



*The* **LIGHT**  
*of the*  
**DHAMMA**

Published by the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council

Vol. IV No. 3

K 1.50

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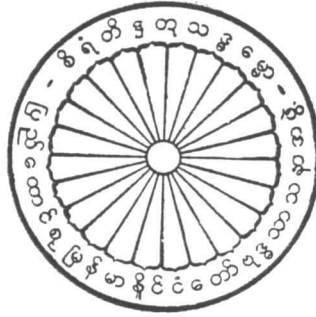
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2501 B.E.

July 1957 C.E.



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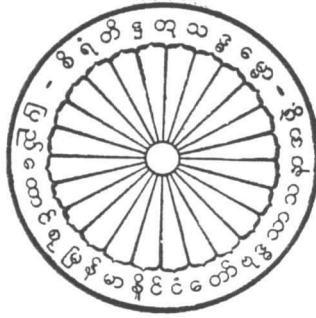
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 16, Hermitage Road, Kokine  
 Rangoon, Union Of Burma




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# The Power of Mindfulness

An Inquiry into the Scope of Bare Attention and the Principal Sources of its Strength

by

Nyanaponika Thera

## Introduction

Is mindfulness actually a power in its own right as claimed by the title of this essay? Seen from the viewpoint of the ordinary pursuits of life, it does not seem so. From that angle mindfulness, or attention, has a rather modest place among many other seemingly more important mental faculties serving the purpose of variegated wish-fulfillment. Here, mindfulness means just “to watch one’s steps” so that one may not stumble or miss a chance in the pursuit of one’s aims. Only in the case of specific tasks and skills is mindfulness sometimes cultivated more deliberately, but here too it is still regarded as a subservient function, and its wider scope and possibilities are not recognized.

Even if one turns to the Buddha’s doctrine, taking only a surface view of the various classifications and lists of mental factors in which mindfulness appears, one may be inclined to regard this faculty just as “one among many.” Again one may get the impression that it has a rather subordinate place and is easily surpassed in significance by other faculties.

On first consideration, mindfulness in fact has, if we may personify it, a rather unassuming character. Compared with it, mental factors such as devotion, energy, imagination, and intelligence, are certainly more colorful personalities, making an immediate and strong impact on people and situations. Their conquests are sometimes rapid and vast, though often insecure. Mindfulness, on the other hand, is of an unobtrusive nature. Its virtues shine inwardly, and in ordinary life most of its merits are passed on to other mental faculties which generally receive all the credit. One must know mindfulness well and cultivate its acquaintance before one can appreciate its value and its silent penetrative influence. Mindfulness walks slowly and deliberately, and its daily task is of a rather humdrum nature. Yet where it places its feet it cannot easily be dislodged, and it acquires and bestows true mastery of the ground it covers.

Mental faculties of such a nature, like actual personalities of a similar type, are often overlooked or underrated. In the case of mindfulness, it required a genius like the Buddha to discover the “hidden talent” in the modest garb, and to develop the vast inherent power of that potent seed. It is, indeed, the mark of a genius to perceive and to harness the power of the seemingly small. Here, truly, it happens that “what is little becomes much.” A reevaluation of values takes place. The standards of greatness and smallness change. Through the master mind of the Buddha, mindfulness is finally revealed as the Archimedean point where the vast revolving mass of world suffering is levered out of its twofold anchorage in ignorance and craving.

The Buddha spoke of the power of mindfulness in a very emphatic way:

“Mindfulness, I declare, is all-helpful” (*Samyutta*, 46:55).

“All things can be mastered by mindfulness” (*Anguttara*, 8:83).

Further, there is that solemn and weighty utterance opening and concluding the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness:

“This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of pain and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of *Nibbāna*, namely the four foundations of mindfulness.”

## Bare Attention

In ordinary life, if mindfulness, or attention, is directed to any object, it is rarely sustained long enough for the purpose of careful and factual observation. Generally it is followed immediately by emotional reaction, discriminative thought, reflection, or purposeful action. In a life and thought governed by the Buddha’s teaching too, mindfulness (*sati*) is mostly linked with clear

comprehension (*sampajañña*) of the right purpose or suitability of an action, and other considerations. Thus again it is not viewed in itself. But to tap the actual and potential power of mindfulness it is necessary to understand and deliberately cultivate it in its basic, unalloyed form, which we shall call *Bare Attention*.

By bare attention we understand the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens *to* us and *in* us, at the successive moments of perception. It is called “bare” because it attends to the bare facts of a perception without reacting to them by deed, speech or mental comment. Ordinarily, that purely receptive state of mind is, as we said, just a very brief phase of the thought process of which one is often scarcely aware. But in the methodical development of mindfulness aimed at the unfolding of its latent powers, bare attention is sustained for as long a time as one’s strength of concentration permits. Bare attention then becomes the key to the meditative practice of Satipaṭṭhāna, opening the door to mind’s mastery and final liberation.

Bare attention is developed in two ways: (1) as a methodical meditative practice with selected objects; (2) as applied, as far as practicable, to the normal events of the day, together with a general attitude of mindfulness and clear comprehension. The details of the practice have been described elsewhere, and need not be repeated here.<sup>1</sup>

The primary purpose of this essay is to demonstrate and explain the efficacy of this method, that is, to show the actual power of mindfulness. Particularly in an age like ours, with its superstitious worship of ceaseless external activity, there will be those who ask: “How can such a passive attitude of mind as that of bare attention possibly lead to the great results claimed for it?” In reply, one may be inclined to suggest to the questioner not to rely on the words of others, but to put these assertions of the Buddha to the test of personal experience. But those who do not yet know the Buddha’s teaching well enough to accept it as a reliable guide, may hesitate to take up, without good reasons, a practice that just on account of its radical simplicity may appear strange to them. In the following a number of such “good

reasons” are therefore proffered for the reader’s scrutiny. They are also meant as an introduction to the general spirit of satipatthana and as pointers to its wide and significant perspectives. Furthermore, it is hoped that he who has taken up the methodical training will recognize in the following observations certain features of his own practice, and be encouraged to cultivate them deliberately.

#### *Four Sources of Power in Bare Attention*

We shall now deal with four aspects of bare attention, which are the mainsprings of the power of mindfulness. They are not the only sources of its strength, but they are the principal ones to which the efficacy of this method of mental development is due. These four are:

1. The functions of “tidying-up” and “naming” exercised by bare attention.
2. its non-violent, non-coercive procedure;
3. the capacity of stopping and slowing down;
4. the directness of vision bestowed by bare attention.

### **1. The Functions of “Tidying” and “Naming”**

#### *Tidying Up the Mental Household*

If anyone whose mind is not harmonized and controlled through methodical meditative training should take a close look at his own everyday thoughts and activities, he will meet with a rather disconcerting sight. Apart from the few main channels of his purposeful thoughts and activities, he will everywhere be faced with a tangled mass of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and casual bodily movements showing a disorderliness and confusion which he would certainly not tolerate in his living-room. Yet this is the state of affairs that we take for granted within a considerable portion of our waking life and our normal mental activity. Let us now look at the details of that rather untidy picture.

First we meet a vast number of casual sense-impressions such as sights and sounds, passing constantly through our mind. Most of them remain vague and fragmentary; some are even based on

faulty perceptions and misjudgments. Carrying these inherent weaknesses, they often form the untested basis for judgments and decisions on a higher level of consciousness. True, all these casual sense impressions need not and cannot be objects of focused attention. A stone on the road that happens to meet our glance will have a claim on our attention only if it obstructs our progress or is of interest to us for some reason. Yet if we neglect these casual impressions too often, we may stumble over many stones lying on our road and also overlook many gems.

Besides the casual sense impressions, there are those more significant and definite perceptions, thoughts, feelings and volitions which have a closer connection with our purposeful life. Here too, we find that a very high proportion of them are in a state of utter confusion. Hundreds of cross-currents flash through the mind, and everywhere there are “bits and ends” of unfinished thoughts, stifled emotions and passing moods. Many meet a premature death. Owing to their innately feeble nature, our lack of concentration or suppression by new and stronger impressions, they do not persist and develop. If we observe our own mind, we shall notice how easily diverted our thoughts are, how often they behave like undisciplined disputants constantly interrupting each other and refusing to listen to the other side’s arguments. Again, many lines of thought remain rudimentary or are left untranslated into will and action, because courage is lacking to accept their practical, moral or intellectual consequences. If we continue to examine more closely our average perceptions, thoughts or judgments, we shall have to admit that many of them are unreliable. They are just the products of habit, led by prejudices of intellect or emotion, by our pet preferences or aversions, by laziness or selfishness, by faulty or superficial observations.

Such a look into long-neglected quarters of the mind will come as a wholesome shock to the observer. It will convince him of the urgent need for methodical mental culture extending below the thin surface layer of the mind to those vast twilight regions of consciousness we have just visited. The observer will then become aware that the relatively small sector of the mind that stands

in the intense light of purposeful will and thought is not a reliable standard of the inner strength and lucidity of consciousness in its totality. He will also see that the quality of individual consciousness cannot be judged by a few optimal results of mental activity achieved in brief, intermittent periods. The decisive factor in determining the quality of consciousness is self-understanding and self-control: whether that dim awareness characteristic of our everyday mind and the uncontrolled portion of everyday activity tends to increase or decrease.

It is the daily little negligence in thoughts, words and deeds going on for many years of our life (and as the Buddha teaches, for many existences), that is chiefly responsible for the untidiness and confusion we find in our minds. This negligence creates the trouble and allows it to continue. Thus the old Buddhist teachers have said: “Negligence produces a lot of dirt. As in a house, so in the mind, only a very little dirt collects in a day or two, but if it goes on for many years, it will grow into a vast heap of refuse.”<sup>2</sup>

The dark, untidy corners of the mind are the hideouts of our most dangerous enemies. From there they attack us unawares, and much too often succeed in defeating us. That twilight world peopled by frustrated desires and suppressed resentments, by vacillations, whims, and many other shadowy figures, forms a background from which upsurging passions — greed and lust, hatred and anger—may derive powerful support. Besides, the obscure and obscuring nature of that twilight region is the very element and mother-soil of the third and strongest of the three roots of evil (*akusala mūla*), ignorance or delusion.

Attempts at eliminating the mind’s main defilements — greed, hate and delusion — must fail as long as these defilements find refuge and support in the uncontrolled dim regions of the mind; as long as the close and complex tissue of those half-articulate thoughts and emotions forms the basic texture of mind into which just a few golden strands of noble and lucid thought are woven. But how are we to deal with that unwieldy, tangled mass? Usually we try to ignore it and to rely on the counteracting energies of our surface



mind. But the only safe remedy is to face it — with mindfulness. Nothing more difficult is needed than to acquire the habit of directing bare attention to these rudimentary thoughts as often as possible. The working principle here is the simple fact that two thoughts cannot coexist at the same time: if the clear light of mindfulness is present, there is no room for mental twilight. When sustained mindfulness has secured a firm foothold, it will be a matter of comparatively secondary importance how the mind will then deal with those rudimentary thoughts, moods and emotions. One may just dismiss them and replace them by purposeful thoughts; or one may allow and even compel them to complete what they have to say. In the latter case they will often reveal how poor and weak they actually are, and it will then not be difficult to dispose of them once they are forced into the open. This procedure of bare attention is very simple and effective; the difficulty is only the persistence in applying it.

Observing a complex thing means identifying its component parts, singling out the separate strands forming that intricate tissue. If this is applied to the complex currents of mental and practical life, automatically a strong regulating influence will be noticeable. As if ashamed in the presence of the calmly observing eye, the course of thoughts will proceed in a less disorderly and wayward manner; it will not be so easily diverted, and will resemble more and more a well-regulated river.

During decades of the present life and throughout millennia of previous lives traversing the round of existence, there has steadily grown within each individual a closely knit system of intellectual and emotional prejudices, of bodily and mental habits that are no longer questioned as to their rightful position and useful function in human life. Here again, the application of bare attention loosens the hard soil of these often very ancient layers of the human mind, preparing thus the ground for sowing the seed of methodical mental training. Bare attention identifies and pursues the single threads of that closely interwoven tissue of our habits. It sorts out carefully the subsequent justifications of passionate impulses and the pretended motives of our

prejudices. Fearlessly it questions old habits often grown meaningless. It uncovers their roots, and thus helps abolish all that is seen to be harmful. In brief, bare attention lays open the minute crevices in the seemingly impenetrable structure of unquestioned mental processes. Then the sword of wisdom wielded by the strong arm of constant meditative practice will be able to penetrate these crevices, and finally to break up that structure where required. If the inner connection between the single parts of a seemingly compact whole become intelligible, they then cease to be inaccessible.

When the facts and details of the mind's conditioned nature are uncovered by meditative practice, there is an increased chance to effect fundamental changes in the mind. In that way, not only those hitherto unquestioned habits of the mind, its twilight regions and its normal processes as well, but even those seemingly solid, indisputable facts of the world of matter — all will become “questionable” and lose much of their self-assurance. Many people are so impressed and intimidated by that bland self-assurance of assumed “solid facts,” that they hesitate to take up any spiritual training, doubting that it can effect anything worthwhile. The application of bare attention to the task of tidying and regulating the mind will bring perceptible results — results which will dispel their doubts and encourage them to enter more fully a spiritual path.

The tidying or regulating function of bare attention, we should note, is of fundamental importance for the “purification of beings” mentioned by the Buddha as the first aim of Satipaṭṭhāna. This phrase refers, of course, to the purification of their minds, and here the very first step is to bring initial order into the functioning of the mental processes. We have seen how this is done by bare attention. In that sense, the commentary to the “Discourse on the Foundation of Mindfulness” explains the words “for the purification of beings” as follows:

“It is said: ‘Mental taints defile beings; mental clarity purifies them.’ That mental clarity comes to be by this way of mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna magga).”

### *Naming*

We said before that bare attention “tidies up” or regulates the mind by sorting out and identifying the various confused strands of the mental process. That identifying function, like any other mental activity, is connected with a verbal formulation. In other words, “identifying” proceeds by way of expressly “naming” the respective mental processes.

Primitive man believed that words could exercise a magical power: “things that could be named had lost their secret power over man, the horror of the unknown. To know the name of a force, a being or an object was (to primitive man) identical with the mastery over it.”<sup>3</sup> That ancient belief in the magical potency of names appears also in many fairy tales and myths, where the power of a demon is broken just by facing him courageously and pronouncing his name.

There is an element of truth in the “word-magic” of primitive man, and in the practice of bare attention we will find the power of naming confirmed. The “twilight demons” of the mind — our passionate impulses and obscure thoughts — cannot bear the simple but clarifying questions about their “names,” much less the knowledge of these names. Hence, this is often alone sufficient to diminish their strength. The calmly observant glance of mindfulness discovers the demons in their hiding-places. The practice of calling them by their names drives them out into the open, into the daylight of consciousness. There they will feel embarrassed and obliged to justify themselves, although at this stage of bare attention they have not yet even been subjected to any closer questioning except about their names, their identity. If forced into the open while still in an incipient stage, they will be incapable of withstanding scrutiny and will just dwindle away. Thus a first victory over them may be won, even at an early stage of the practice.

The appearance in the mind of undesirable and ignoble thoughts, even if they are very fleeting and only half-articulate, has an unpleasant effect upon one’s self-esteem. Therefore such thoughts are often shoved aside, unattended to and unopposed. Often they are also camouflaged

by more pleasing and respectable labels which hide their true nature. Thoughts disposed of in either of these two ways will strengthen the accumulated power of ignoble tendencies in the subconscious. Furthermore, these procedures will weaken one’s will to resist the arising and the dominance of mental defilements, and strengthen the tendency to evade the issues. But by applying the simple method of clearly and honestly naming or registering any undesirable thoughts, these two harmful devices, ignorance and camouflage, are excluded. Thence their detrimental consequences on the structure of the subconscious and their diversion of mental effort will be avoided.

When ignoble thoughts or personal shortcomings are called by their right names, the mind will develop an inner resistance and even repugnance against them. In time it may well succeed in keeping them in check and finally eliminating them. Even if these means do not bring undesirable tendencies fully under control at once, they will stamp upon them the impact of repeated resistance which will weaken them whenever they reappear. To continue our personification, we may say that unwholesome thoughts will no longer be the unopposed masters of the scene, and this diffidence of theirs will make them considerably easier to deal with. It is the power of moral shame (*hiri-bala*) that has been mustered here as an ally, methodically strengthened by these simple yet subtle psychological techniques.

The method of naming and registering also extends, of course, to noble thoughts and impulses which will be encouraged and strengthened. Without being given deliberate attention, such wholesome tendencies often pass unnoticed and remain barren. But when clear awareness is applied to them, it will stimulate their growth.

It is one of the most beneficial features of right mindfulness, and particularly of bare attention, that it enables us to utilize all external events and inner mental events for our progress. Even the unsalutary can be made a starting point for the salutary if, through the device of naming or registering, it becomes an object of detached knowledge.

In several passages of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* the function of naming or “bare registering” seems to be indicated by formulating the respective statements by way of direct speech. There are no less than four such instances in the discourse:

(1) “When experiencing a pleasant feeling, he knows ‘I experience a pleasant feeling’,” etc.;

(2) “He knows a lustful (state of) mind, ‘Mind is lustful’,” etc.;

(3) “If (the hindrance of) sense desire is present in him, he knows, ‘Sense desire is present in me’,” etc.;

(4) “If the enlightenment factor mindfulness is present in him, he knows, ‘The enlightenment factor mindfulness is present in me’,” etc.

In concluding this section, we briefly point out that the *tidying-up* and *naming* of mental processes is the indispensable preparation for fully understanding them in their true nature, the task of insight (*vipassanā*). These functions, exercised by bare attention, will help dispel the illusion that the mental processes are compact (*ghana-vinibbhoga*). They will also help us to discern their specific nature or characteristics, and to notice their momentary rise and fall.

## 2. The Non-coercive Procedure

Both the world surrounding us and the world of our own minds are full of hostile and conflicting forces causing us pain and frustration. We know from our own bitter experience that we are not strong enough to meet and conquer all these antagonistic forces in open combat. In the external world we cannot have everything exactly as we want it, while in the inner world of the mind, our passions, impulses, and whims often override the demands of duty, reason and our higher aspirations.

We further learn that often an undesirable situation will only worsen if excessive pressure is used against it. Passionate desires may grow in intensity if one tries to silence them by sheer force of will. Disputes and quarrels will go on endlessly and grow fiercer if they are fanned again and again by angry retorts or by vain attempts to crush the other man’s position. A disturbance during work,

rest or meditation will be felt more strongly and will have a longer-lasting impact if one reacts to it by resentment and anger and attempts to suppress it.

Thus, again and again, we meet with situations in life where we cannot *force* issues. But there are ways of mastering the vicissitudes of life and conflicts of mind without applications of force. Non-violent means may often succeed where attempts at coercion, internal or external, fail. Such a non-violent way of mastering life and mind is *Satipaṭṭhāna*. By the methodical application of bare attention, the basic practice in the development of right mindfulness, all the latent powers of a non-coercive approach will gradually unfold, with the beneficial results and their wide and unexpected implications. In this context we are mainly concerned with the benefits of Satipatthana for the mastery of mind, and for the progress in meditation that may result from a non-coercive procedure. But we shall also cast occasional side glances at its repercussions on everyday life. It will not be difficult for a thoughtful reader to make more detailed application to his own problems.

The antagonistic forces that appear in meditation and that are liable to upset its smooth course are of three kinds:

1. external disturbances, such as noise;
2. mental defilements (*kilesa*), such as lust, anger, restlessness, dissatisfaction, or sloth, which may arise at any time during meditation; and
3. various incidental stray thoughts, or surrender to day-dreaming.

These distractions are the great stumbling blocks for a beginner in meditation who has not yet acquired sufficient dexterity to deal with them effectively. To give thought to those disturbing factors only when they actually arise at the time of meditation is insufficient. If caught unprepared in one’s defence, one will struggle with them in a more or less haphazard and ineffective way, and with a feeling of irritation which will itself be an additional impediment. If disturbances of any kind and unskillful reactions to them occur several times during one session, one may come to feel utterly frustrated and irritated and give up further

attempts to meditate, at least for the present occasion.

In fact, even meditators who are quite well informed by books or a teacher about all the details concerning their subject of meditation often lack instruction on how to deal skillfully with the disturbances they may meet. The feeling of helplessness in facing them is the most formidable difficulty for a beginning meditator. At that point many accept defeat, abandoning prematurely any further effort at methodical practice. As in worldly affairs, so in meditation, one's way of dealing with the "initial difficulties" will often be decisive for success or failure.

When faced by inner and outer disturbances, the inexperienced or uninstructed beginner will generally react in two ways. He will first try to shove them away lightly, and if he fails in that, he will try to suppress them by sheer force of will. But these disturbances are like insolent flies: by whisking — first lightly and then with increasing vigor and anger — one may perhaps succeed in driving them away for a while, but usually they will return with an exasperating constancy, and the effort and vexation of whisking will have produced only an additional disturbance of one's composure.

*Satipaṭṭhāna*, through its method of bare attention, offers a non-violent alternative to those futile and even harmful attempts at suppression by force. A successful non-violent procedure in mind-control has to start with the right attitude. There must be first the full cognizance and sober acceptance of the fact that those three disturbing factors are co-inhabitants of the world we live in, whether we like it or not. Our disapproval of them will not alter the fact. With some we shall have to come to terms, and concerning the others — the mental defilements — we shall have to learn how to deal with them effectively until they are finally conquered.

1. Since we are not the sole inhabitants of this densely populated world, there are bound to be *external disturbances* of various kinds, such as noise and interruptions by visitors. We cannot always live in "splendid isolation," "from the noise of men and dogs untroubled," or "ivory towers"

high above the crowd. Right meditation is not escapism; it is not meant to provide hiding-places for temporary oblivion. Realistic meditation has the purpose of training the mind to face, to understand and to conquer this very world in which we live. And this world inevitably includes numerous obstacles to the life of meditation.

2. The Burmese meditation master, the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw said: "In an unliberated worldly mental defilements are sure to arise again and again. He has to face that fact and know these defilements well in order to apply again and again the appropriate remedy of *Satipaṭṭhāna*. Then they will grow weaker, more short-lived, and will finally disappear." To know the occurrence and nature of defilements is therefore as important for a meditator as to know the occurrence of his noble thoughts.

By facing one's own defilements one will be stirred to increase the effort to eliminate them. On the other hand, if out of a false shame or pride one tries to avert one's glance when they arise, one will never truly join issue with them, and will always evade the final and decisive encounter. By hitting blindly at them, one will only exhaust or even hurt oneself. But by observing carefully their nature and behavior when they arise in one's own mind, one will be able to meet them well prepared, to forestall them often, and finally to banish them fully. Therefore meet your defilements with a free and open glance! Be not ashamed, afraid or discouraged!

3. The third group of intruders disturbing the meditator's mind are stray thoughts and daydreams. These may consist of various memories and images of the past, recent or remote, including those emerging from subconscious depths; thoughts of the future — planning, imagining, fearing, hoping; and the casual sense-perceptions that may occur at the very time of meditation, often dragging after them a long trail of associated ideas. Whenever concentration and mindfulness slacken, stray thoughts or daydreams appear and fill the vacuum. Though they seem insignificant in themselves, through their frequent occurrence they form a most formidable obstacle, not only for the beginner, but in all cases when the

mind is restless or distracted. However, when these invaders can be kept at bay, even long continuous periods of meditation can be achieved. As in the case of the mental defilements, stray thoughts will be entirely excluded only at the stage of Arahatsip, when the perfect mindfulness thereby obtained keeps unfailing watch at the door of the mind.

If they are to shape our attitude, all these facts about the three kinds of disturbing factors must be given full weight and be fully absorbed by our mind. Then, in these three disturbing factors, the noble truth of suffering will manifest itself to the meditator very incisively through his own personal experience: “Not to obtain what one wants is suffering.” The three other noble truths should also be exemplified by reference to the same situation. In such a way, even when dealing with impediments, the meditator will be within the domain of Satipatthana. He will be engaged in the mindful awareness of the Four Noble Truths — a part of the contemplation of mental objects (*dhammānupassanā*).<sup>4</sup> It is characteristic of right mindfulness, and one of its tasks, to relate the actual experiences of life to the truth of the Dhamma, and to use them as opportunities for its practical realization. Already at the preliminary stage devoted to the shaping of a correct and helpful attitude, we have the first successful test of our peaceful weapons: by understanding our adversaries better, we have consolidated our position which was formerly weakened by an emotional approach; and by transforming these adversaries into teachers of the truths, we have won the first advantage over them.

If we are mentally prepared by a realistic view of these three factors antagonistic to meditation, we shall be less inclined to react at once by irritation when they actually arise. We shall be emotionally in a better position to meet them with the non-violent weapons of which we shall now speak.

There are three devices for countering disturbances that arise in meditation. The three should be applied in succession whenever the preceding device has failed to dispose of the disturbance. All three are applications of bare

attention; they differ in the degree and duration of attention given to the disturbance. The guiding rule here is: to give no more mental emphasis to the respective disturbance than is actually required by circumstances.

1. First, one should notice the disturbance clearly, but lightly: that is, without emphasis and without attention to details. After that brief act of noticing, one should try to return to the original subject of meditation. If the disturbance was weak or one’s preceding concentration fairly strong, one may well succeed in resuming contemplation. At that stage, by being careful not to get involved in any “conversation” or argument with the intruder, we shall on our part not give it a reason to stay long; and in a good number of cases the disturbance will soon depart like a visitor who does not receive a very warm welcome. That curt dismissal may often enable us to return to our original meditation without any serious disturbance to the composure of mind.

The non-violent device here is: to apply bare attention to the disturbance, but with a minimum of response to it, and with a mind bent on withdrawal. This is the very way in which the Buddha himself dealt with inopportune visitors, as described in the *Mahāsūññatā Sutta* (*Majjh.* 122): “...with a mind bent on seclusion... and withdrawn, his conversation aiming at dismissing (those visitors).” Similar was Shantideva’s advice on how to deal with fools: if one cannot avoid them, one should treat them “with the indifferent politeness of a gentleman.”

2. If, however, the disturbance persists, one should repeat the application of bare attention again and again, patiently and calmly; and it may be that the disturbance will vanish when it has spent its force. Here the attitude is to meet the repeated occurrence of a disturbance by a reiterated “No,” a determined refusal to be deflected from one’s course. This is the attitude of patience and firmness. The capacity for watchful observation has to be aided here by the capacity to wait and to hold one’s ground.

These two devices will generally be successful with incidental stray thoughts and daydreams, which are feeble by nature, but the other two types

of disturbances, the external ones and defilements, may also yield quite often.

3. But if, for some reason, they do *not* yield, one should deliberately turn one's full attention to the disturbance and make it an object of knowledge. Thus one transforms it from a *disturbance* to meditation into a legitimate *object* of meditation. One may continue with that new object until the external or internal cause for attending to it has ceased; or, if it proves satisfactory, one may even retain it for the rest of that session.

For instance, when disturbed by a persistent noise, we should give the noise our undivided attention, but we should take care to distinguish the object itself from our reaction to it. For example, if resentment arises, it should be clearly recognized in its own nature whenever it arises. In doing so we shall be practicing the contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*) according to the following passage of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*; "He knows the ear and sounds, and the fetter (e.g., resentment) arising through both." If the noise is intermittent or of varying intensity, one will easily be able to discern the rise and fall (*udayabbaya*) in its occurrence. In that way one will add to one's direct insight into impermanency (*aniccatā*).

The attitude towards recurrent mental defilements such as thoughts of lust and restlessness, should be similar. One should face them squarely, but distinguish them from one's reaction to them, e.g., connivance, fear, resentment, irritation. In doing so, one is making use of the device of "naming," and one will reap the benefits mentioned above. In the recurrent waves of passion or restlessness, one will likewise learn to distinguish gradually phases of "high" and "low," their "ups and downs," and may also gain other helpful knowledge about their behavior. By that procedure, one again remains entirely within the range of *Satipaṭṭhāna* by practicing the contemplation of the state of mind (*cittānupassanā*) and of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*: attention to the hindrances).

This method of transforming disturbances to meditation into objects of meditation, as simple as it is ingenious, may be regarded as the

culmination of non-violent procedure. It is a device very characteristic of the spirit of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, to make use of all experiences as aids on the path. In that way enemies are turned into friends; for all these disturbances and antagonistic forces have become our teachers, and teachers, whoever they may be, should be regarded as friends.

We cannot forego to quote here a passage from a noteworthy little book, *The Little Locksmith* by Katherine Butler Hathaway, a moving human document of fortitude and practical wisdom acquired by suffering:

"I am shocked by the ignorance and wastefulness with which persons who should know better throw away the things they do not like. They throw away experiences, people, marriages, situations, all sorts of things because they do not like them. If you throw away a thing, it is gone. Where you had something you have nothing to work on. Whereas, almost all those things which get thrown away are capable of being worked over by a little magic into just the opposite of what they were... But most human beings never remember at all that in almost every bad situation there is the possibility of a transformation by which the undesirable may be changed into the desirable."

We said before that the occurrence of the three disturbing elements cannot always be prevented. They are parts of our world, and their coming and going follows its own laws irrespective of our approval or disapproval. But by applying bare attention we can avoid being swept away or dislodged by them. By taking a firm and calm stand on the secure ground of mindfulness, we shall repeat in a modest degree, but in an essentially identical way, the historic situation under the Bodhi Tree. When Mara, the Evil One, at the head of his army, claimed the soil on which the future Buddha sat, the latter refused to budge. Trusting in the power of mindfulness, we may confidently repeat the Bodhisatta's aspiration on that occasion: *Mā Maṃ thānā acavayi!* "May he (Māra) not dislodge me from this place" (*Padhāna Sutta*).

Let the intruders come and go. Like all the other members of that vast unceasing procession of mental and physical events that passes before our observant eyes in the practice of bare attention, they arise, and having arisen, they pass away.

Our advantage here is the obvious fact that two thought moments cannot be present at the same time. Attention refers, strictly speaking, not to the present but to the moment that has just passed away. Thus, as long as mindfulness holds sway, there will be no “disturbance” or “defiled thought.” This gives us the chance to hold on to that secure ground of an “observer’s post,” our own potential “throne of enlightenment.”

By the quietening and neutralizing influence of detached observation as applied in our three devices, the interruptions of meditation will increasingly lose the sting of irritation, and thereby their disturbing effect. This will prove to be an act of true *virāga* (dispassion), which literally means “decoloring.” When these experiences are stripped of the emotional tinge that excites towards lust, aversion, irritation and other defilements of the mind, they will appear in their true nature as bare phenomena (*suddha-dhammā*).

The non-violent procedure of bare attention endows the meditator with the light but sure touch so essential for handling the sensitive, evasive, and refractory nature of the mind. It also enables him to deal smoothly with the various difficult situations and obstacles met with in daily life. To illustrate the even quality of energy required for attaining to the meditative absorptions, The Path of Purification (*Visuddhimagga*) describes a test which students of surgery in ancient days had to undergo as a proof of their skill. A lotus leaf was placed in a bowl of water, and the pupil had to make an incision through the length of the leaf, without cutting it entirely or submerging it. He who applied an excess of force either cut the leaf into two or pressed it into the water, while the timid one did not even dare to scratch it. In fact, something like the gentle but firm hand of the surgeon is required in mental training, and this skillful, well-balanced touch will be the natural outcome of the non-violent procedure in the practice of bare attention.

### 3. Stopping and Slowing Down

For a full and unobstructed unfoldment of the mind’s capacities, the influence of two complementary forces is needed: *activating* and *restraining*. That twofold need was recognized by the Buddha, the great knower of mind. He advised that the faculties of energy (*viriy’indriya*) and of concentration (*samādh’indriya*) should be kept equally strong and well balanced.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, he recommended three of the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) as suitable for rousing the mind, and three for calming it.<sup>6</sup> In both cases, among the spiritual faculties and the enlightenment factors, it is mindfulness that not only watches over their equilibrium, but also activates those that are sluggish and restrains those that are too intense.

Mindfulness, though seemingly of a passive nature, is in fact an activating force. It makes the mind alert, and alertness is indispensable for all purposeful activity. In the present inquiry, however, we shall examine how it makes for disentanglement and detachment, and how it positively helps in the development of the mental qualities required for the work of deliverance.

In practicing bare attention, we *keep still* at the mental and spatial place of observation, amidst the loud demands of the inner and outer world. Mindfulness possesses the strength of tranquillity, the capacity for deferring action and applying the brake, for *stopping* rash interference and for suspending judgment while *pausing* to observe facts and to reflect upon them wisely. It also brings a wholesome *slowing down* in the impetuosity of thought, speech and action. Keeping still and stopping, pausing and slowing down — these will be our key words when speaking now of the restraining effect of bare attention.

An ancient Chinese book states:

“In making things end, and in making things start, there is nothing more glorious than *keeping still*.”

In the light of the Buddha’s teaching, the true “end of things” is Nibbāna which is called the “*stilling* of formations” (*saṅkhārānaṃ vūpasamo*), that is, their final end or cessation. It is also called

“the stopping” (*nirodha*). The “things” or “formations” meant here are the conditioned and impersonal phenomena rooted in craving and ignorance. The end of formations comes to be by the end of “forming,” that is, by the end of world-creating kammic activities. It is the “end of the world” and of suffering, which the Buddha proclaimed cannot be reached by walking, migrating or transmigrating, but can be found within ourselves. That ‘end of the world’ is heralded by each deliberate act of *keeping still, stopping, or pausing*. “Keeping still,” in that highest sense, means stopping the accumulation of kamma, abstaining from our unceasing concern with evanescent things, abstaining from perpetually adding to our entanglements in samsara — the round of repeated birth and death. By following the way of mindfulness, by training ourselves to keep still and pause in the attitude of bare attention, we refuse to take up the world’s persistent challenge to our dispositions for greed or hatred. We protect ourselves against rash and delusive judgments; we refrain from blindly plunging into the whirlpool of interfering action with all its inherent dangers.

“He who abstains from interfering is everywhere secure”

(*Sutta Nipāta*, v.953)

“He who keeps still and knows where to stop will not meet danger”

(*Tao-Te-Ching*, Chapter 44)

The Chinese saying quoted earlier states in its second part that there is nothing more glorious in *making things start* than in keeping still. Explained in the Buddhist sense, these things effectively started by keeping still are “the things (or qualities) making for decrease of kammic accumulation.” In dealing with them, we may follow the traditional division of mental training into morality (or conduct), concentration (or tranquillity) and wisdom (or insight). All three are decisively helped by the attitude of *keeping still* cultivated by bare attention.

1. *Conduct*. How can we improve our conduct, its moral quality and its skill in taking right decisions? If we earnestly desire such an

improvement, it will generally be wisest to choose the line of least resistance. If we turn too quickly against those shortcomings deeply rooted in old habits or in powerful impulses, we might suffer discouraging defeat. We should pay attention first to our blemishes of action and speech and our errors of judgment caused by thoughtlessness and rashness. Of these there are many. In our lives there are numerous instances where one short moment of reflection might have prevented a false step, and thereby warded off a long chain of misery or moral guilt that started with a single moment of thoughtlessness. But how can we curb our rash reactions, and replace them by moments of mindfulness and reflection? To do so will depend on our capacity to *stop and pause*, to apply brakes at the right time, and this we can learn by practicing bare attention. In that practice we shall train ourselves “to look and wait,” to suspend reactions or slow them down. We shall learn it first the easy way, in situations of our own choice, within the limited field of experiences met with during the periods of meditative practice. When facing again and again the incidental sense impressions, feelings or stray thoughts which interrupt our concentration; when curbing again and again our desire to respond to them in some way; when succeeding again and again in keeping still in face of them — we shall be preparing ourselves to preserve that inner stillness in the wider and unprotected field of everyday life. We shall have acquired a presence of mind that will enable us to pause and stop, even if we are taken by surprise or are suddenly provoked or tempted.

Our present remarks refer to those blemishes of conduct liable to arise through thoughtlessness and rashness, but which may be more or less easily checked through mindfulness. Dexterity in dealing with these will also affect those more obstinate deviations from moral conduct rooted in strong passionate impulses or in deeply ingrained bad habits. The increased tranquillity of mind achieved in keeping still for bare attention will restrain the impetuosity of passions. The acquired habit of pausing and stopping will act as a brake to the ingrained habits of indulging in unwholesome deeds.



By being able to keep still for bare attention, or to pause for wise reflection, very often the first temptation to lust, the first wave of anger, the first mist of delusion, will disappear without causing serious entanglement. At which point the current of unwholesome thought process is stopped will depend on the quality of mindfulness. If mindfulness is keen, it will succeed at a very early point in calling a stop to a series of defiled thoughts or actions before we are carried along by them too far. Then the respective defilements will not grow beyond their initial strength, less effort will be required to check them, and fewer kammic entanglements, or none, will follow.

Let us take the example of a pleasant visual object which has aroused our liking. At first that liking might not be very active and insistent. If at this point the mind is already able to keep still for detached observation or reflection, the visual perception can easily be divested of its still very slight admixture of lust. The object becomes registered as “just something seen that has caused a pleasant feeling,” or the attraction felt is sublimated into a quiet aesthetic pleasure. But if that earliest chance has been missed, the liking will grow into attachment and into the desire to possess. If now a stop is called, the thought of desire may gradually lose its strength; it will not easily turn into an insistent craving, and no actual attempts to get possession of the desired object will follow. But if the current of lust is still unchecked, then the thought of desire may express itself by speech in asking for the object or even demanding it with impetuous words. That is, unwholesome mental kamma (*akusala-mano-kamma*) is followed by unwholesome verbal kamma (*akusala-vacī-kamma*). A refusal will cause the original current of lust to branch out into additional streams of mental defilements, either sadness or anger. But if even at that late stage one can stop for quiet reflection or bare attention, accept the refusal, and renounce wish-fulfillment, further complications will be avoided. However, if clamoring words are followed by unwholesome bodily kamma (*akusala-kayā-kamma*), and if, driven by craving, one tries to get possession of the desired object by stealth or force, then the kammic entanglement is complete and its

consequences must be experienced in their full impact. But still, if even after the completion of the evil act, one stops for reflection, it will not be in vain. For the mindfulness that arises in the form of remorseful retrospection will preclude a hardening of character and may prevent a repetition of the same action.

The Exalted One once said to his son, Rahula (Majjhima 61):

“Whatever action you *intend* to perform, by body, speech or mind, you should consider that action... If, in considering it, you realize: ‘This action which I intend to perform will be harmful to myself, or harmful to others or harmful to both; it will be an unwholesome action, producing suffering, resulting in suffering’ — then you should certainly not perform that action.

“Also *while* you are performing an action, by body, speech or mind, you should consider that action... If, in considering it, you realize: ‘This action which I am performing is harmful to myself, or harmful to others or harmful to both; it is an unwholesome action, producing suffering, resulting in suffering’ — then you should desist from such an action.

“Also *after* you have performed an action, by body, speech or mind, you should consider that action... If, in considering it, you realize: ‘This action which I have performed has been harmful to myself, or harmful to others, or harmful to both; it was an unwholesome action, producing suffering, resulting in suffering’ — then you should in the future refrain from it.”

2. *Tranquillity*. We shall now consider how stopping for bare attention also helps one to attain and strengthen tranquillity (*samatha*) in its double sense: general peace of mind and meditative concentration.

By developing the habit of pausing for bare attention, it becomes increasingly easier to withdraw into one’s own inner stillness when unable to escape bodily from the loud, insistent noises of the outer world. It will be easier to forego useless reactions to the foolish speech or deeds of others. When the blows of fate are particularly hard and incessant, a mind trained in bare attention will find a refuge in the haven of apparent passivity

or watchful non-action, from which position it will be able to wait patiently until the storms have passed. There are situations in life when it is best to allow things to come to their natural end. He who is able to keep still and wait will often succeed where aggressiveness or busy activity would have been vanquished. Not only in critical situations, but also in the normal course of life, the experience won by observant keeping still will convince us that we need not actively respond to every impression we receive, or regard every encounter with people or things as a challenge to our interfering activity.

By refraining from busying ourselves unnecessarily, external frictions will be reduced and the internal tensions they bring will loosen up. Greater harmony and peace will pervade the life of every day, bridging the gap between normal life and the tranquillity of meditation. Then there will be fewer of those disturbing inner reverberations of everyday restlessness which, in a coarse or subtle form, invade the hours of meditation, producing bodily and mental unrest. Consequently, the hindrance of agitation (*uddhacca-nīvaraṇa*), a chief obstacle to concentration, will appear less often and will be easier to overcome when it arises.

By cultivating the attitude of bare attention as often as opportunity offers, the centrifugal forces of mind, making for mental distraction, will peter out; the centripetal tendency, turning the mind inward and making for concentration, will gather strength. Craving will no longer run out in pursuit of a variety of changing objects.

Regular practice of sustained attention to a continuous series of events prepares the mind for sustained concentration on a *single* object, or a limited number of objects, in the strict practice of meditation. Firmness or steadiness of mind, another important factor in concentration, will likewise be cultivated.

Thus, the practice of keeping still, pausing and stopping for bare attention, fosters several salient components of meditative tranquillity: calmness, concentration, firmness, and reduction of the multiplicity of objects. It raises the average level of normal consciousness and brings it closer

to the level of the meditative mind. This is an important point because often too wide a gap between these two mental levels repeatedly frustrates attempts at mental concentration and hinders the achievement of smooth continuity in meditative practice.

In the sequence of the seven factors of enlightenment, we find that the enlightenment factor of tranquillity (*passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*) precedes that of concentration (*samādhī-sambojjhaṅga*). Expressing the same fact, the Buddha says: “If tranquilized within, the mind will become concentrated.” Now in the light of our previous remarks, we shall better understand these statements.

3. *Insight*. It has been said by the Exalted One: “He whose mind is concentrated sees things as they really are.” Therefore, all those ways by which bare attention strengthens concentration also provide a supporting condition for the development of insight. But there is also a more direct and specific help which insight receives from keeping still in bare attention.

Generally, we are more concerned with handling and using things than with knowing them in their true nature. Thus we usually grasp in haste the very first few signals conveyed to us by a perception. Then, through deeply ingrained habit, those signals evoke a standard response by way of judgments such as good-bad, pleasant-unpleasant, useful-harmful, right-wrong. These judgments, by which we define the objects in relation to ourselves, lead to corresponding reactions by word or deed. Only rarely does attention dwell upon a common or familiar object for any longer time than is needed to receive the first few signals. So, for the most part, we perceive things in a fragmentary manner and thence misconceive them. Further, only the very first phase of the object’s life-span, or a little more, comes into the focus of our attention. One may not even be consciously aware that the object is a process with an extension in time — a beginning and an end; that it has many aspects and relations beyond those casually perceived in a limited situation; that, in brief, it has a kind of evanescent individuality of its own. A world perceived in this

superficial way will consist of shapeless little lumps of experiences marked by a few subjectively selected signs or symbols. The symbols chosen are determined mainly by the individual's self-interest; sometimes they are even misapplied. The shadow-like world that results includes not only the outer environment and other persons, but also a good part of one's own bodily and mental processes. These, too become subjected to the same superficial manner of conceptualization. The Buddha points out four basic misconceptions that result from distorted perceptions and unmethodical attention: taking the impure for pure, the impermanent for lasting, the painful and pain-bringing for pleasant, and the impersonal for a self or something belonging to the self. When the seal of self-reference is thus stamped again and again upon the world of everyday experience, the basic misconception, "This belongs to me" (*attaniya*) will steadily put forth roots into all the bodily and mental factors of our being. Like the hair-roots of a plant, these will be fine, but firm and widespread — to such an extent, in fact, that the notions of "I" and "mine" will hardly be shaken by mere intellectual convictions about the non-existence of self (*anattā*).

These grave consequences issue from that fundamental perceptual situation: our rush into hasty or habitual reactions after receiving the first few signals from our perceptions. But if we muster the restraining forces of mindfulness and pause for bare attention, the material and mental processes that form the objects of mind at the given moment will reveal themselves to us more fully and more truly. No longer dragged at once into the whirlpool of self-reference, allowed to unfold themselves before the watchful eye of mindfulness, they will disclose the diversity of their aspects and the wide net of their correlations and interconnections. The connection with self-interest, so narrow and often falsifying, will recede into the background, dwarfed by the wider view now gained. The processes observed display in their serial occurrence and in their component parts a constant birth and death, a rise and a fall. Thereby the facts of change and impermanence impress themselves on the mind with growing intensity. The same discernment of rise and fall

dissolves the false conceptions of unity created under the influence of the egocentric attitude. Self-reference uncritically overrides diversity; it lumps things together under the preconceptions of being a self or belonging to a self. But bare attention reveals these sham unities as impersonal and conditioned phenomena. Facing thus again and again the evanescent, dependent and impersonal nature of life-processes with and without, we will discover their monotony and unsatisfactory nature: in other words, the truth of suffering. Thus, by the simple device of slowing down, pausing and keeping still for bare attention, all three of the characteristics of existence — impermanence, suffering, and non-self — will open themselves to penetrative insight (*vipassanā*).

### *Spontaneity*

An acquired or strengthened habit of pausing mindfully before acting does not exclude a wholesome spontaneity of response. On the contrary, through training, the practice of pausing, stopping, and keeping still for bare attention will itself become quite spontaneous. It will grow into a selective mechanism of the mind that, with an increasing reliability and swiftness of response, can prevent the upsurge of evil or unwise impulses. Without such a skill we may intellectually realise those impulses to be unwholesome, but still succumb to them due to their own powerful spontaneity. The practice of pausing mindfully serves, therefore, to replace unwholesome spontaneity or habits by wholesome ones grounded in our better knowledge and nobler intentions.

Just as certain reflex movements automatically protect the body, similarly the mind needs spontaneous spiritual and moral self-protection. The practice of bare attention will provide this vital function. A person of average moral standards instinctively shrinks from thoughts of theft or murder. With the help of the method of bare attention, the range of such spontaneous moral brakes can be vastly extended and ethical sensitivity greatly heightened.

In an untrained mind, noble tendencies and right thoughts are often assailed by the sudden

outbreak of passions and prejudices. They either succumb or assert themselves only with difficulty after an inner struggle. But if the spontaneity of the unwholesome is checked or greatly reduced, as described above, our good impulses and wise reflections will have greater scope to emerge and express themselves freely and spontaneously. Their natural flow will give us greater confidence in the power of the good within us; it will also carry more conviction for others. That spontaneity of the good will not be erratic, for it will have deep and firm roots in previous methodical training. Here appears a way by which a premeditated good thought (*sasaṅkhārika-kusala*) may be transformed into a spontaneous good thought (*asaṅkhārika-kusala-citta*). According to the psychology of the Abhidhamma, such a thought, if combined with knowledge, takes the first place in the scale of ethical values. In this way we shall achieve a practical understanding of a saying in *The Secret of the Golden Flower*:<sup>7</sup> “If one attains intentionally to an unintentional state one has comprehension.” This saying invites a paraphrase in Pali terms: *Sasaṅkhārena asaṅkhārikaṃ pattaḃbaṃ*, “by premeditated intentional effort spontaneity can be won.”

If the numerous aids to mental growth and liberation found in the Buddha’s teaching are wisely utilized, there is actually nothing that can finally withstand the Satipatthana method; and this method starts with the simple practice of learning to pause and stop for bare attention.

### *Slowing-down*

Against the impetuosity, rashness and heedlessness of the untrained mind, the practice of pausing and stopping sets up a deliberate slowing-down. The demands of modern life, however, make it impracticable to introduce such a slow-down of function into the routine of the average working day. But as an antidote against the harmful consequences of the hectic speed of modern life, it is all the more important to cultivate that practice in one’s leisure hours, especially in periods of strict Satipatthana practice. Such practice will also bestow the worldly benefits of greater calm, efficiency and skill in one’s daily

round of work.

For the purpose of meditative development, slowing-down serves as an effective training in heedfulness, sense-control, and concentration. But apart from that, it has a more specific significance for meditative practice. In the commentary to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, it is said that the slowing down of movements may help in *regaining lost concentration* on a chosen object. A monk, so we read, had bent his arm quickly without remembering his subject of meditation as his rule of practice demanded. On becoming aware of that omission he took his arm back to its previous position and repeated the movement mindfully. The subject of meditation referred to was probably “clearly comprehending action,” (*sampajāna-kāra*) as mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*: “In bending and stretching he acts with clear comprehension.”

The slowing-down of certain bodily movements during strict meditative training is particularly helpful in gaining insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāna*), especially the direct awareness of change (*anicca*) and non-self (*anattā*). To a great extent, it is the rapidity of movement that strengthens the illusions of unity, identity, and substantiality in what is actually a complex evanescent process. Therefore, in the strict practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, the slowing down of such actions as walking, bending and stretching, so as to discern the several phases of each movement, provides a powerful aid for direct insight into the three characteristics of all phenomena. The meditator’s contemplation will gain increasing force and significance if he notices clearly how each partial phase of the process observed arises and ceases by itself, and nothing of it goes over or “transmigrates” to the next phase.

Under the influence of pausing for bare attention, the average rhythm of our everyday actions, speech and thoughts will also become more quiet and peaceful. Slowing down the hurried rhythm of life means that thoughts, feelings, and perceptions will be able to complete the entire length of their natural lifetime. Full awareness will extend up to their end phase: to their last vibrations and reverberations. Too often that end

phase is cut off by an impatient grasping at new impressions, or by hurrying on to the next stage of a line of thought before the earlier one has been clearly comprehended. This is one of the main reasons for the disorderly state of the average mind, which is burdened by a vast amount of indistinct or fragmentary perceptions, stunted emotions and undigested ideas. Slowing-down will prove an effective device for recovering the fullness and clarity of consciousness. A fitting simile, and at the same time an actual example, is the procedure called for in the practice of mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*): mindfulness has to cover the whole extent of the breath, its beginning, middle and end. This is what is meant by the passage in the sutta, “Experiencing the whole (breath-) body, I shall breathe in and out.” Similarly, the entire “breath” or rhythm of our life will become deeper and fuller if, through slowing-down, we get used to sustained attention.

The habit of prematurely cutting off processes of thought, or slurring over them, has assumed serious proportions in the man of modern urban civilization. Restlessly he clamors for ever new stimuli in increasingly quicker succession just as he demands increasing speed in his means of locomotion. This rapid bombardment of impressions has gradually blunted his sensitivity, and thus he always needs new stimuli, louder, coarser, and more variegated. Such a process, if not checked, can end only in disaster. Already we see at large a decline of finer aesthetic susceptibility and a growing incapacity for genuine natural joy. The place of both is taken by a hectic, short-breathed excitement incapable of giving any true aesthetic or emotional satisfaction. “Shallow mental breath” is to a great extent responsible for the growing superficiality of “civilized man” and for the frightening spread of nervous disorders in the West. It may well become the start of a general deterioration of human consciousness in its qualitative level, range and strength. This danger threatens all those, in the East as well as in the West, who lack adequate spiritual protection from the impact of technical civilization. Satipatthana can make an important contribution to remedying this situation, in the way we have briefly indicated here. Thus the

method will prove beneficial from the worldly point of view as well.

Here, however, we are chiefly concerned with the psychological aspects of mindfulness and their significance for meditative development. Sustained attention, helped by slowing-down, will affect the quality of consciousness mainly in three ways: (a) in intensifying consciousness; (b) in clarifying the object’s characteristic features; and (c) in revealing the object’s relatedness.

(a) An object of *sustained* attention will exert a particularly strong and long-lasting impact on the mind. Its influence will be felt not only throughout the thought-series immediately following the particular perception, but may also extend far into the future. It is that causal efficacy which is the measure of the *intensity of consciousness*.

(b) Sustained attention leads to a fuller picture of the object in all its aspects. Generally, the first impression we gain of any new sense-object or idea will be its most striking feature; it is this aspect of the object which captures our attention up to the culminating point of the impact. But the object also displays other aspects or characteristics, and is capable of exercising other functions, than those we initially notice. These may be less obvious to us or subjectively less interesting; but still, they may be even more important. There will also be cases where our first impression is entirely deceptive. Only if we sustain our attention beyond that first impact will the object reveal itself more fully. In the downward course of the first perceptual wave the prejudicing force of the first impact lessens; and it is only then, in that end phase, that the object will yield a wider range of detail, a more complete picture of itself. It is therefore only by sustained attention that we can obtain a clearer understanding of an object’s characteristic features.

(c) Among the characteristic features of any object, physical or mental, there is one class we often overlook due to hasty or superficial attention, and therefore needs to be treated separately. This is the relatedness of the object. The object’s *relatedness* extends back to its past — to its origin, causes, reasons, and logical precedents; it also

extends outward to embrace the total context — its background, environment, and presently active influences. We can never fully understand things if we view them in artificial isolation. We have to see them as part of a wider pattern, in their conditioned and conditioning nature; and this can be done only with the help of sustained attention.

*The influence of slowing down and sustained attention on subconsciousness, memory and intuition*

The three ways of heightening consciousness just discussed are evidently of prime importance for the development of insight (*vipassanā*). When consciousness is intensified, and its objective field clarified and discerned in its relational structure, the ground is prepared for “seeing things according to reality.” But besides its obvious direct influence, this threefold process also has an indirect influence which is no less powerful and important: it strengthens and sharpens the mind’s subliminal faculties of subconscious organization, memory and intuition. These again, on their part, nourish and consolidate the progress of liberating insight. The insight aided by them is like the mountain lake of the canonical simile: it is fed not only by the outside rains, but also by springs welling up from within its own depths. The insight nourished by these “underground subliminal resources of the mind” will have deep roots. The meditative results that it brings cannot be lost easily, even with unliberated worldlings (*putthujjana*) who are still subject to relapse.

1. Perceptions or thoughts which have been objects of sustained attention make a stronger impact on the mind and reveal their characteristic features more distinctly than when attention is slack. Thus, when they sink into the subconscious, they occupy there a special position. This holds true for all three ways of enhancing the consciousness of an object. (a) In a process of consciousness, if attention is as strong in the end phase as in the earlier phases, then when the process is finished and the mind lapses back into subconsciousness, the latter will be more amenable to conscious control. (b) If an impression or idea has been marked by numerous distinct

characteristics, then when it fades from immediate awareness, it will not be so easily lost in the vague contents of the subconscious or dragged by passionate biases into false subconscious associations. (c) The correct comprehension of the object’s relatedness similarly will protect the experience from being merged with indistinct subconscious material. Perceptions or thoughts of enhanced intensity and clarity, absorbed into the subconscious, remain more articulate and more accessible than contents originating from hazy or “stunned” impressions. It will be easier to convert them into full consciousness and they will be less accountable in their hidden effects upon the mind. If, through an improvement in the quality and range of mindfulness, the number of such matured impressions increases, the results might be a subtle change in the very structure of subconsciousness itself.

2. It will be evident from our earlier remarks that those impressions which we have called “matured” or “more accessible and convertible” lend themselves more easily and more correctly to recollection — more easily because of their greater intensity, more correctly because their clearly marked features protect them from being distorted by false associative images or ideas. Remembering them in their context and relatedness works both ways — it promotes both easier and more correct recollection. Thus *sati* in its meaning and function of mindfulness helps to strengthen *sati* in its meaning and function of memory.

3. The influence of sustained attention on the subconscious and on memory brings a deepening and strengthening of the faculty of intuition, particularly the intuitive insight which chiefly concerns us here. Intuition is not “a gift from the unknown”. Like any other mental faculty, it arises out of specific conditions. In this case the primary conditions are latent memories of perceptions and thoughts stored in the subconscious. Obviously, the memories providing the most fertile soil for the growth of intuition will be those marked by greater intensity, clarity, and wealth of distinctive marks; for it is these that are most accessible. Here, too, the preserved relatedness of the impressions will contribute much. Recollections of that type

will have a more organic character than memories of bare or vague isolated facts, and they will fall more easily into new patterns of meaning and significance. These more articulate memory images will be a strong stimulation and aid for the intuitive faculty. Silently, in the hidden depths of the subliminal mind, the work of collecting and organizing the subconscious material of experience and knowledge goes on until it is ripe to emerge as an intuition. The break-through of that intuition is sometimes occasioned by quite ordinary happenings. However, though seemingly ordinary, these events may have a strong evocative power if previously they had been made objects of sustained attention. Slowing-down and pausing for bare attention will uncover the depth dimension of the simple things of everyday life, and thus provide stimuli for the intuitive faculty. This applies also to the intuitive penetration (*paṭivedha*) of the Four Noble Truths that culminates in liberation (*arahatta*). The scriptures record many instances of monks who could not arrive at intuitive penetration when engaged in the actual practice of insight meditation. The flash of intuition struck them on quite different occasions: when stumbling against a rock or catching sight of a forest fire, a mirage, or a lump of froth in a river.

We meet here another confirmation of that seemingly paradoxical saying that “intentionally an unintentional state may be won.” By deliberately turning the full light of mindfulness on the smallest events and actions of everyday life, eventually the liberating wisdom may arise.

Sustained attention not only provides the nourishing soil for the *growth* of intuition, it also makes possible the fuller utilization and even repetition of the intuitive moment. Men of inspiration in various fields of creative activity have often deplored their common experience; the flash of intuition strikes so suddenly and vanishes so quickly that frequently the slow response of the mind hardly catches the last glimpse of it. But if the mind has been trained in observant pausing, in slowing-down and sustained attention, and if — as indicated above — the subconscious has been influenced, then

the intuitive moment too might gain that fuller, slower, and stronger rhythm. This being the case, its impact will be strong and clear enough to allow for full use of that flash of intuitive insight. It might even be possible to lead its fading vibrations upward again to a new culmination, similar to the rhythmic repetition of a melody rising again in harmonious development out of the last notes of its first appearance.

The full utilization of a single moment of intuitive insight could be of decisive importance for one’s progress toward full realization. If one’s mental grip is too weak and one lets those elusive moments of intuitive insight slip away without having utilized them fully for the work of liberation, then they might not recur until many years have passed, or perhaps not at all during the present life. Skill in sustained attention, however, will allow one to make full use of such opportunities, and slowing-down and pausing during meditative practice is an important aid in acquiring that skill.

Through our treatment of pausing, stopping and slowing-down, one of the traditional definitions of mindfulness found in the Pali scriptures will have become more intelligible in its far-reaching implications: that is, its function of *anapilapanata*, meaning literally, “not floating (or slipping) away.” “Like pumpkin-pots on the surface of water;” add the commentators, and they continue: “Mindfulness enters deeply into its object, instead of hurrying only over its surface.” Therefore, “non-superficiality” will be an appropriate rendering of the above Pali term, and a fitting characterization of mindfulness.

#### 4. Directness of Vision

“I wish I could disaccustom myself from everything, so that I might see anew, hear anew, feel anew, Habit spoils our philosophy.”

G.C. Lichtenberg (1742-1799)

In an earlier section we spoke about the impulsive spontaneity of the unwholesome (*akusala*). We have seen how stopping for bare and sustained attention is able to counter, or reduce, our rash impulsive reactions, thus allowing

us to face any situation with a fresh mind, with a directness of vision unprejudiced by those first spontaneous responses.

By *directness of vision* we understand a direct view of reality, without any coloring or distorting lenses, without the intrusion of emotional or habitual prejudices and intellectual biases. It means: coming face to face with the bare facts of actuality, seeing them as vividly and freshly as if we were seeing them for the first time.

### *The Force of Habit*

Those spontaneous reactions which so often stand in the way of direct vision do not derive only from our passionate impulses. Very frequently they are the product of habit. In that form, they generally have an even stronger and more tenacious hold on us — a hold which may work out either for our good or for our harm. The influence habit exercises for the good is seen in the “power of repeated practice.” This power protects our achievements and skills — whether manual or mental, worldly or spiritual — against loss or forgetfulness, and converts them from casual, short-lived, imperfect acquisitions into the more secure possession of a quality thoroughly mastered. The detrimental effect of habitual spontaneous reactions is manifest in what is called in a derogative sense the “force of habit”: its deadening, stultifying and narrowing influence productive of compulsive behavior of various kinds. In our present context we shall be concerned only with that negative aspect of habit as impeding and obscuring the directness of vision.

As remarked earlier, habitual reactions generally have a stronger influence upon our behavior than impulsive ones. Our passionate impulses may disappear as suddenly as they have arisen. Though their consequences may be very grave and extend far into the future, their influence is in no way as long lasting and deep reaching as that of habit. Habit spreads its vast and closely meshed net over wide areas of our life and thought, trying to drag in more and more. Our passionate impulses, too, might be caught in that net and thus be transformed from passing outbursts into lasting traits of character. A momentary impulse,

an occasional indulgence, a passing whim may by repetition become a habit we find difficult to uproot, a desire hard to control, and finally an automatic function we no longer question. Repeated gratification turns a desire into a habit, and habit left unchecked grows into compulsion.

It sometimes happens that, at an early time, we regard a particular activity or mental attitude as without any special personal importance. The activity or attitude may be morally indifferent and inconsequential. At the start we might find it easy to abandon it or even to exchange it for its opposite, since neither our emotions nor reason bias us towards either alternative. But by repetition, we come to regard the chosen course of action or thought as “pleasant, desirable, and correct,” even as “righteous”; and thus we finally identify it with our character or personality. Consequently, we feel any break in this routine to be unpleasant or wrong. Any outside interference with it we greatly resent, even regarding such interference as a threat to our “vital interests and principles.” In fact at all times primitive minds, whether “civilized” or not, have looked at a stranger with his “strange customs” as an enemy, and have felt his mere non-aggressive presence as a challenge or threat.

At the beginning, when no great importance was ascribed to the specific habit, the attachment that gradually formed was directed not so much to the action proper as to the pleasure we derive from the undisturbed routine. The strength of that attachment to routine derives partly from the force of physical and mental inertia, so powerful a motive in man. We shall presently refer to another cause for attachment to routine. By force of habit, the particular concern — whether a material object, an activity, or a way of thinking — comes to be invested with such an increase of emotional emphasis, that the attachment to quite unimportant or banal things may become as tenacious as that to our more fundamental needs. Thus the lack of conscious control can turn even the smallest habits into the uncontested masters of our lives. It bestows upon them the dangerous power to limit and rigidify our character and to narrow our freedom of movement —



environmental, intellectual and spiritual. Through our subservience to habit, we forge new fetters for ourselves and make ourselves vulnerable to new attachments, aversions, prejudices and predilections; that is, to new suffering. The danger for spiritual development posed by the dominating influence of habit is perhaps more serious today than ever before; for the expansion of habit is particularly noticeable in our present age when specialization and standardization reach into so many varied spheres of life and thought.

Therefore, when considering the Satipatthana Sutta's words on the formation of fetters, we should also think of the important part played by habit:

“...and what fetter arises dependent on both (i.e., the sense organs and sense objects), that he knows well. In what manner the arising of the unarisen fetter comes to be, that he knows well.”

In Buddhist terms, it is preeminently the hindrance of sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha nīvaraṇa*) which is strengthened by the force of habit, and it is the mental faculties such as agility and pliancy of mind (*kāya* and *citta-lahutā, mudutā* etc.)<sup>8</sup> that are weakened.

This tendency of habits to extend their range is anchored in the very nature of consciousness. It stems not only from the aforementioned passive force of inertia, but in many cases from an active will to dominate and conquer. Certain active types of consciousness, possessing a fair degree of intensity, tend to repeat themselves. Each one struggles to gain ascendancy, to become a center around which other weaker mental and physical states revolve, adapting themselves to and serving that central disposition. This tendency is never quite undisputed, but still it prevails, and even peripheral or subordinate types of consciousness exhibit the same urge for ascendancy. This is a striking parallel to the self-assertion and domineering tendency of an egocentric individual in his contact with society. Among biological analogies, we may mention the tendency toward expansion shown by cancer and other pathological growths; the tendency toward repetition we meet in the freak mutations which

loom as a grave danger at the horizon of our atomic age.

Due to that will to dominate inherent in many types of consciousness, a passing whim may grow into a relatively constant trait of character. If still not satisfied with its position, it may break away entirely from the present combination of life forces until finally, in the process of rebirths, it becomes the very center of a new personality. There are within us countless seeds for new lives, for innumerable potential “beings,” all of whom we should vow to liberate from the wheel of *saṃsāra*, as the Sixth Zen Patriarch expressed it.<sup>9</sup>

Detrimental physical or mental habits may grow strong, not only if fostered deliberately, but also if left unnoticed or unopposed. Much of what has now strong roots in our nature has grown from minute seeds planted in a long-forgotten past (see the Simile of the Creeper, Majjhima 45). This growth of morally bad or otherwise detrimental habits can be effectively checked by gradually developing another habit: that of attending to them mindfully. If we now do deliberately what had become a mechanical performance, and if prior to doing it we pause a while for bare attention and reflection — this will give us a chance to scrutinize the habit and clearly comprehend its purpose and suitability (*sāthaka* and *sappāya-sampajañña*). It will allow us to make a fresh assessment of the situation, to see it *directly*, unobscured by the mental haze that surrounds a habitual activity with the false assurance: “It is right because it was done before.” Even if a detrimental habit cannot be broken quickly, the reflective pause will counter its unquestioned spontaneity of occurrence. It will stamp it with the seal of repeated scrutiny and resistance, so that on its recurrence it will be weaker and will prove more amenable to our attempts to change or abolish it.

It need hardly be mentioned that habit, which has been rightly called “the wet-nurse of man,” cannot and should not disappear from our life. Let us only remember what a relief it is, particularly in the crowded day and complex life of a city-dweller, to be able to do a great number of things fairly mechanically with, as it were, only “half-powered attention.” Habit brings considerable

simplification to our life. It would be an unbearable strain if all our little humdrum activities had to be done with deliberate effort and close attention. In fact, many operations of manual labor, much of the technique in art, and even standard procedure in complex intellectual work, generally bring better and more even results through skilled routine performance. Yet that evenness of habitual performance will also reach its end point. Unless enlivened by the creation of new interest, it will show symptoms of fatigue and start to decline.

Of course it would be absurd to advocate that all our little habits be abolished, for many are innocuous and even useful. But we should regularly ask ourselves whether we still have control over them, whether we can give them up or alter them at will. We can answer this question for ourselves in two ways: by attending to our habitual actions mindfully for a certain period of time, and second, by actually giving them up temporarily in cases where this will not have any harmful or disturbing effects upon ourselves or others. If we turn on them the light of direct vision, looking at them or performing them as if for the first time, these little routine activities, and the habitual sights around us, will assume a new glow of interest and stimulation. This also holds good for our professional occupation and its environment, and for our close human relationships if they should have become stale by habit. The relationship to one's marriage partner, to friends, to colleagues, may thus receive a great rejuvenation. A fresh and direct vision will also reveal that one can relate to people or do things in a different and more beneficial way than one did before by force of habit.

An acquired capacity to give up minor habits will prove its worth in the fight against more dangerous proclivities. It will also come to our aid at times when we are faced with serious changes in our life which forcefully deprive us of fundamental habits. Loosening the hardened soil of our routine behavior and thoughts will have an enlivening effect on our vital energy, our mental vigor, and our power of imagination. But what is most important, into that loosened soil we shall be able to plant the seeds of vigorous spiritual progress.

### *Associative Thought*

Mental Habituation to standard reactions, to sequences of activity, to judgments of people or things proceeds by way of associative thinking. From the objects, ideas, situations and people that we encounter, we select certain distinctive marks, and associate these marks with our own response to them. If these encounters recur, they are associated first with those marks selected earlier, and then with our original or strongest response. Thus these marks become a signal for releasing a standard reaction, which may consist of a long sequence of connected acts or thoughts familiar through repeated practice or experience. This way of functioning makes it unnecessary for us to apply new effort and painstaking scrutiny to each single step in such a sequence. The result is a great simplification of life, permitting us to release energy for other tasks. In fact, in the evolution of the human mind, associative thinking was a progressive step of decisive importance. It enabled us to learn from experience, and thus led up to the discovery and application of causal laws.

Yet along with these benefits, associative thinking can also bring many grave dangers if it is applied faultily or thoughtlessly and not carefully controlled. Let us draw up a partial list of these danger points:

1. Associative thinking, recurring again and again in similar situations, may easily perpetuate and strengthen faulty or incomplete initial observations, errors of judgment, and emotional prejudices such as love, hate and pride.
2. Incomplete observations and restricted viewpoints in judgment, sufficient to deal with one particular situation, may prove quite inadequate and entail grave consequences if mechanically applied to changed circumstances.
3. Due to misdirected associative thinking, a strong instinctive dislike may be felt for things, places or persons which in some way are merely reminiscent of unpleasant experiences, but actually have no connection with them.

These briefly-stated instances show how vital it is for us to scrutinize from time to time the mental grooves of our associative thoughts, and to review the various habits and stereotype reactions

deriving from them. In other words, we must step out of our ruts, regain a direct vision of things, and make a fresh appraisal of our habits in the light of that vision.

If we look once again over the list of potential dangers deriving from uncontrolled associative thinking, we shall better understand the Buddha's insistence upon getting to the bedrock of experience. In the profound and terse stanzas called "The Cave," included in the Sutta Nipata, the Buddha says that the "full penetration of sense impression (*phassa*) will make one free from greed" and that "by understanding perception (*sañña*), one will be able to cross the flood of *saṃsāra*" (stanza 778 f.).<sup>10</sup> By placing mindfulness as a guard at the very first gate through which thoughts enter the mind, we shall be able to control the incomers much more easily, and shut out unwanted intruders. Thus the purity of "luminous consciousness" can be maintained against "adventitious defilements" (*Āṅguttara*, 1:51).

The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* provides a systematic training for inducing direct, fresh, and undistorted vision. The training covers the entire personality in its physical and mental aspects, and includes the whole world of experience. The methodical application of the several exercises to oneself (*ajjhatta*), to others (*bahiddhā*), and alternately to both, will help uncover erroneous conceptions due to misdirected associative thinking and misapplied analogies.

The principal types of false associative thinking are covered, in the terminology of the Dhamma, by the four kinds of *misapprehension* or *perverted views* (*vipallāsa*), which wrongly take (1) what is impermanent for permanent, (2) what is painful, or conducive to pain, for happiness, (3) what has no self and is unsubstantial for a self or an abiding substance, and (4) what is impure for beautiful. These perverted views arise through a false apprehension of the characteristic marks of things. Under the influence of our passions and false theories, we perceive things selectively in a one-sided or erroneous way, and then associate them wrongly with other ideas. By applying bare attention to our perceptions and impressions, gradually we can free them from these

misapprehensions, progressing steadily towards the direct vision of things as they really are.

### *The Sense of Urgency (saṃvega)*

One who has clear and direct vision, stirred to a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) by things which are deeply moving, will experience a release of energy and courage enabling him to break through his timid hesitations and his rigid routine of life and thought. If that sense of urgency is kept alive, it will bestow the earnestness and persistence required for the work of liberation.

Thus said the teachers of old:

"This very world here is our field of action.  
It harbors the unfoldment of the holy path,  
And many things to break complacency,  
Be stirred by things which may well move the heart,  
And being stirred, strive wisely and fight on!"

Our closest surroundings are full of stirring things. If we generally do not perceive them as such, that is because habit has made our vision dull and our heart insensitive. The same thing happens to us even with the Buddha's teaching. When we first encounter the teaching, we receive a powerful intellectual and emotional stimulation; but gradually the impetus tends to lose its original freshness and impelling force. The remedy is to constantly renew it by turning to the fullness of life around us, which illustrates the Four Noble Truths in ever new variations. A direct vision will impart new lifeblood even to the most common experiences of every day, so that their true nature appears through the dim haze of habit and speaks to us with a fresh voice. It may well be just the long accustomed sight of the beggar at the street corner, or a weeping child, or the illness of a friend, which startles us afresh, makes us think, and stirs our sense of urgency in treading resolutely the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

We know the beautiful account of how Prince Siddhattha first came face to face with old age, illness and death while driving his chariot through the royal city after a long period of isolation in a make-believe world. This ancient story may well be historical fact, for we know that in the lives of many great men common events often gain a symbolic significance and lead to major

consequences far beyond their ordinary appearance. Great minds find significance in the seemingly commonplace and invest the fleeting moment with far-reaching efficacy. But, without contesting the inner truth of that old story, we may reasonably believe that the young prince had actually seen before, with his fleshly eyes, old people, sick people, and those who had succumbed to death. However, on all these earlier occasions, he would not have been touched very deeply by these sights — as is the case with most of us most of the time. That earlier lack of sensitivity may have been due to the carefully protected, artificial seclusion of his petty, though princely, happiness, the hereditary routine of his life into which his father had placed him. Only when he broke through the golden cage of easy-going habits could the facts of suffering strike him as forcibly as if he had seen them for the first time. Then only was he stirred by them to a sense of urgency that led him out of the home life and set his feet firmly on the road to enlightenment.

The more clearly and deeply our minds and hearts respond to the truth of suffering manifest in the very common facts of our existence, the less often shall we need a repetition of the lesson and the shorter will be our migration through samsara. The clarity of perception evoking our response will come from an undeflected directness of vision, bestowed by bare attention (*sati*); and the depth of experience will come from wise reflection or clear comprehension (*sampajañña*).

### *The Road to Insight*

Directness of vision is also a chief characteristic of the methodical practice of insight meditation. There it is identified with the direct or experiential knowledge bestowed by meditation, as distinguished from the inferential knowledge obtained by study and reflection. In the meditative development of insight, one's own physical and mental processes are directly viewed, without the interference of abstract concepts or the filtering screens of emotional evaluation. For in this context these only obscure or camouflage the naked facts, detracting from the strong immediate impact of reality. Conceptual generalizations from

experience are very useful in their place; but if they interrupt the meditative practice of bare attention, they tend to "shove aside" or dispose of the particular fact, by saying, as it were: "It is nothing else but this." Generalizing thought inclines to become impatient with a recurrent type, and after having it classified, soon finds it boring.

Bare attention, however, being the key instrument of methodological insight, keeps to the particular. It follows keenly the rise and fall of successive physical and mental processes. Though all phenomena of a given series may be true to type (e.g., inhalations and exhalations), bare attention regards each of them as distinct, and conscientiously registers its separate birth and death. If mindfulness remains alert, these repetitions of type will, by their multiplication, exert not a reduced but an intensified impact on the mind. The three characteristics — impermanence, suffering, and voidness of self-inherent in the process observed, will stand out more and more clearly. They will appear in the light shed by the phenomena themselves, not in a borrowed light, not even a light borrowed from the Buddha, the peerless and indispensable guide to these experiences.

These physical and mental phenomena, in their "self-luminosity," will then convey a growing sense of urgency to the meditator: revulsion, dissatisfaction, awareness of danger, followed by detachment — though certainly joy, happiness, and calm, too, will not be absent throughout the practice. Then, if all other conditions of inner maturity are fulfilled, the first direct vision of final liberation will dawn with the stream-winner's (*sotapanna*) indubitable knowledge: "Whatever has the nature of arising, has the nature of vanishing."

Thus, in the unfoldment of the power of mindfulness, *Satipatthana* will prove itself as the true embodiment of the Dhamma, of which it was said:

"Well-proclaimed is the Dhamma by the Blessed One, visible here and now, not delayed, inviting inspection, onward-leading, to be directly experienced by the wise."

**Notes :**

1. See Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (London; Rider & Co., 1962).

2. Comy. to Sutta Nipata v. 334.

3. Anagarika B. Govinda, *The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy* (London: Rider & Co., 1961).

4. *The Way of Mindfulness*, Bhikkhu Soma (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1975), p. 83.

5. See *Path of Purification*, p. 135 f.

6. *Ibid*, pp. 136 ff. The three rousing factors are investigation, energy and rapture; the three calming ones, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity.

7. A treatise of Chinese Taoism, strongly influenced by Mahayana.

8. About these important qualitative constituents of good, wholesome (kusala) consciousness, see the author's *Abhidhamma Studies* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1965), pp. 51 f.

9. This may be a somewhat ironical reference by that great sage to the fact that the well-known Mahayanic Bodhisattva vow of liberating all beings of the universe is often taken much too light-heartedly by many of his fellow Mahayanists.

10. Compare also the passage on the significance of sense impression (or contact) in the concluding section of the *Brahmajala Sutta* (Digha 1).

**A note on the source of this article**

The *Power of Mindfulness* was first published in *The Light of the Dhamma* in three parts in 1956 and 1957.

In 1968 The Buddhist Publication Society published it as Wheel 121/122.

The preceding was downloaded from the Access to Insight website. This version differs from the original in that many sentences were rephrased and more suitable words chosen in some cases.

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## BUDDHIST CONCEPTION OF MIND OR CONSCIOUSNESS (CITTA)

*Bhadanta Nārada Mahāthera*

Mind or consciousness, the essence of the so-called being, plays the most important part in the complex machinery of man. It is mind that either defiles or purifies one. Mind in fact is both the bitterest enemy and the greatest friend of “oneself”.

In the Dhammapada we learn

‘What harm a foe may do to a foe, or a hater to a hater — an ill-directed mind can do one still greater harm.’ (S.42)

‘What good neither mother nor father, nor any other relative can do — a well-directed mind does, and thereby elevates one.’ (S.43)

‘Mind foreruns deeds — mind is chief, and mind-made are they. If, therefore, one speaks or acts with a wicked mind — pain pursues one, even as the wheel follows the draught ox.’ (S.1)

‘Mind foreruns deeds — mind is chief, and mind-made are they. If, therefore, one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows one, even as one’s shadow.’ (S.2)

And in the Saṃyutta Nikāya

‘By mind the world is led, by mind is drawn  
And all men own the sovereignty of mind.’

‘This mind, monks, is luminous, but it is defiled by taints that come from without. But this the uneducated manyfolk understands not as it really is. Wherefore for the uneducated manyfolk there is no cultivation of the mind, I declare.

That mind, monks, is luminous, but it is cleansed of taints that come from without. This the educated noble disciple understands as it really is. Wherefore for the educated noble disciple there is cultivation of the mind, I declare.’

The complete purification of the mind is the ultimate aim of Buddhism. “*Cittaṃ vimucci me*” — my mind is delivered — was the paean of joy uttered by all Arahats.

It is from this ethical point of view that Buddhists interest themselves in the study of mind

or consciousness, and not from a psychological point of view. Buddhism, it may be mentioned, teaches a psychology without a psyche.

The Pāḷi terms applied to mind or consciousness are *Citta*, *Ceta*, *Mana Mānasa*, *Nāma*, *Viññāna*, and so forth. They are used as synonymous terms.

*Citta* is derived from *Citi*, to think. The traditional interpretation of the term is that which is aware of an object (*cinteti* or *vijanāti*).<sup>\*</sup> Actually it is not that which thinks of an object as the term implies. If it could be said ‘it thinks’ as one says in English ‘it rains’, it would be more in consonance with the Buddha’s teaching. From an ultimate point of view *Citta* may be defined as the awareness of an object, since Buddhism denies a subjective agent like a soul. No distinction is made between mind and consciousness which are used as equivalents for Pāḷi “*Citta*”.

The term *Citta* is usually employed in Buddhist philosophy to denote different classes of consciousness. In isolated cases, in the ordinary sense of mind, both *Citta* and *Mana* (derived from *man*, to think) are frequently used without any distinction.

*Nāma* means that which turns towards an object. This term is used in connection with two constituent parts of the so-called being— mind and matter (*Nāma-Rūpa*).

*Viññāna*, derived from *vi*: + *ñā*, to know, frequently occurs both in the *Abhidhamma* and *Sutta Piṭakas*, and it should be understood in accordance with the context.

‘Whilst referring to the five ‘Groups’ (*pañcakkhandha*), the five aspects in which the Buddha has summed up all the physical and mental phenomena of existence, and which appear to the ignorant man as his Ego, or personality, *Nāma* is substituted by *Viññāna* to denote consciousness. Here the prefix *vi* has no special meaning. It does not connote superiority of *Nāna*. In the *Paṭicca Sammupāda*, *Viññāna*, which is conditioned by

moral and immoral activities (*saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṃ*), is to be understood as the rebirth-consciousness one experiences at the moment of conception (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*).

In the *Abhidhamma*, *Viññāṇa* is also used in connection with the five kinds of sense-door\* consciousness (*dvipaṇca Viññāṇa*), and in one isolated case, *Mano-viññāṇa* is applied to denote a particular class of consciousness. In some places in the *Sutta Piṭaka* it is stated ‘whatever suffering that arises is conditioned by *viññāṇa*; with its cessation suffering ceases.’

In the *Abhidhamma* there are mentioned 89 types of consciousness. Of them 81 are mundane (*lokiya*) and 8 are supra-mundane (*lokuttara*). The mental object of the latter is *Nibbāna*.

Consciousness is divided into four classes with respect to its nature.

They are as follows

1. Immoral types of consciousness which are associated with attachment (*lobha*), aversion or illwill (*paṭigha*) and ignorance (*moha*).

2. Moral types of consciousness which are associated with non-attachment (*alobha*), goodwill (*adosa*), and wisdom (*amoha*).

The immoral are regarded as unwholesome as they produce undesirable effects (*aniṭṭha vipāka*), the moral as wholesome since they produce desirable effects (*iṭṭha vipāka*). Both immoral and moral types of consciousness constitute what in *Pāli*, are known as *Kamma*.

3. Those types of consciousness that arise as the inevitable results of these moral and immoral types of consciousness are called resultant types of consciousness (*Vipāka*).

As a seed sown on fertile soil germinates and fructifies sooner or later, according to its own intrinsic nature, even so moral and immoral types of consciousness produce their desirable and undesirable effects here or hereafter.

4. The fourth type of consciousness is called *Kiriya* which, for want of a better term, is rendered ‘inoperative’ or ‘ineffective.’ As the actions of Buddhas and Arahats lack reproductive power, it is such types of consciousness they experience

when any moral deed is done by them. This last type is called *Kiriya*, literally deed or action, because it is causally ineffective.

Here *Kiriya* is used in the sense of resultless action i.e. producing no result to the doer.

Each consciousness a person experiences performs a definite function. Certain types of consciousness perform several functions, under different circumstances, in various capacities. There are fourteen specific functions performed by them all.

*Paṭisandhi Citta*.

Every living being at the very moment of conception experiences a consciousness which in combination with the sperm and ovum cells provided by the parents, tends to form the fetus. This potential initial consciousness is conditioned by the past Kammic force of that particular person. It also inherits the accumulated impressions, characteristics and so forth of that particular life-flux just as the infinitesimally small cell, about 1/120th part of an inch across, inherits more or less the physical characteristics of its parents and its ancestors. This consciousness which links the past with the present is regarded as the source of the present life stream. In the course of one particular life there is only one relinking consciousness. It is also called rebirth consciousness (*paṭisandhi citta*).

Buddhism does not state that mind is evolved from matter or that matter is evolved from mind. Nor does Buddhism make any dogmatic statement with regard to the ultimate origin of mind or matter. With the present as the basis Buddhism argues the past and future mainly with the object of discovering the cause or causes that condition this ever-recurring cycle of birth and death.

There are two other types of consciousness similar to this relinking consciousness, though functionally they differ. They are so treated because the mental contents and the objects of these three are identical.

One of them is called *Bhavaṅga* and the other *Cuti*.

*Bhavaṅga* (*Bhava—āṅga*) means factor of life, or indispensable cause or condition of existence.

When a person is fast asleep and is in a dreamless state, he experiences a kind of consciousness which is more passive than active. It is similar to the consciousness one experiences at the moment of conception and at the final moment of death. The Buddhist philosophical term for this type of consciousness is *Bhavaṅga*. Arising and perishing every moment, it flows on like a stream, not remaining for two consecutive moments the same.

We experience this class of consciousness not only in a dreamless state but also in our waking state. In the course of our life we experience *Bhavaṅga* thought-moments more than any other types of consciousness. Hence *Bhavaṅga* is an indispensable condition of life.

Some scholars identify *Bhavaṅga* with sub-consciousness. According to the Dictionary of Philosophy sub-consciousness is 'a compartment of the mind alleged by certain psychologists and philosophers to exist below the threshold of consciousness.' In the opinion of Western philosophers sub-consciousness and consciousness co-exist. But Buddhist philosophy says no two types of consciousness co-exist. Nor is *Bhavaṅga* a sub-plane. It does not correspond to F.W. Myer's 'subliminal consciousness' either. There does not seem to be any place for *Bhavaṅga* in Western Philosophy. Perhaps we may be using these philosophical terms with different meanings.

*Bhavaṅga* is so called because it is an essential condition for continued subjective existence.

Radhakrishnan writes : '*Bhavaṅga* is subconscious existence, or more accurately existence free from waking consciousness. *Bhavaṅga* is subconscious existence when subjectively viewed, though objectively it is sometimes taken to mean *Nibbāna*.'

This certainly is not Buddhist. *Bhavaṅga* occurs in the waking consciousness, too, immediately after a thought process, and is never identified with *Nibbāna*. Life continuum has been suggested as the closest English equivalent for *Bhavaṅga*.

*Cuti* or Decease Consciousness.

As *Paṭisandhi* or rebirth consciousness is the

initial thought-moment of life, so is *Cuti* the final thought-moment. They are the entrance and exit of one particular life stream. *Cuti* functions as a mere passing away from life.

Death occurs immediately on the *Cuti* consciousness. Though with death the physical body disintegrates and consciousness temporarily ceases, yet the life stream is not annihilated as the Kammic force that propels it remains. Death is only a prelude to birth.

*Javana*.

Another type of consciousness that should be clearly understood is the *Javana* consciousness. Ordinarily the term *Javana* is employed in the sense of swift. *Javana hamsa*, for example, means swift swan ; *Javana paññā* means swift wisdom. In Buddhist philosophy it is used in a purely technical sense.

Here *Javana* means running. It is so called because in the course of a thought-process it runs consecutively for seven thought moments, or five with an identical object. The mental states occurring in all these thought moments are similar, but the potential force differs.

This *Javana* stage is the most important from an ethical point of view. It is at this psychological stage that good or evil is actually done. Irrespective of the desirability or the undesirability of the object presented to the mind it is possible for one to make the *Javana* process moral or immoral. If for, instance, one meets an enemy, a thought of hatred will arise automatically. An understanding person, might, on the contrary, harbour a thought of love towards him. This is the reason why the Buddha states in the Dhammapada 'By self is evil done,  
By self is one defiled,  
By self is evil not done,  
By self is one purified.  
Both defilement and purity depend on oneself,  
No one is purified by another.'

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It is an admitted fact that environment, circumstances, habitual tendencies and so forth condition our thoughts. On such occasions



freewill is subordinated to the mechanistic course of events. There is also the possibility to overcome those external forces and produce moral and immoral thoughts exercising our own freewill.

A foreign element may be instrumental, but we ourselves are directly responsible for our actions. We create our own heavens. We create our own hells.

It is extremely difficult to suggest a suitable rendering for *Javana*.

Apperception is suggested by some. Impulse is suggested as an alternate rendering, which seems to be less satisfactory than apperception. It is best to retain the *Pāḷi* term.

Buddhist philosophy shows that there is no moment when we do not ordinarily experience a particular kind of consciousness, hanging on to some object — whether physical or mental. The time limit of such a consciousness is termed one thought-moment. Each thought-moment is followed by another. Time is thus the *sine qua non* of the succession of mental states. The rapidity of the succession of such thought-moments is hardly conceivable to human knowledge.

Each unit of consciousness consists of three minor instants (*khaṇas*). They are arising or genesis (*uppāda*), static or development (*thīti*) and cessation or dissolution, (*bhaṅga*).

Immediately after the cessation stage of a thought-moment there occurs the genesis stage of the subsequent thought-moment. Each momentary consciousness of this ever-changing life-process, on passing away, transmits its whole energy, all the indelibly recorded impressions to the successor. Each fresh consciousness thus consists of the potentialities of its predecessors and something more.

There is therefore a continuous flow of consciousness like a stream without any interruption. The subsequent thought-moment is neither absolutely the same as its predecessor — since its composition is not identical — nor entirely different — being the same stream of life. There is no identical being, but there is a continuity in process.

It must not be understood that consciousness is chopped up in bits and joined together like a train or a chain. But on the contrary, ‘it constantly flows on like a river receiving, from the tributary streams of sense, constant accretions to its flood and ever dispensing to the world around it the thought stuff it has gathered up by the way. It has birth for its source and death for its mouth.’

Here we find a juxtaposition of fleeting states of consciousness but not a superposition of such states as some appear to believe. No state once gone ever recurs none is absolutely identical with what goes before. These states constantly change, not remaining for two consecutive moments the same. Worldlings, veiled by the web of illusion, mistake this apparent continuity to be something eternal and go to the extent of introducing an unchanging soul (the supposed doer and observer of all actions) to this ever changing consciousness.

Though consciousness is a unit in itself it consists of fleeting mental states. There are 52 such mental concomitants that arise in different types of consciousness in varying degrees.

One of them is feeling (*vedanā*) ; another is perception (*saññā*). The remaining 50 are collectively called volitional activities (*saṅkhārā*), a rendering which does not exactly convey the meaning of the *Pāḷi* term. Of them *volition* or *cetanā* is the most important mental factor.

Feeling is a more appropriate rendering for *vedānā* than sensation. It is an essential property of every consciousness and it may be pleasurable, painful or neutral.

Feeling is like a master who enjoys a dish prepared by a cook. It is feeling that experiences the desirable or undesirable fruits of an action done in this or a previous birth. Apart from this mental state there is no permanent soul or any other agent to experience the result of the action.

‘*Kammaṣṣa kāraṅko natthi vipākassa ca vedako*

*Suddhadhammā pavattanti evetaṃ samma dassanaṃ.*’

‘No doer is there who does the deed,

Nor is there one who eats the fruit;

Constituent parts alone exist

This verily is the right view.

Visuddhi Magga.

Strictly speaking, there is no actor apart from action, no perceiver apart from perception, or, in other words, no conscious subject behind consciousness.

Professor James is quite Buddhistic when he says — ‘Thoughts themselves are the thinkers.’

It should be understood that the bliss of *Nibbāna* is not associated with any kind of feeling. In conventional terms the Buddha says — *Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ* — *Nibbāna* is the highest bliss. It is bliss supreme because it is not a kind of happiness that is experienced by the senses. It is a positive blissful state of relief. It is not the enjoyment of any pleasurable object.

In the Majjhima Nikāya the Buddha says ‘The Exalted One does not recognize bliss because of a pleasurable sensation; but wheresoever bliss is attained, there and there only does the Accomplished One recognize bliss.’

*Saññā*, the second factor, means simply sense-perception. It is *Saññā* that enables one to recognize an object that has once been perceived by the mind. It should be understood that perception is not used here in the sense employed by early modern philosophers such as Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz.

Memory is due to this perception.

*Cetanā* or volition is the most important of all saṅkhāras or volitional activities.

Both *cetanā* and *citta* are derived from the same root *cīti*, to think. In the case of *citta*, mind or consciousness, the root assumes the meaning of discernment (*viñāna*), whilst in *cetanā* it is used in the sense of co-ordination (*abhisandhāna*) and accumulation (*āyūhana*).

*Cetanā* is that which co-ordinates the mental states associated with itself on the object of consciousness. Like a chief disciple, or like a foreman carpenter who fulfils his duties and regulates the work of others as well, so does *cetanā* fulfil its own function and regulate the function of other concomitants associated with itself.

*Cetanā* plays a prominent part in all moral and immoral actions. The most significant mental state in the mundane (*lokiya*) consciousness is this *cetanā*, whilst that in the supramundane (*lokuttara*) is *paññā*, wisdom or insight. Mundane thoughts tend to accumulate *kamma*. Supramundane thoughts, on the contrary, tend to eradicate *kamma*. Hence *cetanā* in the supramundane consciousness does not constitute *kamma*.

It is this *cetanā* that is alluded to as saṅkhāra and *kammabhava* in the *paṭicca samuppāda*. Whilst dealing with the Five ‘Groups’, *saṅkhāakkhandha* (mental formations) is used to denote the fifty mental states excluding feeling, and perception, with volition as the foremost.

From a psychological point of view, volition determines the activities of the mental states associated with it. From an ethical point of view, it determines their inevitable consequences. Hence where there is no volition there is no *kamma*.

Of the fifty-two mental states, seven are common to all types of consciousness. The first in order is *phassa* or contact.

For any sense-impression to occur, three factors are essential, namely — consciousness, receptive sense, and the object. For instance, one perceives an object with the consciousness through the eye as its instrument. It is still more correct to say that perception is a combination of these three factors.

When an object presents itself to the consciousness through one of the six senses there arises the mental state—contact. It should not be understood that mere collision is contact (*na sangatimatto eva phasso*).

Like a pillar which acts as a strong support to the rest of the structure, even so is contact to the co-existent mental states.

Feeling is the second, perception, the third, and volition, the fourth.

*Ekaggatā* or one-pointedness is the fifth mental state. It is concentration on one object or focusing the mind on one object. It is compared to a steady lamp-flame in a windless place; to a firmly fixed pillar that cannot be shaken by the wind; to

water that binds together several substances to form one compound. That mental state tends to prevent its co-adjuncts from dissipation.

This one-pointedness is one of the five *Jhāna* factors. When it is developed and cultivated it is designated ‘*samādhi*’. ‘It is the germ of all attentive, selected, focused, or concentrated consciousness.’

*Jīvitindriya* or psychic life is the sixth mental state. *Jivita* means life and *indriya*, controlling faculty or principle. It is called *jivita* because it sustains its co-associates. Although volition determines the activities of mental states it is *jīvitindriya* that vitalizes volition and other concomitants. As lotuses are sustained by water, an infant is sustained by a nurse, so are mental states sustained by *jīvitindriya*.

Death is regarded as the destruction of this psychic life. Immediately after, due to the power of *Kamma*, another psychic life arises in the subsequent life at the moment of conception.

The seventh universal mental state is *manasikāra* or attention. The literal meaning of the term is ‘making in the mind.’ Turning the mind towards the object is the chief characteristic of *manasikāra*. It is like the rudder of a ship, which is indispensable to take her directly to her destination. Mind without *manasikāra* is like a ruderless ship. *Manasikāra* is also compared to a charioteer with close attention on two well-trained horses (mind and object) as regards their rhythmical movements.

Attention is the closest equivalent to *manasikāra*, although the *Pāli* term does not fully connote the meaning attached to the English word from a strictly philosophical point of view. As a mental state it is mere spontaneous attention. In *manasikāra*, as in attention, there is no peculiar vividness or clarity. To perception may be attributed this vividness to some extent.

*Manasikāra* is an aid to memory as it is common to all types of consciousness.

This stream of consciousness flows ad infinitum as long as it is fed by the muddy waters of ignorance and craving. When these two are completely cut off, then only does the stream of consciousness cease to flow. An ultimate beginning of this stream of consciousness cannot be determined, as a stage cannot be perceived when this life-force was not fraught with ignorance and craving.

This uninterrupted flux or continuity of or consciousness, conditioned by *Kamma* has no perceptible source in the beginningless past nor an end to its continuation in the future, except by the Noble Eightfold Path. There is no permanent ego or eternal soul as postulated in some religious systems.

### THE SEAT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

It is clear that the Buddha has not definitely assigned a specific basis for consciousness as He has done with the other senses. It was the cardiac theory that prevailed in His time, and this was evidently supported by the Upanishads. The Buddha could have adopted this popular theory, but He did not commit Himself. In the *Paṭṭhāna*, the Book of Relations, the Buddha refers to the basis of consciousness in such indirect terms as “*yaṃ rūpaṃ nissāya*,” depending on that material thing. What that material thing was, the Buddha did not positively assert. But according to the views of commentators like venerable Buddhaghosa and Anuruddha the seat of consciousness is the heart (*hadayavatthu*). One wonders whether one is justified in presenting the cardiac theory as Buddhist when the Buddha Himself neither rejected nor accepted this popular theory.

#### NOTE:

The purely mechanical side is, of course, the brain, but that is merely a tool, the most complex machine-tool imaginable. It is this tool that “mind” uses and one should not with “blind disbelief” reject the cardiac theory on purely material evidence, since none really exists.

## THE EARNEST WISH

*Ohn Ghine*

Much confusion is caused in the minds of some Westerners when in their Buddhist reading or in conversation with Buddhists of Asia they come across terms which express, for them, concepts they cling to as part of their theist outlook or, on the other hand, have recently discarded as 'mere superstition'. There is much talking at cross purposes in this. The Asian whose mother tongue is not English means something slightly different to the concept he evokes when he speaks of 'priests' and 'prayer' and 'religion' for instance. There is no excuse really for using the word 'priest' since a priest is an intermediary between a supposed God or Angel and man, and there can be nothing in Buddhism even approximating that spiritual brokerage whereby a man buys or barter his way to 'Heaven'.

But in the use of 'prayer' there is often a misunderstanding on the part of the Westerner who is blinded by his concept of 'prayer' as a theist instrument and is not always aware of the subtle nuances of meaning of the word. To a theist or an ex-theist, 'prayer' is associated with an earnest request or petition to a supposed supernatural Being, able and, given the right mood and the right supplication and, sometimes, the right sacrifice, willing to grant a boon or avert a threatened danger.

When a non-Buddhist is told that there is no 'God' in Buddhism, or anywhere else, in the sense of an all-powerful Creator, and that all the responsibility for one's actions can not be bartered for submissiveness, he says: 'But Buddhists do pray, I've heard them say they pray and I've read of them praying: to whom, then, do they pray?', he is somewhat puzzled if he receives the reply that if Buddhists pray (as some, it must be admitted, sometimes do) they pray to themselves as the theists do; but the Buddhists usually know that their prayers are really addressed to themselves and not to a postulated 'God' projected forth from their personalities as something separate and distinct, and changeless. They know that anything they

can contact is in continual change and subject to the same disadvantages thereby as they themselves are.

So the meaning of 'prayer' is important. For prayer is merely an earnest wish that is usually but not necessarily addressed to one who has, it is supposed, the ability to make that wish come true. The word is from the Latin 'precarius', 'obtained by prayer' and the Romans were realist enough to use the same word (our modern 'precarious') for 'doubtful', and they derived the word from 'precor' meaning both 'to entreat' and 'to wish for', just as our Pāli word *pattheti* has both these meanings.

And in Buddhism it is as an 'Earnest Wish' that we most often use the word 'Prayer'. Even then we could perhaps be a little more positive and term it, as it often has been termed, 'An Act of Truth'.

One often finds in the old Scriptures the 'Act of Truth' and this Act of Truth is remarkably potent. It has died out in the world to a great extent with the dying out of the resolute courage that is necessary for the telling of truth and for making a vow that one must keep at all costs; and with the partial dying out of the courage necessary for shouldering one's own burdens and responsibilities, the Act of Truth has degenerated into slavish prayers or petitions to supposed Divine Beings for 'ever-present help in time of trouble'.

A very beautiful instance of the Act of Truth is given in the Majjhīma Nikāya where the former bandit-murderer, Angulimāla, desires to help a devout woman lay-disciple in difficult and dangerous childbirth. The Buddha tells him to recite *parittas* (help-giving stanzas) after making the Act of Truth: 'Earnestly wishing by the virtue of the fact that I have not in my whole life harmed anybody by word, thought or deed, that the devout laywoman may come safely through her ordeal.' Taken aback, Angulimāla pointed out the murders he had committed in

the past. Then the Buddha told him to make an Act of Truth that never since he had been reborn by entering the Noble Order and changing himself by gaining the stages of the Path, had he harmed any being. This joyfully done, Angulimāla's efforts were successful.

To the old-fashioned 'materialist' this and other Acts of Truth, earnest wishes based on and made the more earnest by an appeal to Truth itself, may sound fanciful and superstitious; yet that will only prove him really vulnerable to the epithet 'old-fashioned', since the painstaking team of scientists in the Parapsychology Department of Duke University in U.S.A. (to mention only one band of workers in this field) has had results that at least go a very long way towards proving the truth of psychokinesis, the action of 'mind' on 'matter' at a distance.

But even apart from psychokinesis there are normal psychological values that come into play and a rather amusing instance in real life and on a somewhat mundane plane is worth relating if only to show the interaction of these several factors.

The story was told me by one of the younger actors in the comedy and as he has since died at a ripe age the telling can harm no-one.

In the latter half of the last century there lived in Rangoon a poor and uneducated Chinese who earned a meagre living by plying a sampan on the swift-flowing Rangoon river, struggling with goods or passengers to manipulate, his sweep and steer his frail craft for the few small coins that served but to keep him alive.

He had ambition, courage, initiative, a strong will and a good physique but could not make enough, though he worked long hours at his arduous occupation, to raise himself above subsistence level and gain even a small capital to carry on trade on his own account though he felt certain he could make his fortune at it.

He had often noticed a fine brick building not far from the foreshore which, though not large by some standards, was, to his vision, a palace, and he was one day inspired to walk round the building, to gaze longingly at it and

take it all in with his eye and to make the earnest wish: 'May I, as I am sincere and hard-working, some day be the sole owner of this buikling and may my fortune grow as long as I own it.' He confided this to some of his few friends who were inclined to jeer at 'the future millionaire'. One day, taking a brief rest against some bales of goods piled on the jetty, he pondered his fate and his position and came closer than he had ever been to complete discouragement and defeat. He was following an occupation that killed men young, and he was nearing middle age.

He made the earnest wish 'By my sincerity and hard work, if my future is ever to change may it change now, before it is too late.' In that moment of exaltation, his sharpened hearing and attention took in what had been just the drone of voices coming from the other side of the bales of goods. An itinerant fortune-teller was consoling a customer, a comfortably-off Burmese widow: 'You need not despair, madam, although your daughter is not as beautiful or as young as some, she is sure to obtain a good husband who will be kind to her and who will make your small fortune into a great one, though he may be poor to start with.' The poor boatman immediately walked round the pile of goods and exclaimed to the astonished trio: 'Indeed the fortune-teller is a wise man and speaks truth. I am the man who will marry your daughter as he foresaw and I can make your small fortune into a very great one'. All eventually agreed that it must be so and he married the girl to whom he was a very good husband. One of the first things he did was to buy the building he had vowed to buy and he became one of the richest men in Burma. The building in later years seemed small and mean to his son, but never could he be persuaded to part with it.

The Chinese friend who told me the story related how, when he was an impecunious youngster of ten, he, with others who had heard the story in popular gossip, used to choose a time when the owner was outside the building and walk ceremoniously round it, if they could dodge the caretaker who was paid to drive them

away, and say earnestly 'May I some day be the owner of this building'. The now wealthy Chinese owner, who had come up the hard way, would never spend a copper coin that he could avoid spending, let alone give anything away, yet he would at once offer money to the young blackmailers to take back their words.

Now to put the whole case down to 'chance plus psychology' does not explain everything as the old man knew when he paid blackmail to the youngsters. He was as hard-headed a realist as any that has traded in the world, and he had proved the efficacy of the 'Earnest Wish'.

In just the same manner any man can prove its efficacy, especially if he makes it an Act of Truth. But in making the Act of Truth and the Earnest Wish one should be very careful that there is a moral motive behind it. Otherwise there can be the danger of obtaining one's desire at a time when one no longer desires it, and that has proved, at times, calamitous. This is shown very

well in the folk-lore of most peoples where the man who gets his wish finds that it brings disaster.

And many a man who has said 'I'll be damned if I do it' and then does it, damns himself for a period in actuality. Indeed, benediction, the speaking of good wishes, and malediction, the speaking of bad wishes or cursing, has been used by almost every man who has ever lived. The ancients had a sure instinct which has been practically lost in the mad whirl of the modern world, of the potency of these, which are both earnest wishes. Although an earnest wish can change outside circumstances, it the more quickly and the more surely changes the one who wishes.

There is really only one Earnest Wish that is at all worth the making, since all things change and all times are dangerous times. That is the Earnest wish 'May I, by virtue of my past good deeds and my earnest striving, attain Nibbāna'.

"The burden is indeed the fivefold mass:  
The seizer of the burden, man:  
Taking it up is sorrow in this world:  
The laying of it down is bliss.

If a man lay this heavy burden down,  
And take not any other burden up:  
If he draw out that craving, root and all,  
No more an-hungered, he is free."

—*Samyutta-Nikāya* xxii, Sec. 22.

## THE BUDDHIST VIEW ON RACE RELATIONS

*By Venerable Aggamahdipandita U Thittila*

The problem of race, of the idea of superiority of race, of race prejudice, of “colour bar” and consequently of the implementation, in the fullest and broadest sense of the word, of the Charter of Human Rights, is one which, apart from some of its terms of reference, is not new. Neither does it appear from its latest forms of expression to be nearer to solution than on any previous date. That the problem as such may be settled on paper by making use of the data (or lack of it) available from the many scientific bodies concerned with such matters, is proved beyond all possible doubt. That the problem still remains, however, regardless of its apparent theoretical solution, is a matter of grave concern. It indicates that an aspect of the problem has either not been appreciated, or if appreciated has not been approached with anything other than prejudice or a complete lack of understanding of the fundamentals of the psychology of beings in general and of human beings in particular. Before enlarging on these fundamentals, however, let us examine briefly what would, in the more usual sense of the word, be considered the scientific approach to the subject. Let us satisfy ourselves again that by means of this approach we have clearly proved to ourselves without a shadow of doubt the groundlessness of race prejudice. Let us show by means of our scientific knowledge that there is no basis whatever on which we can say, on any pretext, that, given suitable environment, there is the slightest evidence of a difference of ability between racial groups.

Besides the scientific method, and before it in matter of time, is the literary approach, dealing as it does with considerations of historical background and the authoritative opinion of the ancients. Then there is the religious attitude shown, in principle, as the statement or command of a humanly-created “Almighty God” or, in extenso, as the “Law of the Prophets” and the commentarial elucidations of the scholar—teachers. Morally, as an aspect of the literary

approach, the problem has been treated from almost every quarter. It is here, however, that we so often find how far man is from appreciating the utterly uncompromising dicta of an absolute morality, how, in obedience to his desire, man will construct an opinion, a relative morality, quite inconsistent with the principles of his outwardly accepted canons of moral teaching. Here, of course, our duty is to deal with the distinct problem of race, but it is clearly to be observed that such matters arise fundamentally from an attitude of mind which is intolerant of the smallest difference between individuals. Differences in habit, appearance, gesture, speech, outlook or opinion of another individual as genetically and anatomically related to one as one’s own brother can cause this intolerance to arise. Extend this and we witness, within the confines of what is called a race, the religious persecutions of the earlier centuries based on a relative morality prescribed by political necessity founded on a desire for power and position. Extend this and we witness the true race prejudice, born of a relative morality urged in the name of true religion, which spread over areas of the South American continent. See, though, how this arose from a deceptive state of mind which cloaked its desire to explore, to become rich and powerful, with the majesty of the “Word of God” carried to “the benighted—the heathen, the pagan, the inferior—the coloured man.” A man fit only to be killed if he stood in the way of—what?—The Word of God, or Desire.

To return to the scientific aspect of this very important problem. Here is an occasion to observe with what care and with what objectivity the individual scientist has pursued his task. Whether his task was originally framed to prove an absolute and fundamental race difference, or whether to indicate conclusively, once and for all, that all men are brothers, he has pursued it. Regardless of this task, however, data has been collected; data which, according to the bias of

the statistician, has been formulated in such a manner that political necessity has been able to elevate one group to the level of master race and condemn another to extermination on the grounds of racial inferiority.

Only the completely unprejudiced mind can examine statistics and discover in that data the knowledge it seeks. There have been many such who have laboured honestly and tirelessly at the very detailed and complicated tasks of collecting and editing anthropological, genetical, psychological, historical, sociological, political and cultural material with the true aim of discovering why one group of individuals should show prejudice against another.

Let us then review, summarize and try to draw a conclusion from some of the aspects analysed by researchers in their various fields. Psychology is perhaps a good aspect on which to begin, since it is a subject of growing importance in the examination of human behaviour. A subject which has been approached by Western workers in a manner quite different from that traditional to the Eastern hemisphere. The Western method seeks to analyse individuals in terms of the results arising from their behaviour and reaction to set problems and stimuli associated, to a greater or lesser degree, with the environment of the subject, that of the researcher, or in terms of an artificial set of conditions by which neither side is unduly affected. The Eastern method, and particularly the Buddhist approach, seeks to interpret the very thought of the individual in terms of a root structure bearing in its very nature the tendency and bias which will warp the absolute clarity of experience. A warping which renders us all, to a greater or lesser degree, what one might in Western terminology call "psychopathic". Psychopathic when equated with the universal yard-stick of ethical purity, unbiased perception and equanimity. (The Buddha it was who said: "*Putthujjano uinmattako*": All ordinary men are mad.) The approaches to this subject are clearly quite different, and the results may at first sight appear sometimes to be at variance with each other.

Nevertheless, where one system may by persistent and detailed examination of experimental data fail to perceive differences which could be interpreted as sufficient grounds for racial prejudice, the other will show and prove beyond all doubt that the individual is the only unit. This latter system will show that root structure is invariably comparable, and that behaviour and performance are matters of environment coupled with personal, not parental or racial, tendency.

Professor Otto Klineberg in his excellent little pamphlet "Race and Psychology", deals with the problem of possible racial differences in a helpful and systematic manner. He groups the various aspects of the experimental approach to the question in an all-embracing and logical fashion. He shows that tests imposed on individuals intended to illustrate difference of ability are almost always inconclusive, since by far the greater part of an individual's reaction to any test is dominated by the effect of his environmental background. Moreover, tests however cleverly devised can never quite be freed from such deficiencies owing to their having been framed initially on the basis of another environmental background. He does show, however, and this is important, that when members of different ethnic groups are subject to the same environmental conditions their I.Q.'s (intelligence quotients) show only the expected individual difference, never superiority or inferiority of ethnic group. Now it is clear that people exhibit considerable physical difference, differences which give to the popular mind the idea of race. He shows, however, that variations such as white skin, black skin, yellow skin, straight hair, woolly hair, blue eyes, black eyes, long heads, broad heads, etc., in their many combinations and permutations exhibit no greater tendency to variation than is demonstrated between the individuals showing dominance of one particular characteristic. That is, they never show a mental capability or deficiency associated with a physical characteristic. He indicates that tests designed to demonstrate the upper limit of ability among



the various ethnic groups show that every such group possesses roughly the same percentage of high I.Qs. Moreover, he says, it is quite evident that race mixture as such never of itself brings about inferiority. It is the environmental conditions built largely on the prejudices of others which cause these groups so often to become degraded and to be of apparently lower mental standard. It would appear also that in matters such as rate of mental growth, of specific ability, of temperament and differences of personality, the factor showing controlling influence is again environment. If this factor is not taken into account the resulting tests have only the effect of showing how "white" a particular ethnic group may be. It can readily be appreciated how misleading, and dangerous, data of this kind may become if used by the unscrupulous to satisfy personal, political and nationalistic ends. One may go much further than this and say how misleading data of this kind has been in the past and still is at this very moment, and how it continues to be used for these same personal, political and nationalistic ends. On paper, however, this short psychological analysis shows that no difference in expected performance between ethnic groups may be found, provided the environmental basis is a constant in the experiment. Remove this constant and we can prove how black, white, or yellow a man is in just the same way as in the well known school algebraic problem the student is asked to express "b" and "c" in terms of "a", or "a" and "c" in terms of "b". Several times the term "ethnic group" has been used in the foregoing, perhaps in the sense of its having some specific meaning. It may seem as though one were speaking of a pure race with decided characteristics and in which the individuals could be said to be comparable in their major and minor details. Such, however, is by no means the case, for although the main and usually quoted feature of skin colour may be a fairly constant aspect of human grouping, interbreeding between the various groups may be and is practised without any degrading effect whatever, either mentally or physically. The only effects are those produced purely artificially by

the prejudices of others and resulting in inferior environmental conditions.

When the subject of race and individual capability is dealt with in accordance with the methods of genetical study, it would appear that the case for non-discrimination becomes greater even than is shown by Western psychological studies. According to the theories of geneticists which have grown and been expanded from the original experimental work of Gregor Mendel, it would appear that the hereditary characteristics of an individual are the result of the combinations and permutations of innumerable discrete particles called genes. Each of these genes transmits without change, except in the specific case of mutation, a characteristic and deterministic quality in the overall growth and structure of a new individual from the moment of conception onward throughout his life. It also enables him in turn to propagate a gene structure which will again determine the detailed form of a further being in accordance with these individually unchanged but variously combined ultra-microscopic bodies. To what extent the gene theory can be observed in the mental structure and behaviour of related beings is, however, another matter. One will appreciate that it is often easy to perceive a physical similarity between parents and their children, nevertheless it is usually readily realizable, by honest self examination, that one's own mental characteristics are quite different from those of one's parents, similarities being the result of education and environment. The basic, underlying and governing bias of one's character is clearly a feature quite peculiar to the individual. This, however, departs from the point somewhat. It was intended to show, on the findings of geneticists, that dominant physical characteristics may be perceived locally, due to the perpetuation of certain gene combinations by environmentally selective mating, that these same genes may be present in any individual on the globe and may be transmitted freely and in accordance with regular laws between individuals of any other gene structure whatsoever. This would prove again that the so-called racial characteristics are, as such, only

the result of a few of the many thousands of genes which according to modern theory determine the detailed physical and operative structure of the individual.

On paper, therefore, it can, as previously stated, readily be proved that there is no physical or mental foundation whatsoever for these very prevalent racial prejudices. Yet, despite all this, the fact remains that they are still strong and show too little sign of abating. Consequently we must turn our attention in other directions to see what aspect has been left unexamined which might give a clue to the problem. It may be that this problem is one which from its very nature cannot be solved in anything other than an individual manner. However, the possibility of general solution must not be abandoned at this stage for lack of examination.

Two things remain to be spoken of, they are environment and mental nature. The first of these two has been mentioned frequently in connection with every kind of examination of the point at issue, whether it be psychological, genetical, anthropological, historical or literary. It is, admittedly, an aspect of the greatest importance, for it points the way to what could—if it were so desired—be a general solution to the question. It would appear from all the tests made, however efficient or inefficient they may have been, that provided a being is subject to a particular kind of environment from a very early age he will react to that environment and develop a mental outlook influenced by it. Moreover, he will be comparable with any other individual of whatever group one may choose who has been subject to the same environment. If, therefore, the tests are formulated by a member of one particular set of dominant environmental conditions, beings who are examined in accordance with that series of tests will show a greater or lesser aptitude and could be awarded a higher or lower quotient of intelligence accordingly as their own environmental background approximated to, or deviated from, that dominating the test. As it is clearly observable that there are many varying environmental backgrounds to which

individuals may be subjected, either singly or in groups, it becomes very clear that unless these backgrounds were swept away in every detail, however small, and replaced by one in which every detail were identical—even geographically and climatically—there would always arise what would eventually be called different “cultures”. This is not to say that if such an impossible thing could be achieved we would have “one universal culture”. Far from it, but we shall deal with this when we speak of Kamma. Since the stabilizing of environment on a common basis is fundamentally an impossibility, and a contradiction of the very order of things, the environmental solution on a general basis would in any case be useless.

Now we speak of culture in broad terms such as Eastern culture, Western culture, European culture, Chinese culture, Asian culture and so on, thereby signifying basic differences of what we personally either approve or disapprove, to a degree depending on our own knowledge, education and perception. Does not this very point then give the clue to the whole problem of race prejudice, a clue not to be found in any of the physical studies made, or in what one might call psycho-physical examinations of representative subjects. Does not the explanation, and the elucidation, of this great question lie in the individual’s own attitude to the way of life, habits and customs of other individuals or groups. His attitude to their culture and to their environment in terms of his own experience and in accordance with the underlying structure of his own mental process. His mental process, that personal bias or habitual form of mind, which, quite irrespective of the theoretical proof of a problem in physical terms, will strike an attitude depending upon whether he likes or dislikes the local characteristics and habits of other beings. The great teaching of Dependent Origination of the Buddha is:

“Phassa paccayā vedanā  
Vedanā paccayā taṇhā  
Taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ  
Upādāna paccayā bhavo”

Freely translated this says that from the contact we make with various objects there arise in us feelings, which are either painful, pleasant or neutral. From these feelings there arise cravings either to possess the object or to have it removed. From these cravings there arise positive graspings which make one wish not only to possess but to retain, not only to remove the undesirable but to keep it away at all times. In this manner existence proceeds based on an ignorance of the real nature of things, and, by this latent bias of ignorance, expressing itself in the type of feeling arising after contact with an object and proceeding to craving and grasping, the cycle of laying down the bias for future life (and opinion) proceeds.

If we are to solve the race problem at all there is but one way in which it can be done. What is that way? It is by the examination of one's own biases and characteristics. It is by the gradual extirpation of those biases and characteristics with the consequent disappearance of the conceit which says, "I am the better man." To be subject to an environment is in the very nature of things, but, by persistent analysis and understanding, to free oneself mentally from the bonds of that or any other environment is the solution to the problem. It is not a mass solution, but it answers the question, "Can the race problem be solved?" by the simple answer, "Yes, if you wish it to be solved, now, here, and for yourself".

The very small saying given above regarding contact, feeling, craving and grasping, is but a tiny fraction of the Buddhist attitude to the questions of race, individual and existence, so it would be profitable in the following pages to examine this attitude in greater detail. It is an attitude which shows that the problem can be solved, not by legislation, not by research into the characteristics of others, but by gaining understanding of oneself and thereby of the true underlying cause of the trouble. What is the cause? The three roots which dominate the existences of us all: Greed, Hatred and Ignorance.

These three roots are roots in full reality. They go deep down in the very fibres of our being, they are thus part of what we call "Us", "I", "Personality", for animals as well as for humans and Devas.

Even in the "colour bar" we are considering, we find that this goes deeper than thought, down to the depths of our emotionality, our instinct. Put a Black Orpington hen in with some White Leghorns or vice versa and you will see an instant mass attack against the intruder of another colour. In the animal world the instinct to attack, to destroy that which shows a difference, even if it is one of the herd in other respects, can be noticed. For "difference" spells "danger" to the herd instinct.

A truly civilised man is one who has succeeded to some extent in controlling his instincts. Full control of the instincts and of the mind is prerequisite to Arahatsip or Supreme Buddhahood, one of which is the goal of every Buddhist.

The worm, the God, the man, none is free from instinct, and none is free from the roots of Craving, Aversion and Ignorance.

That it is that hinders the acceptance of logical, scientific proofs that colour or shape of the head make no final difference, in the mass (though it is still true that individual differences can make great differences in the world: as Pascal said: "If Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, the whole face of the earth would have been changed.") In every ethnic group there are, on the one hand, outstanding individuals and, on the other, individuals repressed economically and culturally. There are Negro Prime Ministers who dine and dance with white royalty and "poor whites" who could never get that opportunity, which shows that political and economic considerations leap the "colour bar".

Why this should be so is a "Divine mystery" to the believers in "Divine Providence" but quite understandable to those who have a knowledge of Kamma and Rebirth. Indeed even if one accepts the idea of Kamma and Rebirth as

a theory merely, it still remains the only theory that will fit the facts and give any sort of logical reason and “raison d’être” to the world.

Before entering on a further consideration of this, let us consider some other aspects of the Buddhist view on race and colour prejudice generally.

This is not the place to moralise on the modern manifestations in various countries of colour prejudice nor to prophesy as to the ultimate fate of those “systems” based on this and of the countries that cling tenaciously to them, but to quote what the Buddha said so long ago

“Not by birth is one an outcaste, Not by birth is one a noble;

But by deeds is one an outcaste, And by deeds is one a noble.”

—Khuddaka-Nikāya, Suttanipāta, Vasala-Sutta, Verse 142.

And in the Visuddhimagga it is put very plainly : “This is the body’s nature: it is a collection of bones plastered over with pieces of flesh, enveloped in moist inner skin, enclosed in the outer cuticle, with orifices here and there, constantly dribbling and trickling like a grease pot, inhabited by a community of worms, the home of disease, the basis of painful states, perpetually oozing from the nine orifices like a chronic open carbuncle, from both of whose eyes eye-filth trickles, from whose ears ear-filth, from whose nostrils snot, from whose mouth food and bile and phlegm and blood, from whose lower outlets excrement and urine, and from whose pores the broth of stale sweat seeps, with blue-bottles and their like buzzing round it, which when untended with tooth sticks and mouth-washing and head-anointing and bathing and underclothing and dressing would, judged by the universal repulsiveness of the body, make even a king, if he wandered from village to village with his hair in its natural wild disorder, no different from a flower-scraper or an outcaste or what you will. So there is no distinction between a king’s body and an

outcaste’s in so far as its impure stinking nauseating repulsiveness is concerned.”

Also, in the Aḡaṇṇa Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, the Buddha showed that some people of the ‘highest caste’ performed good actions and thereby after the death of their present bodies, manifested in better realms, while there were those of the same caste who performed evil actions which caused their manifestation in worlds of greater suffering. Similarly there were those of the despised castes or ‘outcastes’ whose deeds took them to higher or lower existences; while in the Sāmaṇṇaphala Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, He showed that even in this world the king himself would pay reverence to a man of low caste if that man became a monk. This, by the way, shows that there was not the rigidity of the caste system which grew up later.

In the Majjhīma Nikāya we find that the Buddha treated of caste pretensions in two separate Sermons. In the Assālāyana Sutta He pointed out that the fire produced by a person pretending to kingly rank and high caste and using for the purpose of making fire, the costliest of sandal wood, would differ in no respect from the fire produced by a poor man of ‘low caste’ using the castor-plant stubble from pig-sties as regards the production of heat and light. In the Madhura Sutta, He drove this idea home by showing that spiritual advancement of both rich and poor, those claiming high caste and those despised as of low caste, differed in no respect whatsoever. The ‘spiritual fire’ is the same. And both types will, pass away according to their deeds, since both types produce evildoers and the doers of good.

### KAMMA AND REBIRTH

‘Men are heirs of their Kamma’: said the Buddha. Kamma means deeds and therefore men are the heirs of their deeds, the deeds done in the remote past as well as in the present ‘life’.

Adefinite knowledge of this or, in those cases where there is no definite knowledge, a belief in this, is natural to Buddhists since it was stated so unequivocally and so often by the Buddha.

Here we must digress a little to show how 'beliefs' are held by Buddhists, since otherwise we may be accused of 'blind belief' and 'dogma' both of which are foreign to Buddhism.

Naturally one doesn't call oneself a Buddhist' unless one accepts the Teaching of the Buddha, which has been so well preserved in the Pāli Canon, that never contradicts itself and that is susceptible of proof in every particular.

This is where 'belief' must come in and where there is 'dogma' in the sense of the word that means 'strongly-held opinions'. But these beliefs are to be taken, until there is full knowledge and realisation, as working hypotheses, and not as 'dogmas' in the sense that they must be blindly believed in and must not be disputed. Knowledge and full realisation are attained only by fitting oneself to perceive Truth.

So in the case of Karma and Rebirth, one can attain to unshakable realisation of this truth, but even if one accepts it merely as a hypothesis, it is the only hypothesis that fits all the known facts and has been such for twenty-five centuries. And if it is still 'unproven' for some, it has also, in all that time, never been disproved.

Acceptance, then, in whichever way one does accept it, of the facts of Karma and Rebirth, naturally precludes the type of thought that would allow the opinion, "'I' am superior because of my colour; or the shape of my head.' It is so clear that one has been in so many families and so many castes, even in the lower spheres of animals etc., and will probably be so again in no long time unless one has gained at least the first stage on the Path of Enlightenment. This essential part of the teaching of the Buddha thus deals a death-blow to all pretensions of superiority.

This is all against the background of eternity, pictured by the Buddha in His famous parable of the mountain, seven leagues high and seven leagues through each way, of pure ironstone, with no crack or cranny, and with nothing to weather it away. At the end of a hundred years a man comes with a fine handkerchief of Benares

cloth, and strokes that rock, and so at the end of another hundred years, and another hundred years. At the end of each hundred years this happens and there is nothing else to wear away the mountain. Sooner would this mountain be worn away thus, said the Buddha, than would an aeon pass, and of such aeons, there have been many hundreds, many thousands, since this world system began and there will be many hundreds, many thousands before this world system is destroyed to give place to another. Against such a background the pretensions of superiority of an individual or a class seem as childish as they really are.

Then there is the Buddha's dynamic teaching of *Mettā Bhāvanā*. This has been translated best as 'Meditation of Loving-kindness' and that seems to be the best translation that one can give in English. But these words express the merest fraction of the full meaning. It is a dynamic, intense radiation of a positive force that even the words 'loving-kindness', 'benevolence' and 'goodwill' only faintly express. This *Mettā* is radiated with a concentrated mind to the front, to the right, to the rear, to the left, above and below, through the whole universe with no sense of 'I' am radiating *Mettā* but one IS *Mettā*. There can be, then no mental reservation to exclude a supposed 'enemy' or 'inferior' and this at-oneness with all gives ineffable peace and well-being and there is neither 'higher' nor 'lower' nor 'equal', neither 'individual' nor 'race'. Yet it is not, as the Buddha pointed out, annihilation except the annihilation of 'Self' and of 'Craving'.

All this lays the foundation for the Buddhist outlook on caste and colour there is no difference and should be no distinction. The great teaching of *Mettā*, of loving-kindness to everything that lives and breathes, to humans with different customs and different ideologies as well as to those of the same herd, precludes in a Buddhist any compromise with the ignorant error of a significant difference because of colour or cranial configuration. In this respect the Buddhist is at one with the English mystic and poet William Blake 'Everything that lives is holy'.

## A REMEDY FOR WORLD SUFFERING

By U Sobhana of Myingyan

The Exalted One, the great spiritual physician saw that the world was sick with Suffering and prescribed the only possible remedy: His remedy is the method of Meditation—the development of systematic thinking to take one to the farthest limits of thought and beyond thought. The journey of religious life, as described in the *Piṭakas*, is at once a progress of increasing peace and of increasing intellectual power and activity, which is induced by meditation. It is real intellection, not the “turning round and about” that sometimes passes for thought.

*Bhāvanā* is the term used in the *Pāli* Canon, and it means the developing or the cultivation of the mind. Meditation is taught in a methodical and scientific way in the Buddhist texts. *Sīla* or moral conduct is the starting point in the progress of mental enlightenment. It is the right control of mental, physical and vocal actions. Anyone who has secured a firm footing on the ground of morality becomes a fit person to embark upon the higher practice of *Bhāvanā* the control and culture of the mind.

There are two kinds of *Bhāvanā*—*Samādhi Bhāvanā* and *Vipassana Bhāvanā*. In the former the meditator acquires mental fixity in the sense of perfect poise free from wavering and enjoys inward peace. In the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta, Majjhīma Nikāya*, we get a good discussion of *Samādhi Bhāvanā*. Here the lay disciple Visākha questions the Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā in this wise:

“What, sister, is rapt concentration ? What cultivates it ?”

“Rapt concentration is the focussing of the mind; its phenomena are the fourfold mustering of mindfulness, its requisites are the four right exertions ; the practice, the cultivation and increase of these states of consciousness develop rapt concentration”, replies the Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā. This passage emphasises the importance of mental power and activity to reach this state of one-pointedness of mind. Certain “philosophies” speak of “the head and the heart”, “emotion and the will” and often in terms of

conflict. In *Bhāvanā* these are fused into one mighty dynamic force. Various methods are used to attain this state of mental equipoise.

The *Pāli* texts speak of *Kammaṭṭhānas* and *Kasiṇas*, used to attain this state of mental tranquillization. *Kammaṭṭhānas* are topics on which attention should be focussed and *Kasiṇas* are external objects which engross the attention. The Suttas also recommend the practice; in the *Mahārāhulovāda Sutta, Majjhīma Nikāya*, the Buddha says : “Cultivate, Rāhula, the meditation of mindfulness on inhaling and exhaling. This, Rāhula, when constantly cultivated brings about manifold advantages.” These breathing exercises are used to calm and concentrate the mind and provide a point of focus. At the beginning of the discussion on *Adhi-citta*, in the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa enumerates forty subjects for meditation. The ten impurities (*Asubha-Bhāvanā*), the four sublime states (*Brahma-vihāra*), namely, Lovingkindness (*Mettā*), Compassion (*Karuṇā*), Sympathetic joy (*Mudītā*) and Equanimity (*Upekkhā*), and the four formless states (*Arupajjhāna*) are some of the subjects recommended. Taking one of these topics, the disciple, mindful and self-possessed should concentrate his attention on it, and be fully absorbed in it, till he finally reaches one-pointedness of mind.

From this complete absorption, the ‘*Jhānas*,’ are sometimes translated as ‘absorptions’. As a result of successful *Samādhi-Bhāvanā*, on one of these subjects, the disciple experiences four blissful states of consciousness, called the *Jhānas*. Successful *Samādhi-Bhāvanā* leads the disciple to experience the Ecstatic (*Jhāna*) states in succession.

In the first blissful state the mind will be impregnated with joy and a sense of physical and mental well-being — rapture — is experienced. Present in the First *Jhāna* are the qualities of analysis, investigation, joy, happiness and concentration. In each *Jhāna*, the mind becomes progressively more concentrated and consciousness becomes more and more subtle.

The second blissful state is described in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta—Dīgha-Nikāya* thus: “By allaying analysis and investigation, with inner faith, the mind concentrated and one-pointed, he enters on and abides in this stage, which is without analysis, without investigation, is born of contemplation (Samādhijam), and is rapture and happiness.

The third Ecstatic state is characterised by equanimity, mindfulness and ease.

In the fourth blissful state of meditation, this feeling of ease is allayed and there is only a sense of equanimity, a state of mind which, rising above hedonistic views, is yet positive and not merely the negation of interest and desire. When the meditator reaches this state, his mental development is such that he experiences neither suffering nor happiness and his condition is described as the utter purity of mindfulness, which is indifference. In this state the meditator experiences transcendental, blissful and complete tranquillization of body and mind. The Buddha describes the mental state of such a person, in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* as “with his mind thus serene, made pure, translucent, cultured, void of evils, supple, ready to act, firm and impenetrable”, and proceeds to give us an idea of the serenity of mind left after the fourth Ecstatic state is reached.

In these blissful states there is no suggestion of trance, but of enhanced vitality. By wrongly translating “*Jhāna*” as “trance” much misunderstanding has been caused by some scholars who had not themselves experienced the *Jhānas*. To imagine that experiencing them is equal to *Arahatship* is condemned as a deadly heresy in the *Brahmajāla Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya*. The *Ariyapariyesana Sutta, Majjhīma Nikāya* shows that the Buddha rejected the doctrines of Alara Kālāma and Uddaka Rāma-Putta, because they made this the aim of their teaching. As such, these Ecstatic states are only the means to an end, but not the end in itself. After the fourth *Jhāna*, even higher mental states can be attained, for instance, the *Pañcaābhīñña*, which are five profound intellectual attainments. They are classified as supernormal vision, supernormal hearing, ability

to remember past births, insight into the mental processes or thoughts of others, and various psychic powers. These supernormal powers are described in great detail in the *Pāli* texts, but the Master expressly states that they are not essential to attain *Nibbāna*, which is the true Goal of all Buddhist meditation.

Reaching the fourth Ecstatic state, the pilgrim, on his path of progress, should turn his mind towards *Vipassanā-bhāvanā*. *Samādhi-bhāvanā* merely inhibits the passions, which can be completely annihilated only by *Vipassanā-bhāvanā* through which the meditator experiences an intuitive vision of Reality. He begins to see life as it really is, and also acquires Right Knowledge. Thereby he comes to understand the three characteristics of phenomenal life, as transiency, suffering and non-self. Everywhere he sees these three characteristics standing out in bold relief. He comprehends that life is merely a flux, a continuous undivided movement. To him, every form of pleasure is only a prelude to pain. He is detached from all conditioned things and has neither attachment nor aversion for anything in the world. He has a clear vision of the true nature of the world. As he is deeply absorbed in meditation, he perceives an aura emanating from his body and he experiences a serenity, hitherto unknown. As he develops insight, he becomes even-minded and strenuous, his attention is perfected, and his intellect becomes extraordinarily keen.

Reaching this state of mental culture, he meditates on one of the three characteristics and continues intently to reflect on it till to his great joy a flash of Insight dawns upon him, which gives him the first glimpse of *Nibbāna*.

The possibility of light is within us, it can be kindled and made to shine forth by meditation. The highest state of bliss, which is *Nibbāna*, the Peace Eternal, can be achieved only by *Vipassanā* meditation as shown by the Enlightened One.

Thus the Buddha gives the only permanent cure—Supreme *Nibbāna* where one never ails again and where all diseases cease for evermore.

# THE ESSENTIALS OF BUDDHISM

## The Eightfold Noble Path:—The Middle Way

*UHla Maung, B.A., B.E.S. (Retd.)*

The Eightfold Noble Path enshrines the eight desiderata or factors for a successful and effective treading of the Middle Way. The farer on the Middle Way is to be lighted along by eight beacons. What is this Middle Way? It is a way which lies mid-way between one which is not at all productive of any positive good and another which is fruitful of much positive evil. It is thus a way which is not characterised by barrenness and sterility or by the stink of a charnel-house. It is clean, wholesome, fragrant and fruitful of blessings.

Is it a hard way? That depends upon the rate of speed with which one wishes to reach the goal. Some may slip or dally by the way, but others may and can push on and on. The Middle Way is more than “Plain living and high thinking”. There is a definite ultimate. For those who wish to develop into the highest disciples of the Buddha it demands nothing less than the highest stage or standard of *Sīla* (morality), *Samādhi* (mental purity and development) and *Paññā* (wisdom). This ultimate was attained to by thousands of *Arahats* during the lifetime of the Enlightened One. Who knows how many have silently climbed the pinnacle since the Master’s passing away to *Nibbāna*? The Dhamma is still vigorous and fresh. The path remains clear, precise and inviting. *Arahatship* is still attainable. If the West has produced Newtons, Rutherfords and Einsteins of Science, why can she not produce her own *Sāriputtas* and *Moggallanas*? The glory of this path is the grand adventure that now beckons to the West.

So much for the ultimate. Below this ideal there is ample room and range for treading the way according to one’s *Kamma* and one’s moral equipment and development. Those readers, who will please turn their attention back to the way of life indicated in the *Mangalasutta* or the *Sutta* of Thirty-eight Great Blessings, will find the range of the Middle way in those blessings. Remember that the *Tathāgata* preached the *Mangalasutta* way of life for all *Devas* and men whereas the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path were addressed, in the first, instance, to *bhikkhus*. This, of course does not mean that the

Noble Path is shut out to ordinary people. For these latter, there is the preparatory Middle Way for wholesome social living in town and village. Living the home-life and tasting as many of the *Mangalas* as possible, the earnest and sincere will naturally progress to the fuller and fuller practice of the Middle Way in its highest key. So the Eightfold way of life is for every one, *Bhikkhu* or layman, who shuns a life characterised by ignorance, sensuality and worldliness on the one hand and a life characterised by frenzied and misdirected asceticism of the old type and the equally misdirected ideologies and ‘isms’ of the present.

Here is the Good Life, the heroic and the grand, laid down by the Enlightened One, who had trodden it through thousands of lives and had discovered the solution to the problem of Becoming, the only solution possible. He exhorts us to lift ourselves out of our besetting ignorance, to cleanse ourselves entirely of the delusion “Self” and “Soul”. The pristine Dhamma will then unfold itself to our hearts and minds. Accepting the law of *Kamma* and the fact of re-birth, we can rest assured that way-faring in accord with the *Mangalasutta* or the Noble Eightfold Path will make our future lives more and more blessed and auspicious until *Arahatship* is eventually reached, by those who are ripe and can develop or arrive at a constant mindfulness of *Anicca* (impermanence), *Dukkha* (sorrow) and *Anattā* (absence of a Soul).

Whether we consider the Noble Eightfold Path in the context of the Four Noble Truths or the latter in terms of the former, we should learn or habituate ourselves to do so against the background of *Anicca*, *Dukkha*, *Anattā*, that is, “All is Impermanence”—“All is Sorrow”—“All is without Soul”. The background is the sad and solemn truth of the universe because we have made it such through our ignorance, cravings and attachments. To the degree that this sad, solemn truth permeates our constitution to that degree we are nearing perfection and deliverance.

So we now see the implications of the Noble Eightfold Path and how the truth of *Anicca*, *Dukkha*,



and *Anattā* together with the Four Noble Truths make up the solemn theme of the *Buddha-Dhamma*, incomparable in its starkness, profound, unique and overriding the fetters and the flatteries of “I”, the child of delusion and ignorance.

And what are the assurances given by the Master in respect of the Noble Eightfold Path? We have already read how the *Tathagata* spoke of the Four Noble Truths in terms of His Enlightenment: “Then there arose in me the eye to see, vision, knowledge and understanding, insight, wisdom and light. We have to note that the realisation of the great truths involves very much more than mere intellection and mundane thinking. The Noble Path is an avenue to the higher and purer mind, buttressed by mindfulness and tranquillity and concentrated on perfection.

In propounding the Grand Path the Buddha said, “The Middle Way which has been fathomed by me in conjunction with the Four Noble Truths is verily pregnant with deliverance; for it gives wisdom, it brings clarified knowledge, it is productive of peace, develops higher wisdom, it brings enlightenment and the attainment of *Nibbāna*.” Such are the grand words of assurance the distinctive qualities of the Middle Way.

The Middle Way, in the words of the Buddha is this : “There are two extremes which should not be followed and acted upon by one who is not enamoured of the worldly life and has taken up the supramundane (*Lokuttara*) way.”

“What are these two extremes ?” They are:—(i) the extreme of a worldly life steeped in sensual indulgence, a life of low worth, vulgar, ignoble, harmful and deserving of censure by the wise and (ii) the extreme of senseless asceticism, of self-torture and penances, which is painful, devoid of nobleness and hence unprofitable.

“Between these two extremes is the truly noble, Middle Way which induces vision, which gives knowledge, which is conducive of peace, which promotes higher wisdom and ensures enlightenment and *Nibbāna*.” Such are the sweet words of assurance of the Master.

“Between these two extremes is the truly noble and peace-giving Middle Way leading straight to

enlightenment and *Nibbāna*. It is the way of the Eightfold Noble Path comprising Right Views, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Efforts, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.”

These eight ingredients are usually divided into three interlinked groups, namely (i) factors of morality (ii) of mindfulness and concentration, and (iii) of wisdom. Right Understanding and Right Aspiration, the two wisdom factors, are placed foremost in the list as one cannot arrive at full wisdom unless one begins initially with some degree of Right Understanding and Right Aspiration. These two should govern the practice of morality if it is to be sincere and deep and not merely an eye-wash and a sign of respectability. To attain Mindfulness and *Samādhi*, our attitude must be sound and the understanding must be sure and properly directed so that we can get true light, which is the main objective of *Samādhi*. Thus understanding and aspiration pave the way and accompany our efforts.

Morality is conjoined with Right Speech, Right Actions and Right Livelihood and these are summed up in *Pañca Sila* or the Five Precepts. Looking at these precepts in their full import and intent, we see that we are taught to cease from all sins, to practise virtue and to make our hearts pure.

Not to kill; not to steal; not to indulge in unchastity; not to indulge in falsehood; and not to excite or stupefy our minds with intoxicants and drugs. These are abstinences from interfering with the rights and freedoms of others. They are equally abstinences from all that which degrades us. They require us to be free from anger, hatred, ill-will, greed, passion, and incontinence. They, if followed understandingly, bring about the aspiration to be kind, loving and respectful to all. The crowning position of these abstinences is comprised in truth, purity and compassion.

The remaining three ingredients are Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Mindfulness is, we may say, a moment to moment business sustained by steadfast endeavour. Only strenuous endeavour can lead to *Samādhi* or singleminded intentness. The understanding must be tuned up to fruitful discrimination, thus:— This is

Matter. This is Mind. Both are fluxes; both are impermanent. This is Subject and this is Object. Both are fluxes and impermanent. There is no 'I' in or behind the Subject or the Object. Gradually the awareness of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and no Self will ripen in degree till our insight-knowledge (*Ñānadassana*) of these aspects of the phenomenal world is strongly entrenched.

Thus the Noble Path reaches down to the dynamic processes of life. It helps us to get the right vantage ground from which to view the life scene in its proper perspective. It is a guided path, but for that reason it is no less exploratory. Prayers, rites, ceremonies and sacrifices are the shibboleths of other ways and creeds but not of the Buddha's Truth of Suffering: "This is the Noble Truth of Suffering. It ceases with the complete cessation of *Tanhā* or Thirst—a cessation which consists in the absence of every passion with the abandoning of this Thirst, with the doing away with it, with the deliverance from it and with its destruction.

It is a remarkable fact that, the Buddha did not begin His mission as the Enlightened One by putting forth some doctrine which was not at variance with the popular and optimistic belief, and which, appealing more to the emotions than to the head, was more palatable. On the contrary, His very first discourse, was on the Four Noble Truths and His congregation consisted of the Pañcavaggiya or five ascetics, His erstwhile companions who had broken away from Him for giving up extreme asceticism.

It is recorded that immediately after the attainment of Buddhahood, the Buddha hesitated to propound the doctrine of Sorrow and its cessation—a doctrine which He knew to be difficult and profound for shallow and worldly minds. He, however, remembered the Pañcavaggiya and to them, in the Deer Park at Sarnath, He preached His first sermon, the *Dhammacakka Pavattana Sutta* or the Turning of the Wheel of the Law.

With wonderful solemnity and impressiveness the Buddha affirmed the Four Great Truths and He, in the same manner, made clear His eminent qualification for speaking so assuredly. He assured His listeners, firstly, in these words:

'Now, O Bhikkhus, as long as my knowledge and insight of each of the Four Noble Truths under their three aspects and twelve modes, was not clear to me in their essential nature—so long, O Bhikkhus, I refrained from professing that I had gained the incomparable and Supreme Enlightenment. Only when I had attained to the full insight of that wisdom, which is unsurpassed in the heavens or on earth, I felt fully qualified to proclaim my Enlightenment together with the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Path—the Middle Way.'

Secondly, the Buddha also made the solemn declaration as to how the Four Truths arose in Him, each under their three aspects and, therefore, in twelve modes. He prefaced this declaration by emphasising that the Four Truths were not among those doctrines that were handed down through revelation or otherwise. They were among those never heard before.

This was how the Buddha expounded the truths elaborately showing that at each step He rose to Enlightenment.

#### A. The Noble Truth of Sorrow and Suffering.

1. This is the Noble Truth concerning Suffering: Birth is painful; decay and disease are painful; death and its attendant griefs are painful. Union with the unpleasant, the disharmonious, the undesirable and the unloved is painful. Separation from the pleasant, the loved and the desirable is painful. In brief, the five aggregates of body and mind, which spring from attachment and from belief in individuality, and their causes are painful.

By virtue of this veritable truth there arose in me the seeing eye, vision, knowledge and understanding; further there arose in me wisdom, insight, and there arose in me light concerning things unknown before.

2. Then there came the thought that the Truth of Suffering has to be understood. Thereof there arose in me again the seeing eye, vision, knowledge, understanding and wisdom ; there arose insight and light.

3. Then there came the thought that the Truth of Suffering has been understood by me. Thereof there arose in me the seeing eye, vision, knowledge, understanding and wisdom; there arose insight and light.

B. The Noble Truth concerning the Origin of Suffering.

1. I saw the Noble Truth that Suffering has its origin and source. Verily the Origin of Suffering is that Thirst or Craving for existence and the renewal of existence craving for sensual delight; seeking of satisfaction now here and now there, that is to say, craving for the gratifications of sensuality and passions, craving for success and craving for everlasting life or annihilation.

By virtue of this veritable truth there arose in me the seeing eye, vision, knowledge, understanding and wisdom; there arose insight and light.

2. Then there arose in me the thought that this origin of Suffering has to be eliminated or eradicated. Thereon there arose in me the seeing eye, vision, knowledge, understanding and wisdom; there arose insight and light.

3. Then there arose in me the satisfying thought that this origin of Suffering has indeed been eradicated. Thereof, there arose in me the seeing eye, vision, knowledge, understanding and wisdom; there arose insight and light.

C. The Noble Truth concerning the Destruction of the Causes of Suffering and thereby its Cessation.

1. Then there arose in me the Noble Truth of the cessation of Suffering. Verily it lies in the destruction of this very Thirst till no passions remain; the laying aside of, the getting rid of, the being free from and the harbouring no longer of this Thirst. Then there arose in me the seeing eye, vision, knowledge, understanding and wisdom; there arose insight and light.

2. Thereof, there arose in me the thought that cessation of Suffering was nobly to be realised. Then thereon arose in me the seeing eye, vision, knowledge, understanding and wisdom; there arose insight and light.

3. Thereof, there arose in me the thought that the cessation of Suffering has been nobly and worthily achieved. Thereon there arose in me the seeing eye, vision, knowledge, understanding and wisdom; there arose insight and light.

D. The Noble Truth of the Eightfold Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

1. Then there arose in me the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of Suffering. Verily the cessation of Suffering is provided for by the Eightfold Noble Path— the path of Right Views, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Actions, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

Then there arose in me the seeing eye, vision, knowledge, understanding and wisdom; there arose insight and light.

2. Thereof there arose in me the thought that this Noble Path has been nobly cultivated. Thereon there arose in me the seeing eye, vision, knowledge, understanding and wisdom; there arose insight and light.

At the end of the exposition of the Four Noble Truths in their respective aspects and modes, the Buddha made the supreme declaration that by virtue of the wisdom, insight and light gained by Him, He became supremely confident: 'Sure and unshakable is the deliverance of my heart and mind. This is my last birth. There is no more Becoming for me'.

Thus spoke the Buddha and the five Bhikkhus, glad and serene at heart, joyfully approved of the Blessed One's words. And Kondañña was the first of the five to attain the pure and stainless eye of Truth, namely the truth that everything that has the nature of arising has also the nature of cessation. And the Buddha made this utterance:

'Kondañña has indeed understood! Kondañña has indeed understood!'

The reader will have seen that the *BuddhaDhamma* is not a creed of despondency and despair. It recognises and maintains that all existence is Sorrow. But if with Thomas Hardy we can see: '... the Dreaming, Dark Dumb Thing, that turns the handle of this Idle Show', we may with absolute reliance on the Noble Path say:

*There is a Grand Way out of the Dark Abyss of Life and we can emerge into glorious light and supreme peace.*

## NIBBANA IN THE LIGHT OF THE MIDDLE DOCTRINE

*By Nyanaponika Thera*

“This world, Kaccāna, usually leans upon a duality upon (the belief in) existence or non-existence. . . Avoiding these two extremes, the Perfect One shows the doctrine in the middle Dependent on Ignorance are the Kamma-formations... By the cessation of Ignorance, Kamma-formations cease.”

(Saṃyutta-Nikāya 12, 15)

The saying of the Buddha quoted here, speaks of the duality (*dvayatā*) of existence (*atthitā*) and non-existence (*natthitā*). These two terms refer to the theories of eternalism (*sassata-ditṭhi*) and annihilationism (*uccheda-ditṭhi*) which are the basic misconceptions of actuality that occur again and again, and in many variations, in the history of human thought. *Eternalism* is the belief in a permanent substance or entity, be it conceived as a multitude of individual souls or selves (created or not), as a monistic world-soul, a deity of any description, or as a combination of any of these notions. *Annihilationism*, on the other hand, believes in the temporary existence of separate selves or personalities, which are entirely destroyed or dissolved after death. Accordingly, the two key words of the text quoted above, refer (1) to the absolute, *i.e.* eternal, existence of any assumed substance or entity, and (2) to the ultimate, absolute annihilation of separate entities conceived as impermanent, *i.e.* their nonexistence after the end of their life-span. These two extreme views stand and fall with the assumption of something static of either permanent or impermanent nature. They will lose their basis entirely if life is seen in its true nature, as a continuous flux of material and mental processes arising from their appropriate conditions—a process which will cease only when these conditions are removed. This will explain why our text introduces here the formula of Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), and its reversal, Dependent Cessation.

Dependent *Origination*, being an unbroken process, excludes the assumption of an absolute Non-existence, or Naught, that is supposed to terminate, by necessity, individual existence; while the qualifying word *dependent* indicates

that there is also no absolute *i.e.* independent existence, no static Being *per se*, but only an evanescent arising of phenomena, dependent on likewise evanescent conditions.

Dependent *Cessation* excludes the belief in absolute and permanent Existence, and shows, on the other hand, that there is no automatic lapse into Non-existence, but that the cessation of relative existence is likewise a conditioned occurrence.

Thus these teachings of Dependent Origination and Dependent Cessation are a true Doctrine in the Middle, transcending the extremes of Existence and Non-existence.

Thinking by way of such conceptual contrasts as Existence and Non-existence, has, however, a powerful hold on man because that way of thinking is perpetually nourished by several strong roots, deeply embedded in the human mind. The strongest of them is the practical and theoretical assumption of an Ego or self, the existence of which as a separate entity is taken for granted. It is the powerful wish for a preservation and perpetuation of the personality (or a refined version of it), which is at the background of all the numerous varieties of eternalistic belief. But even with people who have discarded eternalistic creeds or theories, the instinctive belief in the uniqueness and importance of their particular personalities is still so strong that for them the end of the personality, *i.e.* death, is tantamount to complete annihilation or non-existence. Thus the belief in a self is responsible not only for eternalism but also for the annihilationist view (*uccheda-ditṭhi*) which may express itself either in the popular unphilosophical materialism (“death is the end of it”), or in elaborate materialist theories.

There are also other contributory roots of these notions of existence and non-existence which, however, are closely connected with the main root of Ego-belief. There is, for instance, a linguistic root, consisting in the basic structure of language (subject and predicate, noun and adjective) and its tendency to simplify affirmative and negative statements for the sake of easy communication and orientation. The structural features of language and linguistic habits of simplified statements have exercised a subtle, but strong influence on our way of thinking, making us inclined to assume that “there must be a thing, if there is a word for it.”

For holding these one-sided views, there may be also *emotional* reasons, expressive of basic attitudes to life. They may reflect the moods of optimism and pessimism, hope and despair, the wish to feel secure through metaphysical support, or the desire to live without inhibitions in a materialistically conceived universe. The theoretical views of eternalism and annihilationism may well change during lifetime, together with the corresponding moods or emotional needs.

There is also an *intellectual* root: the speculative and theorizing preoccupation of certain minds<sup>1</sup> creating various and elaborate philosophical systems in which these and other conceptual opposites are played off against each other with an ingenuity that provides great satisfaction to those engaged in these thought-constructions.

From these brief remarks, one will be able to appreciate the strength and variety of the forces which induce man to think, feel and speak in the way of these opposites, the belief in either absolute existence or absolute non-existence. It was, therefore, with good reason that the Buddha said, in our introductory passage, that men usually lean upon that duality. Hence we need not be surprised that even *Nibbāna*, the Buddhist’s goal of deliverance, has been wrongly interpreted in the sense of either of these extremes: existence or non-existence. But these rigid conceptual terms cannot do justice to the dynamic’ nature of actuality, and still less to

*Nibbāna* which has been declared to be supramundane (*lokuttara*) and beyond conceptual thinking (*atakkāvacara*).

In the early days, when knowledge of Buddhist teachings had just reached the West, most of the writers and scholars took *Nibbāna* as non-existence, pure and simple, with a few exceptions like Schopenhauer and Max Mueller. Consequently, Western writers all too lightly condemned Buddhism as a nihilistic doctrine, teaching annihilation as its highest goal, which these writers described as philosophically absurd and ethically reprehensible. Similar statements can be read also nowadays in prejudiced non-Buddhist literature. The pendular reaction to that view was the conception of *Nibbāna* as existence, in the sense of Pure Being, Pure Consciousness, Pure Self, or any other metaphysical concept, seeing it in the light of religious and metaphysical notions familiar in the West and in the East alike.

But even Buddhist thought could not always keep clear of a lop-sided interpretation of *Nibbāna*. This happened even in early times: the sect of the Sautrantikas had a rather negativistic view of *Nibbāna*, while the Mahayanistic conceptions of Buddha-fields (*Buddha-ksetra*), Primordial (*Ādi*-) Buddha, *Tathāgatagarbha*, etc., favoured a positive-metaphysical interpretation.

It is therefore not surprising that both these extremes are also advocated by modern Buddhist authors. In Buddhist countries of the East, however, there is, as far as is known to the writer, not a single Buddhist school or sect that favours now a nihilistic interpretation of *Nibbāna*. Contrary to erroneous opinions, voiced mainly by uninformed or prejudiced Western authors, *Theravāda*, i.e., the tradition prevalent in Burma, Ceylon, Thailand, etc., is definitely averse to a view that regards *Nibbāna* as mere extinction. The first main section of this essay will substantiate this statement.

For reasons mentioned earlier, it is not easy, indeed, to steer always clear of those two opposite views of existence and non-existence, and to keep closely to the Middle Path shown

by the Buddha, that is, the teaching of Dependent Origination and Dependent Cessation. Until that way of thinking has been fully absorbed in the texture of one's mind, constant watchfulness will be required against the mind slipping unawares into either of the two extreme views of eternalism and annihilationism, or coming too close to them. When discussing these questions, there is the danger of being carried away by one's arguments and countering one extreme by its opposite. Therefore, in the treatment of that problem, great caution and self-criticism is required lest one may lose sight of the Middle Path.

It is therefore the primary purpose of this treatise to offer material for a clear demarcation of the Buddha's doctrine of *Nibbāna* from both misinterpretations of it. It is not the intention of these pages to encourage any speculations on the nature of *Nibbāna*, which are bound to be futile and may even prove to be detrimental to the endeavours for an actual attainment of it. *Nibbāna* is to be realized (*sacchikātabbam*), not to be understood (as the first Truth), nor to be developed (as the fourth Truth). It will also be improper if the material presented here is used in a one-sided manner as arguments in favour of one of the extremes against the other one. Each of the two main sections of this treatise requires the other for its qualification and completion. It is hoped that the material from canonical and commentarial sources collected in these pages will at least reduce the point of conflict between the opposing interpretations, by clarifying the position of Theravāda.

### I. *The nihilistic-negative extreme*

#### § 1

We shall first consider the basic work of post-canonical Theravāda literature "The Path of Purification" (*Visuddhi-magga*), compiled in the 5th Century C.E. by the great commentator, Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa. This monumental work furnishes a comprehensive and systematic exposition of the principal Buddhist doctrines, derived from the Pāli Canon and ancient commentarial literature which partly

incorporates material that may well go back to the earliest times of the teaching.

In that work, in the chapter on the Faculties and Truths, in the section dealing with the 3rd Noble Truth, we find a lengthy disquisition on *Nibbāna*. It is striking that the polemical part of it is exclusively directed against what we have called the "nihilistic-negative extreme" in the interpretation of *Nibbāna*. We cannot be sure about the reason for that limitation, since there is no explicit statement on it. It is, however possible that the Venerable Buddhaghosa (or perhaps already the traditional material he used) was keen that the Theravāda teachings on that subject should be well distinguished from those of a prominent contemporary sect, the Sautrantikas, which, in other respects, was close to the general standpoint of Theravāda. It belonged to that group of schools which we suggest should be called *Sāvakayāna* (following the *early* Mahayanist nomenclature), instead of the derogatory Hīnayāna. The Theravādins obviously did not want to be included in the accusation of nihilism, raised by the Mahayanists against the Sautrantikas. This might have been the external reason for the Visuddhi-magga's emphasis on the rejection of the nihilistic conception of *Nibbāna*. As to the positive-metaphysical view, the Venerable Buddhaghosa thought it, perhaps, sufficiently covered by the numerous passages in the Visuddhi-magga dealing with the rejection of the eternity-view and of a transcendental Self. However that may be, also nowadays Buddhism, and Theravāda in particular, is quite often wrongly accused of nihilism. It is therefore apposite to reproduce here extracts from the respective arguments found in the Visuddhi-magga, followed (in 2) by additions from the commentary to that work.<sup>2</sup> Many of the passages from the Suttanta which are relevant to a rejection of nihilism, are quoted in both these extracts, making it unnecessary to deal with them separately.

In the aforementioned chapter of the Visuddhi-magga, the argument proper is preceded by a definition of *Nibbāna*, by way of

three categories usually employed in commentarial literature for the purpose of definition:

“*Nibbāna* has peace as its characteristic. Its function is not to die; or its function is to comfort. It is manifested as the signless [*i.e.*, without the “signs, or marks, of greed, hatred and delusion]; or it is manifested as non-diversification.”

[The first assertion about *Nibbāna* as non-existence, which follows now, is not a view about the nature of *Nibbāna*, but a simple denial of it, on account of the alleged illogical nature of the conception itself:]

“(Question 1.) [Is it not true that] *Nibbāna* is non-existent because it is unapprehensible like the hare’s horn?

“(Answer.) That is not so, because it is apprehensible by the (right) means. For it is apprehensible by some, (namely the Noble Ones) by the right means, in other words, by the way that is appropriate to it, (the way of virtue, concentration, and understanding).... Therefore it should not be said that it is non-existent because unapprehensible; for it should not be said that what the foolish ordinary man does not apprehend is unapprehensible.”

[And for those who are followers of the Dhamma, it is added:]

“Again it should not be said that *Nibbāna* does not exist. Why not? Because it then follows that the way would be futile. For if *Nibbāna* were non-existent, then it would follow that the right way, which includes the three Aggregates beginning with Virtue and is headed by right understanding, would be futile. And it is not futile because it reaches *Nibbāna*.

“(Q.2) But futility of the way does not follow because what is reached is absence [which has been aspired for] (that is, absence of the five aggregates, consequent upon the cutting off of the defilements)?

“(A.) That is not so. Because, though there is [always] absence of past and future (aggregates), there is nevertheless no reaching of *Nibbāna* (simply because of that).

“(Q.3.) Then is the absence of present (aggregates) as well *Nibbāna*?....

“(A.) That is not so. Because their absence is an impossibility (being self-contradictory), since their absence means that they are not present. (Besides if *Nibbāna* were absence of present aggregates too,) that would entail the fault of excluding the arising of the *Nibbāna* element with result of past clinging left [*sopadisesanibbāna*; *i.e.* *Nibbāna* during lifetime], at the path moment which has present aggregates as its support.

“(Q.4.) Then will there be no fault if it is non-presence of defilements (that is *Nibbāna*)?

“(A.) That is not so. Because it would then follow that the noble path was meaningless. For if it were so, then, since defilements (can be) non-existent also before the moment of the noble path [of arahantship, e.g., temporarily, in every profitable (kusala) state of mind], it follows that the noble path would be meaningless.

“(Q.5) But is not *Nibbāna* destruction (*khaya*), because of the passage beginning ‘That, friend, which is the destruction of greed .... (of hate .. of delusion .. is *Nibbāna*)’ (S.IV, 251) ?

“(A.) That is not so, because it would follow that arahantship, also, was mere destruction. For that, too is described in the (same) way beginning ‘That, friend, which is the destruction of greed .. (of hate .. of delusion .... is arahantship)’ (S. IV, 252)<sup>3</sup>

“And what is more, the fallacy then follows that *Nibbāna* would be temporary, etc.; for if it were so, it would follow that *Nibbāna* would be temporary [being limited to the moment of the destruction of greed, etc.], formed [conditioned (*saṅkhata*); because the destruction of greed, etc. is a conditioned phenomenon, but not *Nibbāna*]

“.....Because [*Nibbāna*] serves, figuratively speaking, as decisive-support (*upanissaya*) for the kind of destruction called ‘cessation consisting in non-arising’ (*anuppattinirodha*), that (*Nibbāna*) is called ‘destruction’ (*khaya*) as a metaphor for it.

\* \* \* \*

“(Q.7.) Why is *Nibbāna* not described in its own nature [but only circumlocutions and negations] ?

“(A.) Because of its extreme subtlety. And its extreme subtlety is established because it inclined the Blessed One to inaction (that is, to not teaching the Dhamma see M.I, 186) and because a Noble One’s eye is needed to see it (M.I, 510). It is not shared by all because it can only be reached by one who is possessed of the path. And it is uncreated because it has no first beginning.

“(Q.8.) Since it *is*, when the path is, then isn’t it *not* uncreated ?

“(A.) That is not so, because it is not arousable by the path; it is only reachable, not arousable, by the path; that is why it is uncreated. It is because it is uncreated that it is free from ageing and death. It is because of the absence of its creation and of its ageing and death that it is permanent.

“...The Buddhas’ goal is one and has no plurality. But this (single goal, *Nibbāna*), is firstly called ‘with result of past clinging left’ (*sa-upādisesa*) since it is made known together with the (aggregates resulting from past) clinging still remaining (during the Arahant’s life), being thus made known in terms of the stilling of defilement and the remaining (result of past) clinging that are present in one who has reached it by means of development. But (secondly, it is called ‘without result of past clinging left’ [*anupādisesa*]) since after the last consciousness of the Arahant, who has abandoned arousing (future aggregates) and so prevented *kamma* from giving result in a future (existence), there is no further arising of aggregates of existence, and those already arisen have disappeared. So the (result of past) clinging that remained is non-existent; and it is in terms of this non-existence, in the sense that ‘there is no (result of past) clinging here’ that that (same goal) is called ‘without result of past clinging left’ (see It. 38).

“Because it can be arrived at by distinction of knowledge that succeeds through untiring perseverance,<sup>4</sup> and because it is the word of the Omniscient One<sup>5</sup>, *Nibbāna* is not non-existent

as regards its nature in the ultimate sense (*paramatthena nāijjamānaṃ sabhāvato nibbānaṃ*); for this is said ‘Bhikkhus, there is an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an unformed’ (It. 37; Ud.80).”

## § 2.

Taking up the last quotation, the Commentary to the Visuddhi-magga (Paramattha-mañjusa)<sup>6</sup> says:

+ “ By these words the Master proclaimed the actual existence of *Nibbāna* in the ultimate sense. But he did not proclaim it as a mere injunction of his [i.e. as a creedal dogma], saying: ‘I am the Lord and Master of the Dhamma’; but, in his compassion for those to whom intellectual understanding is the highest (attainable; *padaparama*), he also stated it as a reasoned conclusion (*yuttito*), in the continuation of the passage quoted above (Ud.80): “If, bhikkhus, there were not the unborn, etc., an escape from what is born, etc., could not be perceived (*na paññāyetha*). But because, bhikkhus, there is an unborn, etc., an escape from what is born, etc., can be perceived.” This is the meaning: if the Unformed Element (*asaññkhata-dhātu*=*Nibbāna*), having the nature of being unborn, etc. did not exist, no escape from the formed (or conditioned; *sankhata*). i.e., the five aggregates, could be perceived in this world; their final coming-to-rest (i.e. cessation) could not be perceived (*na paññāyeyya*), could not be found (or apprehended; *na upalabheyya*), would not be possible (*nasambhaveyya*). But if Right Understanding and the other path factors, each performing its own function, take *Nibbāna* as object, then they will completely destroy the defilements. Therefore one can perceive here a getting-away, an escape from the suffering of existence in its entirety.

“Now in the ultimate sense the existingness of the *Nibbāna*-element has been demonstrated by the Fully Enlightened One, compassionate for the whole world, by many Sutta passages such as “Dhammas without condition,” “Unformed dhammas” (see *Dhammasaṅgani*), “Bhikkhus, there is that sphere (*āyatana*) where neither earth” ....(Ud.80), “This state is very hard



to see, that is to say, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all substance of becoming” (D.II, 36; M.I, 167), “Bhikkhus, I shall teach you the unformed and the way leading to the unformed” (S.IV, 362), and so on, and in this Sutta “Bhikkhus, there is an unborn..” (It.87; Ud.80)

‘... the words “Bhikkhus, there is an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an unformed” and so on, which demonstrate the existingness of *Nibbāna* in the ultimate sense, are not misleading [or: have not an ambiguous meaning; *aviparītatta*] because they are spoken by the Omniscient One, like the words “All formations are impermanent, all formations are painful, all *dhammas* (states) are not-self” (Dh. 277-9; A.I, 286; etc.).

+ “If *Nibbāna* were mere non-existence (or absence; *abhavamattam eva*), it could not be described by terms as “profound [deep, hard to see, hard to comprehend, peaceful, lofty, inaccessible to ratiocination, subtle, to be known by the wise]” etc.; or as ‘the unformed, [the cankerless, the true, the other shore],’ etc.<sup>7</sup>; or as ‘kammically neutral, (without condition, unincluded [within the three realms of existence],’ etc.”<sup>8</sup>

### § 3.

The references to Sutta-texts, quoted in the extracts from the Visuddhi-magga and its commentary, make it quite clear that the Buddha declared *Nibbāna* to be an attainable entity (see § 1, Q.1, §8) and did not conceive it as the mere fact of extinction or cessation (see § 1, Q.5). All negatively formulated statements on *Nibbāna* should be understood in the light of the Sutta passages quoted here, and do not admit an interpretation contradictory to these texts. Any forced or farfetched interpretation of them will be contrary to the whole straightforward way of the Buddha’s exposition.

If we have spoken above of *Nibbāna* as an “entity”, it should be taken just as a wordlabel meant to exclude “non-existence”. It is used in the same restricted sense of a linguistic convention as the emphatic words in the Udana:

“There *is* an unborn”, ..“There *is* that sphere where neither earth..”. It is not meant to convey the meaning of “existence” in the strict sense, which should be kept restricted to “the five aggregates or any of them”. *Nibbāna* is indescribable in the strictest sense (*avacaniya, avyākata*).

Our extracts from such an authoritative work as the Visuddhi-magga will have shown how emphatically the Theravāda tradition has rejected a nihilistic conception of its highest ideal, *Nibbāna*. This fact may perhaps help to remove one of the points of controversy among modern writers and Buddhist schools: the prejudice that Theravāda, or even the Pāli Canon, advocates a form of annihilation as its highest goal.

There is, however, another principal point of difference in the interpretation of Buddhism, and of the Pāli Canon in particular which is likewise closely connected with the conception of *Nibbāna*. It is the question of the range of validity, or application, of the *Anattā* doctrine, i.e. the doctrine of impersonality. It applies not only to the world of conditioned phenomena, but also to *Nibbāna*. The denial of its application to the latter falls under the heading of the “positive-metaphysical extreme” which will be treated in the following section.

## II. *The positive-metaphysical extreme*

### § 1.

In India, a country so deeply religious and philosophically so creative, the far greater danger to the preservation of the Dhamma’s character as a “Middle Way”, consisted, in identifying, or connecting, the concept of *Nibbāna* with any of the numerous theistic, pantheistic or other speculative ideas of a positive-metaphysical type and, chiefly, with various conceptions of an abiding self.

According to the penetrative analysis in the Brahmajāla Sutta (Dīgha Nik.1), all these various notions of a self (and this applies also to other metaphysical or theological statements) arise from either of two sources

(1) from a limited and misinterpreted meditative experience (where we may also include supposed revelations, prophetic inspirations, etc.), or (2) from bare reasoning (speculative philosophy, and theology without personal experiential basis). But as the driving force behind all these metaphysical and theological productions of the human mind looms the powerful urge in man to preserve, in some way or other, his belief in an abiding individuality, or in any mental projection of that urge which he can invest, by proxy, with all his longings for permanency, security, eternal happiness, etc. It is therefore not surprising that, yielding to that powerful, instinctive urge for “self”-preservation, and under the influence of long-cherished and widely held views, there are also nowadays advocates of the positive-metaphysical interpretation of *Nibbāna* and *Anattā*, who sincerely believe themselves to be true Buddhists; and among them are many who have a genuine devotion towards the Buddha and a fair appreciation of other aspects of his teachings. With these views we shall now be concerned.

In the spirit of the Middle Way, the following refutation of the positive-metaphysical extreme is also meant to guard against any metaphysical conclusions which may be wrongly derived from our rejection of nihilism, in the first section of this essay. In the reverse, that first section may serve to counter an excessive ‘defence-reaction’ against the metaphysical views to be treated now.

The positive-metaphysical extreme in the interpretation of the Buddhist conception of *Nibbāna* consists in the identification, or metaphysical association, of a refined or purified self (*attā*) with what, in the context of the respective view, is held to be *Nibbāna*. Two main types of the metaphysical view can be distinguished which are already implied in the preceding sentence.

(1) The assumption of a universal and unitary (non-dual and non-pluralistic) principle with which a purified self, *i.e.* one thought to be liberated from the aggregates (*khandhā*), either merges, or is assumed to be basically one. These

views might differ in details, according to their being influenced either by Theosophy, Vedānta or Mahāyāna (the latter, with varying degrees of justification).<sup>9</sup>

(2) The assumption that the transcendental “selves” of the Arahants, freed from the aggregates, enter *Nibbāna* which is regarded as their “eternal home” and as “the only state adequate to them”. *Nibbāna* itself is admitted to be not-self (*anattā*), which the Holy Ones (Arahants) are supposed to retain “in *Nibbāna*” some kind of individuality, in a way unexplained and unexplainable. This view is, to our knowledge, advocated in such a way only by Dr. Georg Grimm and his followers.

## § 2.

(a) Common to both views is the assumption of an eternal self supposed to exist beyond the five aggregates (*khandhā*) that make up personality and existence in its entirety. The supposition that the Buddha should have taught anything like that, is clearly and sufficiently refuted alone by the following saying:

“Any ascetics or brāhmins who conceive manifold (things or ideas) as the self, all of them conceive the five aggregates (as the self) or any among them.”

*Ye hi keci bhikkhave samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā anekavihiṭaṃ attānaṃ samanupassamānā samanupassanti, sabbe te pañcupādānakkhandhe samanupassanti etesaṃ va aññataraṃ.* (Saṃyutta-Nikāya 22, 47)

This textual passage also excludes any misinterpretation of the standard formulation of the *Anattā* doctrine: “This does not belong to me, this I am not, this is not my self.” Some writers believe that this statement permits the conclusion that the Buddha supposed a self to exist outside, or beyond, the five aggregates to which the above formula usually refers. This wrong deduction is finally disposed of by the words of the Buddha quoted above, which clearly say that all the manifold conceptions of a self can have reference only to the five aggregates or to any one, or several, of them. How else could any idea of a self or a personality

be formed, if not from the material of the five aggregates and from a misconception of them? On what else could notions about a self be based alternatively? This fact about the only possible way how ideas of a self can be formed was expressed by the Buddha Himself, in the continuation of the text quoted above:

“There is, bhikkhus, an uninstructed worldling . . . He regards corporeality as self, or the self as possessing corporeality, or the corporeality as being within the self, or the self within corporeality [similarly with the four mental aggregates].<sup>10</sup> In this way he arrives at that very conception ‘I am’ (*iti ayañ-c’eva samanupassanā asmi’ti c’assa adhigataṃ hoti*)” (Samy. 22, 47).

Further it was said : “If there are corporeality, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness; on account of them and dependent on them arises the belief in individuality and speculations about a self “. (Sarhy. 22, 154. 155).

(b) If the words “I”, “ego”, “personality”, “self”, etc., should have meaning at all, any form of an ego-conception, even the most abstract and diluted one, must necessarily be connected with the idea of particularity or separateness, i.e. with a differentiation from what is regarded as not “ego”. But from what could that particularity or differentiation be derived if not from the only available data of experience, i.e. the physical and mental phenomena which have been comprised by the Buddha under the classification of the five aggregates ?

In the Discourse called “The Simile of the Serpent” (Majjh.22), it is said: “If ,bhikkhus, there is a self, will there also be something belonging to a self?”—“Certainly, Lord.”—“If there is something belonging to a self, will there also be (the view) ‘My self’?”—“Certainly, Lord.”— “But since, bhikkhus, a self and anything belonging to a self cannot truly and really be found, is it not a perfectly foolish doctrine to hold the point of view ‘This is the world. This is the self. Impermanent, abiding, eternal and immutable shall I be after death, in eternal identity shall I persist’?”—“What else

should it be ,O Lord, than a perfectly foolish doctrine.”

The first sentence of that text expresses, in a manner as simple as emphatic, the fact pointed out before: that the assumption of a self requires also something ‘belonging to a self’ (*attaniya*), i.e. properties by which that self receives its distinguishing characteristics. To speak of a self devoid of such differentiating attributes, having therefore nothing to characterize it and to give meaningful contents to the word, will be entirely senseless and in contradiction to the accepted usage of these terms “self”, “ego”, etc. But this very thing is done by those who advocate the first of the two main-types of the “positive-metaphysical extreme”: that is, the assumption of a “great, universal, or over-self (*Mahātman*) supposed to merge, or be basically identical with, a universal and undifferentiated (*nirguṇa*) metaphysical principle which is sometimes equated with *Nibbāna*. Those who hold these views are sometimes found to make the bold claim that the Buddha wanted to deny only a “separate self”, and that, in none of His utterances, He rejected the existence of a “transcendental self”. What has been said before in this section, may serve as an answer to these beliefs.

Those views, however, which we have assigned to the second category, insist on the separate existence of liberated, transcendental “selves” within the *Nibbāna*-element. They leave quite a number of issues unexplained: how they arrive at any idea of separateness without reference to the world of experience; in what that “separateness” actually consists and how it can be said to persist in the *Nibbāna* -element, which, by definition, is undifferentiated (*nippapañca*), that is, the very reverse of separateness.

Both varieties of individuality belief wish to combine various conceptions of self with the Buddhist teaching of *Nibbāna*. They are, at the very outset, refuted by the philosophically very significant statement in the Discourse on the “Simile of the Serpent”, implying that I and Mine, owner and property, substance and attribute,

subject and predication are inseparable correlative terms, which, however, lack reality in the ultimate sense.

### § 3

The two main-types of a positive-metaphysical interpretation of *Nibbāna* can be easily included in a considerable number of false views, mentioned, classified and rejected by the Buddha. A selection of applicable classifications will be presented in what follows. This material, additional to the fundamental remarks in the preceding sections, will furnish an abundance of documentation for the fact that not a single eternalistic conception of self and *Nibbāna*, of any conceivable variety, is reconcilable with the teachings of the Buddha as found in their oldest available presentation, in the Pāli Canon.

(a) In the Saṃyutta Nikāya (22,86; 44,2) we read: “Do you think, Anurāḍha, that the Perfect One is apart from corporeality (*aññatra rūpā*).. apart from consciousness?”<sup>11</sup> — “Certainly not, O Lord.” — “Do you think that the Perfect One is someone without corporeality (*arūpī*) .... someone without consciousness?”<sup>12</sup> — “Certainly not, O Lord.” — “Since the Perfect One, Anurāḍha, cannot, truly and really, be found by you even during lifetime, is it befitting to declare:

‘He who is the Perfect One, the highest being .., that the Perfect One can be made known outside of these four possibilities:

The Perfect One exists after death .. does not exist.. exists in some way and in another way not .. neither can be said to exist nor not to exist?’ — “Certainly not, O Lord.”

This applies to both main-types which assume a self beyond the aggregates. It deserves to be mentioned here that the Commentary paraphrases the words “the Perfect One” (*tathāgato*) by “living being” (*satto*). That is probably meant to convey that the statements in the text are valid not only for the conventional term “the Perfect One”, but that they hold true also for any other terms designating an individuality.

(b) Since the concept of a self is necessarily linked with that of an ownership of qualities and possessions (see II, §2 b), both main-types come under the following headings of the 20 kinds of individuality-belief (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*; see II, §2 a):

“He regards the self as possessing corporeality .. as possessing feeling .. perception...formations .. consciousness.

This applies, in particular, to the second main-type advocated by Dr. Georg. Grimm who expressly speaks of the five aggregates as “attributions” (“Beliegungen”) of the self. It does not make here any difference that these “attributions” are regarded by Grimm as “incommensurate” to the self and as capable of being discarded. What matters, here, is the fact that such a relationship between the self and the aggregates is assumed, and this justifies the inclusion of that view in the aforementioned type of individuality-belief.

(c) From the “Discourse on the Root Cause” (*Mūlapariyāya Sutta*; Majjh. 1), the following categories apply to both types:

“He thinks (himself) different from (or: beyond) the four material elements, the heavenly worlds, the uncorporeal spheres; from anything seen, heard, (differently) sensed and cognized; from the whole (universe; *sabbato*), to the second type: “He thinks (himself) in *Nibbāna* (*nibbānasmiṇ*) or as different from *Nibbāna* (*nibbānato maññati*; that is, he believes the liberated self supposed to enter the *Nibbāna* element, as different from it).”

(d) In the Sutta “All Cankers” (*Sabb’āsava Sutta*; Majjh. 2), the following instances of unwise and superficial thinking (*ayoniso manasikāra*) are mentioned and rejected:

Six theories about the self, from which the following are applicable here: “I have a self”, “By the self I know the self” \*.

Sixteen kinds of doubt about the existence and nature of the self, with reference to the past, present and future, e.g.: “Am I or am I not?”, “What am I?”, “Shall I be or not?”, “What shall I be?”

Hereby any speculation about an alleged self is rejected.

(e) In the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (Digh.1), the theories about a self are specified as to their details. Those, however, who advocate the two main-types of the positive-metaphysical extreme, with which we are here concerned, generally avoid or reject detailed statements on the nature of *Nibbāna* and the self. But if, by them, an eternal and transcendental self is assumed, it must be thought as being of a passive nature (Pāli: *vañjho*, barren, unproductive) and motionless, i.e. immutable. For, any creative or other relationship to the world would involve an abandonment of the transcendental state assumed. Therefore both main-types fall under the eternalist view, characterized in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* as follows:

“Eternal are self and world; barren (*vañjho*), motionless like a mountain peak, steadfast like a pillar.”

(f) The rejection of any belief in a self (as abiding or temporarily identical) and of the extremes of existence and non-existence cannot be better concluded then by quoting the continuation of the saying that forms the motto of this treatise:

“For him, Kaccāna, who considers, according to reality and with true wisdom, the origination of [and in] the world, there is not what in the world [is called] ‘nonexistence’ (*natthitā*). For him, Kaccāna, who considers, according to reality and with true wisdom, the cessation of [and in] the world, there is not what in the world [is called] ‘existence’ (*atthitā*). This world, in general, Kaccāna, is fettered by propensities, clingings and biases. But he [the man of right understanding, *sammā-dīṭṭhi*], concerning these propensities, clingings, fixed mental attitudes, biases and deep-rooted inclinations, he does not come near, does not cling, does not have the mental attitude ‘I have a self’ (*n’adhiṭṭhāti attā me’ti*). He has no doubt or uncertainty that it is suffering, indeed, that arises, and suffering that ceases. Herein has he knowledge does not rely on others. In so far, Kaccāna, is one a man of right understanding”. (Saṃy 12, 15).

### III. *Transcending the extremes*

If we examine the utterances on *Nibbāna*, in the Pāli Canon, we find that it is described (or better: paraphrased) in positive and negative terms. Statements of a positive nature are, e.g., designations like “the profound, the true, the pure, the permanent, the marvellous,” etc. (Saṃy. 43; see I, § 2); further texts such as those quoted above I, §2):

“There is that sphere . . .”, “There is an unborn . . .”, etc. Statements of a negative character are, e.g., definitions of *Nibbāna* as “the destruction of greed, hatred and delusion”, as “cessation of existence” (*bhavanirodha*; Saṃy. 12, 68). If the Buddhist doctrine of *Nibbāna* is to be understood correctly, one will have to give full weight to the significance of both types of utterance. If one were to quote only one group of them, as a vindication of one’s own one-sided opinion, it would result in a lop-sided view.

To the utterances of positive character we may ascribe the following purposes:

(1) to exclude the nihilistic extreme, (2) to allay the fears of those who are still without an adequate grasp of the truths of Suffering and *Anattā*, and consequently shrink back from the final cessation of suffering, i.e., of rebirth, as if recoiling from threatening fall into a bottomless abyss, (3) for showing *Nibbāna* as a goal capable of attainment and really worthwhile.

The emphatic “There is” that opens the two well-known texts on *Nibbāna*, in the *Udāna*, leaves no doubt that *Nibbāna* is not conceived as bare extinction or as a camouflage for an absolute Zero. But, on the other hand, as a precaution against a metaphysical misinterpretation of that solemn enunciation “There is .... (*atthi*)”, we have that likewise emphatic rejection of the extremes of existence (*atthitā*) and non-existence (*natthitā*).

But even those utterances on *Nibbāna* which are phrased positively, include mostly also negative terms:

“There is that sphere where there is neither earth . . . neither this world nor the next, neither coming nor going . . .”

“There is an unborn, an unbecome..”

“I shall teach you the Unformed .. the Profound .. , and the way to it. What now is the Unformed .. the Profound .. ? It is the destruction of greed, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion.”

These texts, combining positive and negative statements, illustrate our earlier remark that both the positive and the negative utterances on *Nibbāna* require mutual qualification, as a precaution against sliding into an extremist position.

Negative utterances are meant to emphasize the supramundane and undepictable nature of *Nibbāna* that eludes any adequate description in positive terms. Our language is basically unsuited for it, since it is necessarily related to our world of experience, and its structure and terms are derived from it. Therefore the positive statements in the Suttas cannot be more than allusions or metaphors (*pariyāyadesanā*), making use of emotional values intelligible to us, and of experiences and reactions known to those who have trodden the path to the Pathless. In brief, they are evocative, and not truly descriptive, but they have nevertheless great practical value for the reasons mentioned above. Negative statements, however, are quite sound and legitimate in themselves. They relate *Nibbāna* to the world of experience only by negations. The negating method of approach consists in a process of eliminating what is inapplicable to *Nibbāna* and incommensurate with it. It enables us to make much more definite and useful statements about the supramundane state of *Nibbāna* than abstract terms, the positive character of which can be only metaphorical. Negative statements are also the most appropriate and reverential form to speak of that which has been called the Marvellous (*acchariya*) and the Extraordinary (*abhūta*).

Negative ways of expressions have also another important advantage. Statements like those defining *Nibbāna* as “the destruction of greed, hatred and delusion”, at the same time, indicate the direction to be taken, and the work to be done, for actually reaching *Nibbāna*. And

it is this which matters most. These words on the overcoming of greed, hatred and delusion set a clear and convincing task which can be taken up here and now. Further they not only point to a way that is practicable and, worthwhile for its own sake, but they also speak of the lofty goal itself which likewise can be experienced here and now, and not only in an unknown Beyond. For it has been said:

“If greed, hatred and delusion have been completely destroyed, insofar is *Nibbāna* visible here and now, not delayed, inviting of inspection, and directly experiencible by the wise” (Aṅguttara Nik. III, No.55).

That visible *Nibbāna* has been lauded by those who attained to it, as an unalloyed and unalienable happiness, as the highest solace, as the unspeakable relief of being freed from burden and bondage. A faint foretaste of it may be experienced in each act of joyful renunciation and in moments of serene detachment. To know oneself, if but temporarily and partially, free from the slavery of passions and the blindness of self-deception; to be master of oneself and to live and think in the light of knowledge, if but for a time and to a limited extent—these are truly not “mere negative facts”, but are the most positive and elevating experiences for those who know more than the fleeting and deceptive happiness of the senses. “There are two kinds of happiness, O monks: the happiness of the sense-pleasures, and the happiness of renunciation. But the greater of them is the happiness of renunciation.” (Aṅguttara-Nikāya, Duka-nipāta).

Thus, these seemingly negative words of the destruction of greed, hatred and delusion, will convey to the thoughtful and energetic a stirring positive message: of a way that can here be trodden, of a goal that can here be reached, of a happiness that can here be experienced.

That aspect of a lofty happiness attainable here and now should, however, not be allowed to cover for us the fact that the attainment of *Nibbāna* is the end of rebirth, the cessation of becoming. This end or cessation is, however, in no way the destruction or annihilation of anything. What actually takes place is the

ending of new origination owing to the stopping of its root-causes: ignorance and craving.

He who sees the Truth of Suffering deeply and thoroughly, is “no longer carried away by the unreal, and does no longer shrink back from the real”. He knows, “It is suffering indeed, that arises, it is suffering that ceases”. With a mind unswerving, he strives after the deathless state, the final cessation of suffering—*Nibbāna*.

“The Holy Ones know it as bliss; the personality’s cessation;

Repugnant to the worldly folk, but not to those who clearly see.

What others count as highest bliss, as pain regard it Holy Ones;

What those as painful do regard, is for the Holy Ones sheer bliss.”

(Sutta-nipāta, Verses 76 1/2)

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> They correspond to the *diṭṭhi-carita*, the theorizing type of character, in Buddhist Psychology.

<sup>2</sup> The rendering in the extracts from both works has mainly been taken, with a few alterations, from the excellent new translation of the VisM, by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (“The Path of Purification”; XLIX, 886 pp; pubt. by R. Semage, 1956; available at Lake House Bookshop, Colombo, Ceylon). Explanatory additions by the writer are in [square brackets]: while those by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli are in (curved brackets).

<sup>3</sup> But,” says the commentary, “Arahantship is certainly not mere destruction, since it consists in the four mental aggregates having the highest fruition (of arahantship) as their foremost.”

<sup>4</sup> Corny: “This is to show that, for Arahants, *Nibbāna* is established by their own experience (*paccakkhasiddhatam*).“

<sup>5</sup> Corny: “For others it is established by inference [based on the words of the Master: *anumāna-siddhatam*.]

<sup>6</sup> The paragraphs beginning with a plus sign (+) are translated by the author; those without, by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (taken from the notes to his translation of the Visuddhi-magga).

<sup>7</sup> These are some of the altogether 33 designations of *Nibbāna*, in Saṃmutta Nikāya 43. 12-44.

<sup>8</sup> This refers to Abhidhammic classifications in which *Nibbāna* is included, occurring, for instance, in the Dhammasaṅgani.

<sup>9</sup> The *Theosophical* variant is, e.g., represented by neo-buddhistic groups in Britain, which otherwise have done good work in introducing Westerners to Buddhism or to their conception of it.—The *Vedāntic* influence is conspicuous. e.g., in utterances of well-meaning Indians, among them men of eminence, maintaining the basic identity, or similarity, of the *Vedāntic* and Buddhist position concerning *Ātman*. This is, by the way, quite in contrast to the opinion on that subject, expressed by the great classical exponents of *Vedānta*.—*Mahāyānistic* influence may be noticeable in some representatives of the former two variants. But also in *Mahāyāna* literature itself, the positive-metaphysical extreme is met with, in varying degrees: ranging from the *Mādhyamika* scriptures where it is comparatively negligible, up to the *Yogāvacara* school where Aśaṅga uses even the terms mahātma and paramātma in an approving sense (see Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra-sāstra and Aśaṅga’s own commentary).

<sup>10</sup> These are the twenty kinds of individuality-belief (*vīsati sakkāya-diṭṭhi*).

<sup>11</sup> That is, outside the aggregates taken singly.

<sup>12</sup> That is, outside the aggregates as a whole.

<sup>13</sup> Pali: *attanā’va attānaṃ sañjanāmi*. This refers to vedantic conceptions. Quite similar formulations are found already in the Saṃhita, the pro-Buddhist Upanisads, and, later in the Bhagavadgīta.

## NOTES AND NEWS

### WESAK IN PARIS

The "Friends of Buddhism" held Wesak celebrations in Paris on Sunday, May 12th and Monday, May 13th.

Like last year, the Meditation Room was open during seven hours to all those wishing to offer to the Buddha the homage of their meditation, and many more people than last year came to meditate before the statue of the Buddha, surrounded with flowers and light. It was a homage of pure and noble dignity.

Venerable Amritananda Thera of Nepal gave the Precepts twice during the afternoon and also a lesson to the constant flow of people who came to meditate in the Meditation Room. At 9 p.m. Venerable Dr. Rahula came and gave the Precepts again and addressed a few words to those present. Some of our members remained all afternoon and evening meditating or reading in our library. It was, for many, a day of profound and sincere homage to the Buddha.

On the evening of Monday, May 13th, at 9 p.m., we held a public meeting in the big lecture hall of the Musee Guimet under the auspices of His Excellency Major Oeneral Chai Prathipasen, Ambassador of Thailand in Paris. The 2500th anniversary of the Buddha was celebrated this year by Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. The three diplomatic representatives of these countries were asked to speak.

On the platform a beautiful bronze statue of the Buddha, kindly lent for the occasion by the Directors of the Museum, Mr. P. Stern and Miss J. Auboyer, was surrounded by yellow roses and in front of Him, as on an altar in Thailand, were placed candlesticks and a bowl of rice containing tapers of incense, and a tray of flowers among the garlands of white and orange flowers. To the right of the statue were Venerable Amritananda Thera of Nepal, Venerable Shin Kelasa and Venerable Dr. W. Rahula. To the left of the statue, near His Excellency the Ambassador of Thailand, who presided, were His Excellency the Ambassador of Laos and Mr. Poc Thieun, Charge d' Affaires of the Cambodiam Embassy.

The flower offering was presented by a charming young Thai girl, Miss Nuanchan Watanakun, and received by the three Venerable Bhikkhus. Then the

three Ambassadors pronounced their speeches, uniting us in thought with the magnificent celebrations taking place at the same time in their far-away lands. Professor P. Mus, of the Collage de France, gave a short speech which was followed by a religious Buddhist chant recorded in India. Four of our members, Mr. Goury, Mr. Barbarin, Mr. Coulon and Mr. Marc, then read passages from the Suttas on the Birth, the Enlightenment and the Parinibbāna of the Buddha, along with messages sent by Mahāthera Nārada and Professor J. Filiozat who, as the guest of the Royal Government of Cambodia, was taking part in the celebrations in Phnom Penh. Then followed a beautiful Song for Wesak sung by a group of Thai students. After the recitation of the three Homages by the Venerable Bhikkhus our President, Miss G. Constant Lounsbury B. Sc. expressed her heartfelt thanks for the collaboration given us by the Embassy of Thailand in organizing' the meeting and for the help extended to Madame La Fuente by Mr. P. Maolarion and Mr. Watanakun and for the songs and recitations, by the young Thai students. Our President also gratefully thanked the Government of Thailand which, on the request of His Excellency the Ambassador, sent us for this beautiful Fete of Wesak, a generous gift to enable us to publish the second volume of the French translation of the Suttas of Majjhima Nikāya, the first volume having been already published through the generosity of the Royal Government of Thailand.

The evening closed by the recitation of the *Mettā Sutta* in Paḷi by a choir of young Thai students, young boys and girls whose sweet voices filled the hall singing the noble words of the *Sutta*.

Among the many distinguished guests of the evening were the Minister of Burma and the First Secretary U Ba Yi, the Charge d' Affaires of Ceylon, Mr. W. L. B. 'Mendis and Mrs. Mendis, Mr. R. Jeudy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Henry Holland of the Australian Embassy, the First Secretary of the Indian Embassy, Mr. and Mrs. A. Bureau, Mr. Ph. Stern, Director of the Musee Guimen, together with our members and our many friends. We are very happy that Wesak has once again been, celebrated in France in deep sincerity and beauty.





His Holiness Somdet Phra Vajirayaṇṇāvongs, Sangharāja  
of Thailand

## BUDDHA JAYANTI MESSAGES

*Message of the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council to the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations in Thailand.*

We the members of the Union Buddha Sāsana Council most respectfully send this Message of cordial Greetings on the occasion of the Celebrations held in Thailand to mark the 2500th Buddha Jayanti.

Our two countries are akin in all ways of the same race and religion, of culture and manners, and in geographical situation next-door neighbours.

In helping to establish Buddhism firmly for another 2500 years we acted together as one, thereby inseparably joining our fate and our fortunes for great good and in great goodwill. Together we have established the Pariyatti Sāsana, the foundation of the whole Sāsana, by holding the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā, a joint effort of the five Buddhist countries in which Thailand's participation made possible the production of an authentic edition of the Tipiṭaka.

His Holiness the Sangharājā of Thailand presented to the Ovādācariya Sanghanāyaka Organisation of the Union of Burma the Chulalongkorn edition of Paḷi Texts printed and published by H. M. the King of Thailand after it was edited and re-edited by Thai Piṭakattayaseka Piṭakakovidā Mahātheras, proficient and well versed in the Scriptures.

There was the heartiest co-operation from the Sangha, the Government and the people of Thailand, both in the preparations for the holding of the Sixth Great Synod and the actual holding of it.,

A Buddhist Goodwill Mission from Burma comprising Venerable Aggamahāpaṇḍita Anisakhan Sayadaw, a member of the Sangha Supreme Council, Venerable Aggamahāpaṇḍita U Visuddha, Honorary Secretary of the Sangha Supreme Council, Hon'ble Justice Thado Thin Thudhamma, Agga Mahā Thray Sīthu U Thein Maung, Chief Justice of the Union and Vice-President, Union of 'Burma Buddha Sāsana

Council, and Hon'ble Justice Thado Mahā Thray Sīthu U Chan Htoon, Honorary General Secretary of the Buddha Sāsana Council, was sent to Thailand on the 3rd. May 1954 to request the Sangha, the Government and the people of Thailand to depute Bhikkhu and lay Delegations to the proceedings of the Sixth Great Buddhist Synod and this Mission was received and treated in brotherly fashion.

After the despatch of that Buddhist Goodwill Mission to Thailand, Burma achieved advantages not only in respect of the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā but basing on this pure and sublime Sāsana mentality, the diplomatic relations between the two countries have been much improved.

Apart from Thailand's and Burma's sending their Goodwill Missions to each others' countries, the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council has been subsidising the Thai Bhikkhus and nuns who are prosecuting their studies in Buddhist literature in Burma for the promotion of the Pariyatti and Paṭipatti Sāsanas. In addition, branch Meditation Centres of the Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw have been successfully opened in Thailand.

We firmly believe that the Aṭṭhakathā Sangāyanā now being held in Burma will be brought to a successful conclusion, just as was the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā, owing to the whole-hearted support of the Sangha, the Government and the people of Thailand.

In conclusion, we earnestly wish that not only may 'the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations' now held in Thailand be brought to a successful conclusion, but also that, henceforth, we may see enduring perfection in,

- (a) Thai-Burma cordial relations based on the Sāsana,
- (b) The cordial relations between all Buddhist countries basing on the Sāsana, and
- (c) Peace of the world as the result of the endeavours of the Bhikkhus, the Government and the peoples of all Buddhist countries.

*An Address of Veneration at the 25(10th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations in Thailand by Hon'ble Justice Thado Thin Thudhamma, Agga Mahā Thray Sithu U Thein Maung, Chief Justice of the Union and Vice-President of the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council.*

The Presiding Mahāthera of the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations, Thailand, and Venerable Bhikkhus.

Most Respectfully, Bhante,

By the nature of the Teaching of the Omniscient Buddha, it is evident that, of the three parts of the Good left by the Buddha 2500 years ago, comprising Pariyatti (Learning), Paṭipatti (Practice) and Paṭivedha (Realisation), Pariyatti is the pivot around which the other two revolve.

For the purpose of preserving the Pariyatti Sāsana in its pristine purity, the First Great Buddhist Council was held at Rājagaha, the Second at Vesālī, the Third at Pāṭaliputta, the Fourth at Ceylon, and the Fifth at Mandalay Burma.

Five years ago, the Bhikkhu and lay leaders of the various Buddhist Organisations in the Buddhist countries decided to convene the Sixth Great Buddhist Council, before the completion of the 2500th Sāsana year.

The Preparations for the holding of the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā which lasted for about two years and the actual holding of the Council which lasted for two years, were eminently successful due in large measure to the ardent and whole-hearted support of the Sangha, the Government and the people of Thailand.

For the purpose of editing and re-editing the Pāḷi Texts which task was the most essential in the proceedings of the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā, His Holiness the Sangharāja of Thailand presented to the Ovādācariya Sanghanāyaka Organisation of the Union of Burma, a set of Tipiṭaka (Chulalongkorn Edition) printed and published under the authority of His Majesty the King of Thailand.

Also, seven learned Thai Mahātheras acted as the members of Boards of Revisors

(Paṭivisodhaka); two scholarly Mahātheras acted as the members of the Board of Final Proof Readers (Osāna Sodheyyapatta Pāṭhaka); three eminent Mahātheras from Thailand acted as the Chaṭṭha Sangāti Mahānāyakas (Chairmen) of the Proceedings during the Sixth Great Synod ; while seventy-nine Sangāti-kāraka Bhikkhus from Thailand participated in the proceedings of the Sixth Great Synod which was held in five sessions.

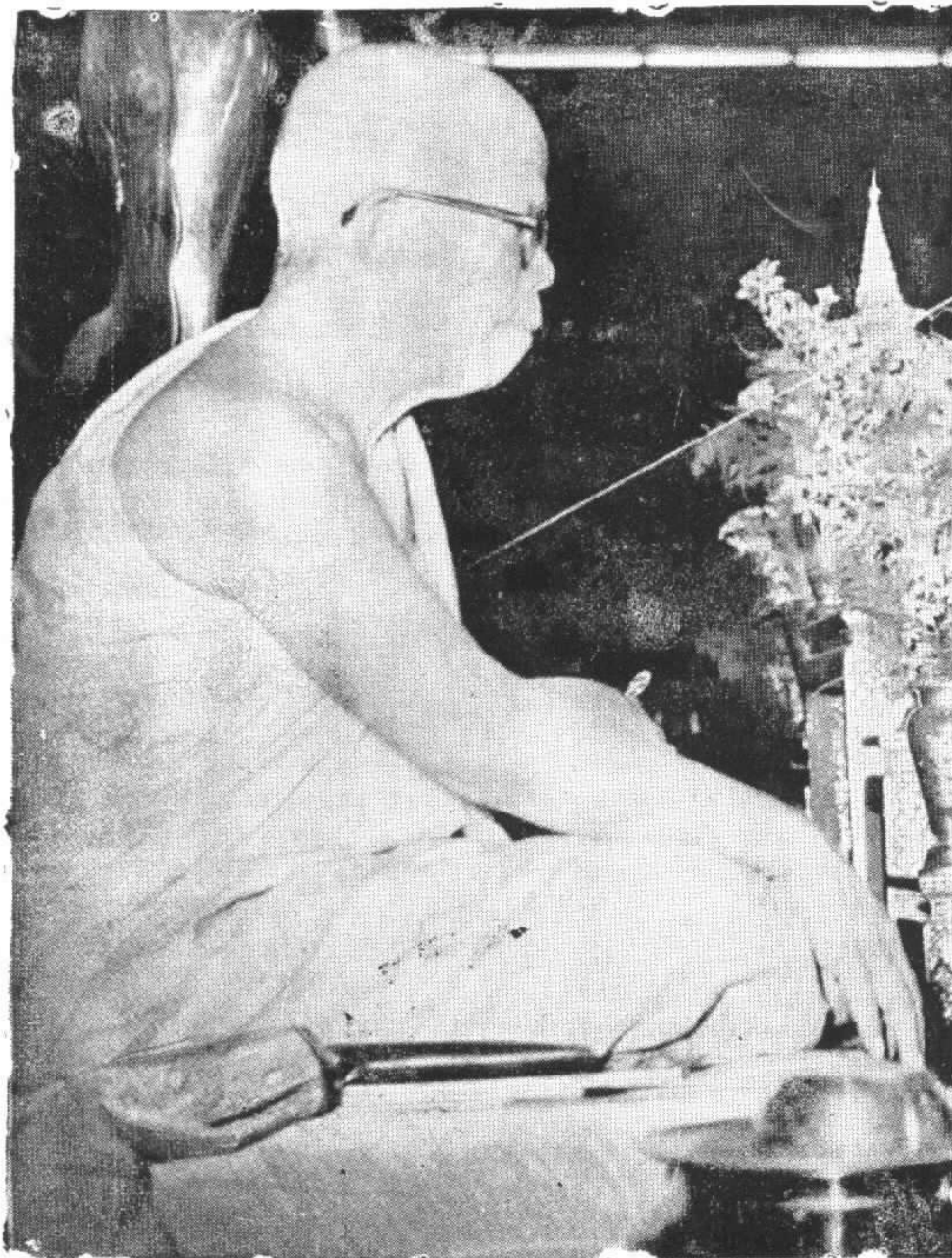
Of the five sessions of this Great Synod, the Fourth Session (Siyāma Sannipāta) which lasted for 54 days commencing on 16-12-55 and terminating on 16-2-56, was enabled to be successfully held owing to the leadership of the Sangha and the Government of Thailand.

As a mark of respect and veneration and in recognition of the valuable part played by Thailand in the deliberations of the Sixth Great Synod, 32 sets of Tipiṭaka in Burmese characters are being presented one to each of 32 monasteries in Thailand from which Sangāti-kāraka Bhikkhus attended the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā. A set each has already been presented to six such other monasteries.

Similarly, as a mark of respect and veneration and in recognition of the valuable part played by the Paṭivisodhaka (Text Re-editors), Osānasodheyyapatta Pāṭhaka (Final Proof Readers) and Sangāti-kāraka Bhikkhus from Thailand, Testimonials acknowledging their valuable help are offered to these 91 Mahātheras.

Bhante, we ardently hope that Thailand will be able to participate with Burma throughout all the remaining sessions of the Aṭṭhakathā Sangāyanā, just as the Thai Bhikkhus headed by Venerable Bhadanta Sudassanamuni participated in the First Session of the Great Recital of the Commentaries.

In conclusion, I earnestly wish that all the peoples of the world may be able to follow the Teaching of the Buddha, practise the Dhamma and enjoy the fruits of Realisation derived therefrom.



His Holiness Somdej Phra Vanarat Kittisobhana, the Sanghanāyaka  
(Ecclesiastical Premier) of Thailand

*An Address of Veneration delivered by the Hon'ble U Nu, Prime Minister of the Union of Burma at the Ceremony for the Burma Government's presentation of titles and certificates, held in Thailand in 1957 C.E.*

Venerable Mahātheras of Thailand who possess the inherent quality of the Sangha, Suppaṇipanna (practising well the Buddha-Dhamma) and honourable friends.

Two thousand five hundred years ago, after the Mahāparinibbāna of the Omniscient Buddha, His great disciples such as Arahat Mahā Kassapa, Arahat Ānanda and Arahat Upāli convened the First Great Buddhist Council in order that the Buddha Sāsana might endure for a great length of time, and they taught the Buddha-Dhamma to their disciples.

After that, Venerable Arahat Mahā Yasa and Venerable Arahat Mahā Moggalliputtatissa convened the Second and the Third Buddhist Councils with the support of King Kālāsoka and Emperor Āsoka respectively, for the purpose of enabling the Buddha Sāsana to last for a great length of time, and they, after teaching the Buddha-Dhamma to their disciples deputed Buddhist Missions to nine different places.

As the result of those Missions, the Buddha Sāsana began to shine brilliantly in Thailand, Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia and Laos almost at the same period.

Later, in the Island of Lanka (Ceylon), during the reign of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇi, the Fourth Great Buddhist Council was held under the leadership of Arahat Dhammarakkhita and the Teaching of the Buddha was first committed to writing. Again, during the reign of King Mindon in Burma, the Fifth Buddhist Council was held, and the Buddha-Dhamma was inscribed on marble slabs. Thus the disciples of the ancient Mahātheras taught the Buddha-Dhamma to their disciples so that the Buddha Sāsana might endure for a long time.

Bhante, in accordance with the Declaration made by the Mahātheras at the Third Great Buddhist Council— “Paccantimesu janapadesu, sāsanam, suppaṭiṭhitaṃ bhavissati” (In future, the Buddha Sāsana will be well established in the

neighbouring countries)—, the Sixth Great Buddhist Council was able to be convened in Burma in 2500 B.E., under the sponsorship of the A.F.P.F.L. Government as hosts, and with the co-operation and collaboration of all the five Theravadin countries—Thailand, Burma, Ceylon, Cambodia and Laos, for the purpose of the recension of the Pāli Texts—the five Nikāyas. The Aṭṭhakathā Sangāyanā is now being held in Burma.

Bhante, of all the eminent personages who strove their best to discharge the Sāsana duties such as the holding of the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā, His Holiness Somdet Phra Vajirayaṇṇāvongs, Supreme Patriarch of Thailand is one of those of whom it has been said “Puggala viseso jānitabbo” “Distinguished persons should be known,” and therefore, the highest Sāsana title in the Union of Burma, of Abhi Dhaja Mahā Raṭṭha Guru is offered to His Holiness.

Again, the title of Agga Mahā Paṇḍita the second highest ecclesiastical title in Burma is offered to His Holiness Somdej Phra Vanarat Kittisobhana, the Sanghanāyaka (Ecclesiastical Premier) of Thailand for his outstanding work in bringing the proceedings of the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā to its successful conclusion. Also the Government of the Union of Burma as a token of cordial friendship with the Thai Government is presenting to the Thai Government a specially bound set of Tipitaka as “Asadisa paṇṇākāra” (the highest Dhamma gift).

The Venerable Mahātheras of Thailand who are preserving the Teaching of the Buddha have participated in the holding of the Sixth Great Buddhist Council, thus making it possible to hold the Chaṭṭha Sangāyanā in the 2500th Sāsana year, have made it possible for their disciples to learn the Tipitaka by heart, and have taught the definitions, expositions and etymology of the Pāli Texts. In accordance with the phrase “Purisa viseso nāma ṇātabbo” “A man endowed with special talents should be understood as such”, these exalted ecclesiastical titles are offered them.

In conclusion, Bhānte, I most respectfully and earnestly wish that for the purpose of making the Buddha Sāsana to endure for a great length of

time the Bhikkhus and Upāsakā and Upāsikāyo may practise the Threefold Sikkhā (Training), and that the Buddha Sāsana may remain free from all blemishes and last for another 2500 years.

*Jina sāsanaṃ nimmalaṃ, ciraṃ loke tiṭṭhatu.*

May the Sāsana of the Conqueror remain free from all blemishes and last in the world for a great length of time.

*Speech delivered by the Hon'ble U Nu, Prime Minister of the Union of Burma, at the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations held in Thailand.*

I am very happy indeed to have this opportunity to greet my friends at the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations in Thailand and also to say a few words on the Buddha-Dhamma.

The people of Thailand and the people of the Union of Burma, both Buddhist and both striving for the common spiritual goal—Nibbāna, are indeed, friends and brothers who are co-travellers on this way of Saṃsāra and are co-partners in fulfilling the Perfections and performing meritorious deeds.

Buddhists perform wholesome actions to attain Nibbāna, which is devoid of all the unsatisfactoriness of life. There are briefly three kinds of such wholesome actions, (1) Dāna (giving), (2) Sīla (observing moral precepts) and (3) Bhāvanā (mental development). One will not be able to attain Nibbāna by practising Dāna, Sīla or Bhāvanā alone, but will have to practise all the three, of which Dāna is the simplest, Sīla is somewhat higher and Bhāvanā is the highest. A person with meagre saddhā (confidence of heart and faith in the teachings of the Buddha) will not be able to perform all of them; only a person with good saddhā will be able to perform all these wholesome actions. Some also are not able to attain Nibbāna although they strive earnestly, because there are two methods. They are (1) Sammā-pañipadā (Right Way) and (2) Micchā-pañipadā (Wrong Way). In giving bountifully, in observing moral precepts and in practising Vipassana-bhāvanā, one should aim at Nibbāna only. This is Sammā-pañipadā and by this Right Way only will one be able to attain Nibbāna.

On the other hand, if one aims at becoming in future existences a rich man, king, emperor or universal monarch, a Deva or Brahmā, he is on the Wrong Way. He will not be able to attain Nibbāna, but will, have to wander in the Round of Rebirths, experiencing various kinds of suffering.

Dāna, Sīla and Bhāvanā practised by many people nowadays are mostly on the Wrong Way because they see themselves as powerful beings moving in higher circles and not as renouncing all worldly things and attaining Nibbāna.

One thing we should remind ourselves of is that while we are in contact with the Buddha-Sāsana, we should endeavour our utmost to attain 'Nibbāna in this very, life failing which we should aim at attainment in one of our future existences during the remaining 2500 Sāsana years and if we feel that we may fail in this, should so orient our thoughts and practise that we may be certain to attain Nibbāna during the period when the next Buddha, Buddha Metteyya arises.

The holding of the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations in Buddhist countries and in particular this Ceremony in the great Buddhist country, Thailand, reminds us all that of the 5000 Sāsana years half has already gone and we have not yet attained the Real Freedom we aim at, and that we should strive our best to attain that Freedom during the remaining 2500 Sāsana years.

In conclusion, my ardent and earnest wishes are

(1) May all beings be able to practise Dāna, Sīla and Bhāvanā according to the Right Way!

(2) May every Buddhist be able to attain the spiritual goal he aims at!

(3) May the tie of friendship between Thailand and the Union of Burma remain firm and unshakably cemented till this world-system comes to an end!

(4) May the Buddha-Sāsana shine brilliantly as the sun and the moon!

(5) May the whole world enjoy Peace and Happiness by the Grace of the Buddha-Sāsana!



His Holiness Samdach Prah Mahāsumedhādhīpati C. N. Jotaññāno,  
Agga Mahā Paṇḍita, Sangharājā of Cambodia

## IN CAMBODIA

*The English translation of the speech given by the Hon'ble U Ba Saw, Minister for Religious Affairs & Social Welfare on behalf of the Government of the Union of Burma at the Buddha Jayanti Celebrations,*

Venerable Theras, Your Majesty, Hon'ble Prime Minister and People of Cambodia.

I feel it a great privilege to address, on behalf of the Government of the Union of Burma, this august gathering of monks and laymen on such an auspicious occasion as the Buddha Jayanti Celebration, commemorating the 2500th year of the Buddha Sāsana.

This celebration is a most remarkable one in connection with the Sāsana. and is well attended by great personalities, such as the Sangharāja, leading the monks, and His Majesty the King, leading the people and guests from Theravādin countries.

At this celebration, the Government of the Union of Burma has the honour to present the precious gift of a special set of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyanā Tipiṭaka.

Though our two countries are geographically divided, yet our friendship tie has been quite firm and strong since time immemorial because of the similarity in religion, race and culture.

When the 6th Great Synod was held in Burma, the Venerable Sangharājā and great Theras of Cambodia, and also His Majesty the King, the Hon'ble Prime Minister and people of Cambodia attended the Celebration. It shows that our two countries are co-workers in the fulfilment of the Pāramīs and in the propagation of the Sāsana for the attainment of Nibbāna.

Such meritorious deeds can only be carried out because we are living during the period of the Sāsana. It is believed that any meritorious deed done during such a period of Sāsana will bear abundant fruit, as seeds sown in a fertile soil.

In conclusion, may I request all Buddhists to follow the maxim of "Make hay while the sun shines" and while we are living in the Sāsana period practise the Teachings of the Buddha for the attainment of Magga, Phala and Nibbāna.

May the friendship tie between Cambodia and the Union of Burma be strong and firm for ever. May

both countries be prosperous and may the Buddha Sāsana be long lasting and illumine the whole World.

*The speech given by the Hon'ble U Ba Saw, Minister for Religious Affairs & Social Welfare, on behalf of the Government of the Union of Burma, at the ceremony of the conferring of titles, in Cambodia.*

Your Holiness and Venerable Theras.

May the Sāsana shine supreme for ever.

May I on behalf of the Government of the Union of Burma, be permitted to deliver an address at this great ceremony.

It is a great honour for me to pay my homage to His Holiness the Sangharājā and the Theras of Cambodia.

This is a Celebration specially held for conferring titles by the Government of the Union of Burma. This tradition of conferring titles has existed since the time of the Buddha. Such titles are conferred on those of outstanding virtues and learning. The Buddha Himself conferred etadagga-ship on Sāriputta for wisdom, on Moggallāna for supernormal powers and on Rāhula. for discipline.

Following this long-standing tradition of the Buddha and the Buddhist Kings, the Government of the Union of Burma also confers titles.

His Holiness the Ven'ble Sangharājā Jotaññāno, who is very virtuous, well-disciplined and greatly learned, took part in the Sixth Great Synod in Burma, which is the most remarkable event in the history of Buddhism. Because of his great service for the promotion of Buddhism in the world, the Government of the Union of Burma is pleased to confer on His Holiness the highest title of Abhidhaja Mahā Raṭṭhaguru; the conferring of other titles and the presentation of 8 sets of Tipiṭaka are also made to other Theras' of Cambodia for their active participation in the Sixth Great Synod.

In conclusion, may I earnestly wish that these meritorious deeds be the strong support for the attainment of Nibbāna.



*Message of the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council to the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations in Cambodia.*

The Presiding Mahāthera of the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations, Cambodia, and Venerable Bhikkhus.

Most Respectfully, Bhante,

We the members of the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council most respectfully send this Message of cordial Greetings on the occasion of the Celebrations held in Cambodia to mark the 2500th Buddha Jayanti.

Bhante, we have noticed that only after a long duration is a Sangāyanā for the purpose of the recension of the Piṭaka Texts able to be held, and during a period of 2500 years, only six Sangāyanā s have been possible.

We have been inseparably joined in friendship, love and truth by having the great good fortune to be able to hold, together, the ChaṭṭhaSangāyanā. This great synod and recension of the Scriptures would have been impossible for one country to bring to a successful conclusion and it was performed only by the joint efforts of all the five Buddhist countries.

The part played by Cambodia, famous for its learned and virtuous Bhikkhus, was no mean one.

Bhante, the presentation to Burma by His Holiness the Sangharājā of Cambodia of a set of Tipiṭaka which was edited by himself and about to be published, testifies to the fact that Cambodia co-operated with the other Buddhist countries in discharging a very effective work relating to the ChaṭṭhaSangāyanā, and this is only one instance.

Bhante, we ever remember the fact that during the five Sessions of the ChaṭṭhaSangāyanā which lasted for two years, Cambodia participated in the proceedings from the beginning to the end, and also that the Third Session of the ChaṭṭhaSangāyanā was convened under the patronage of Cambodia and Laos and was known as the Cambodia-Laos Session of the ChaṭṭhaSangāyanā.

May Cambodia and Burma which are akin in racial stock, geographical situation, culture and religion, be able to discharge all mundane and supramundane affairs with similar loving-kindness and co-operation from this day onwards.

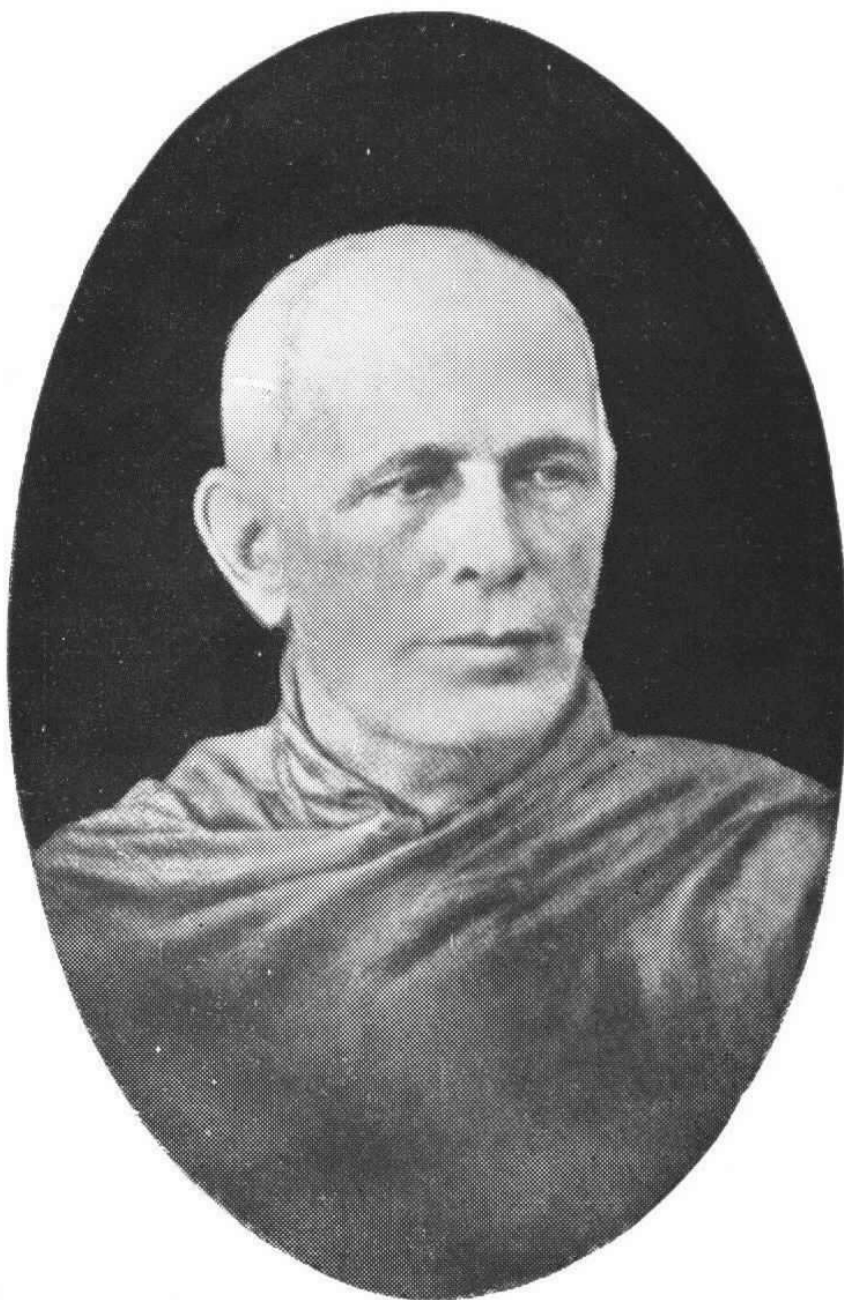
‘Monks, eleven advantages are to be looked for from the release of heart by the practice of amity, by making amity to grow, by making much of it, by making amity a vehicle and basis, by persisting in it, by becoming familiar with it, by well establishing it.

What are the eleven ?

One sleeps happy and wakes happy; he sees no evil dream; he is dear to human beings and non-human beings alike; the devas guard him; fire, poison, or sword affect him not; quickly he concentrates his mind; his complexion is serene; he makes an end without bewilderment; and if he has penetrated no further (to Arahatsip) he reaches (at death) the Brahma-world.

These eleven advantages are to be looked for from the release of the heart by the practice of amity..... by well establishing amity.’

*Aṅguttara-Nikāya*



The late Venerable Nyanatiloka Mahāthera

## OBITUARY

*Venerable Bhadantācariya Nyanatiloka Mahāthera*

We have to record with deep sorrow the passing of one of the most venerated figures of this age, a Westerner by birth who as a Buddhist Bhikkhu has given more than fifty years of service to the world in making known the Teachings of the Exalted One.

Only in the last hundred years has there been any attempt at real Buddhist studies by the West and this has produced a few outstanding Buddhist monks of Western origin and a few outstanding Buddhist scholars.

Absolutely pre-eminent among these was the late Mahāthera Nyanatiloka. He was born on the 19th February 1878 at Wiesbaden in Germany and at an early age his keen intellect and direct, logical mind was attracted by Buddhist philosophy. In 1903 he went to Ceylon and later that year came to Burma where he received the lower ordination in the same year and the higher ordination in 1904. He remained in the Noble Order, keeping the Vinayā Rules as they should be kept.

Quite a few 'Buddhist scholars' have been scholars but not Buddhists. Naturally they have not had that 'feeling' for the Teaching nor the opportunity to test their ideas, nor the Insight that comes from practice and from living the life. In the Venerable Nyanatiloka we had a scholar in the fullest sense of

the word who was also a Buddhist in the fullest sense of the word; a simple, unassuming, kind-hearted Buddhist leader of keen intellect and logical brain.

He was a top-ranking Pāli scholar and his translations in his mother-tongue, German, and in English are authoritative.

He visited Burma from time to time and was a great link between Burma and Lanka (Ceylon) especially, as well as between Asia generally and the West.

His 'Guide through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka' is perhaps the most scholarly work of its kind that has ever appeared, while his 'Buddhist Dictionary' of which a new, revised and enlarged edition has just appeared, is a real necessity to every Buddhist scholar.

His best-known book is 'The Word of the Buddha' which appeared first in German in 1906 and in English a year later, in Rangoon, and has run into 12 editions. This is so much a classic among the many not very informed books on Buddhism by lesser men that we reproduce below a review which appeared in these pages some time ago.

Sabbe Saṅkhārā aniccā All compounded things are subject to decay. The great Mahāthera has passed but we can take some consolation in that his great works are living and will be of continuing benefit to the world while this civilisation lasts.

### “THE WORD OF THE BUDDHA”

By **VENERABLE NYANATILOKA MAHĀTHERA**

Vital and interesting as well as learned and authoritative, this book is valuable to one beginning a study of Buddhism and as valuable to the Buddhist scholar.

The Author covers the whole ground in less than 100 pages of a clear and simple exposition, clearly and simply and readably printed.

This is the Buddhism of the Buddha presented by one of the Buddhist scholars, himself for many years now a Mahāthera (leading Buddhist Bhikkhu) who has brought his great attainments of mind and learning to the task and has produced a finished work of great interest and value.

The book was published originally in German and the first English version was published in 1917. This is the 11th edition which has been revised throughout with additions to the introduction and to the explanatory notes and with some addition of Texts.

Our copy is from the “WORD OF THE BUDDHA” Publishing Committee, “Asoka” 139 High Level Road, Nugegoda, Ceylon, and the price is only Re. 1. (paper cover) or, bound in cloth, Rs. 3. We understand that special rates are applicable for orders above 25 copies.

## BOOK REVIEW

### THE CAT IS OUT OF THE BAG.

*'The Goose is out' by W. J. Gabb, The Buddhist Society, London, 9/6d.*

This curious and revealing book has a lesson to teach. That lesson is that without some standard of judgment, some criterion, some touchstone, the mind can work in devious ways its wonders to perform, and those wonders, insofar as they have no secure base of Teaching, usually are of doubtful value to the owner of the mind and to the world at large.

This is where one has to reiterate the distinction, which seems somewhat too subtle for some few undeveloped minds, between 'dogmatic authority' and 'an accepted standard of values'.

If we are to call ourselves 'Buddhists' we must have some confidence in the Buddha and His Teaching, and some confidence that what we believe the Buddha taught really is, as close as man can possibly evaluate, really what the Buddha did teach. We must not accept in blind faith and we must not expect others to accept in blind faith. We must scan the proofs and we must be ready to furnish our proofs and our reasons; and we must be ready to examine evidence offered by others for a contrary view and to accept any proofs or reasons as long as they are proofs and based on reason. That is surely neither dogmatic nor authoritarian. And just as surely is it poles removed from any idea of a 'Mother Church'.

There is ample proof of the veracity of the Pāli Canon, of its continued veracity through the ages. It has enshrined the Word of the Buddha from the beginning as a definite act of will and discipline. Groups of Bhāṇakas

or Reciting Monks, Groups that still exist, have learned and recited their portions daily for more than 25 centuries. That, to some, seems incredible as it seems incredible that any human could learn whole passages by rote without error. Yet here in Burma there is a monk who knows the whole Canon (estimated at eleven times in volume the Old and New Testaments of the Christians combined) and who can recite

any or all of it, understanding it and being able to explain it. There is also other evidence whose place is not here. Now for some of the epic poems composed, as is admitted even by their devout followers, some seven hundred years after the passing away of the Buddha, there is no such proof that they enshrine the Word of the Buddha.

The source, then, is Pāli, and only by ever returning to the source can we be sure of the veracity of the Teaching, of the Word of the Buddha.

Professor Rhys Davids had occasion to show how in one instance especially, a whole verse lost its meaning completely when translated into Chinese, so that the verse, in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, by a mistranslation in one clause and a grammatical blunder in another, was changed as follows:—

From the Pāli

'They're transient all, each being's parts and powers,

Growth is their very nature, and decay.

They are produced, they are dissolved again:

To bring them all into subjection— that is bliss.'

This became in the Chinese

'Whatever exists is without endurance,

And hence the terms 'flourishing' and 'decaying'.

A man is born and then he dies.

Oh, the happiness of escaping from this condition.'

It may be noted that the word 'Dhamma' as Rhys Davids points out, is an extremely difficult word to translate, but it can never be 'term'.

When, added to certain mistranslations and misconceptions, there are the epic poems composed at so much later a date, with the quite

unverified assertion and, indeed, unverifiable assertion, that 'secret transmission' was handed down, privately whispered from one to another, this mixture can in no wise be accepted as 'Buddhist' except it be subjected to the 'Great Authority' mentioned by the Buddha Himself:— '(Anything that is represented as the teaching of the Master) should be put beside the Suttas and compared with the Vinaya. If, when so compared, they do not harmonize with the Suttas and do not fit in with the Vinaya, then you may come to the conclusion:— 'Verily this is not the Word of the Exalted One.'

Here, in this book under review, is a case, an extreme case admittedly, of the mind wandering in underground realms with no real guide. When the Buddha gave His famous sermon to the Kalamas, He told them what not to believe in. He also told them what to believe in, and gave a touchstone. He certainly did not tell them: 'Whatever comes into your mind, that believe' but exactly the opposite. That too needs re-stressing. He told them to realise things for themselves and gave the basic moral teaching. 'Above mere logic' is the understanding of the sages but the Way thereto is 'With reasoning and investigation going on the while'. That too needs re-stressing.

Hitler, Mussolini and scores of others before them and some since, have attained to a sort of 'power' as has, if he is to be believed, the author of this book, though by his own evidence a much lesser degree of 'power'; and this bears about the same relation to real power as does low cunning to real intellect.

The book shows, again taking for granted the veracity of the author, what the mind, tapping the same subconscious source, can do without the guide of a full morality and reason, which has been stressed as so necessary by the Buddha.

For real power, and this is stressed in the Buddhist Teaching, one must have complete Truth, the unflinching facing of truth and telling of truth. No lie, even for the sake of a joke, can be even considered. The standard is, admittedly, rather high for moderns.

The author of the book, in which is incorporated some previous fragments he wrote for a 'Buddhist' magazine, tells how these, published as 'Tales of Tokuzan' and in the style of the Japanese fables, had deceived two well-known men, whom he mentions, and how he felt a 'puckish glee' thereat. Well, this is not a serious matter in ordinary journalism. It is certainly serious when put up against the high standard of Truth demanded by that Discipline which is Buddhism.

Mr. Gabb then tells of how he performs minor miracles by 'affirmations' ('though', he says: 'in point of fact I do nothing but act as go-between') to, presumably some sort of Theosophical 'Oversoul'.

If we can believe his accounts of modern 'miracles' he has performed by these 'affirmations', he has merely used a subconscious force which is not at all miraculous and which, since it is always allied with Craving, really, always kicks back. And it IS allied with craving even when the user thinks he is performing 'miracles' just to help friends'.

Mr. Gabb's first 'affirmation' was when he was practically penniless and he asked for a job of a particular sort. He got the job, made possible by the advent of a war in which very many thousands of little children died horribly by bombing. A 'loving God' or, if you will 'Oversoul', in other words, rescued Mr. Gabb from poverty at his urgent plea by murdering millions. That is not actually what did happen. There is an old story of an Egyptian priest who used to go and bathe his feet in the Nile every year, just before the Nile flooded. Finally he got to believe that the Nile flooded because he bathed his feet there. But when "miracles" happen as the result of what for want of a better phrase we must still call 'subconscious force'; something rather amoral when not immoral (and the immorality is always there since it stems from Craving in the user's mind), it lasts for a time only. Take the case of the man who was saved by Mr. Gabb. The man was worried sick because he was about to go bankrupt and then, according to Mr. Gabb, by the manipulation of Mr. Gabb's 'affirmations' he discovered that he really had

made a mistake in his accounts and had £3500 that he had presumably, failed to notice in adding up his 'Profit and Loss.' That man must die and lose his money and no God and no Mr. Gabb can save him permanently. Mr. Gabb tells how his 'Tales of Tokuzan' deceived a well-known psychiatrist. It is quite certain that the present book would deceive no-one with the slightest knowledge of psychology.

The 'Zen Tales' (the imitations) have the genuine flavour of Sadism. Whether the kicks and slaps are really administered and the legs broken and the fingers cut off by the Abbots or whether these are mere 'figures of speech', the flavour of Sadism yet remains, and Sadism is the very opposite of the kind and firm teaching of the Buddha.

The 'back to front' method of writing (analogous to the 'mirror-writing' of certain psychotics, is also not Buddhist. The Buddha had said to a certain Brahman 'There are those, Brahmin, who say that day is night and night is day. I say to you that day is day and night is night.' \*

On page 69 of 'The Goose is Out' is a saying of an old master of 'Zen' Yoka-Daishi, (unless Mr. Gabb is pulling our leg again) as follows

'Who has gone beyond learning and is not exerting himself in anything.

He neither endeavours to avoid idle thoughts nor seeks after the truth.

For he knows that ignorance in reality is the Buddha-nature,

And that this empty visionary body is no less than the Dhamma-body.'

We use the Buddha's 'Great Authority' and put this against the Suttas and the Vinaya and pronounce it non-Buddhist and anti-Buddhist,

Tokuzan who is now revealed as a figment of Mr. Gabb's imagination, says

'Life can be pleasurable.

Union with the pleasant is pleasurable.

Separation from the unpleasant is pleasurable.

And craving that is satisfied, that also is pleasurable.

Pleasure is caused by craving.

Pleasure more abundant is caused by cultivating the art of craving.

The way to cultivate this art is the Eightfold Path.

I call the path, "Right Play".

We use the Buddha's 'Great Authority' and put this against the Suttas and the Vinaya and pronounce it non-Buddhist and anti-Buddhist.

In showing what the mind can do when unguarded by a standard, a Norm, and undisciplined; and in showing how the petty magicks and makings of myths originated and were fobbed off as 'Buddhism', 'The Goose is Out' lets the cat out of the bag with a vengeance.

We have a Norm, we have a touchstone, for which there is plenty of proof. Let the great Asian philosophers of the last eighteen centuries and their modern imitators flourish and flourish exceedingly. Some of their work is better than some of their other work. But let them not pass it off as 'Buddhism' unless it agrees with the Suttas and the Vinaya as the Buddha Himself said it should.

I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine; for in respect of the truths, Ānanda, the Tathāgata has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher who keeps something back.

*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.*