

*The  
Triple Gem  
and*



*The Way to  
Social  
Harmony*

**Pyinnyāthīha**

*The  
Triple Gem  
and  
The Way to  
Social  
Harmony*

*by*  
Venerable Pyinnyāthīha



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THE WAY TO SOCIAL HARMONY

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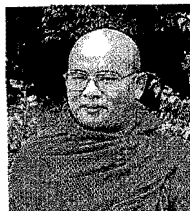
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## Author's Note

IN THIS SPECIAL revised edition published by Triple Gem Publications in association with Inward Path Publishers, the two books that I have written and published while I was residing in the United Kingdom, is now combined into one book. "The Triple Gem" was first printed and published in 1988. "The Way to Social Harmony" was first printed and published in 1990.

I sincerely hope that the knowledge acquired from this book will bring peace and happiness to all by being able to live harmoniously.

Venerable Pyinnyāthiḥa  
New Jersey, U.S.A.  
June 2002



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ven. U Pyinnyāthīha was born on 7 December 1950, to U Maung Khin and Daw Thaung Khin in Salin Township, Magwe Division, Myanmar (Burma). He ordained as a Samanera at the age of the eleven. In the fourth year of his Novice, he passed the basic level of Government Pali Examination. At the age of nineteen, he passed the Government Examination of Teachership in Fundamental Pitaka Scriptures.

On 23 May 1969, he was ordained a Bhikkhu (Monk) at Jotikayon Monastery in Pyay (Prome) Township. In 1970-1975, he appeared for two advanced Pitaka examinations with success, and attained the certificates on Pitaka Lectureship level namely Dighabhanaka and Digha Nikaya Kovida. To appreciate his success, he was awarded a lifetime first class ticket, valid for domestic travels with a companion for State-owned transportation.

He then turned to his academic studies and passed the Matriculation Eligibility examination in 1978. After four years, in early 1982, he sat for Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) examination successfully. Before he joined Mahasi Meditation Centre, he attended the first six-month refresher course in Pitaka Lectureship sponsored by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

During his years in Mahasi Meditation Centre, Ven. U Pyinnyāthīha practiced meditation under the guidance of Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, and he in turn gave training to Yogis and Laymen. He also studied English language on the other hand. Effective 24 July 1986, he took residence at a monastery in London known as "London Vihara" established by Britain Burma Buddhist Trust.

On 3 July 1995, he arrived at The Universal Peace Buddha Temple In New York, on invitation of the America Burma Buddhist Association (ABBA). Being assigned by the association, he is serving religious duties as a devout Bhikkhu at Mahasi Mahasatipatthana Centre (63 Gordons Corner Road, Manalapan, New Jersey 07726, USA) established by ABBA on January 16, 1995.

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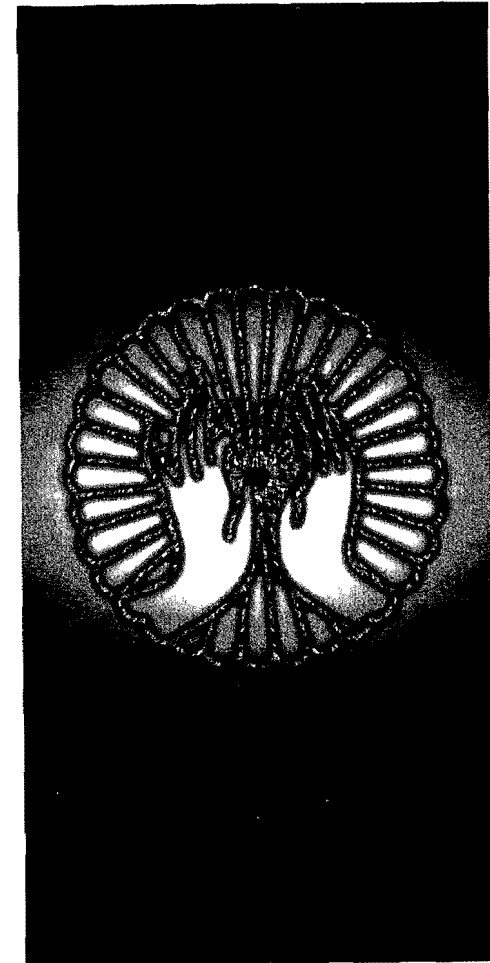
## Abbreviations

The references in the footnotes are to page numbers of the Pāli texts of the Pali Text Society. In the corresponding translations these page numbers are given in square brackets at the top of each left hand page or, in the case of Vinaya and Jātaka books, in the body of the text.

Some Dhammapada stories are taken from the translation by Daw Mya Tin (M.A.) published by the Burma Piṭaka Association, Rangoon (Yangon), 1986.

	Pāli Text	Translation
A.	Aṅguttaranikāya	Gradual Sayings
*A	Aṭṭhakathā	Commentary on*
D	Dīghanikāya	Dialogues of the Buddha
DhA,	Dhammapada Commentary	
Dhp.	Dhammapada	(References are to verse numbers)
Ibid	Ibidem (latin)	In the same place
Jā	Jātaka	Stories of Buddha's former births
M	Majjhimanikāya	Middle Length Sayings
MLS		Middle Length Sayings
S	Saṃyuttanikāya	Kindred Sayings
Sta	Sutta	Discourse
VbhA	Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā	The book of Analysis
Vin	Vinaya	Book of Discipline
Vism	Visuddhimagga	The Path of Purification

## The Triple Gem



## Foreword

by

Ven. Dr. Hammalawa Saddhātissa

M.A. Ph.D. D.Litt

**THE BOOK ENTITLED "The Triple Gem"**, written by Venerable Pyinnyāthīha is an excellent guide to understand the main articles of Buddhism; the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. The Buddha said that by *Saddhā* one can cross over the stream of *Samāsāra*, the circle of birth and death. This book really generates, and develops true *Saddhā*, confidence based on knowledge. Without understanding the Buddha (the teacher), the Dhamma (the teachings) and the Saṅgha (the followers of the teaching) it is impossible to appreciate the Buddhist Path. Venerable Pyinnyāthīha, I am quite sure, has written this book with these views at heart to help the Buddhists and intelligentsia in understanding and appreciating this sublime path.

I read this book with great interest and I have noticed that he has followed Buddhaghosa's interpretation of the Three Recollections dealing with the Triple Gem in his Path of Purification, the Visuddhi-magga. Also, he has used other relevant parts of the Buddhist Canon in writing this valuable book. The presentation of the subject, the contents as well as the elegant language, are inviting to all sorts of readers. Venerable Pyinnyāthīha is a graduate of the Rangoon University, and he was trained in the Mahāsī Sāsana Yeikthā in the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation. He is well-versed in the *Theravāda* Canon.

It is highly creditable for him to write a book of this calibre after pursuing the study of English for less than one year under an able teacher. This is really an authentic presentation of one facet of the *Dhamma*. It is a readable book, not only for Buddhists and the people who appreciate Buddhism, but also for non-Buddhists who are learning comparative religion. Without any hesitation I am delighted to recommend this book to the readers as an illuminating and accurate interpretation of the Three Gems.

*"Ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu lokasmiṃ sammāsambuddhasāsanaṃ."*

*"May the teaching of the Fully Enlightened  
Buddha endure long in the world."*

## Acknowledgement

I WAS SELECTED by the president of the Buddha Sāsana Organization, 16 Hermitage Road, Rangoon, to propagate Buddhism in England. Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma, the Spiritual Director of the Britain Burma Buddhist Trust, and the Trustees and supporters made it possible for me to come to England so I am much indebted to them. Soon after I arrived there I realized that most young Burmese people in England did not know about the attributes of the Three Gems. When they were asked about Buddhism, they could not give satisfactory answers. So, the idea came to me that it would be appropriate to write a booklet about the Three Gems. I had to write it with considerable effort because my English proficiency is very limited. My only purpose in writing this booklet is to intimate today's younger generation with the knowledge of Buddhism. Though it is not a classic book, the readers, after reading it, should have acquired some basics of Buddhism. If that happens to be the case, all my tiresome efforts to this end would be worthwhile.

Mary Hale, a retired teacher, has been very kind to me and generous with her time. She has corrected my exercises with great patience. Without her help this book could not have been published. I should also thank Mrs. Jacquetta Gomes who introduced me to Mary and asked her to teach me English. Two more people deserve thanks. One is Venerable Pesala who helped me by typing the draft and gave many suggestions. The other is Indrajit Samaranayake who offered the use of his computer to Venerable Pesala which

greatly facilitated the preparation of the manuscript. Last but not least, I would like to thank all the donors who contributed to the costs of printing this book and enabling me to distribute it free as a gift of the *Dhamma*.

May all of them get great happiness and merit from their worthy efforts in this *Dhamma* work.

Venerable Pyinnyāthiṇa  
1 Old Church Lane  
London NW9 8TG,  
England. (1988)

## The Three Main Views



**THERE WERE SIXTY-TWO VERSIONS** proliferating from the three fundamental views even during the time of the Buddha; and so, it is needless to say, that there are numerous versions nowadays. The three main views expressed in the lifetime of the Buddha were *Pubbekata vāda*, *Issaranimmāna vāda* and *Ahetuka vāda*.

The first view is that today's life is the culmination of deeds done in former existences. It rejects the idea of a Creator as well as the consequences of good and bad deeds in the present life. In this regard, it is assumed that all evils stem from the results of actions done in the past, and there is no connection whatsoever, with the deeds practiced or refrained from in this present life. If everybody does whatever he or she wants without any restraint there cannot be peace, security, freedom and happiness on this earth; longed for by all human beings.

The second view accepts that everything — human beings not an exception, the happiness and suffering — is created. Beings vary in strength, courage, ability, wisdom, wealth, faith, etc. Why are there variations in the lives of human beings? Who causes evil? Why does evil arise? Who wants evil? Who creates evil? Who can control evil? These questions cannot be answered by the idealism of the Creator. The Buddha emphasized that all beings are afflicted with malice and hence, sufferings as a result of conflicts with one another.

The third view describes everything as mere coincidences. This view is completely untenable, for everything we experience stems from a cause; the good will be beneficial and the bad harmful for us. If a person holds this view, he or she will disregard the moral aspect of things happening around and also embrace that there is no life after death. And then he or she will certainly earn his or her livelihood at random, without giving due consideration. Therefore, he or she will jeopardize the environment. Moreover, a person who holds this view is unable to make any progress in character or others, because he or she is unlikely to make any effort in that direction. After death, he or she cannot attain the status even of the lowest human being, apart from ending up in an existence in the lower worlds.

Buddhism dissents from all these views. It accepts the "The Middle Way" and believes in cause and effect.

#### ● Why do people hold different views?

The Buddha answered the question as follows; in this world people do not have the same kind of temperaments and inclinations. They obsessively cling to the views that suit their temperaments. Then they insist that only their views are right and that the other views are wrong. Owing to their different temperaments, people differ from one another in their preferences in regard to colors, sounds, clothes and so forth. Likewise they talk about the beliefs which they have accepted on the basis of their attachments and speculations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D. ii. 282

## What is Buddhism?



**THE DOCTRINE OR TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA** is called Buddhism. Everyone who follows the Buddha's teaching is a Buddhist. To be a Buddhist, one must regard the three jewels; the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha as one's refuge and believe in kamma and rebirth. Every Buddhist commits himself or herself to the three jewels by reciting the following formula:

*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

I go to the Buddha for refuge,

*Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

I go to the Dhamma for refuge,

*Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

I go to the Sangha for refuge.

## Who is the Buddha?



**THE NAME OF THE BUDDHA** is just an honorary title which means he was 'Enlightened.' He was named Siddhtha which means "Wish Fulfilled". He was born in the year 623 B.C. at Kappilavatthu on the borders of present-day India and Nepal. His parents were King Suddhodana and Queen Mahā Māyā.

On the fifth day after his birth, learned Brahmins predicted that he would become either a universal monarch or a Buddha. But the youngest, Kondañña, confidently declared that the Prince would definitely become a Buddha.

At the early age of sixteen, he married his beautiful cousin, Princess Yasodharā. For nearly thirteen years, he had a luxurious married life. He knew no personal grief because his father provided more than he could ever need. Although he lived amidst comfort and prosperity, he felt a deep pity for suffering humanity and realized the universality of sorrow.

One glorious day as he went out to the pleasure park to see the world outside, he saw an old man, a disease-ridden man, a corpse and a dignified monk. He had never seen such sights before. When he saw the first three sights, he was convinced that beings are subject to birth, aging, disease, death, sorrow and mental defilement, and so also, would he be.

The fourth sight suggested the ways to overcome the ills of life and to attain calm and peace. So, he decided to leave the worldly life to search for Truth and eternal peace. On the day when his

first and only son was born, he left the palace to become a hermit. At that time he was just 29 years old.

His quest for Truth lasted six years, and at the age of 35, he became the well-known Buddha. He gave numerous sermons for forty-five years until he passed away (went into *Mahāparinibbāna*) at the age of eighty.

### ● Why should anyone take refuge in the Buddha?

The Buddha did not exhort people to take refuge in him. He neither punished nor gave salvation to other beings. He did not judge, but he gave a great deal of guidance to everyone how to live peacefully, how to practice meditation and how to be liberated from all suffering. To know whether or not he is the Buddha, as claimed, people can judge by putting his teachings into practice. When they acquire the benefit of both the worldly and spiritual life, then they should accept him as the Buddha, and take refuge in him.

### ● Why should we pay homage to the image of the Buddha?

Buddhists do not pay homage just to an image of the Buddha. Actually they are paying homage to the attributes of the Buddha. To remind them of the Buddha's Nine Attributes, amongst many, they make an image of the Buddha, and show their reverence to Him in that way. This explains the reason Buddhists prostrate themselves in front of Buddha's images.

## The Attributes of the Buddha

*Iti pi so bhagavā, araham, sammā-sambuddho,  
vijjā carāṇa-saṃpanno, sugato, loka-vidū,  
anuttaro purisa-dhammāsārathi,  
satthā deva-manussānam, buddho, bhagavā.*



**THE BUDDHA HAS NINE ATTRIBUTES**, namely; worthy of honor, the Omniscient, perfect in knowledge and conduct, the Blessed One, knows the worlds, the Tamer of unruly men, the Teacher of gods and men, the Enlightened One and the Exalted One.

### 1. Why is he worthy of honor? (*Araham*)

The Buddha has no greed, ill-will and ignorance which are the source of bad deeds. One who has these mental impurities is attached to sensual pleasures, has anger and aversion to offensive objects, and does not know the true nature of mind and matter; that is, one thinks that everything is permanent and pleasurable. Moreover, the Buddha has uprooted in himself all kinds of mental defilement such as; conceit, envy, meanness, enmity, hypocrisy, boastfulness, deception, etc. Although we may wish to eradicate these things we have not been able to do so, therefore, the Buddha is far better than us and worthy of honor.

### 2. In what sense is he the Fully Enlightened One? (*sammāsāmbuddho*)

The Buddha knows everything by his own insight knowledge without depending on the teaching of others. He is always ready to explain anything that should be explained.

Once, a Prince named Abhaya asked the Buddha, "If learned persons approached and asked you a question they had already

constructed, would the answer occur to you spontaneously, or would you have to reflect on a possible question thinking, 'If anyone approaches me and asks me this, I will answer thus'?"

The Buddha answered with a counter-question, "Can you name all the various parts of a chariot?"

"Yes I can", answered the Prince.

"What do you think, Prince, if anyone should ask thus, 'What is the name of this particular part of the chariot?' would the answer occur to you spontaneously, or would you have to reflect on it in your mind?"

"The answer would occur to me spontaneously because I am a renowned charioteer and all the particular parts of a chariot are fully known to me" replied the prince.

"In the same way, Prince, the answer occurs to me spontaneously because the Dhamma is fully understood and digested by me."

Nobody can answer as many questions as the Buddha. Other teachers, when they are baffled by a question, resort to speculation and imagination. In recognition of these Buddha's unlimited wisdom and knowledge as known, we pay homage to him.

### 3. What is the Buddha's knowledge and conduct?

(*vijjācarāṇa-saṃpanno*)

The Buddha perfects fifteen kinds of conduct, namely: morality, restraint on six senses (looking, listening, scents and fragrances, tasting, bodily contact and thinking), moderation in eating, vigilance, moral shame, moral dread, great learning, wisdom, confidence, industriousness, concentration and the four-fold *jhāna* of the non-material sphere. Because of these attributes it is appropriate to pay homage to the Buddha.

Without right conduct no one can get knowledge. Due to a gift of good deed in previous lives, some may have knowledge without having to study. For four aeons and one hundred thousand world-cycles, throughout innumerable lives the Bodhisatta (the



future Buddha) sought for the well-being of mankind and he practiced the ten noble wholesome deeds (*pāramī*), namely: charity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, industriousness, tolerance, truthfulness, resolve, loving-kindness, and equanimity.

In his last life, realizing that sensual pleasures could never give inner peace, the Bodhisatta renounced the lay life and for six years practiced austerities such as suppression of breathing, starvation and so on. When he realized that self-mortification was also not the way to enlightenment he gave it up and followed the Middle Path to be the Buddha.

#### ● What is the Middle Path?

The Middle Path comprises of eight factors, namely:

- i. **Right Understanding** — There is no ego, soul or Creator. There is only mind and matter, and cause and effect. In every second, they are arising and vanishing.
- ii. **Right Thought** — Thoughts free from hatred are for the welfare of all living beings. They are based on love and goodwill. Thoughts of harmlessness arise from sympathy. Thoughts of renunciation arise from the intention to liberate oneself from sensual desires, mental defilement and the cycle of life.
- iii. **Right Speech** is the speech that is free from lying, slander, abuse and frivolous chatter.
- iv. **Right Action** means abstention from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.
- v. **Right Livelihood** is to make one's living in an honest way and to avoid dealing in armaments, animals for slaughter, slaves, intoxicating drinks, drugs and poisons.
- vi. **Right Effort** — There are four kinds of right effort. The first is to remove unwholesome thoughts. If one has done something wrong in the past one should try not to repeat it. The second is to prevent wrong deeds that have not yet occurred. The third is to try to do good deeds that one has not yet done. For example, one should give alms and

observe moral precepts more often. Fourthly, one should strengthen and perfect the wholesome deeds that one has already developed.

- vii. **Right Mindfulness** is bearing in mind wholesome thoughts which lead to further development of good qualities. It is not beneficial to dwell on past mistakes but you must only resolve to do good in the present moment.

- viii. **Right Concentration** — This refers to mental development by overcoming the restless and scattered nature of the mind.

#### ● The Enlightenment

It was by following this Middle Path that the Bodhisatta attained Enlightenment. In the late evening of the full-moon night of May in 588 B.C. the Bodhisatta acquired the extraordinary knowledge whereby he could recollect all his former lives. At midnight, he attained the Celestial Eye by means of which he could see all the celestial worlds and the destiny of beings. Just before dawn, he managed to eradicate all illusions and attained the supreme Enlightenment. With the extinction of all kinds of mental defilement, and the attainment of the Enlightenment the Bodhisatta realized Nibbāna, inner peace, and became the Omniscient Buddha.

#### 4. Why is he called the Blessed One? (*Sugato*)

The fourth attribute of the Buddha is '*Sugato*' which is translated as the Blessed One or the Happy One. It is a combination of the prefix '*su*' and the word '*gato*'. *Su* means good, and *gato* means speech. The Buddha never speaks anything that is false or meaningless. There are six kinds of speech.

- i. Speech which is untrue, not factual, not beneficial and which is disagreeable to others,
- ii. Speech which is true, factual, not beneficial and which is pleasing to others,
- iii. Speech which is true, factual, and beneficial, but which is disagreeable to others,

- iv. Speech which is not true or factual, not beneficial but which is pleasing to others,
- v. Speech which is true, factual, not beneficial and which is disagreeable to others, and
- vi. Speech which is true, factual, beneficial and which is pleasing to others.

The Buddha's speech is usually the last type, and on some occasions he speaks the third, but for that he knows the right time. As a mother would alleviate a baby from a choking throat, at the risk of even drawing blood, the Buddha sometimes admonishes his disciples severely out of compassion.

In another sense, 'su' means peace, extinction or Nibbāna. *Gato* means getting or realizing. The Buddha is the first to realize Nibbāna, and bears the title of *Sugato*, for being without anyone to show him the way. Although other people realize Nibbāna, they are not given the title *Sugato* because their attainment depends on the guidance of the Buddha.

Again, we can divide *Sugato* into 'su' and 'āgato'. *Su* means straightly or zealously and *āgato* means coming or practising. To reach one's destination or objective one must choose the best way and follow it without deviating. From the time of hearing the prediction from the former Buddha (*Dīpankarā*) that he would become a Buddha also, the Bodhisatta practiced the ten noble wholesome deeds (*pāramī*) and the five great sacrifices (giving up his wealth, wife and children, limbs, eyes and life for the well-being of other people) which lead to Omniscience. Having reached his goal of Perfect Enlightenment, he is called *Sugato*.

#### 5. How does he know the worlds? (*lokavidū*)

The Buddha has knowledge of all existences; that is, he can perceive the nature of all beings, planes and phenomena. He knows all the past, present and future lives of beings as well as their temperament.

Beings differ from one another in their inclinations and preferences. Without the practice of meditation relevant for their particular temperament no one can get the best results. Only the Buddha was able to give the method of meditating for each person in conformity with his or her temperament.

For example, a young son of a goldsmith became a monk (*Bhikkhu*). Venerable Sāriputta gave him the meditation objective of loathsomeness of the body. Although he practiced meditation keenly, he made little progress. So, Sāriputta sent him to the Buddha. Knowing that the monk had been born in the families of goldsmiths for the past five hundred existences, the Buddha created a beautiful golden lotus flower with his psychic powers and told him to concentrate on it. While the monk was concentrating on it the flower gradually withered. Seeing the flower withered, he realized the impermanent nature of all things including himself. Thus he was able to get rid of craving.<sup>1</sup> Had he not met the Buddha he would not have been able to overcome his craving and attachment.

The Buddha also fully knows the true nature of mind and matter. Perhaps, other people may think that mind and matter are permanent and pleasant. But he perceives that they are always changing, that they are ceaselessly arising and vanishing.

#### 6. Why is he the guide of unruly men?

(*anuttaro purisa-dammsārathi*)

The Buddha is also known as the peerless tamer and guide of the hearts of men. This is related to the previous attribute. He has the ability to instruct and tame other people because he knows people's temperament, like a physician who can cure someone effectively only when he knows what is wrong with him. Otherwise, not only the patient may not recover, but he may die due to wrong treatment.

Human beings are treacherous, tricky and guileful. So, it is hard to tame them. One day, when the Buddha was near the

pond named Gaggrā in the city of Sampā, an elephant trainer named Pessa arrived there. When he saw the quiet serene monks surrounding the Buddha he thought, "I am able to tame elephants with ease because they show their minds by their behavior. However, I have difficulty in controlling my slaves and workers who do one thing with their body, another with their speech, and their thought is still on another. But the Buddha can instruct human beings. It is truly wonderful how the Buddha knows the progress and deterioration of beings."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the question arises, "Could the Buddha help everyone with his teaching?" It depends on the spiritual maturity of the individual.

Once, a horse-trainer, Kesi, came to visit the Buddha. The Buddha put this question to him, "How do you train a horse?"

Kesi answered, "I train a horse sometimes by kindness and sometimes by harshness or by both."

"And if the horse does not submit to your training by either of these methods, what do you do?"

"In that case I kill him because I cannot let him be a discredit to my teaching."

Then Kesi asked the Buddha, "How do you train a man?"

"I train him sometimes by kindness and sometimes by harshness and sometimes by both. And if he does not submit to the training, I kill him."

At this, Kesi was shocked, "Surely you do not mean that you kill him! Taking life is not proper for a Buddha."

"That is right, taking life is not proper. Yet, if any man does not follow my training then I think it is not worthwhile to admonish that man, for he is on his own destruction and thus, unworthy of a holy life."<sup>2</sup>

So we should be very careful that we are not such a person who takes no notice of good guidance.

<sup>1</sup> Kandaraka Sutta, MLS Sta. 51, M. i. 340

<sup>2</sup> A. ii. 110

## 7. Why is he the teacher of gods and men?

(*sattthā deva-manussānam*)

The Buddha is able to solve many problems which could not be solved by anyone else. Then he enlightens others. He teaches them how to live, how to practice meditation in order to be released from the cycle of suffering. Some may think that the Buddha is pessimistic and cynical because he often stresses the loathsome aspects of life. But the Buddha not only teaches detachment from the world but also gives many instructions on how to live happily and purely, how to relate to others, how to judge a person, how to make an honest livelihood etc. For one's daily existence the Mangala Sutta and Sigālovāda Sutta are very useful and practical.

Before the birth of the Buddha, there was much dispute on what was a Mangala or blessing or auspicious practice. In those days people believed that seeing certain sights or hearing certain sounds in the morning were signs of good or bad things to come. But no one could agree on what were the best signs. Eventually, the dispute even reached the heavenly planes.

Then, one night, a certain *Deva* approached the Buddha, and, standing respectfully, asked him to preach on Mangalas. The Buddha enumerated 38 kinds of Mangala or auspicious practice. These can be summarized as every act resulting in the good of a person or people is a Mangala or auspicious practice for the present and future. Unanimous acceptance of his explanation ended the dispute. So, the Buddha was deemed as the 'teacher' of gods and men.

## 8. What is the meaning of Buddha? (*Buddho*)

The eighth attribute of the Buddha is 'Enlightened One' or 'Awakened One' — **Buddha**. Anyone who attains Omniscience deserves to be called by that name. One who possesses great wealth is known as a millionaire, it is not necessary for him to announce it. If a poor man claims to be a millionaire he will be ridiculed.

There are three kinds of understanding: understanding based on thinking, understanding based on learning from others and understanding based on mental development which has reached the stage of full concentration. It is by the last of these that the Buddha knows the Four Noble Truths. There is no knowledge beyond the Noble Truths because all phenomena fall within their scope. Without realizing the Four Noble Truths, no one can be free from suffering.

### ● What is the Four Noble Truth?

- i. The first Truth is **about suffering**. The Buddha pointed out that birth, aging, illness, death, association with the unpleasant, and separation from loved ones are sufferings. Also, not to get what one wanted is a suffering. In short, the five aggregates of clinging and craving are sufferings.
- ii. The second is the Truth of the **deriving of suffering**. It is that craving, a potent for rebirth, is accompanied by pleasure and lust, and seeking satisfaction here and there, namely; the craving for sensual pleasure, the craving for existence and the craving for non-existence (with the belief that there is no existence at all after death).
- iii. The third is the Truth of the **cessation of suffering**. It is the utter fading away and cessation of that very craving.
- iv. The fourth is the Truth of the **path leading to the cessation of suffering** or the **noble Eightfold Path**, as already been explained.

### 9. Why is he called the Exalted One? (*Bhagavā*)

The Buddha possesses six special qualities:

- i. Control over his mind
- ii. Nine supra-mundane attributes
- iii. Good disciples
- iv. Glory
- v. The wish to further the welfare of all beings
- vi. Untiring energy.

#### i. Control over his mind

The mind is very difficult to control. It wanders far and near. It lies in the depth of the heart and goes wherever it likes. It is essential to control the mind for a well-tamed mind brings much happiness. Those who can control their mind will get freedom from the bondage of craving (lust).

The Buddha has the ability to control his mind well. He can regard a loathsome object as pleasant, and vice versa. He can view both pleasant and unpleasant objects in equanimity. He can firmly focus his mind on any object.

#### ii. Nine supra-mundane attributes

This refers to his attainment of the Four Paths and the Four Fruits (of *sotāpatti* etc.) and to Nibbāna as the ninth.

#### iii. Good disciples

The Buddha's disciples have acquired great reputation because of the Buddha's extraordinary excellence. Even though he passed away more than 2,540 years ago his name is still alive today because his teachings are so beneficial and accurate. Bigotry and religious fanaticism removed, the teachings of the Buddha are too convincing for any intelligent person to deny.

It is not easy to win over religious bigots. Though they know that the teachings of the Buddha are beyond any doubt, they find it difficult to accept. You can understand how difficult it is from the following story.

In the lifetime of the Buddha, there were two young men, Upatissa and Kolita from the villages near Rājagaha. One day, while watching a show and realizing that the span of life was very short, they decided not to waste their lives in the pursuit of sensual pleasures which would lead them to temporary happiness only. There and then, they decided to find the way leading to lasting inner peace. First, they approached Sañjaya, one of six famous religious leaders. But

they were not satisfied with his teachings so they continued to search for the truth on their own, each going his way.

One day, Upatissa met Venerable Assaji who said, "all things have their causes, and my teacher has shown the cause and the way leading to its cessation." On hearing this, Upatissa attained the first path of insight knowledge (*Sotāpatti*). When he repeated the same verse to his friend (Kolita), the latter too realized Nibbāna.

They both wanted to share this extraordinary teaching with their former teacher, Sañjaya. They went to him and said, "We have found someone who can point out the path to Nibbāna, the true Buddha, the true Dhamma and true Sangha have appeared. Come, let us all go to the teacher."

But Sañjaya refused saying, "I am also a religious leader, I cannot acknowledge anyone else as my teacher. Having been a teacher to so many pupils, for me to become his pupil would be like a water jar turning into a cup."

Then they said, "No one who really loves the truth will come to you. You will remain here alone. Come, let us all go to the Buddha."

To this Sañjaya replied, "In this world, who are the majority, the wise or the foolish?"

"The majority are foolish."

"Then do not worry about me, because even though the wise may go to the Buddha; the foolish will come to me. Go your own way my pupils."

Because of his false pride, he never saw the truth.<sup>1</sup> To fully understand the Dhamma everyone must remove the veil of religious bigotry.

The Buddha was always surrounded by noble disciples who had attained at least the First Path. Perhaps, in number, his followers were sometimes less than those of other teachers, but quality has nothing to do with quantity.

<sup>1</sup> DhA. vv 11, 12

#### iv. Glory

The Buddha is majestic to look at because he has the thirty-two marks of greatness and the eighty minor marks. Five days after his birth, when his father asked learned *Brahmins* to observe his marks, six of them prophesied that the child would become either a Universal Emperor or a Perfect Buddha. But the youngest of all, Kondañña, said quite confidently, "The child will become a supreme Buddha."

Appearance is important because it shows one's birth and status. An exception is, it does not follow that every good looking person has a noble mind. But we can judge most people by their appearances. In this world, famous people often possess good appearances. When we see their statues or pictures, they arouse our admiration.

In the lifetime of the Buddha, a *Brahmin* named Māgandīya had a very beautiful daughter. He thought that an ordinary person was not worthy of his daughter. But when he saw the Buddha he decided that he was the only one worthy of his daughter. He approached the Buddha and said, "I have a very beautiful daughter; I want to give her to you, please wait here for a moment." He hurriedly went off to fetch his wife and daughter but when he returned they saw only a footprint left by the Buddha. As soon as the wife saw the footprint and being an expert in astrology, said, "This is not an ordinary person." After searching for the Buddha who was meditating under a tree, they offered their daughter to the Buddha.

Turning down their offer, the Buddha said, "Even after seeing the beautiful daughters of Māra, I have no desire for sexual pleasures, after all, what is your daughter's body which is full of filth?"

On hearing these words of the Buddha, both the *Brahmin* and his wife attained the third stage of insight knowledge in the noble path. But the daughter became bitter and vowed to take revenge in case an opportunity arose. Although the

Buddha had known her animosity toward him he spoke out of consideration for the wellbeing of her parents.

Because of the Buddha's glorious appearance the *Brahmin* approached him and was blessed with the realization of the Nibbāna.

But although the Buddha's saying was true, the daughter's view of Buddha remained unchanged, out of false pride.<sup>1</sup>

#### v. The wish to further the well-being of all beings

The Buddha is always zealous for the well-being of all beings. Even though he could have easily realized Nibbāna since the time of former Buddha (Dipankarā) who preceded him four aeons and a hundred thousand world cycles<sup>2</sup>, he postponed it.

As soon as he received a prediction that he would become a Buddha, he practiced the noble wholesome deeds in order to gain supreme Enlightenment and to teach all beings to free them from suffering. In his last life, desiring to be Buddha, he carried out self-mortification until his body became a skeleton and he fell down in a dead-like faint. Such was his zealousness in the pursuit of the well-being of people.

#### vi. Untiring energy

The Buddha was the most energetic of all religious leaders. Throughout the forty-five years of his ministry, he was occupied with religious activities except when attending to his physical needs — only taking a short rest after the meal and sleeping about one and a half-hour at night. If there was need for his spiritual guidance, he would go on lengthy journeys to help the person, sometimes by psychic powers, but mostly on foot.

<sup>1</sup> DhA. vv 179, 180.

<sup>2</sup> A kappa or world cycle is the period of evolution and dissolution of the world. An aeon (*asankheyya*) or incalculable period is even longer than that.)

Even in the last minutes before passing away (attaining *Mahā Parinibbāna*), the Buddha had reached. When an ascetic named Subhadda came to the Buddha to dispel his doubt, the attendant Ānanda, younger brother of the Buddha, objected to his meeting with the Buddha, who was sick and close to death. But the Buddha told Ānanda not to prevent him from approaching. On the Buddha's instruction, Subhadda was ordained and became an *Arahant*. Before the Buddha passed away, finally, he addressed his disciples thus, "Behold, O disciples, I exhort you. All compounded things are subject to decay. Practice the Dhamma with diligence."

### THE BENEFITS OF RECITING THE BUDDHA'S ATTRIBUTES

Mind is like pure, colorless water. If someone puts a drop of red dye into pure, colorless water its color swiftly changes to red. In the same way, though one's mind may be intrinsically pure, as soon as one sees or hears or imagines any sensual pleasure, the mind is defiled with lust or greed; once, one sees unpleasant objects the mind is defiled with anger or hatred.

To purify and compose the mind, the Buddha urged his disciples to imagine the attributes of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, or one's morality, generosity etc. While one is contemplating these pure objects the heart is never overwhelmed by passion, hatred, infatuation; the mind is at least, temporarily free from mental defilement. When the mind is free from mental defilement it becomes fully concentrated and joyful and when it is thus well composed one is ready to understand the truths and realize Nibbāna.

Elsewhere the Buddha said, "When someone has gone into the forest, or to an empty place, if he feels fear, panic, creeping under the flesh, he should call to mind the attributes of the Buddha or those of the Dhamma or Sangha. If he does so, his fear will be overcome."

In the lifetime of the Buddha there were two ten-year old boys named Tissa and Datta. While they were playing Tissa always recited "I pay homage to the Buddha" (*Namo Buddhassa*), so he always defeated Datta. Gradually, Datta recited the same although he did not know the meaning of it.

Then, one day Datta went into the forest with his father, a woodcutter, to cut some firewood. On their return home in the evening, they stopped near a cemetery to have their meal. They also removed the yoke from the two oxen to enable them to graze nearby; but the oxen wandered off unnoticed. As soon as they discovered that the oxen had disappeared, the father went to look for them, leaving his son with the cart of firewood. The father entered the town looking for the oxen. When he went to fetch his son it was getting late and the city gate was closed. So the boy had to spend the night alone underneath the cart.

Datta, although young, was in the habit of reciting the qualities of the Buddha; so, that night when two ogres came to frighten him and one of them pulled his leg, he cried out, "I pay homage to the Buddha." Hearing these words the ogres got frightened and felt obliged to guard the boy; so, one of them remained nearby, while the other went to the king's palace and brought some food on King Bimbisāra's tray. The two ogres then fed the boy as if he was their own son and left a written message on the tray that was visible only to the king.

In the morning when the king's servants discovered that the king's tray was missing, they frantically searched the whole city for it and eventually found it among the firewood in the cart. They also found the boy, still asleep underneath the cart. They arrested him as a thief and took him with the tray into the presence of the king. When the king examined the tray he saw the message and asked the boy about it. The boy answered that his parents had come to feed him during the night and that he went to sleep contentedly after his meal. He knew nothing more. The king sent for the boy's parents and took them to the Buddha.

The Buddha explained what had happened and said that the boy's life had been saved by his reciting "*Namo Buddhassa*". The king asked whether only the mindfulness of the Buddha could give such protection from danger or the mindfulness of the Dhamma equally effective.

The Buddha replied that there were six things, mindfulness of which, protected one from danger. They are the qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, the Thirty-two component parts of the body, the meditation on compassion, and the meditation on loving-kindness. At the end of the discourse, the boy and his parents attained the first stage of insight knowledge in the noble path and they later joined the Order and became *Arahants*.

#### RECITE THE ATTRIBUTES WITH MINDFULNESS

Now the attributes of the Buddha have already been explained partially. There is a lot to say more about him but it is fairly enough for beginners. Learn the meaning of the attributes, and whenever you pay homage to the image of the Buddha, you should bear these attributes in mind, otherwise you will be accused of worshipping an idol. You can recite all of the attributes or one of them when you count rosary beads, but it is not good enough to recite the words like a parrot. Realize that what you are reciting is more important than gaining the numbers of round in counting rosary beads. That is why, think of the meaning of the words whenever you recite them. By doing so, you can gain good concentration and develop your devotion to the Buddha. The more you know the Buddha, the more you will learn and practice his teaching, and then you will finally attain the lasting inner peace (*Nibbāna*).

*May all of you attain inner peace!*



## Dhamma (The teachings of the Buddha)



### ● What is the Dhamma?

**DHAMMA OR THE TRUTH** already exists in the world whether or not anyone proclaims it. But a person is needed to reveal it correctly. The Buddha searched for the truth and found it. So we revered him as an exponent of the truth. In addition, by way of acknowledging his ability, the exposition of the truth is called Buddhism. Whether or not one acknowledges the Buddha, if one follows the truth, one can get benefits. But I think one cannot fully understand the profound truth of selflessness (*Anatta*) without depending on the Buddha's skilful exposition.

## The Attributes of the Dhamma

*Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo  
sanditṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko opaneyyiko  
paccattam veditabbo viññūhi'ti*



**THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING OR DHAMMA** is endowed with six attributes: it is well proclaimed, relating to the present, immediate in its results, inviting and challenging all, leading on to Nibbāna and to be comprehended by the wise each for himself.

### 1. Well-proclaimed (*Svākkāto*)

From the time of his supreme Enlightenment until passing away (attaining *Parinibbāna*), a period of 45 years, the Buddha preached many discourses. They were enumerated in the following order. The subject of charity (*Dana-kathā*), the subject of morality (*Sīla kathā*), the subject of heavenly beings (*Saggakathā*), which describes the delights of the *Devas'* blissful existence and the subject of different levels of insight knowledge (*Magga kathā*) which exposes the disadvantages of sensual pleasures and advantages of freedom from all kinds of mental defilement.

None of his teaching is concerned with animosity, revenge, selfishness, racism or religious prejudice. Because it is systematically composed with correct grammar and meaning, no one can find any fault with his teaching.

If a person listens to the Dhamma without cavil, capriciousness or bigotry, there is no reason for him to reject it.

From the following example you can judge the value of the Buddha's teachings. In the lifetime of the Buddha, while a *Brahman*

named Kāranapālin was building a house, he saw his friend, Pingiyanin, coming towards him. When his friend approached him and asked, "What do you think of the Buddha's clarity in wisdom? As for me, I think he is rather wise."

Pingiyanin said, "Who am I to judge the wisdom of the Buddha? To judge his wisdom one must be like him; he is too wise for me to even guess."

"Why do you praise him so highly?", the former asked.

Pingiyanin explained to him, "As a man, who is satisfied with some choice savor, does not long for any other savors, even so, whenever a person hears any part of the Buddha's teaching he does not long for the talk of others."

"As a man who, overcome by hunger and weakness, if he tastes any part of a honey cake, enjoys the sweet, delicious taste, even so, whenever a person hears the teaching of the Buddha he becomes elated, serene of mind and happy."

"As a clever physician can immediately take away the sickness of a patient, even so, whenever a person hears the Buddha's teaching his grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow and despair vanish."

"As a man who is tortured by heat, thirst and weariness might come to a clear, sweet, cool pool and, plunging therein, bathe, drink and thus allay all his woe, even so, whenever anyone hears the teachings of the Buddha all his woe and fatigue is wholly allayed because the Dhamma is proclaimed well and completely."

Kāranapālin was very pleased with the explanation and then paid homage to the Buddha saying, "*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddassa* — adoration to him, the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One."<sup>1</sup>

One should also know the other qualities of the Dhamma: it is good in the beginning, in the middle and in the end of the Buddha's teaching; and it sets forth the meaning and the letter of the holy life, wholly fulfilled and perfectly pure.

1 A. iii. 237

## 2. Relating to the Present (*sandittiko*)

It may be that some people think that the Buddha's teachings relate only to the future life. Some people even say that the Buddha threatened people with the past and enticed people by presenting the prospect of a bright future. But it is not like that. He related many stories to bring to people's attention the danger of unwholesome deeds and the merit of wholesome deeds. All his teachings can be condensed into the fact that there is only cause and effect. He propounded the doctrine of dependent origination which can be stated as follows:

Because of new existence, all beings suffer decay and death. Clinging brings new existence into being. Clinging is due to craving that in turn stems from feeling. Again feeling is conditioned by sense contact which depends on the six senses. The six spheres of sense have their origin in mind and matter, which are rooted in consciousness. Consciousness is due to kamma formations. The root cause of kamma formations is ignorance that is due to craving. Craving and ignorance depend on one another. To understand their relationship, one must practice meditation.

For the most part, the teachings of the Buddha are about charity, morality and development of the mind or insight meditation. If a person practices the Dhamma he will get due benefit in accordance with his effort at any time.

A person who lacks morality will have to face disadvantages in his worldly and spiritual life. His bad reputation will spread among good people. When he approaches people he will suffer disfavor and timidity. An immoral person will die, confused and then will be reborn in one of the four lower worlds; hell, animal, spirit or demons. To get the opposite results, a person must observe the moral code.

A person who offers alms is loved by good and wise men, and they come to him. His good reputation is spread abroad among people. He is respected and loved by many people. On the dissolution of the body at death he will be reborn in the

happy, heavenly world.

A person who, by practicing insight meditation, purifies his mind; overcomes sorrow and lamentation, is released from physical pain and mental distress, attains the noble path (*Magga*) and realizes Nibbāna. So the Dhamma gives many advantages, not only after death, but also in this very life.

### 3. Immediately Effective (*Akālika*)

The third attribute of the Dhamma is that it produces immediate results. This attribute is rather difficult to explain because it is related to the four supra-mundane paths, the fruits of holiness and the realization of Nibbāna. When a person has mature knowledge of insight meditation, he roots out all kinds of mental defilement in stages by the four paths and immediately following those attainments he can be absorbed in the corresponding fruits of holiness and realization of Nibbāna. Because one does not have to wait to get the fruit of the Practice, the Dhamma is called for immediate effectiveness. To understand this attribute a person should meditate.

There are five hindrances of the mind by reason of which the mind is neither pliable, nor ready to meditate or purify itself, nor rightly composed for the destruction of the defilement. They are sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, remorse and worry, and doubt. To be free from these hindrances there is no simple way other than by meditating. When the mind is free from these five debasements it is pliable, pure, ready to get psychic knowledge and become an eyewitness to the true nature of life.

A person, being rid of these five hindrances which obstruct the heart and weaken insight knowledge, will know his own good or another's good and will know the mutual good, and will realize the excellence of knowledge. So we should know that the more our insight meditation matures, the more we will understand the teachings of the Buddha.

### 4. Inviting Investigation (*Ehipassiko*)

The Buddha never encouraged blind faith and speculation. He allowed every aspect of his teaching to be questioned, because his teaching can withstand critical inspection by the wise. He always encouraged people to make inquiry into all teachings saying in the *Kālāma Sutta*, "Do not believe anything which is based on hearsay, tradition, rumor, what is in any scriptures, speculation, axiom, plausible argument, bias towards a notion that has been pondered over, a famous person's speech, one's respect for a teacher.

But when you yourself know, 'These things are bad, blameworthy, censured by the wise; these things lead to harm and sorrow,' abandon them. When you yourself know, 'These things are good, praised by the wise; these things lead to benefit and happiness,' undertake and observe them."<sup>1</sup>

See! How notable the Buddha's teaching is. He never boasted, "There is no need to inquire into my teaching because I am a great teacher; I know every thing perfectly." So for this reason, we revere him.

Some people believe in a Creator who is eternal and has the power to create everything, including the world. They hold that the brevity or longevity of a man's life, or his poverty and wealth, etc., is determined by the Creator. Perhaps some people's ultimate goal is to be associated with Him after death.

During the lifetime of the Buddha, a discussion about the best way to reach a state of union with Brahma (the Supreme Being) sprang up among the people. In those days some people believed in Brahma as the Creator. One day, two young *Brahmans*, Vāsettha and Bhāradvāja, were debating about the direct way which leads to union with Brahma. But neither was able to convince the other because they held that only what their own teachers taught was right. To settle the dispute they agreed to go to the Buddha. They went to the Buddha and related their debate to him.

The Buddha asked them, "Do all your teachers say that a person who acts in accordance with their teaching, will reach a state of union with the Supreme Being?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir," they replied, "because of that we want to know which of them is right."

"Put aside that question for now and answer this; although your teachers pray and recite the three Vedas, dedicated to seeing Brahma (the Supreme Being), is there a single one of them who has ever seen the Supreme Being face to face?"

"No, indeed not, Venerable Sir," they replied.

"Then in that case, is it possible to believe their words? They look like a string of blind men, who are clinging to one another, of which neither the foremost can see, nor the middle one can see, nor can the hindmost see. Therefore the talk of your teachers turns out to be ridiculous. Just as a man who, never having seen a beautiful lady, and who does not know where she is, whether she is tall or short or of medium height, what color her complexion is, but longs for and loves the most beautiful lady in the world; your teachers say, 'This is the most direct way which leads to a state of union with Brahma without knowing where he is, or who he is'."

The Buddha then asked them whether Brahma (the Supreme Being) possessed a wife and wealth; whether he had anger, mental obstructions, mental impurities. They replied, "Surely Brahma is without anger, mental obstructions and impurities, and possesses no wife or wealth."

Then the Buddha asked if their teachers were like this.

"Indeed they are the opposite to this" they replied.

"Is it then possible for them to associate with (the Supreme Being)? Just as a man who is standing on the river-bank, and who wants to reach the other bank, will not reach it just by saying 'Come here other bank, come over to this side!' Just so they will not be united with the Supreme Being merely by their invoking, praying, hoping and praising."

### ● The way to unite with the Supreme Being

Then the two *Brahmans* asked the Buddha, "Do you know the way which leads to the state of union with the Supreme Being?"

"Yes, I know the way. Just as a man, who is born and brought up in a village and who has only just left that village, undoubtedly knows every road that leads to that village. Brahmās always stay with the four noble states of mind; loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy and equanimity. So, if a person wants to associate with Brahmā, he must possess right behaviour and conduct, must adopt and train himself in precepts, must fill himself with virtue in speech, deed and thought, must guard the doors of his senses and he must develop the four noble states of mind towards all beings and in all directions."

They were very pleased with the Buddha's explanation.<sup>1</sup>

If you do not believe in his explanation, you can test his way to reach union with Brahma. Here, you should not misunderstand that the Buddha believed in the Creator. According to the ancient tradition, Brahma was regarded as a Creator. Although the Buddha spoke of and accepted the existence of Brahma he did not regard him as a Creator.

### ● The aim of Buddhists

To realize inner peace or Nibbāna is the be-all and end-all of every Buddhist's life. What is Nibbāna. It is the total extinction of suffering or mind and matter. In this regard, some people may think Nibbāna is useless because of this idea of annihilation.

One should not misunderstand that as soon as a person realizes Nibbāna, his mind and matter are absolutely extinguished. A person can realize Nibbāna and be absorbed into inner peace during his life-time. Only after a person passes away as an *Arahant* or a Buddha, his mind and matter

<sup>1</sup> Tevijja Sutta; D. i. p300 Ch13.

absolutely extinguished. There is no way to attain Nibbāna but to practice the Dhamma. If a person puts the Dhamma into practice, even if he does not realize Nibbāna, he will get due benefit in accordance with his own effort. There is no need for a Buddhist to rely on others for salvation. Just by practicing the Dhamma a person will be promoting his own well-being. Although a person may be a Buddhist in name, if he is lacking in practice of Dhamma, he will not get any advantage from the Dhamma.

#### 5. **Leading on to Nibbāna (*Opaneyyiko*)**

Everybody must have a goal in their life or they will be like a rudderless boat. A Buddhist always keeps in mind his resolve to realize Nibbāna and when he does wholesome deeds he has that view in mind. Once a person has realized Nibbāna he will never again land in the four lower worlds. If he attains at least the first stage of the path (*Sotāpatti magga*) he will, from then on, be born at most seven times in the human world or in higher Deva and Brahma realms.

All of the Buddha's teachings lead towards Nibbāna. By following his *Dāna kathā* (the subject of charity) one extinguishes the mental defilement of meanness and selfishness which lead to poverty in future lives. By following his *Sīla kathā* (the subject of morality) one extinguishes mental corruption which leads to pain and disease. By following his *Magga kathā* (the subject of the levels of insight knowledge) one extinguishes all kinds of mental defilement and attains Nibbāna, the end of all suffering.

#### ● **What is Nibbāna?**

Perhaps some people think that Nibbāna is a place because, in some literary works, it is compared to a golden city. Actually it is not a place or a plane of existence. It cannot be seen by the eyes but it can be known by the mind only through the knowledge of the noble path (*Magga ñāṇa*). The way to attain this knowledge is none other than the Eightfold

Noble Path. The practice of charity and morality enables one to follow this path more easily, but if anyone wishes to be free from suffering he must follow all eight aspects of this path diligently and intelligently.

#### 6. **To be comprehended by everyone for oneself.**

(*paccattam veditabbo viññūh'ti*)

A worldling can understand the nature of Nibbāna through hearsay or learning but he cannot realize it as an *Ariya* (Noble one) does. An *Ariya* means a person who has rooted out the flames of lust, hatred or ignorance which are the root causes of suffering. He/she always practices the eightfold path so he/she attains Nibbāna by his effort. No one can pass on the supra-mundane results to another as one might share other kinds of merits. Even the Buddha can only explain the way to attain it. It is up to each individual to follow that way to be a noble one.

It is more important to practice the Dhamma than to worship the Buddha. He never encouraged any kind of personality cult, even though he won the reverence and veneration of all. During the time of the Buddha, a monk (*Bhikkhu*) named Vakkali was very much impressed by the noble appearance of the Buddha and he always followed him closely, neglecting to meditate. So the Buddha said to him, "It will be of no use to you merely to look at my face. You must practice insight meditation; for indeed only the one who sees the Dhamma, sees me, one who does not see the Dhamma does not see me; so you should leave my presence."

Vakkali felt very depressed and attempted to commit suicide by jumping down from the mount Vulture's peak. The Buddha foresaw this, so he sent forth his radiance to Vakkali and made him feel his presence, appearing as if in person to him. The Buddha said, "The monk who frequently feels joy and is devoted to the teachings of the Buddha will realize Nibbāna."<sup>1</sup>

With the Buddha near him, Vakkali soon forgot all his sorrows, and at the end of the Buddha's words Vakkali meditated

on his ecstasy and attained Arahantship.

The story shows how important it is to practice the Dhamma. The harder a person tries to practice the Dhamma, the more he will get happiness. At least, he will be free from self-accusation because a person may be able to deceive others but he will always know his own intention. To comprehend the Dhamma, a person should practice meditation.

### ● Insight Meditation

We can find various forms of meditation which are practiced by different people. According to the dictionary, meditation means considering or thinking about something. Perhaps they may think that by meditating on God they can be free from greed, hatred and ignorance etc. It is only partly right. It is like the practice of *samatha* meditation which was also taught by the Buddha.

The practice of *samatha* is for the sake of developing tranquillity by thinking about the attributes of the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, one's morality, charity etc. Such meditation leads at best to rebirth in a heavenly plane of existence. Heavenly beings still possess mind and matter. As long as there is mind and matter one has to suffer physical and mental pain. Nevertheless, *samatha* is a necessary prerequisite for *vipassanā* meditation because without tranquillity one cannot understand the nature of mind and matter.

*Vipassanā* meditation, however, is not just thinking about something. Its purpose is to understand correctly the nature of mind and matter within oneself. Only one who understands the real nature of mind and matter by meditating knows fully about their impermanence and unsatisfactory nature. Then one has no desire for them. Being free from all defilement, one realizes Nibbāna and puts an end to rebirth. Therefore, the word meditation alone is not sufficient to cover the full meaning of the word *vipassanā*. Insight meditation is a suitable translation for it.

### ● Should everyone practice insight meditation?

In this world everybody seeks happiness because nobody likes suffering. So, people are making all possible efforts to be free from suffering but they are not able to achieve perfect happiness. Their efforts are mainly concerned with their physical well-being which cannot provide permanent happiness. Trying to get momentary pleasure which depends on material gain, they run into hardship again and again. They are like people who have drunk salty water. The more they drink, the more thirsty they will be. One's mind may be easily overwhelmed by sorrow, pain and grief when one meets difficult circumstances such as association with antagonistic people, separation from beloved ones, or the frustration over one's desires.

Happiness and sorrow are conditioned by mental attitudes. A sensitive mind cannot tolerate unfavorable circumstances. An unstable building cannot withstand an earthquake; it will collapse easily. In the same way a person whose mind is undeveloped will easily be upset when he/she has to go through hard times. So, to maintain peace and happiness, he/she should develop his/her mind. To develop the mind, the best way is to practice insight meditation. The more one meditates, the more mature one's mind will become and then one will be able to overcome sorrow, pain and grief when they arise.

### ● The King of heavenly beings' Question

One day the King of heavenly beings was very unhappy because he knew that he would die after only seven more days. So he went to the Buddha to ask how to overcome his unhappiness. But without exposing his personal grief, he asked a general question, "All living beings always want to get happiness but they are not free from danger and suffering. Why is that?"

The Buddha replied, "They do not get happiness because they bear envy and selfishness in their minds."

Sakka, the King of heavenly beings, asked again, "What is the cause of envy and selfishness?"

The Buddha replied, "Envy and selfishness are caused by love and hatred. If they have no love or hatred they will not fall into the error of envy and selfishness. Love and hatred are in turn dependent on craving. And craving depends on random thinking about sense objects."<sup>1</sup>

If a person sees something he/she is likely to perceive it as attractive or repulsive. When he/she considers that it is attractive, desire arises in him/her. If it appears repulsive, hatred will arise. So it is reflection or thinking that causes love and hatred to arise. In order to prevent love and hatred arising, when a person sees something he/she should note "seeing, seeing." Then there is no need to consider whether it is pretty or not, or even whether it is a man or woman. In the same way one should note the other sense objects as "hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking."

In order to restrain his random thinking a person should concentrate his/her mind on one object in his/her body. The Buddha gave a lot of methods to prevent desire and hatred from arising. To follow the teaching of the Buddha there is no need to pay homage to the Buddha. He never said that one must revere him in order to practice his teachings. So a person of any religion can practice his method.

One of his methods is to concentrate on the breath. If a person wants to meditate he/she should first find a quiet place. Then cross the legs comfortably; sit with the upper body erect; close the eyes; breathe steadily; and concentrate on the nostrils. When a person breathes he/she will feel the air which passes through his/her nostrils. As he/she breathes in, he/she must make a note of "in" to keep his/her mind on the process of breathing. When he breathes out he/she must

make a note "out". While a person is concentrating on the 'ins' and 'outs' of breaths, there is no greed, hatred or delusion in his/her mind. So, he/she is gaining great merit as long as he/she is practicing.

My teacher, the late Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, teaches the method of concentrating on the rising and falling of the abdomen. When a person breathes in the abdomen rises. Then he/she must note "rising, rising." When he/she breathes out the abdomen will fall. Then, he/she must note "falling, falling." For a beginner it may be easier for him/her to notice the rising and falling of the abdomen than to concentrate on the in and out breaths. It is like when a blacksmith is working, he/she watches the bellows. He or she sees the rising and falling of the bellows.

At first, the mind of a person who is meditating will often wander away from the object of meditation. There is no need to worry about this. This is one of the first realizations of meditation. Before a person starts practicing insight meditation he/she did not know the nature of the mind. Perhaps, he/she thought he/she could control his/her mind easily. But now he/she finds that the mind is like a wild animal tied to a post; it struggles hard to get around and escape. Because people are used to living without even trying to control their minds, when their minds are tied to the post of *vipassanā*, their mind often try to run away from the object of meditation.

While a person is meditating, if his or her mind reaches somewhere or he or she imagines meeting and speaking with somebody, he or she should note "meeting" or "talking." When this has been noted once or twice the mind will stop wandering away and then he or she can go back to noting the rising and falling of the abdomen. He or she will find that as he or she practices more and more the mind will gradually become tranquil and he or she will get some concentration.

<sup>1</sup> Sakka Pañha Sutta; D ii. 263



When a person meditates for a long time, he or she will encounter feelings of stiffness, heat or pain etc. Perhaps, he or she may think that meditating causes him to suffer more, because in his or her daily life he or she tries to live a life of ease, comfort and luxury. When he or she feels stiffness, pain or heat etc., in one body posture, he or she changes his or her body to another position to ease the sensation. Until a person suffers from a serious disease, he or she regards his or her body as a pleasant or useful thing. But when he or she is stricken by a serious disease and is close to death he or she cannot easily change his or her posture to ease the sensation. Therefore one should practice in order to be able to overcome unpleasant sensations by developing patience and endurance before he or she meets with such an unfavorable circumstance.

Unpleasant sensations can be overcome by systematic practice. If, while a person is meditating, unpleasant sensations become unbearable, mindfulness must be focused on the most conspicuous pain or heat etc., and then he or she must note them mentally as they arise as "pain, pain" or "heat, heat." While mindfulness is applied to these various sensations of pain and discomfort, they may increase in intensity. He or she may then wish to change his or her posture, but this should not be done immediately. He or she should make a mental note of this wish and if he or she has to change his or her posture, he or she must do so very slowly, noting the movements involved. But he or she should not change the posture very often. He or she should continue noting with patience. If patience is lacking it will take much longer to develop *samādhi* or tranquillity. Without tranquillity, insight knowledge will not ensue. When mindfulness and insight knowledge have grown in strength the unpleasant feeling will disappear as if it has been suddenly taken away.

A person who is meditating should not, however, hope that great benefits would come quickly and easily. According

to the maturity of one's knowledge from practice in previous lives and the degree of effort in the present life one will get due benefits. Even if one cannot realize Nibbāna at once, one's efforts will not be in vain. All one's endeavors will make one's knowledge ripe for full development after some years or in future lives. Therefore, everyone should practice insight meditation whenever they have a chance, as no one knows when they will have such a good opportunity again.

### THE TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA (*Tipiṭaka*)

I have partly mentioned the attributes of the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha. There is a lot to say more about them. To give some information about the Dhamma, I extract this Part from Buddhism in a nutshell by Venerable Nārāda Thera.

The collection of the teachings of the Buddha is called "Tipiṭaka." It is estimated to be about eleven times the size of the Bible.

Immediately after the Buddha passed away, 500 enlightened disciples who have destroyed all passions versed in the Teachings and the Disciplines, held a convocation to rehearse the Doctrine as was originally taught by the Buddha. Venerable Ānanda Thera, who enjoyed the special privilege of hearing all the discourse, recited the Teachings (Dhamma), while the Venerable Upāli recited the Disciplines (Vinaya). They were compiled as the "Tipiṭaka."

As the world itself implies the Tipiṭaka consists of three baskets. They are the Basket of Discipline (Vinaya Piṭaka), the Basket of Discourses (Sutta Piṭaka), and the Basket of Ultimate Doctrine (Abhidhamma Piṭaka).

The Vinaya Piṭaka which is regarded as the sheet anchor to the oldest historic celibate order—the Sangha—mainly deals with rules and regulations which the Buddha promulgated, as occasion arose, for the future discipline of the Order of monks (*Bhikkhus*) and nuns (*Bhikkunis*). It described in detail the gradual development of the *Sāsana* (Dispensation). An account of the life and ministry of the Buddha is

also given. Indirectly it reveals some important and interesting information about ancient history, Indian customs, arts, science, etc.

The Vinaya Piṭaka consists of the five following books:

**Vibhanga**

1. Pārājika Pāli — Major Offences
2. Pācittiya Pāli — Minor Offences

**Khandaka**

3. Māhevagga Pāli — Greater Section
4. Cullavagga Pāli — Shorter Section
5. Parivāra Pāli — Epitome of the Vinaya

The Sutta Piṭaka consists chiefly of discourses, delivered by the Buddha himself on various occasions. There are also a few discourses delivered by some of his distinguished disciples such as the Venerable Sāriputta, Ānanda, Moggallāna etc., included in it. It is like a book of prescriptions, as the sermons embodied therein were expounded to suit the different occasions and the temperaments of various persons. There may be seemingly contradictory statements, but they should not be misconstrued as they were opportunely uttered by the Buddha to suit a particular purpose: for instance, to the self-same question he would maintain silence (when the inquirer is merely foolishly inquisitive), or give a detailed reply when he knew the inquirer to be an earnest seeker. Most of the sermons were intended mainly for the benefit of *Bhikkhus*, and they deal with the Holy life and with the exposition of the doctrine. There are also several other discourses which deal with both the material and moral progress of his lay followers.

This Piṭaka is divided into five Nikāyas or collections. Viz:

1. Dīgha Nikāya — Collection of Long Discourses
2. Majjhima Nikāya — Middle-length Discourses
3. Saṃyutta Nikāya — Collection of Kindred Sayings
4. Anguttara Nikāya — Collection of Discourses arranged in accordance with numbers

**5. Khuddaka Nikāya — Smaller Collection**

The fifth is subdivided into fifteen books:

1. KhuddakaPāṭha — Shorter texts
2. Dhammapada — Way of Truth
3. Udāna — Paeans of Joy
4. Iti Vuttaka — "Thus said" Discourses
5. Sutta Nipāta — Collected Discourses
6. Vimāna Vatthu — Stories of *Deva*
7. Peta Vatthu — Stories of *Petas*
8. Thera-gātha — Psalms of the Brethren
9. Therī-gātha — Psalms of the Sisters
10. Jātaka — Birth Stories
11. Niddesa — Expositions
12. Paṭisambhidā Magga — Analytical Knowledge
13. Apadāna — Lives of *Arahants*
14. Buddhavaṃsa — The History of the Buddha
15. Cariyā Piṭaka — Modes of Conduct

The Abhidhamma Piṭaka is the most important and the most interesting of the three, containing as it does the profound philosophy of the Buddha's Teaching in contrast to the illuminating and simpler discourses in the Sutta Piṭaka.

In the Sutta Piṭaka is found the conventional teaching (*Vohāra-desanā*) while in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka is found the ultimate teaching (*Paramattha-desanā*).

To the wise, Abhidhamma is an indispensable guide; to the spiritual evolved an intellectual; treat; and to research scholars, food for thought. Consciousness is defined. Thoughts are analysed and classified chiefly from an ethical standpoint. Mental states are enumerated. The composition of each type of consciousness is set forth in detail. How thoughts arise, is minutely described. Irrelevant problems that interest mankind but having no relation to one's purification are deliberately set aside.

Matter is summarily discussed; fundamental units of matter, properties of matter, sources of matter, relationship between mind and matter, are explained.

The Abhidhamma investigates mind and matter, the two composite factors of the so-called being, to help the understanding of things as they truly are, and a philosophy has been developed on those lines. Based on that philosophy, an ethical system has been evolved, to realize the ultimate goal, Nibbāna.

The Abhidhamma Piṭaka consists of seven books:

1. Dhammasaṅgaṇī — Classification of Dhammas
2. Vibhanga — The Book of Divisions
3. Kathā-Vutthu — Points of Controversy
4. Puggala-Paññatti — Description of Individuals
5. Dhatu-Kathā — Discussion with Reference to Elements
6. Yamaka — The Book of Pairs
7. Paṭṭhāna — The Book of Relations

In the Tipiṭaka, one finds milk for the babe and meat for the strong, for the Buddha taught his doctrine both to the masses and to the intelligentsia.

*May all of you acquire knowledge studying the Tipiṭaka and propagate the teachings of the Buddha!*

## The Sangha (The Community of Noble Disciples)



**SANGHA MEANS A CONGREGATION** of those who have the same view. According to Buddhism, to be considered the Sangha, there must be at least four monks who follow the 227 monastic rules laid down by the Buddha. (In addition to these there are a great many more minor rules). There are two kinds of Sangha; *Ariya Sangha* and *Puthujjana Sangha*. A member of the *Ariya Sangha* has attained one or more of the stages of holiness; the four supra-mundane paths (*magga*) and fruitions (*phala*). The *Ariya Sangha* came into being on the fifth waning day of July following the Buddha's Enlightenment.

An ordinary monk (*Puthujjana Bhikkhu*) is still possessed of all ten fetters binding to the round of rebirths but he always tries to reach the noble state of an *Ariya*. To be ordained as a monk (*Bhikkhu*) he must have his own bowl and three robes; an outer double robe, an under robe and an upper robe. He must be free from such diseases as leprosy, boils, eczema, consumption and epilepsy. He must be a male human being and free from debt. He must be a free man and not a slave. He must have his parents' consent and be fully twenty years of age from conception. To ordain a monk (*Bhikkhu*) there must be at least five monks or at least ten in the middle country of India (*majjhima desa*).

## The Attributes of the Sangha

*Supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasango, ujupaṭipanno bhagavato  
sāvakasango, nāyapaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasango,  
sāmicipaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasango,  
yadidam cattāri purisayugāni attha purisapuggalā,  
esa bhagavato sāvakasango; āhuneyyo, pāhuneyyo dakkhineyyo  
anjalikaraniyo, anuttaram punnakkhetam lokassa.*



**THE BUDDHA'S ORDER OF ARIYA SANGHA** has practiced well, practiced straightly, practiced intelligently and completely. It is worthy of offerings, hospitality, gifts and reverence. It is an incomparable field of merit for the world.

### 1. Practiced Well (*Supaṭipanno*)

The task of the Sangha is to put the teachings of the Buddha into practice and to preach to others. So, a member of the Sangha has to practice the Dhamma well, even if he cannot propagate the teachings of the Buddha. If he says, "Do as I say, not as I do," he cannot teach others effectively. A poor man can give nothing to others; if he tries to do so he will only fall into debt. The recipient too, will not be satisfied with a loan. So, a member of the Sangha who wants to eradicate the mental defilement has to practice the teachings of the Buddha well.

A noble monk (*Ariya Bhikkhu*) never commits the deeds which have been described as an obstacle to the attainment of Nibbāna. During the lifetime of the Buddha the people blamed some monks who went to a public alms-house every day for their meal. When the Buddha was told of this he made a rule permitting the monks to take only one meal at a public alms-house. Then, when Sāriputta was going on a journey, he fell sick at an alms-house. He had eaten a meal there for one day but could not yet set out on his journey. Although some people

offered food to him, he did not eat even at the risk of his life, because of his wish to keep the rule laid down by the Buddha. When the Buddha came to know about this he made an amendment to the rule allowing a sick monk to take meals at an alms-house until he recovers. A noble monk never breaks the Vinaya rules even for the sake of his own comfort.

If a ordinary monk is endowed with five factors: believes in the enlightenment of the Buddha, has good health and digestion, is not deceitful, sustains vigorous effort to root out the mental defilement, and is endowed with insight into the impermanence of things, he will soon attain Arahantship.<sup>1</sup> So, the ordinary monk (*Puthujjana Bhikkhu*) is also worthy of reverence.

### 2. Practiced Correctly (*ujupaṭipanno*)

Following the Middle Path without deceit, a monk practices correctly the way leading to higher knowledge. Most people always pursue sensual pleasures because they assume that that is the best way to be happy. But the happiness that is dependent on sensual pleasures is short-lived. As soon as a person obtains the object he desires, he wants something else. He is like a thirsty person who has drunk salty water. In the effort to get pleasures, he has to suffer many hardships and disappointments. So, realizing this danger, monks do not pursue sensual pleasures. Some people, because they know that sensual pleasures produce suffering, try to remove desires from them by practicing self-torment. But that way is also wrong. Not only is it connected with sensuality but also it cannot cause knowledge to arise. By practicing it a person only doubles his suffering. So monks avoid the practice of self-torment.

There are two kinds of dishonesty. An ignoble person is reluctant to admit his faults and hides his wrong-doing by fair means or foul. He also makes much of his good qualities to gain more honor. You can find the two kinds of dishonesty among those who do not respect the Dhamma and are greedy to possess great wealth and influence. But, the noble one (*Ariya*)

<sup>1</sup> A. iii. 64

who has attained the first path (*sotāpatti magga*) eradicates all dishonesty. After he has made some mistakes without intention, as soon as he sees his defect, he admits his mistake and resolves not to do it again. So, this honesty and straight-forwardness is an attribute of the *Ariya Sangha*.

A ordinary monk might pretend to be a noble person because of his desire for fame and wealth, however, a scrupulous monk will never do that because he knows what people often get into trouble through such deceit.

The Buddha gave the following guidelines on how to size up a person by his words. Someone who possesses four traits is to be understood as an ignoble person. What are the four?

- i. A man says what is discreditable about an other even when he is not asked. If he gets a chance to speak, he utters faults of another in full and in detail without reserve.
- ii. He does not say what is to another's credit even when asked, let alone if not asked. If he has to speak, he utters praise grudgingly and in brief.
- iii. He does not admit what is discreditable about himself even when asked let alone if unasked. When he has to speak he admits his faults grudgingly with reservations and equivocation.
- iv. He says what is creditable about himself even when not asked. When he gets a chance to speak, he sings his own praises to the full and without reserve.

Thus possessed of these four traits he is to be understood as an ignoble person.<sup>1</sup> Possessed of the opposite four traits he is to be understood as a noble person.

So, one can judge who is a good person by listening carefully. A hypocrite may be clever enough to deceive ignorant people but he will not fool those with discrimination.

In the lifetime of the Buddha a monk behaved in such a way that some regarded him as wise person. To admonish the monk, the Buddha related a story of the past.

<sup>1</sup> A. ii. 76

Once while King Brahmadatta ruled in Benares the Bodhisatta was born in a merchant's family. An ascetic lived in a village supported by a wealthy man. One day, the wealthy man buried his treasure under the temple and told the hermit to look after it. Then the ascetic said, "It is not proper to do that, an ascetic never takes care of treasures." After three days the ascetic took away the treasure and buried it in another place. Then he told his supporter, "An ascetic should not stay always in one place; he should be like a bird, so I am going to another place." The rich man requested him not to leave his temple but it was in vain.

Soon after leaving, the ascetic returned again to visit the rich man who was very happy to see him and asked, "Why do you return, have you changed your mind?" The ascetic showed him a piece of thatch that was sticking in his hair and said, "When I came out of your house, this thatch got stuck to my hair so I came to return your property to you."

The naive rich man admired the ascetic's scrupulousness but the Bodhisatta guessed his pretence and asked the rich man, "Does the ascetic know any secret of yours?" The rich man told the Bodhisatta about the buried treasure. The Bodhisatta said, "Go and see if the treasure is still there. If you do not find it there is no one to suspect other than the ascetic." The rich man immediately left and found that his treasure had disappeared. He followed the ascetic and beat him until he confessed. Then the rich man took possession of his treasure again. So, you should remember that all that glitters is not gold, and be on your guard against hypocrites.

### 3. Practiced Wisely (*nāyapaṭipanno*)

Monks are practicing for the realization of inner peace (*Nibbāna*). Although lay people could also realize *Nibbāna* their life is very busy. They are not able to practice the Eightfold Path which leads to *Nibbāna* so freely as a monk. In order to practice more freely some people join the Order.

In the lifetime of the Buddha, as soon as a person was ordained he went to the Buddha and asked for a method of meditation. Then, he practiced earnestly in a suitable quiet place in order to realize Nibbāna. Depending on his spiritual maturity he could realize Nibbāna, in a short or longer time.

Perhaps some people think that a person who is lazy or who finds it hard to make a living in lay life might become a monk. In the lifetime of the Buddha, a king named Korabya approached a monk, Ratthapāla, son of a rich family and said, "There are four kinds of loss; the loss through old age, the loss through illness, the loss of wealth and the loss of relatives. When a person becomes old or decrepit he reflects thus, 'I am worn out. It is not easy for me to acquire wealth nor to use the luxuries of wealth I have had already. It would be better to be ordained'. And he becomes a monk. An invalid also reflects in the same way. A rich person also thinks the same way when he is ruined. A person who suffers the loss of relatives and friends, being alone, thinks to become a monk. But you are young and strong, you are healthy and have great wealth, a good family and many friends. Why did you join the Buddha's Order of monks? What is the benefit of being ordained for you?"

Ratthapāla replied to the king, "The Buddha expounded Four Universal Truths as follows:

- i. All beings are impermanent because they always subject to decay and death.
- ii. They have no refuge and no protection; i.e. when a person has a chronic disease he is not able to say to his relatives, 'ease my disease; take a share of my disease so that my suffering diminishes'. He alone has to suffer.
- iii. All beings are not the owners of their own wealth. Although a person may possess a lot of wealth, when he dies he cannot take anything with him. He has to pass away with empty hands.
- iv. All beings are unsatisfied with wealth and sensual pleasures. Because I realized the truth of this statement I have joined the Buddha's Order of monks."

## ● The Story of Ratthapāla

When the Buddha arrived at a small town, Thullakothitta, and preached the Dhamma, Ratthapāla, the only son of a rich family, was delighted with the Buddha's talk. He asked his parents for permission to ordain but they would not agree to it because they wanted him to inherit their wealth. Then he lied down on the ground and determined not to eat any food until he got his parents' consent to be a monk. His friends urged his parents to give their consent saying, "If you consent to his wish you may see him as a monk and if he does not enjoy the monks life he will return to you. Consent to his wish."

Reluctantly, they consented and soon after becoming a monk, Ratthapāla became an *Arahant*. One day he went to his parents' house for alms. His father showed him a heap of treasure and said, "This is your inheritance from your mother. A lot of other treasures still remains. Give up the robe and return to lay life. Enjoy sensual pleasures and do meritorious deeds."

Ratthapāla replied, "You should drop them all in the river because they are the cause of grief, sorrow, lamentation and despair." His father was very upset.

Then Ratthapāla's former wives said, "Did you join the Buddha's Order in order to associate with heavenly nymphs? Are they prettier than us?"

Ratthapāla replied, "Dear sisters, I did not become a monk for that reason, but only to be free from all mental defilement." On being called sisters by Ratthapāla they realized that he would never return to them and fainted with grief and shock.<sup>1</sup>

It is not possible to say that all monks will be released from rebirth. Some monks return to lay life. After death as a monk, some go to heavenly planes of existence, some are reborn as human beings and some go to the four lower

<sup>1</sup> Rattapāla Sutta, M.S. Sta. 82, M. ii. 64-65

worlds because they did not practice the teachings of the Buddha very well. Therefore, monastic life is a very serious undertaking. We can see this from a story told by the Buddha.

Once, Venerable Moggallāna, the chief of the disciples with psychic powers, was coming down the Gijjhakuta Hill with Venerable Lakkhana. When they reached the foot of the mountain, Venerable Moggallāna suddenly smiled. Venerable Lakkhana did not understand the reason for smiling and asked why he smiled. Venerable Moggallāna said, "You should ask the reason in the presence of the Buddha." When they came to the presence of the Buddha, Venerable Moggallāna said, "I saw a swine hungry ghost (*Peta*) with its mouth swarming with maggots. Because of that I smiled."

The Buddha said, "I also saw that very same hungry ghost soon after my attainment of Buddhahood but I did not say anything about it because they might not have believed me and that would have been harmful to them."

Then the monks requested the Buddha to tell about the hungry ghost's deed which had led to that state and the Buddha related the following story.

"During the time of Kassapa Buddha, the hungry ghost was a monk who was a skilled preacher. On one occasion he came to a monastery where two monks lived amicably together. The two resident monks were very hospitable to the visiting monk. All three monks went together to the village for alms. The resident monk urged the visiting monk to preach to the villagers. Day by day, the visitor won the reverence of the villagers because of his skilful preaching. A desire to live there permanently arose in him and he thought, "It would be better if I could make the other two monks leave this place." The visiting monk pitted one monk against the other with an aim to separate them and the two resident monks gradually became suspicious of one another and then quarrelled violently. The visiting monk pretended to reconcile them and make them stay but secretly he was happy.

The two monks left the monastery and went in different directions. The visitor said to the villagers, "The two monks have left your monastery. Although I requested them not to do so, they did not listen to me. They were too angry." But some wise people did not believe him.

The two monks were unhappy. They thought, "We stayed harmoniously together for many years. Why did we blame each other?" After many years they met at a monastery by chance. At first, they did not speak to each other.

The elder monk broke the silence by saying, "We lived together for such a long time. In the meantime, how did I offend you?"

The younger monk replied, "No, you did not offend me." "Then why did you tell the visiting monk not to associate with me?"

"I did not say that, but you told the visiting monk not to associate with me," the younger monk replied.

After that they realized that it was only because of the visiting monk that they had quarrelled. So, they returned to their monastery together. When the visiting monk saw them coming, he ran away from the monastery.

On account of this evil deed the visitor monk was reborn in hell and he was serving out the remaining part of this evil kamma as a swine hungry ghost.

Then the Buddha admonished the monks, "A monk should be calm and well restrained in thought, word and deed."<sup>1</sup>

From this story we can learn many lessons about backbiting and gossip. We should have good-will towards other people. We should say what is true at an appropriate time. We should be cautious about believing other people. We should keep ourselves away from people who backbite and praise themselves. If you listen to them and believe their words it will only lead to the arising of jealousy and anger.



#### 4. Practiced Respectably (*Sāmicipaṭipanno*)

In this world everybody wants respect from others. To be a respected person, one's morality must be better than others. To pay respect to each other is very important in society because everybody likes to win the respect of others and produces harmony and happiness. On the contrary, a contemptuous attitude increases hatred and causes quarrels. The Buddha taught that it is proper to pay respect to elders and to those of superior morality such as monks and nuns.

On one occasion the Buddha, with Venerable Sāriputta and other elderly noble monks, set out on a journey from Rājagaha to Sāvattthi in order to receive a gift of the Jetavana monastery. Some other monks, who were the disciples of a group of six immoral monks, went on ahead to occupy a good place for their night's rest. So, when Venerable Sāriputta and the other elders arrived they had no place to rest. The Buddha summoned the monks and told a story of the past saying, "If, while I am still alive, my disciples do not pay respect to each other what will happen after I pass away?"

"Long ago, three animals; a partridge, a monkey and an elephant, lived together by a banyan tree in the Himalayan forest. One day they thought, "We should choose the eldest among us as the leader and we will give him the first choice of food and resting place. So they asked one another, "What is your first memory of this tree?"

The elephant said, "When I was young, I could stand with my belly touching the top of the tree."

The monkey said, "When I was young, I sat on the ground and ate its sprouts."

The partridge said, "When I was young, this tree was not here. I ate the fruits of another tree and excreted the seeds here. The tree grew from that.

So, they recognized the partridge as the eldest and the other two paid respect to him. The partridge observed morality himself and urged the other two to do the same. After they had lived

happily together throughout their lives they were reborn in a heavenly plane.<sup>1</sup>

Monks dedicate their whole life to the practice of the Buddha's teachings to get rid of mental defilement. Random thinking and illusion produce mental defilement. Only a person who knows the real nature of mind and matter can root out the mental defilement. Monks have to practice insight meditation in order to know correctly the true nature of mind and matter. If a monk meditates, he is worthy of respect, even if he is not an Ariya, because he is practicing to eradicate the mental defilement.

Devout lay Buddhists dedicate their wealth to the attainment of Nibbāna. They have no wish to gain mundane welfare. Therefore, monks need to have good morality so that the devotees' offerings will get maximum benefit. The more monks practice morality, tranquillity and insight, the more merit the devotees will get from their offerings.

#### ● Why should one make offerings to monks?

The followers of the monastic life are entirely dependent on the support of lay people, because they have no other source of income. This mode of living was prescribed by the Buddha to make the monks humble and amenable to instruction. No one likes to depend on others, because a dependent is in an inferior position. The Buddha also prescribed the monk's ascetic appearance with simple robes and a shaven head so that monks would not become conceited about their appearance. Most people cherish their hair and try to keep it in an attractive style but the monk is not allowed to keep it more than two finger-widths long. Their robes are made from rags from the rubbish heap and colored with bark dye. Nowadays, factory-made robes are usually used, but the appearance has not changed much. Monks are not allowed to follow the changing fashions. For their food they have to accept whatever is offered and cannot, unless invited or

<sup>1</sup> Tittira Jātaka No. 37, Jā. i. 218

ill, ask for what they need, except from their relatives.

The Buddha laid down this way of life in order to constantly remind his disciples that their life depends on others, so that they do not become conceited about their good looks, and so that they constantly reflect on their morality to see that they are not blameworthy. This encourages monks to get rid of mental defilement whenever they arise.

Once a monk named Eyamitta lived in a forest. He always went to a village not far from the forest for his alms. One day while he went for alms he overheard a conversation between a mother and her daughter. The mother, before going to work in the fields, told her daughter, "Dear daughter, here is the best rice, butter, milk, cooking oil etc.; cook them carefully; offer them to our monk and eat the rest yourself."

The daughter asked, "What about you?"

"Oh, I have had vinegar and left-over rice for my breakfast. I will take something else later."

Eyamitta thought, "They are dedicating their food to Nibbāna. Can I develop the result of their merit according to their wish?" Then he resolved, "Until I root out the mental defilement, I will never eat their food."

So, he returned to his place to practice insight meditation. Because he had already practiced for a long time he very quickly attained Nibbāna. There was still time for him to go into the village so he went to his supporter's house for alms.

The daughter was struck by the calm and serene features of the monk and when her mother returned told her about it. The mother, who was wise, said "Our monk has attained Nibbāna", and they were both very happy.<sup>1</sup>

#### ● Why should one pay respect to monks?

The Buddha said, "If, as a result of a monk's teaching, one has the opportunity to go to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha for refuge, to observe the precepts pleasing to noble

people and to realize the Four Noble Truths, then that monk is deserving of reverence and offerings."<sup>1</sup>

#### Worthy of Offerings (*āhuneyyo*)

Noble monks are worthy of offerings which are brought even from far away. Even heavenly beings, let alone human beings, come and offer to noble monks because of their morality, tranquillity and wisdom. Nothing gets around farther or faster than the news of the virtuous. It can reach the Brahma world. It arouses the donor's generosity. Noble monks, thus, promote the prosperity of poor people by accepting their alms food. If a person offers alms to a noble monk who has just arisen from absorption in Nibbāna, he can get whatever he wishes for immediately.

One day, an elderly noble monk, Mahākassapa, entered a poor quarter of the city of Rājagaha for alms-food just after arising from *Nirodha-samāpatti*. Five hundred female heavenly beings asked the noble monk to take their food, but he refused because his intention was to give a poor man an opportunity of gaining great merit. When the king of the heavenly beings knew about it, he and his most beloved wife, Sujāta, came down to Rājagaha in the guise of a poor old couple. They took the appearance of weavers in a small hut. The noble monk stood at their door. They took the bowl from the monk and filled it up with rice and curry. When the noble monk opened the bowl, the delicious smell of the food spread throughout the city. Then, it occurred to the noble monk that this person must be no ordinary human being and indeed must be the king of the heavenly beings himself. Then he said, "Oh, King of heavenly beings, you have committed an offence by grabbing the opportunity of a poor family."

King of heavenly beings replied, "In a way, I too am poor because I have had no opportunity to offer anything to a monk during the time of the previous Buddhas, so I have to run away from other heavenly beings who have superior glory because they had given something to the disciples of the Buddha."

<sup>1</sup> Commentary on Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta.

<sup>1</sup> MLS sta. 142, M. iii. 254

The noble monk admonished him not to deceive him again in the future and the couple left happily after paying reverence to him. The Buddha saw this event from his monastery and told the monks about it. The monks wondered how the King of the *Devas* knew that the noble monk had just come out of *Nirodha-samāpatti* and the Buddha answered, "The reputation of the virtuous spreads far and wide; it reaches even the heavenly world. On account of the noble monk's reputation, the King of heavenly beings, Sakka, himself came to offer alms-food to him."<sup>1</sup>

The Buddha enumerated fourteen grades of offerings:

- i. An offering to the Buddha.
- ii. An offering to a *Pacceka-buddha* who is enlightened but cannot preach to others.
- iii. An offering to an *Arahant*.
- iv. An offering to one striving for Arahantship.
- v. An offering to a non-returner.
- vi. An offering to one striving for non-returning
- vii. An offering to a once-returner.
- viii. An offering to one striving for once returning
- ix. An offering to a stream-winner.
- x. An offering to one striving for stream-winning
- xi. An offering to one outside the Buddha's teaching who is detached from sensual pleasures.
- xii. An offering to an ordinary person of moral habit.
- xiii. An offering to a person of poor moral habit.
- xiv. An offering to an animal.

An offering to an animal yields a hundred-fold benefit; to a person of poor moral habit, a thousand-fold; to a moral person, a hundred-thousand-fold; so you can best imagine how much is the benefit of offering to monks, nuns and yogis who are striving for the fruit of stream-winning or higher attainments.

But this offering to individuals is still less than the fruit of offering to the Sangha. When the Buddha's maternal aunt, Mahāpajāpati Gotamī offered him a pair of the best new robes, he told her three times, "Give it to the Sangha Order Gotamī, if you give it to the Order I will be honored and the Order too. In the distant future there will be many, who bear the name of monk wearing the yellow robes around their neck. If a person offers even to them, dedicating the offering to the Order, the result of his offering will be too great to measure."<sup>1</sup>

### 6. Worthy of Hospitality (*pāhuneyyo*)

People tend to keep good things for visitors and friends who visit them occasionally. These visitors may give some pleasure and aid to them in worldly affairs. But noble monk (*Ariya bhikkhu*) can be seen only when people live during the Buddha's *Sāsana*. Whenever noble monks meet people they promote their merit and guide them how to conduct themselves well, how to gain release from suffering, how to choose good friends, how to associate with each other etc. So, monks are worthy even of the presents that have been set aside for visitors. When someone offers something to a noble monk he will accumulate a great deal of merit. To get immediate result of giving, the offering must be endowed with four conditions:

- i. The perfection of the person receiving the alms; i.e. he must be an *Arahant* or *Anāgami*.
- ii. The perfection of generosity, i.e. the donor must feel happy for his offering before, during and after giving it.
- iii. The perfection of the alms given; i.e. they must be obtained by lawful means.
- iv. The perfection of the dignity of the offering.

### ● The Story of a Slave

Once, in Benares, there was a young son of a rich man, Canda. He came into great inheritance upon the death of

his parents. Looking at the wealth he thought, "My parents could not use the wealth fully. I will spend all of it." So, he spent a huge sum of money to build a dining room and bathing house. He took a bath with scented water and ate food worth a thousand pieces of gold every day. Even from far away, people came to see him eat and marveled at his good fortune.

One day, when a villager saw the food, he could not restrain his desire to eat it and asked the rich man what he must do to eat his food for one day. The rich man replied that to do so he must work for him for three years. The villager agreed and became his slave for three years.

At the end of the three years he was taken to the dining room for his hard-earned meal. When he was about to eat the meal a *Paccekabuddha* suddenly appeared in front of him for alms. The poor man thought, "Because of my lack of merit in past lives, I have had to slave for three years for this meal. In order to avoid future poverty I will give the meal to the *Paccekabuddha*." He then offered the meal and prayed, "May I have perfect wealth and happiness in every future life and may I understand the truths that you have realized."

The *Paccekabuddha* said, "May your wishes be fulfilled."

The people were surprised at his great generosity and praised him. When the rich man heard about it, he was also very pleased with the poor villager's offering and shared half his wealth with him. They lived together happily for the rest of their lives and when they passed away they were reborn in heavenly planes.

In the lifetime of Gotama Buddha the villager was reborn in a rich family. From the time of his conception the family had both physical and mental happiness. So, he was named 'Sukha'. He became a novice at the age of seven. On the eighth day after his ordination he accompanied a noble monk, Sāriputta, on his alms-round. When they came across some farmers irrigating their fields, some archers straightening arrows and

some wheelwrights making spokes for their wheels the novice asked the noble monk if these inanimate things could be guided to where one wanted them. The noble monk answered in the affirmative. The novice pondered that if that were so there could be no reason why a person could not tame his mind and practice tranquillity and insight meditation. Thinking thus, he returned to the monastery and practiced meditation in solitude. He attained Arahantship on that very day.<sup>1</sup>

### Worthy of Gifts (*dakkhineyyo*)

Naturally, living beings cling to their own wealth but they offer some to other people for various reasons. The Buddha assured us that the offerings based on attachment, fear or reciprocation cannot give much fruit in the future life. To be a fruitful offering it should stem from loving-kindness, compassion, respect or belief in kamma and rebirth; that is to say that progress in one's future life depends on present wholesome deeds, and unwholesome deeds cause one's status to decline in future lives.

According to Buddhism there are thirty-one planes; namely, four lower worlds, the human realm, and twenty-six heavenly planes. Until beings attain Nibbāna they will have to transfer from one realm to another. We can say that human beings are in a middle place between the four lower worlds and the heavenly planes. Everyone should try at least not to descend below the human realm by observing morality and practicing charity.

The Buddha said that proper and pure offerings can produce benefit and he enumerated four different kinds of offerings as follows:

- i. There is the offering purified by the donor but not by the recipient; i.e. the donor is of moral habit and good character but the recipient is of poor morality and of evil character. This offering does not give great results. To increase the results of this offering one should dedicate it to Sangha, the Order, because a gift to the Order generates greater benefit than a gift to individuals.

- ii. There is the offering purified by the recipient but not by the donor; i.e. the recipient is of moral habit and good character but the donor isn't. This offering also doesn't produce great benefit.
- iii. There is the offering purified by neither the donor nor the recipient. This offering is of least benefit.
- iv. There is the offering purified by both the donor and the recipient. This offering produces the most benefit of all.<sup>1</sup>

#### 8. Worthy of Reverence (*Anjalikaranīyo*)

In the world there are various kinds of salutation. Although some people salute each other according to their tradition, culture, or principle; as for a Buddhist, his salutation to the Buddha and the Order has nothing to do with them. Holding up his hands with palms touching he pays homage to their virtue which is worthy of respect. He does not pay homage only to their appearance or to the person. Anyone can take on the appearance of respectability with ease but it is difficult to live up to the high standards of morality, tranquillity and insight knowledge. An ordinary person has great difficulty even to observe five precepts. As for monks, they have to practice a lot of rules to be worthy of the people's reverence. If a monk fails to follow the monastic discipline his life becomes a burden of guilt. Therefore the Buddha constantly admonished his disciples to conduct themselves so that they would be worthy of respect.

Once, the Buddha was on alms-round among the Kosala people with a great following of monks. On the way he saw a great fire and stepped off the road and sat down at the foot of a big tree. Then he asked the monks, "What do you think, O monks? Which would be better for a monk? To lie down beside that great mass of fire or to lie down beside a beautiful lady?"

The monks replied, "Surely it would be better to lie down beside a beautiful lady."

<sup>1</sup> MLS. sta. 142, M. iii. 257

The Buddha said, "It would be better for a monk to lie down beside that great mass of fire. Because fire might cause him harm or even death but he would not, because of that, go down to hell. If he were to lie down beside a beautiful lady his morality would easily break and his immorality would cause his birth in hell after death."

(According to monastic rules, if a monk have sex with any being or steal or kill human being or tell lies about his spiritual status, he loses the life of monk.)

The Buddha continued his sermon thus: the suffering which will be felt by an immoral monk on account of enjoying the respect of wealthy nobles is worse than the suffering which a person feels when he is bound and both his legs are crushed to the bone-marrow with a stout horse-hair rope being twisted by a strong man.

The suffering which will be felt by an immoral monk on account of enjoying the salutation of wealthy nobles is worse than the suffering which a person feels when his chest is pierced with a sharp spear.

The suffering which will be felt by an immoral monk on account of enjoying wearing the monastic robe is worse than the suffering which a person feels when his body is wrapped around with red-hot iron plates.

The suffering which will be felt by an immoral monk on account of enjoying alms food is worse than the suffering which a person feels when he swallows a red-hot iron ball.

The suffering which will be felt by an immoral monk on account of enjoying the couch or bed is worse than the suffering which a person feels when he sits or lies on a red-hot iron bed.

The suffering which will be felt by an immoral monk on account of enjoying the use of the monastery is worse than the suffering which a person feels when he is boiled in a red-hot iron cauldron.

Therefore you should train yourselves thus; we make use of the requisites — the robes, alms-food, medicine and lodgings.

These offerings should become very fruitful, very profitable for the donors so we must develop our morality, tranquillity and wisdom while using these four requisites. In this way you should strive earnestly for the good of both self and others.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the teachings of the Buddha, the monks practice the monastic rules so they are worthy of reverence.

#### 9. The Finest Field of Merit in the World (*Anuttaram punnakhetam lokassa*)

Giving offerings is like farming. To get a bountiful crop there are several necessary factors; good mature seeds, sufficient water, fertile soil, a knowledgeable farmer, protection from pests etc. In the same way, for an offering to be beneficial a donor must have faith, generosity, wisdom, joy and must offer his donation to a virtuous recipient. As an unripe or rotten seed cannot grow; if a person has no faith, compassion or loving-kindness he will be reluctant to give anything in charity. If a seed is not supplied with enough water it cannot grow properly and yield a good crop. Likewise, some people offer their wealth reluctantly so they get only freedom from danger. When a farmer cannot protect his field from pests all his endeavors may be in vain. Some people offer things to others expecting that they will reciprocate or in order to put them under an obligation. When the recipients do not fulfill their wishes they tend to regret having made any offering. Such offerings also cannot produce much result. In connection with this a story should be told.

Once, King Pasenadi of Kosala came to pay homage to the Buddha after having confiscated a rich man's wealth because he had left no heirs. The king told the Buddha, "The rich man was very stingy, he was reluctant to spend his wealth even on himself and therefore he ate very sparingly and wore only coarse clothes. Why was he unable to enjoy his wealth?"

The Buddha related the story of the rich man's past life. One day when a *Paccekabuddha* came and stood for alms at his

house he told his wife to offer something to him. His wife, thinking that it was very rare for her husband to give her permission to give alms, filled up the alms-bowl with choice food. The rich man met the *Paccekabuddha* on his way home and had a look in the alms-bowl. Seeing that his wife had offered a substantial amount of good food, he thought, "Oh! this monk would only have a good sleep after such a good meal, it would have been better if my servants had been given the food; at least they would have given me better service." Because he had offered alms-food to the *Paccekabuddha* became a rich man in the present life. Because he regretted having offered the food he had no wish to spend anything even on himself.

The king remarked, "Even though he had lived here in the lifetime of the Buddha himself, he had not made any offering of anything to the Buddha or his disciples; indeed the rich man had missed a good opportunity; he had been very foolish."<sup>1</sup>

The king's remark is quite right because the rich man is like a foolish farmer who does not work to protect a fertile field even though he has all the facilities. Now, we too, have a very precious opportunity to offer alms to virtuous monks, to observe the precepts and to practice insight meditation while the teachings of the Buddha are still intact. After the teachings of the Buddha disappear it will be a very long time before one can have another such opportunity to practice the Dhamma.

All of the above mentioned attributes are concerned with noble monks who have realized one of the eight stages of holiness i.e. the four supra-mundane paths (*magga*) and fruitions (*phala*). There are four pairs:

- i. The one realizing the path of stream-winning (*sotāpatti-magga*).
- ii. The one realizing the fruition of stream-winning (*sotāpatti-phala*).
- iii. The one realizing the path of once-returner (*sakadāgāmi-magga*).

<sup>1</sup> A. iv. 128-135

<sup>1</sup> DhA. v 355

- iv. The one realizing the fruition of once-returner (*sakadāgāmi-phala*).
- v. The one realizing the path of non-returner (*anāgāmi-magga*).
- vi. The one realizing the fruition of non-returner (*anāgāmi-phala*).
- vii. The one realizing the path of Arahant (*arahatta-magga*).
- viii. The one realizing the fruition of Arahant (*arahatta-phala*).

Path (*magga*) is the designation of the moment of entering into one of the four stages of holiness. Its duration is extremely short. The moment of rooting out the mental defilement is called *magga*. Fruition (*Phala*) are the moments of consciousness immediately following the path moment and which may also be repeated for longer periods thereafter by developing concentration. So in brief there are only four types of noble individuals; the stream-winner (*sotāpanna*), the once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), the non-returner (*anāgāmi*) and the Arahant.

The stream-winner is free from the five fetters which bind one to the lower worlds, namely; personality belief or ego delusion, sceptical doubt, attachment to wrong practices, envy and meanness. After he is reborn seven times at most as a human being or heavenly being his process of mind and matter will cease, i.e. he will attain *Arahatta magga*.

The once-returner, in addition, is nearly free from the strong fetters of sensual desire and ill-will. He rarely desires sensual pleasures and will be reborn at most once more as a human being.

The non-returner becomes totally free from the above two fetters. He will never return to the sensual world but will attain final release in the Brahma world.

The Arahant is free from all kinds of mental defilement; the above mentioned as well as craving for fine-material existence, craving for immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness and delusion. He has put an end to rebirth.

### ● How should one behave towards monks?

The Buddha preached one verse in the Dhammapada: "If one wrongs a person who should not be wronged; who is free from moral defilement, the evil falls back upon that fool like fine dust thrown against the wind."<sup>1</sup>

In the lifetime of the Buddha, as a hunter called Koka was going out to hunt with his pack of hounds he met a monk entering the city for alms-food. He took that as a bad omen and grumbled to himself, "Since I have seen this wretched one, I don't expect I shall get anything today," and he went on his way. As he expected he did not get anything. On his way home he again saw the same monk returning to the monastery after taking his meal in the city so he became very angry and set his dogs on the monk. Quickly, the monk climbed up a tree to a level just out of reach of the hounds. Then the hunter went to the foot of the tree and pricked the feet of the monk with the tip of his arrow. The monk was in great pain and was not able to keep his robes on; they slipped off his body and onto the hunter. The dogs, seeing the robes, thought that the monk had fallen from the tree and pounced on the hunter tearing him to pieces. The monk broke a dead branch from the tree and throw it at the dogs scaring them into the forest but when he came down he found that the hunter was already dead. He felt sorry for him and wondered whether he might be held responsible for the death since the hunter had died because of being covered up by his robes. So he went in the Buddha to clear up his doubt.

The Buddha said, "My son, rest assured and have no doubt; you are not responsible for the death of the hunter; your morality is not soiled on account of his death. Indeed that hunter did a great wrong to one to whom he should do no wrong and so came to his grievous end."

In accordance with this story one should take care not to do any wrong to monks even if one cannot pay respect to them.

- **The duties of a *Bhikkhu***

A *Bhikkhu* (monk) must

- i. tell people not to do any evil,
- ii. encourage them to do good,
- iii. treat them with loving-kindness,
- iv. teach them what they have not heard,
- v. clarify what they have already heard.

- **The duties of followers**

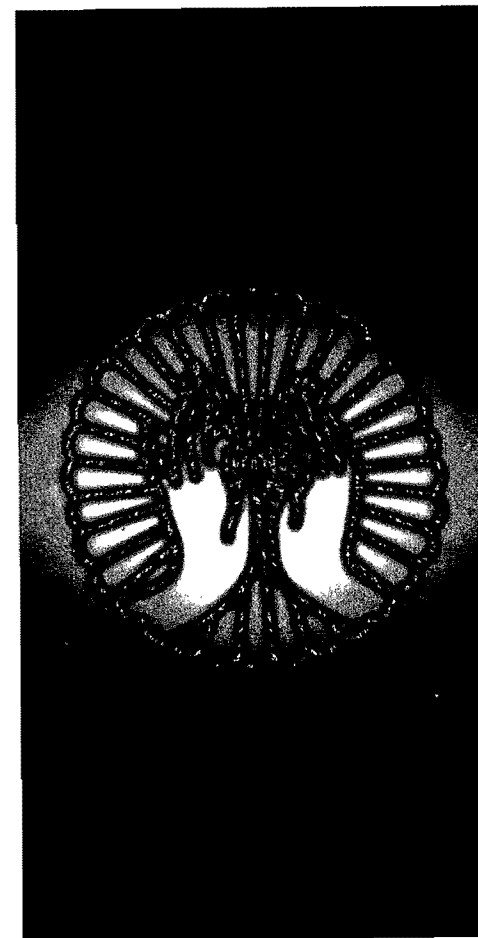
Followers should minister to good religious teachers as to the zenith:

- i. by kindly deeds,
- ii. by kindly words,
- iii. by kindly thoughts,
- iv. by keeping doors open for them,
- v. by offering their needs.

The attributes of the Triple Gem have already been mentioned. It is only a drop in the ocean, but I believe it is enough for those who want to quench the thirst for understanding of the Triple Gem, and to make their faith strong.

*May the readers gain religious knowledge and spiritual freedom!*

# The Way to Social Harmony





## Foreword

by

Ven. Dr. Hammalawa Saddhātissa

M.A. Ph.D. D.Litt

**THE BUDDHASĀSANA** — the dispensation of the Buddha is three fold: the teaching, the practice and the realisation. The main target of Buddhists is the realisation of the truth in its true perspective (*yathā-bhūtañāṇadassana*). In order to attain to that realisation one must practise the *Dhamma* according to the teaching of the Buddha. The practice could be embarked upon by learning the teaching of the Buddha. However, no realisation is possible without practice. Also, practice is not possible without the proper learning of the *Dhamma*. 'The Way to Social Harmony' very clearly and succinctly deals with the above threefold *Buddhasāsana*.

The author, Venerable U Pyinnyāthīha, is well versed in the Buddhist canon, having studied it at the feet of great learned Burmese masters and practised meditation according to their instructions for many years. He is therefore well qualified to write a book like this. On every page it is evident that he is explaining the *Dhamma* from his own experience. He has written this with meticulous care, patience and devotion. It is not out of place to mention that some authors have excellent knowledge but haven't any experience of the *Dhamma*. Books by such authors are unfortunately not very helpful for the readers who are genuinely desirous to practise the *Dhamma*, but our author, Venerable U Pyinnyāthīha, has both qualifications — knowledge of the *Dhamma* and its experience. When one reads his book, naturally one feels that the

author has truly realised the Dhamma.

'*The Way to Social Harmony*' deals with a number of facets of the Dhamma. Social ethics, rights and duties of a layperson, and meditation and the realisation of *nibbāna*. If anyone reads this book carefully and follows its advice he will come to realise that happiness can be achieved by leading an exemplary family life. I therefore recommend this book to all lay people without exception, showing what a happy family life is and how to attain to it. The vast majority of the world's population are leading family lives; this is a valuable manual for all of them.

London 1989

## Preface

BEFORE I FINISHED writing a draft of this book, whenever I was asked what I was doing, my reply was that I was writing about social responsibilities as preached by the Buddha in the *Siṅgāla Sutta*. Dr. Mirko Fryba from Switzerland asked if I had read Buddhist Ethics by Venerable Hammalawa Saddhātissa and suggested I should read it because the author had already explained about the subject. And when I told Venerable Saddhātissa about my work, he recommended the book 'The thirty-eight blessings for world peace' by Venerable U Ñāṇādicca which was very good on that subject. After that I thought that first I should read the two books and if I found the subject already presented thoroughly and perfectly, I would stop my work.

There is a famous story in Burmese history about two learned *bhikkhus*. They were Venerable Munindaghosa (Taungphilā Sayadaw) and Venerable Jambudhaja (Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw). They were translating the Vinaya Pāli text into Burmese at the same time. Venerable Munindaghosa was supported by the ruler and lived in the city and had many devotees but the other Sayadaw was not like him; he lived as a forest hermit.

One day when Venerable Munindaghosa went on a pilgrimage to central Burma, he reached the village near where Venerable Jambudhaja lived and he hoped to meet him.

While Venerable Jambudhaja was cleaning the pagoda, he met him and asked, "Oh, old novice, can you tell me how to get to the monastery where Venerable Jambudhaja lives". Venerable Jambudhaja pointed out the way to the monastery and then paid respect to the pagoda and went back to his monastery to prepare a seat for the visiting Sayadaw.

When Venerable Munindaghosa arrived at his monastery he welcomed him and offered him a seat. Venerable Munindaghosa asked where Venerable Jambudhaja Sayadaw was and only then Venerable Jambudhaja admitted who he was. Venerable Munindaghosa was amazed at the latter's humility and was ashamed for mistaking the elder for an old novice. Then they conversed together and Venerable Munindaghosa asked "Aren't you afraid to live alone?" Venerable Jambudhaja replied, "It is because I am afraid that I live alone." Venerable Munindaghosa understood what the other meant and felt ashamed of associating with people. When their conversation came round to the subject of their translation of the Vinaya, Venerable Munindaghosa asked for Venerable Jambudhaja's translation to compare with his and found it so good and thorough that he decided to enshrine his own unfinished translation in a pagoda.

Likewise, I read the works of Venerable Saddhātissa and Venerable Ñāṇādicca thoroughly and found they were very good. But my approach to the subject is different from theirs so I have decided not to enshrine my book in a pagoda but to present it to the public.

The man who seeks to crown his life with prosperity should study this book thoroughly. The social responsibilities laid down by the Buddha in the *Siṅgala Sutta* are so beautiful in their simplicity that all people of intelligence and good will, no matter what their own creed may be, should acknowledge and pay attention to them. Even though social responsibilities are described completely in the *Siṅgala Sutta*, I presented other teachings of the Buddha relevant to the subject so that the readers can get an opportunity to study them.

I wrote this book bearing in mind the following advice.

My teacher said:

"You should never intend to exploit the teaching of the Buddha but you should only think of what you can do to propagate the teachings."

My lay supporter, the President of the Mahāsī Meditation Centre's Supporters association said:

"I would not like to read about the material progress of the Western world because it is not unknown to me. Let me know about the development of the teaching of the Buddha in the West and how you manage to propagate it there."

My fellow-*bhikkhu*, Venerable Pesala said:

"You are not trying to show your skill in the English language. If a reader wants to read good English he can read an English author's work. But if he wants to know about Buddhism, he will read your book whether or not the English is good."

I have done the best that I can but if any readers find any mistakes, either in the grammar or in the ideas, I hope that they will be kind enough to tell me about it.

### Acknowledgement

Being grateful to those who give help such as giving and teaching something, protecting one from danger, and preventing one from bad habits is the habitual practice of good people. Once the Buddha said, "These two persons are hard to find in the world. What two? The one who has previously done some act of kindness towards others and the person who is grateful to those who helped him."

The first one is like a creditor and the other is like a debtor. There are too many creditors for me to list. Perhaps the loss of one leg cannot have much effect on a centipede, whereas in the case

of a tripod it is disastrous. To publish this book I needed help from people of all walks of life and I got it. Their benevolence makes it rewarding for me to live in England, to learn English, to write and publish two books. I am sure that they did not help me in the hope of getting something back, nevertheless I feel I must reciprocate their benevolence. I do not have the capacity to repay them materially; only spiritually. That is why, I intend to repay my debt to them by writing more books and propagating the teaching of the Buddha as well as I can.

Venerable *Pyinnyāthi*.

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London NW9 8TG,

England. (1990)

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction to Buddhism



**THE BUDDHA WAS THE MOST ENERGETIC** of all religious teachers. Throughout the forty-five years of his ministry, he was constantly occupied with religious activities except when attending to his physical needs; only taking a short rest after the meal and sleeping about one and a half hours at night. If anyone needed his spiritual guidance, he would undertake even lengthy journeys to help them, sometimes by psychic powers but also on foot. Even in the last minutes before attaining *parinibbāna* he preached to a person who came from another religion, and wanted to know the answers to some problems. Finally, he said:

"It may be that you will think; the teacher's instruction has ceased, now we have no teacher! It should not be seen like this, for what I have taught and explained to you, the Dhamma and discipline will, at my passing, be your teacher. Now, *bhikkhus*, I declare to you; all conditioned things are subject to decay — strive on untiringly." These were the Buddha's last words.

His teachings were not compiled during his lifetime, but before they were written down, *bhikkhus* passed on the teachings by word of mouth. Seven days after his passing away, a bad *bhikkhu* showed his contemptuous attitude towards the Buddha and his teachings

to *bhikkhus* sorrowing over the Buddha's passing away. He said "Don't worry about the Buddha's end. He was an austere person. We were restricted in everything. Now we have a free hand. We can do whatever we like."

As to this, a noble *bhikkhu*, Venerable Mahā Kassapa, noticed that the teachings of the Buddha had scattered like flowers, not yet made into a garland, and it would be good to gather them together before bad attitudes towards them spread. And then he suggested to *bhikkhus* at an assembly that they gather the teachings. Noble *bhikkhus* were all in agreement on that point.

During the first rains retreat (*vassa*) after the Buddha passed away, five hundred noble *bhikkhus* classified and named the teachings of the Buddha according to subjects, and chanted them together in order to fix them once and for all. The teachings of the Buddha are enumerated in the following order; Vinaya Piṭaka (the collection of discipline) which deals with the subject of rules for monastic life; Sutta Piṭaka (the collection of teaching) which mentions various teachings adorned with verses and stories, and questions and answers, which contain a lot of lessons for spiritual and worldly lives; Abhidhamma Piṭaka (the collection of philosophy) which details mind and corporal formations, and describes in depth their inter-relation.

The volume of his work is such that even some learned *bhikkhus*, let alone laymen, are not able to study it completely. To be well versed in his teachings a person has to take his time to study them thoroughly. It is assumed that the Buddha preached on some subjects repeatedly, but one should understand that he explained subjects in various ways in accordance with listeners' different temperaments. That is why, some subjects in his teachings are similar but it is impossible to compress all his teachings into a single book.

### Did the Buddha preach on all subjects?

One might say "Are the teachings of the Buddha just the three collections? Just being able to preach them, he should not bear the title of Enlightened One." The Buddha did not reveal all subjects that he knew. He preached only that which is beneficial to human beings.

Once when the Buddha was staying at the Siṅsapā Grove in Kosambī, he collected a few leaves in his hand, and asked the *bhikkhus* to compare them with the leaves on the trees. They said, "The countless leaves on the trees are beyond comparison with the few leaves in your hand." "Likewise, the subjects not revealed by me, are innumerable although I know them because they are not concerned with benefit to human beings, do not concern the holy life, do not conduce to dispassion and perfect peace", the Buddha said.<sup>1</sup>

People have a desire to know about the beginning of human life; if there is anything after death; how the soul transfers to the next life, if there is rebirth; whether the same soul is reborn in every life or not, etc. In regard to this, there is a great deal of research work and statements, but people do not accept them uniformly because the statements, even on the beginning of human life, are vague. There are still abiding questions about this. It is human nature: a questioner is not satisfied, and derides the person who cannot give an acceptable answer to what he wants to know.

The Buddha did not give any solutions to some problems, therefore some people felt resentment against him. When the Buddha stayed at the monastery offered by Anāthapiṇḍika, in the Jeta Grove, near Sāvattī, there was a *bhikkhu* named Mālukiyaṇḍita. As he was meditating he thought, "I have not yet heard what the Buddha thinks about whether the world is eternal or not, whether life is dependent on the body or not, whether beings will be different after dying or not, etc. Why does the Buddha not give exact answers to these questions? I

<sup>1</sup> S. v. 437

will put pressure on the Buddha to preach about them. I will continue to practise his teachings if he explains these matters to me; if not, I will disrobe and reject his teachings."

Then he went to the Buddha, and gave vent to his feelings. He said further, "If you have no knowledge of these matters, you should be absolutely honest enough to say 'I do not know about them'; if you do know, bring these matters to light so that I can practise your teachings."

The Buddha said to Mālukiya-putta, "Well, did I ever say to you: 'Come, Mālukiya-putta practise my teachings; I will explain these matters to you'?" "No, you did not", Mālukiya-putta said. The Buddha said again, "Did you ever say to me: 'I will practise your teachings, if you explain these matters to me'." "No, I did not", Mālukiya-putta said. "Neither you nor I said that, so why do you come to me, and speak like that? If a person disavows my teachings until he knows these matters, he might pass away without practising my beneficial teachings. I will never preach about these matters", the Buddha said.

The Buddha gave an example to Mālukiya-putta: "When a person is pierced by an arrow smeared with poison, his relatives send him to a physician. But the patient might say, 'I will not permit you to draw out this arrow until I know the archer; whether he is a hunter or worker or merchant, whether he is black or white, where he lives and what kind of bow and bow-string he used etc.' Before he receives all this information he may pass away. He cannot regain his health by these endless questions. In the same way, whether or not the world is eternal, and whether or not beings will be different after death, etc., is not connected with benefit, not fundamental to the practice of the truth, and it does not lead to dispassion, calmness, wisdom and insight knowledge. Whether a man knows these matters or not, he will not be free from aging, death, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair. Therefore, I do not reveal these matters." And then the Buddha said, "Mālukiya-putta, if you like my teaching you should accept what I have explained; if not, you

can choose your own way."<sup>1</sup>

After reading this teaching one might think that the Buddha's attitude towards others is rather rude. But here we can give an example: a rich merchant who sells high quality goods never tempts customers to buy them; he just displays his goods, and discloses their quality but there is no need for him to persuade the customers to buy them, nevertheless the customers will buy the goods because of their reputation. On the other hand, a merchant who sells poor quality goods will strongly urge the customers to buy his goods, and by advertising them skilfully, he might sell them, and make a profit whether or not the customers were satisfied with his goods.

People are not for Buddhism but Buddhism is definitely for people. To disseminate the Dhamma, one should not hurt oneself or other people's feelings. A militant character is entirely at variance with the Buddhist idea of non-violence. And also, using magical spells and objects of curiosity is an unsuitable way to propagate Buddhism. Even though some of his disciples and he himself possessed the extraordinary and sensational power of the enlightened — thus exciting great admiration among people, the Buddha always discouraged the public and vainglorious display of them.

Once the Buddha was staying at Nālanda, in Pāvārika's mango grove. And the householder Kevaṭṭha came to the Buddha, prostrated himself before him, and sat down to one side. He then said; "Lord, this Nālanda is rich, prosperous, and full of people who have faith in the Lord. It would be good if the Lord were to cause some *bhikkhus* to perform superhuman feats and miracles. In this way Nālanda would come to have even more faith in the Lord." The Buddha replied; "Kevaṭṭha, this is not the way I teach Dhamma to the *bhikkhus*, by saying; 'Go, *bhikkhus*, and perform superhuman feats and miracles for the laypeople!'"<sup>2</sup>

1 M. i. 426

2 D. i. 211

And what is more, Buddhism is not dogmatic. The Buddha always encouraged people to submit every teaching, including his, to the test of one's own experience, which would pass the final judgement. Therefore, if a person finds that the teachings of the Buddha give no good results for him he may turn his back upon them. And there is no need to obtain permission from any official to practise the teachings of the Buddha if a person likes them.

Anyone, no matter who, may practise the Dhamma; caste and class do not play an important part in the success of his teachings. According to Buddhism, whoever, either brahmins or others, does bad deeds such as killing, stealing, etc., is not purified and is blame worthy. Caste and class are man-made. They have nothing to do with purity and nobility. But, they played an important role before the Buddha appeared on the earth. In those days brahmins thought that only their caste was the highest and the most pure. Therefore, when other heavenly beings requested him to come to the world of humans so that he might become an Enlightened One, the *Bodhisatta*, whose last life but one was in a heavenly abode, considered his future mother's caste in advance so that he would not be treated with disdain on the grounds of caste, and so he was conceived by a queen. But the Buddha did not escape opposition, notably that stirred by the ritualistic *brahmins* anxious to preserve their religious monopoly, for a considerable number of *brahmins* were won over by his teachings and his replies to questions, for his teachings ignored the caste system.

#### ● How the caste system appeared on the earth?

Buddhists accept that the life-span of a human being depends on many factors such as weather, nutrition, people's temperament, morality and so on; that is, the better people behave, the longer life span they will get, and vice versa. Human being's life-span decreases at the rate of one year every century in the aeon of diminution and increases at the same rate in the aeon of increase.

In view of the fact that the Buddha, who was born in a period when the life-span was a hundred years, passed away 2,532 years ago, we can estimate that on average, people can expect to live seventy-five years nowadays. It is proved by the Times newspaper issued on 8th April 1988. The paper said: "Longest life: Japan has the longest life expectancy at birth for both men and women. Males can expect to live 74.8 years and females 80 years or more, according to UN statistics just published."

Eventually, the life-span in the world will be only 10 years. At that time girls will be married at five years of age. Ghee, butter, cooking oil, honey, molasses and salt will disappear from the world. The best food will be poor quality rice. Most people will be malevolent and there will not remain even a word for morality. They will behave promiscuously like animals towards even their mothers, aunts and sisters. Their anger will be so powerful that sticks will become weapons as soon as they touch them and they will kill each other violently for seven days. But some people who do not want to kill and do not want to be killed will hide in forests and mountains, and live on roots and fruits. After seven days, they will reappear from their hiding places and be happy to see each other. They will consider the bad situation and will abstain from taking life. Because of that their life-span will increase by ten years to twenty years. When they abstain from other unwholesome deeds their succeeding generations' life-span will increase more and more. Their life-span will go on and on increasing until it reaches an incalculable numbers of years.

In this way, the life-span of human-beings fluctuates between ten years and an incalculable number of years. When the fluctuation has occurred sixty-four times, the world will be dissolved. The world-dissolution is of three kinds; dissolution due to water, dissolution due to fire and dissolution due to air. When the world is about to be destroyed by fire, there is a great downpour all over the hundred thousand million world-spheres after which there is a prolonged drought. People are delighted

and they sow all their seeds. But when the sprouts have grown enough for oxen to graze, not a drop of rain falls any more. When a long period has passed in this way here and there the water disappears. Then in due course fish and turtles, etc. die and because of their wholesome deeds in their countless past lives, they are reborn in the Ābhassara heavenly abode.

When world-dissolution is about to happen, heavenly beings make this announcement in advance, "At the end of a hundred thousand years from now the world will be destroyed by fire. Develop loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Look after your parents and elders and so on." Therefore men and earth deities become kind to each other and do merit with loving-kindness and so they are reborn in the Brahma world. At the end of a long period after the withholding of the rain, the second sun appears. There is no more telling night from day. As the fifth sun appears, there is only enough water left in the great ocean to wet one finger joint. When the seventh sun appears the whole world-sphere together with the other hundred thousand million world-spheres catches fire and like the flame that burns ghee and oil it leaves no ash. The whole of space is pitch-dark.

The destruction period lasts a very long time. Then, at the end of a long period, a great cloud arises and at first it rains gently and the rain become heavier and heavier to fill the burnt areas with water. The water is compacted and rounded by the wind and the wind makes gaps in the great mass of water here and there like water drops on a lotus leaf. When the water is gradually contracted by the air the Brahma worlds and divine worlds reappear in their former places. But when the water has sunk to the former earth's level, strong winds arise and then they stop the water and hold it stationary.<sup>1</sup>

The beings, whose life-span or merit is exhausted in the Ābhassara Brahma world are reborn in this world. Their bodies are luminous and they wander in the sky. They live on ecstasy

without eating any food. There is no sun or moon or other planets. There are no different sexes. They are reckoned just as beings. They stay like that for a very long time. In due course sweet tasting and smelling edible earth spreads itself over the waters like the skin that forms itself over hot milk as it cools. It is like pure wild honey. A curious person samples the earth with his finger. He finds that the earth is very delicious so that he cannot stop eating it and craving arises in him. When other people see his behaviour they also taste it and craving arises in them. And then they are not contented with a little, therefore they make lumps and eat them. Because of that, their luminosity is extinguished and they are afraid of darkness.

In order to remove their fears and give them courage, the sun, fully fifty leagues across, appears. They have light from the sun but when the sun sets they are frightened again and they desire to get another light. According to their wish, the moon, forty-nine leagues across, appears. After that night and day appear, and months, seasons and years are distinguished.

They continue for a very long time living on the earth. And then their bodies become coarser, and different looks appear among them. The good-looking ones despise and behave in an arrogant manner towards the ugly ones. Therefore, the soft earth changes into a layer of soil in the manner of a mushroom. It is endowed with good colour, smell and taste. When they eat the soil, their bodies become coarser and coarser, and good-looking people become more and more arrogant so that the good colour, smell and taste disappear from the soil. And then, sweet creepers and fragrant rice without powder and husk appear one after another. Although people reap the rice for their meals there is no sign of reaping, and full ears of rice appear in its place. They do not store the rice. Only when they have desire to eat they go to gather the rice. During this age, the different sexes appear. People are delighted to look at the opposite sex and they cannot control their lust. Because of that, some people practise sexual intercourse. It is strange to some

<sup>1</sup> Vism. 414 (Ppn. 455 Nāṇamoli)



people. So, they censure the sensualists for their sexual practice and throw dust, ashes and cow-dung at them, and expel them from their community. The sensualists go away from them and build houses for the purpose of concealing their shameful behaviour and indulge in sexual enjoyment under cover at will.

One day a man gathers rice for supper and breakfast at the same time as he is too lazy to go to collect rice twice a day. When his friend asks him to go to the rice field with him, he says he has already gathered enough rice for supper and breakfast. Other people also follow his example and then when they store rice for eight days, the rice is covered with red powder and husk, and does not grow again in the place where it was reaped.

People meet together and decide to divide the rice ground into fields with boundaries. After that, some greedy people steal the portion of others. When other people find the thieves, they admonish them for stealing. At the third attempt, the thieves do not confess what they have committed, therefore they are hit with fists, sticks and so on.

As stealing, censuring, lying and punishment appear in this way, they meet together again and discuss what should be done. They agree to elect a chief who can govern them justly and to give him a portion of food in return. And then they approach a person who is the most handsome, honourable and clever, and ask him to accept their plan. When the person agrees with them, he is recognised as a chief by the majority. Therefore, he is called Mahāsammata. In other words he is called Khattiya because he is the Lord of Fields and since people are pleased with his just rule, he is named Rāja (King). These titles appear in accordance with justice and truth as well as being the origin of the classes.

Some people think, "Unwholesome deeds have appeared. We ought to abstain from them," and they do. The ones who keep from stealing, censuring, lying and punishment, are named 'Brahmin'. They, living on alms, stay in the forest and practise meditation. Because of that they also get the name of Jāyaka

(meditator). Some of them are reluctant to continue to practise meditation but they settle around towns and villages, and write verses and prose. Therefore, people name them Ajjāyaka. Some people, who are married and gain their livelihood by various kinds of work such as farming and trading, are classified as Vessa. Some people, who are poor, of low intelligence and coarse, and live by hunting and fishing, etc. are called Sudda.<sup>1</sup>

According to their practice people are classified like that but when any persons from these classes become *bhikkhus*, there is no difference between them. As long as they follow the monastic rules they are called *bhikkhus*. People treat them equally without discrimination on the grounds of caste and class. Any one of these classes, either *bhikkhu* or layman, can purify their defilements by practising wholesome deeds. Because Dhamma, or the performing of wholesome deeds is the best thing for people in every walk of life.

If a person thinks that it is impossible to accept the above statements, he should not waste his precious time arguing against them. He should read them by way of learning how caste and class came into existence and what the most important thing is. According to Buddhism human beings' status is promoted by morality. Therefore, Buddhists build their lives on morality as far as they possibly can. Some Buddhists, who think that in the worldly life, there is not enough time to practise higher morality, higher concentration and higher wisdom or knowledge, become *bhikkhus* with the intention of getting rid of greed, anger and delusion.

1 D. iii. 85ff.

### ● Independent way

The Buddha left to his followers this suggestion for freedom;

"Be, each one of you, your own island, your own refuge; do not seek another refuge. It is the way that you will reach liberation from all suffering."

It means that no one but oneself can free one from suffering. Liberation can only come from one's own effort. One should not undertake excessively austere practices or self-indulgence, nor rely on prayers to any deity. One must liberate oneself from error and folly by following the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha disclosed the way which enables people to get, not only personal progress and happiness, but also the good order and prosperity of society. He never sought to make people submit unconditionally to his own teachings. He regarded man as free, truly holding his destiny in his own hands.

Once, when the Buddha stayed at a monastery offered to him by Visākhā in Sāvatti, a *brahman* named Ganaka-Moggallāna approached and asked him, "Do you lay down progressive learning in your teaching as in every other teaching?" The Buddha said, "I lay down a gradual practice in respect of my teaching: if I see a person who deserves to be taught, first of all I teach him to observe precepts as a basis. Secondly, I urge him to control the enjoyment of all his senses, for, if a person indulges his senses in everything, his mind may be defiled with greed, lust, anger, ill-will and so on. Thirdly, I suggest to him to be moderate in eating so as to be able to practise insight meditation very well. Fourthly, I teach him how to be constantly vigilant and how to be possessed of mindfulness as regards his every movement. After that I advise him to practise insight meditation to get rid of mental defilement.

A person has to take these steps to attain perfect inner peace or Nibbāna as long as he has not eradicated the ten mental defilements; personal ego-belief (*Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), doubt (*Vicikicchā*), wrong conception of practice (*Sīlabbata-parāmāsa*),

ill-will (*Byāpāda*), craving for material existence (*Rūpa-rāga*), craving for non-material existence (*Arūpa-rāga*), conceit (*Māna*), restlessness (*Uddhacca*) and illusion (*Avijjā*)."

The *brahman* asked the Buddha, "Do your disciples, taught by you, all attain perfect inner peace or Nibbāna?" "Some of them attain perfect inner peace but some do not" the Buddha answered. "Even if Nibbāna does exist; the way leading to it exists and you exist as a teacher, why do some of your disciples not attain Nibbāna?" the *brahman* asked. The Buddha said, "Suppose, two people, who want to go to the city, Rājagaha, approach and ask you the way leading to the city, you explain in detail how to get there and what they will pass on the way because you know the road to the city very well. One of them, having taken your words to heart, arrives at the city safe and sound but the other does not because he may take a wrong way or else he may forget his aim, following other business. What can you do for the latter?" "I can do nothing more for him" the *brahman* said. The Buddha said, "In this way I too can only show the way to practise to be free from suffering."<sup>1</sup>

The Buddha said,

"By oneself is evil done, by oneself is one defiled, By oneself is evil not done, by oneself is one purified. Both defilement and purity depend on oneself. No one is purified by another."<sup>2</sup>

This teaching suggests the law of *Kamma*. Any kind of intentional deed whether mental, verbal or physical is regarded as *Kamma*. It is an individual force, and is transmitted from one existence to another. It is not said to be stored somewhere in this consciousness or in any part of the body. But dependent on mind and matter it rests manifesting itself at the opportune

<sup>1</sup> M. iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Dh. v 165

moment, just as mangoes are not said to be stored somewhere in the mango tree, but dependent on the mango tree they lie, springing up in due season.<sup>1</sup>

To produce its due effect, it must be a kind of intentional deed. Involuntary, unintentional or unconscious actions, though technically deeds, do not constitute Kamma, because volition, the most important factor in determining Kamma, is absent. Ignorance, not understanding things as they truly are, and its ally craving, are the chief causes of Kamma which produces its due effect. Although the Buddha and *Arahants* are tirelessly active in working for the real well-being and happiness of all, their deeds are not Karmic because they have eradicated both ignorance and craving, the roots of Kamma.

To obtain a clear understanding of the operation of Kamma, it is necessary to acquaint oneself with thought-processes. First one should know that mind or consciousness, the essence of the so-called being, plays the most important part in the complex machinery of man. The following are consecutive happenings within a thought-process.

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 experienced at the moment of conception and at the moment of death. This type of consciousness is called *Bhavaṅga*. Arising and perishing every moment, it flows on like a stream, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments. We experience this type of consciousness not only in a dreamless state but also in our daily life.

When a physical or mental object enters the mind, this *Bhavaṅga* consciousness vibrates for a thought-moment and passes away. Suppose, for instance, the object presented is a physical form. Now, when the *Bhavaṅga* stream of consciousness is arrested, sense-door consciousness, whose function is to turn the consciousness towards the object, arises and passes away. Immediately after these three, arises visual consciousness which

sees the object, yet knows no more about it. This sense operation is followed by a moment of the reception of the object so seen. Next arises the investigating thought-moment which momentarily examines the object so seen. This is followed by the determining thought-moment when discrimination is exercised and freewill may play its part. On this depends the subsequent important stage called *Javana*. It is at this stage that an action is experienced, whether it be moral or immoral. Kamma is performed at this stage. In the course of a thought-process, it runs consecutively for seven thought-moments, or at times of death for five thought-moments, with the same object. After the seven *Javana* consciousness the registering consciousness lasts for two thought-moments. Thus one thought-process is completed at the expiration of seventeen thought-moments.

Books cite the simile of the mango tree to illustrate this thought-process. A man, fast asleep, lies at the foot of a mango tree with his head covered. A wind stirs the branches and a fruit falls beside the head of the sleeping man. He removes his head-covering and turns towards the object. He sees it and then picks it up. He examines it and ascertains that it is a ripe mango fruit. He eats it and swallowing the remnants with saliva, once more resigns himself to sleep.

The dreamless sleep corresponds to the unperturbed current of *Bhavaṅga*. The striking of the wind against the tree corresponds to past *Bhavaṅga* and the swaying of the branches to vibrating *Bhavaṅga*. The falling of the fruit represents the arrested *Bhavaṅga*. Turning towards the object corresponds to sense-door consciousness; sight of the object, to perception; picking up, to receiving consciousness; examination, to investigating consciousness; ascertaining that it is a ripe mango fruit, to determining consciousness. The actual eating resembles the *Javana* process, and the swallowing of the morsels corresponds to retention. His resigning to sleep resembles the subsidence of the mind into *Bhavaṅga* again.

Kamma is performed at the stage of *Javana*. The mental states occurring in all these thought-moments, so-called *Javana*,

<sup>1</sup> See Vism. Ch 17

are similar, but the potential force differs. Of the seven thought-moments, stated above, the effect of the first thought-moment, the weakest in potentiality, one may reap in this life itself. If it does not operate in this life, it becomes ineffective. The next weakest is the seventh thought-moment. Its effect one may reap in the subsequent birth. It also becomes automatically ineffective if it does not operate in the second birth. The effect of the intermediate thought-moments may take place at any time in the course of one's wanderings in *Samsāra* until the final emancipation.

There are four kinds of Kamma according to the priority of effect. The first is *Garuka Kamma*, which means a weighty or serious action. It is so called because it produces its effect for certain in this life or in the next. On the moral side the weighty actions are the *jhānas* or ecstasies, while on the immoral side they are the subsequently-effective heinous crimes — namely, matricide, patricide, the murder of an *Arahant*, the wounding of the Buddha, and the creation of a schism in the Sangha.

When there is no weighty Kamma to condition the future birth a death-proximate (*Āsanna*) Kamma might operate. This is the action one does, or recollects, immediately before the moment of death. Owing to its significance in determining the future birth, the custom of reminding the dying person of his good deeds and making him do good on his death-bed still prevails in Buddhist countries. Sometimes a bad person may die happily and receive a good birth if he fortunately remembers or does a good act at the last moment.<sup>1</sup>

To cite an example, there is a story. Once there was a hunter. When he was old, his son, a *bhikkhu* of skill in teaching the Dhamma, forced him to stop hunting and to become a member of the Buddha's Order. Even though he, as a *bhikkhu*, followed monastic rules, and practised the Dhamma in his later life, terrible appearances came into his mind while he was on his death bed. He screamed out that there were a lot of big

dogs threatening to fight him. His son understood the condition of his father, and took him lying on a couch to a pagoda and offered flowers to the pagoda on behalf of his father and told him about it. At that moment his father told him that he saw a very pleasant place and deities. He passed away, and was reborn in a heavenly abode.<sup>1</sup>

Even though his last thought-moment destined him to a birth in a heavenly abode, that does not mean that the effects of his past bad deeds are obliterated. According to the law of Kamma the potential energy of the reproductive Kamma can be totally annulled by a more powerful opposing past Kamma, which, seeking an opportunity, may quite unexpectedly operate. They will therefore produce their results at the appropriate moment if he fails to do good deeds so that his past evil deeds are wiped out.

At times a good person, on the other hand, may die unhappily by suddenly remembering an evil act or by conceiving a bad thought, perchance compelled by unfavourable circumstances. He might be reborn as a hungry ghost for a while or an animal. There is a story which serves to illustrate the subject.

Once there was a *thera* named Tissa in Sāvattthi. One day, he received a set of fine robes and was very pleased. He intended to wear those robes the next day. But that very night he died and because he was attached to the fine set of robes, he was reborn as a louse and lived within the folds of the robes. As there was no one to inherit his belongings, it was decided that this particular set of robes should be shared by other *bhikkhus*. When the *bhikkhus* were preparing to share them out among themselves, the louse was very much agitated and cried out, "They are robbing my robes!" This cry was heard by the Buddha by means of his divine power of hearing. So he sent someone to stop the *bhikkhus* and instructed them to dispose of the robes only at the end of seven days. On the eighth day, the set of robes which belonged to Thera Tissa was shared out by the *bhikkhus*.

1 THE BUDDHA AND HIS TEACHINGS by Ven. Narada

1 VbhA 420 (Burmese)

Later, the Buddha was asked by the *bhikkhus* why he had told them to wait for seven days before sharing out the robes of Thera Tissa. To them the Buddha replied, "My sons, Tissa had his mind attached to this particular set of robes at the time of his death, and so he was reborn as a louse and stayed in the folds of the robes. When you were all preparing to share out the robes, Tissa, the louse, was very much in agony and was running about to and fro in the folds of the robes. If you had taken the robes at that time Tissa the louse would have felt very bitter against you and he would have had to go to *niraya*. But now, Tissa has been reborn in the Tusita deva world, and that is why I have allowed you to take the robes. Indeed, *bhikkhus*, attachment is very dangerous; as rust corrodes iron from which it is formed, so also, attachment destroys one and sends one to *niraya*. A *bhikkhu* should not indulge too much in the use of the four requisites or be very much attached to them."<sup>1</sup>

Habitual (*Āciṇṇa*) Kamma is the next in priority of effect. It is the Kamma that one constantly performs and recollects and towards which one has a great liking. Habits, whether good or bad, become second nature. They more or less tend to mould the character of a person. At leisure moments we often engage ourselves in our habitual thoughts and deeds. In the same way at the death-moment, unless influenced by other circumstances, we, as a rule, recall to mind our habitual thoughts and deeds.

The last in this category is cumulative (*Kaṭattā*) Kamma which embraces all that cannot be included in the foregoing three. This will come into effect in the second birth if the above-mentioned three kinds of Kamma cannot influence the beginning consciousness of a life.

Is one bound to reap all that one has sown in just proportion?

Not necessarily! In Buddhism there is every possibility to mould one's Kamma.

In the *Anguttara Nikāya* the Buddha states: "If anyone says that man must reap according to his deeds, in that case there

is no religious life nor is an opportunity afforded for the entire extinction of sorrow. But if anyone says that which a man reaps accords with his deeds, in that case there is a religious life and an opportunity is afforded for the entire extinction of sorrow."

"Here, O *bhikkhus*, a certain person is not disciplined in body, in morality, in mind, in wisdom, has little good and less virtue, and lives painfully in consequence of trifling misdeeds. Even a trivial act committed by such a person will lead him to a state of misery."

"Here, O *bhikkhus*, a certain person is disciplined in body, in morality, in mind, in wisdom, does much good, and lives with boundless compassion towards all. A similar evil committed by such a person ripens in this life itself and not even a small effect manifests itself (after death), not to say a great one."

"It is as if a man were to put a lump of salt into a small cup of water. What do you think, O *bhikkhus*? Would now the small amount of water in this cup become salty and undrinkable?"

"Yes, Lord."

"And why?"

"Because, Lord, there was very little water in the cup, and so it was made salty and undrinkable by the lump of salt?"

"Suppose a man were to put a lump of salt into the river Ganges. What do you think, O *bhikkhus*? Would the river now be made salty and undrinkable by the lump of salt?"

"No, indeed, Lord."

"And why not?"

"Because, Lord, the mass of water in the river Ganges is great, and so it would not become salty and undrinkable."

"In exactly the same way we may have the case of a person who does some slight evil deed which brings him to a state of misery, or, again, we may give the case of another person who does the same trivial misdeed, yet he expiates it in his present life. Not even a small effect manifests itself (after death), not to say a great one."

<sup>1</sup> Dhp. v 240, translated by Daw Mya Tin

"We may have the case of a person who is cast into prison for the theft of a half-penny, penny, or for a hundred pence or, again, we may have the case of a person who is not cast into prison for a half penny, for a penny, for a hundred pence."

"Who is cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence?" "Whenever anyone is poor, needy and indigent, he is cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence."

"Who is not cast into prison for a half-penny, or for a penny, or for a hundred pence?" "Whenever anyone is rich, wealthy, and affluent, he is not cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence."

"In exactly the same way we may have the case of a person who does some slight evil deed which brings him to a state of misery, or again we may have the case of another person who does the same trivial misdeed, and expiates it in the present life. Not even a small effect manifests itself (after death), not to say a great one."

According to this teaching, we should not forget the fact that we can still build our own heavens even though there are some mistakes in our life, intentional or unintentional, and our personal effort is essential for both our worldly and spiritual progress.

If a person makes no effort to cure himself of a disease or to save himself from his difficulties, or to strive with diligence for his progress, his evil Kamma will find a suitable opportunity to produce its due effects. If, on the contrary, he endeavours, on his part, to surmount his difficulties, to better his circumstances, to make the best use of the rare opportunities, to strive strenuously for his real progress, his good Kamma will come to his succour.

### ● The result of belief in Kamma

It is this doctrine of Kamma that gives consolation, hope, reliance, and moral courage to a Buddhist. When the unexpected happens, difficulties, failures, and misfortunes confront him, the Buddhist realises that he is reaping what he has sown, and is wiping off a past debt. But instead of resigning himself, leaving everything to Kamma, he can still make a strenuous effort to pull out the weeds and sow useful seeds in their place, for the future is in his hands.

He who believes in Kamma does not condemn even the most corrupt, for they have their chance to reform themselves at any moment. Though bound to suffer in woeful states, they have the hope of attaining eternal peace. By their deeds they can also create their own heavens. A Buddhist, who is fully convinced of the law of Kamma, does not pray to another to be saved, but confidently relies on himself for his emancipation. Instead of making any self-surrender, or propitiating any supernatural agency, he would rely on his own will-power and work incessantly for the welfare and happiness of all.

What is the cause of the inequality that exists amongst man kind? The law of Kamma explains the problem of suffering, the mystery of so-called fate and predestination of some religions, and above all the inequality of mankind.

A young truth-seeker named Subha approached the Buddha and questioned him regarding the apparent disparity that exists amongst humanity.

"What is the reason, what is the cause that we find amongst mankind the short-lived and the long-lived, the diseased and the healthy, the ugly and the good-looking, the powerless and the powerful, the poor and the rich, the low-born and the high-born, the ignorant and the wise?"

The Buddha's reply was: "All living beings have deeds (Kamma) as their own, their inheritance, their congenital cause, their kinsman, their refuge. It is Kamma that differentiates beings into low and high states."

He then explained the causes of such differences in accordance with the law of cause and effect as follows: Some people are short-lived because they killed living beings in their previous lives. Some people are long-lived because they were compassionate and avoided killing in their previous lives.

Because of the habit of harming and torturing others in their previous lives, some people suffer from various diseases in this life. Because of abstention from harming and torturing others in their previous lives, some people enjoy good health in this life.

The reason for ugliness in this life is that some people were wrathful, turbulent, and gave vent to anger, ill-will and resentment in their previous lives. The reason for good-looks in this life is that some people were not wrathful, turbulent, and did not give vent to anger, ill-will and resentment in their previous lives.

Some people are powerless in this life because they were jealous, and envied the gains of others, marks of respect and honour shown to others, and stored jealousy in their heart in their previous lives. Some people are powerful in this life because they were not jealous, and did not envy the gains of others, marks of respect and honour shown to others, and did not store jealousy in their heart in their previous lives.

Because of their generosity in their previous lives some people are wealthy in this life. Because of their greediness in their previous lives some people are poor in this life.

The reason for being intelligent in this life is that they approached the learned and the virtuous, and inquired what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong, what should be practised and what should not be practised in their previous lives. The reason for lack of intelligence in this life is that they did not approach the learned and the virtuous, and did not make inquiries in their previous lives.

Some people are of low-birth because they were stubborn, haughty, and did not honour those who were worthy of honour. Some people are of high-birth because they were not stubborn,

haughty, and honoured those who were worthy of honour.<sup>1</sup>

● **What is the main aim of the Buddha?**

The main objective of the Buddha is to liberate gods and men from endless suffering. Though they are subject to birth, decay and death, they do not regard them as suffering. All beings cling to their existence if they have no extreme physical and mental hardship or they do not attain insight knowledge or Nibbāna. Because of that, they have to struggle against any possibilities of danger to live as long as possible. If they believe in rebirth they tend to get something similar to their present life. People may consider that birth, decay and death are merely the laws of nature; besides, they might not accept that birth and death are suffering because they cannot remember how much they suffered when they were conceived and they cannot foresee the suffering of dying.

But when they are getting old, they have to feel physical and mental discomfort because of some disease or lack of strength to do whatever they like. No one therefore can deny the fact that decay or getting old is inevitable suffering. To express what is real suffering and how to practise to be free from it, the Buddha had to appear on the earth.

Maybe the teachings of the Buddha are extraordinary but he does not intend to contradict the teachings of others. As to this the Buddha said, "I never quarrel with anyone. It is the world that quarrels with me. No preacher of truth quarrels with anyone. All my statements are in line with the concepts of other sages. I declare that that which is not upheld by sages is untruth and that which is upheld by sages is truth."<sup>2</sup>

In order to be able to accept the teachings of the Buddha a person needs to do away with dogmatism and must be wise. If not, he is always bound to argue over the teachings of the Buddha.

1 M. iii. 202ff.

2 S. iii. 138



### ● How did the Buddha start to preach his teaching?

One month after becoming an Enlightened One the following thought occurred to the Buddha, "The Dhamma fully penetrated by me is profound, tranquil and is not understood by speculation. Gods and men are completely absorbed in sensual pleasure. It is not easy for them to realise and accept my teachings. Because of that nothing but weariness will come from teaching them. I will therefore remain with inner peace without delivering any teachings."<sup>1</sup>

When Brahma Sahampati, a supreme heavenly being, knew what was in the Buddha's mind, he thought of the world's great loss because although the Buddha had appeared on the earth, if he did not preach, the world would miss out on his teachings. And then he came to the Buddha and asked him to preach the Dhamma saying that there were some people with little defilement in their heart waiting for his teachings. If they had the opportunity of listening to the teachings they would take full advantage of his existence.

The questions may arise; "Why, after having practised the ten perfections and five great sacrifices with great effort in his countless past lives, was the Buddha reluctant to preach the Dhamma to gods and men after he attained Omniscience?" and "Why did he not know that there were some gods and men hoping for his teaching?"

The Buddha saw some gods and men who were ready to receive his teaching and he had already known that only after someone, of his own free will, asked him to preach the Dhamma if he taught gods and men, they would put value on his teachings and practise them in real earnest. Therefore, he thought like that and finally accepted the Brahma's request.

### ● Who first received his teaching?

As soon as he had decided to deliver his teachings, the first person who came into his mind was Ālāra and he knew<sup>1</sup> that he was learned, experienced and wise; his defilements were weak so that he could understand the teachings very quickly. Before the Buddha attained Omniscience he learnt from Ālāra the method which led him to the achievement of *Ākiñcaññā-yatanajjhāna* one of the four trances of the immaterial sphere.

In return for this help, the Buddha wanted to give his first teaching to Ālāra but when he looked for him he found that he had passed away seven days before. The second person who came into his mind was Udaka who gave him the method which led him to the achievement of *Nevasaññā-nāsaññā-yatanajjhāna*; the trance of neither perception nor non-perception. When he knew Udaka also had passed away the day before, he remarked that both Ālāra and Udaka had missed the golden opportunity for inner peace.

And then the group of five *bhikkhus* appeared in his mind. They were very helpful to him when he sought for Omniscience. In order to give the first teaching to them the Buddha started his journey towards the deer park named Isipatana where they stayed. He met Upaka, a wanderer, on the way. Upaka said, "Your faculties are quite pure; your complexion is very bright and very clear; who is your teacher? Whose teachings do you practise?" The Buddha replied. "For me, there is no teacher; no one is equal to me; I am an Enlightened One; I have overcome all defilements." Upaka said, "It may be so" and having shaken his head he took a different road. He also missed the opportunity to listen to the Buddha's first teaching because he did not believe the Buddha's words.

The Buddha continued his journey and came within sight of the group of five *bhikkhus*. They, looking at him, agreed not to pay respect to him because he had abandoned austerity which was regarded as the best way to inner peace in those days and followed the middle way. They thought that the



Buddha had reverted to the life of abundance, and looked down on him. But, when he came near to them they were not able to hold firmly to their agreement and some received his bowl and robe; some made a seat ready; some brought water for washing his feet.

After he occupied his seat, he proclaimed his Buddhahood and attainment of inner peace, and offered to teach them. The group of five *bhikkhus* said, "You did not get Buddhahood by the practice of austerity; how can you have attained Omniscience by following the easy way?" The Buddha insisted on his Buddhahood and urged them three times to listen to his teaching. Finally, they agreed with the Buddha and were all ears for his teaching which contains the two extremes which should not be practised, the four universal truths and the middle way. One of the two extremes is indulgence in sensual pleasure and the other is emphasis on the practice of asceticism. The four universal truths are suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the way leading to the cessation of suffering.<sup>1</sup>

Even though the Buddha had had insight into the truth that there is no permanent soul or essence he did not reveal it to the group of five *bhikkhus* at first. In order to mature their knowledge in readiness to accept the truth he taught them the middle way between the extremes of sensual desire and emphasis on the practice of asceticism. It is the Noble Eightfold Path and it can also be divided into three sections.

The first is composed of Right View and Right Intention. Both of these relate to wisdom. Right View opposes the idea of the permanent ego or soul. It causes realisation that there is only mind and matter, and the physical and mental process based on cause and effect relationship. The second one is the intention to liberate oneself from sensual desire, to further the well-being of all living beings based on loving-kindness, and to help the physical and mental needs of all beings based on compassion.

1 M. i. 163-4

Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood are contained in the second group. They relate to practical morality and the manner of living.

The last three parts of the Path lead to more spiritual concerns. They are Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Right Effort is trying to do meritorious deeds and to stop thinking of and doing unwholesome deeds. Right Mindfulness is full awareness of the object of meditation. Right Concentration is concentrating on pure subjects or steadiness on the object of meditation. The middle way opens the eyes of everyone who follows it to the existence of the Four Noble Truths.

The First Noble Truth is the universal fact of suffering; being reborn, illness, being subject to decay and death, being associated with the unpleasant and separated from the loved.

The Second Noble Truth is the cause of suffering; craving for sensual pleasure, craving for life itself and craving for non-existence. As to this craving for non-existence, it might be confused with the good intention to remove craving for existence because when one attains Nibbāna the craving for existence is cut off. I can give an example. Suppose there are two men whose aim is to become rich. One of them studies well and learns how to make money. Then he starts a business and gradually becomes wealthy. But, the other man does not study well, therefore he does not learn how to make money and so he associates with thieves, robbers and kidnappers, and he tries to get rich by crime. However he is arrested and sent to jail and instead of becoming rich his life is ruined. Even though their aim is the same they get different results in accordance with their knowledge and actions.

A person who is fed up with the hardship of life might commit suicide to escape from suffering but because of his misunderstanding he would only escape from the hardship of the present life and not from the unlimited suffering inherent in the round of rebirth. This culpable and ill-advised act inevitably throws him into a still more sorrowful rebirth. The Buddha

himself advised against it, even if certain of his disciples had sometimes dallied with the idea of suicide or even had recourse to it. As for Buddhists, even though they try to attain Nibbāna we should not brand them as craving for non-existence because, with their right understanding, they will put an end to all suffering attendant upon the round of rebirth.

The Third Noble Truth is the cessation of suffering and the Fourth Noble Truth is the middle way leading to the cessation of suffering.

In those days people swallowed whole the concept of the existence of a permanent soul. They believed that the soul exists in one's body though one does not perceive it, and instructs the body to do everything; coming, going, seeing, speaking and so on; and that it can transfer from one life to the next.

Had the Buddha started his teaching with the doctrine of the non-existence of a permanent soul and ego, the group of five *bhikkhus* would have found it unacceptable and would have rejected his teaching. Therefore, he first gave them the lesson of the Noble Eightfold Path. At the end of his first teaching, one of the group of five *bhikkhus*, Kondañña, was enlightened and attained the first stage of Path knowledge and asked the Buddha for ordination in the Holy Order. The others got just basic knowledge to penetrate into all aspects of the Buddha's teachings. As day after day they continued meditating without going out even to collect food, one after another attained the same insight knowledge as Kondañña.

After that the Buddha expounded the doctrine of the non-existence of ego and they agreed with him. From that time the concept of egolessness became widely known. If a living being is analyzed, there is nothing except body, feeling, perception, consciousness and other mental formations. They are neither ego nor self and they are always subject to ceaseless arising and vanishing. There is no one who can protect living beings from decay and death.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Teaching of the Buddha



#### ● Is Buddhism pessimistic?

Even though it is a fact that beings are actually lacking an ego and their constituents are transitory, and everything that man regards as solid reality is only impermanent — only insubstantial — when the Buddha cast light upon the matter, some people might criticize Buddhism as being pessimistic because it looks on life and the body as despicable things. The Buddha's illumination about the non-existence of ego is not meaningless. Man thinks things including himself are real, permanent and belong to him. Furthermore, even if he finds that he is fragile and insubstantial, man would like to be solid, substantial and everlasting. To make people see the impermanent nature of everything, the Buddha had to explain about it thoroughly and frequently. When a man has discovered that there is no 'ego'; therefore nothing can belong to it, he will not be attached to or have a desire for any object, not even for his own existence — whether for his body or for his spiritual elements.

It assumes that if a person always contemplates the impermanent nature without doing anything, he will not get on in life. But, the teachings of the Buddha do not mean that human beings should lose their energy and good efforts.

Man is burning with three fundamental passions; with covetousness for what he likes, with hatred for what he fears, and with ignorance and foolishness which makes him think phenomena are real and permanent — whereas they are impermanent and without substance. He might use fair means or foul when he makes money to keep himself and his family. Because of a passionate desire and hatred for something or somebody, he might break the law, and because of the pride in his youth, good health, prosperous business and longevity, he tends to be disrespectful or to give offence to other people.

Only suppression of desire, hatred, ignorance and foolishness based on pride can extinguish all troubles and give people happiness. That is why, in order to reduce or to get rid of them, the Buddha urged his disciples to contemplate as follows: "Decay is inseparable from me and I cannot overcome ageing. Diseases surround me and I will have to wrestle with some diseases. Man is mortal therefore I also cannot escape from death. I will have to lose all things near and dear to me in various ways. I will become heir to just my own deeds and they will be my only good friends."<sup>1</sup>

If a person is mindful of them quite often, when he gets into difficult circumstances, at least he will have the power to bear up well against all misfortunes and to live in peace and contentment. And then when he sees old people and the sick, he will feel for them and fulfil their needs with all his heart as far as he possibly can. If he considers that he may pass away at any time and he will become heir to whatever he did, he will not hesitate to do wholesome deeds. He has been increasing merit throughout the whole of his life. If not, he, indulging in whatever he likes, may delay performing good deeds.

<sup>1</sup> A. iii. 71

### ● Why did the Buddha ask us to perceive impermanence?

The Buddha grew up among luxuries and his father arranged everything carefully to prevent him from seeing unpleasant objects. But when he went to the pleasure park he saw an old man, a sick man, a dead body and a dignified ascetic. And then he was convinced that beings are subject to birth, decay, disease, death, and so also would he be. He decided to search for a way to overcome the ills of life and to get eternal peace. In reality, the sights drove him to renounce the worldly life and to become a Buddha.

Realising that by meditating upon impermanent nature, compassion, loving-kindness, sympathetic mood, tolerance and forgiveness develop in people's mind, the Buddha encouraged his disciples to contemplate it as often as possible.

Once, when the Buddha asked a group of *bhikkhus* if they meditated upon death, the *bhikkhus* respectively replied how they meditated upon death as follows; one said, "I always think that the duration of one's life is not certain; it would be good if I knew for a certainty that my life would extend to twenty-four hours further so that I would be able to practise good deeds." And another said, "I always think that I might die at any time; it would be good if I knew the certainty of my life for another twelve hours so that I could practise insight meditation." And another said, "I want to expect to be alive to perform wholesome deeds for the time it takes me to eat a meal." And another said, "I always hope that I will be alive for the time it takes me to eat four or five morsels so that I can practise good deeds." And another said, "I want to be alive for the time it takes me to eat one morsel." And another said, "I always think that it would be good if my life is maintained for the moment of one breath in order to practise insight meditation."<sup>1</sup>

The Buddha said that the first three *bhikkhus* contemplated death from afar, and praised the last three *bhikkhus* for their meditating upon death. Because the more a person realises

<sup>1</sup> M. iii. 305f.

impermanent nature, the less he will do unfair deeds. Moreover, his mind will be overwhelmed with the idea of the impermanent nature of everything including himself. And then he will not be attached to either himself or others, and his mind will be free from mental defilements such as lust, greed, hatred, conceit, jealousy, covetousness and so on.

Once, when the Buddha was staying at the deer park in Sāvathī, the *bhikkhu*, Rādha, came to him and asked, "For what purpose should one contemplate on the nature of death?" The Buddha replied, "For the sake of disgust of one's body and the bodies of others; one should do that." Their conversation continued as follows:

"But disgust, Lord, for what purpose is it?"

"Disgust, Rādha, is to bring about dispassion."

"But dispassion, Lord, for what purpose is it?"

"Dispassion, Rādha, is to get release."

"But release, Lord, what is it for?"

"Release, Radha, means Nibbāna."

"But Nibbāna, Lord, what is the aim of that?"

"This, Rādha, is a question that goes too far. You can grasp no limit to this question. The only purpose for practising righteousness is to attain Nibbāna. Nibbāna is its goal; Nibbāna is its end."<sup>1</sup>

#### ● Did the Buddha teach social responsibilities?

A person who lacks a good knowledge of the teachings of the Buddha might think that he neglected to teach social responsibilities. If so, he gets hold of the wrong end of the stick about Buddhism.

Buddhism aims at achieving not only spiritual progress and happiness but also the good order and prosperity of society. The Buddha taught social responsibilities as well as supramundane teachings from time to time. But he did not elaborate secular affairs in as much detail as he preached unworldly teachings. The main reason for becoming a Buddha is to preach

the Dhamma which leads people to disinclination for sensual pleasure because attachment to something causes greed, lust, resentment, anger, conflict and maltreatment etc. He emphasised supramundane teachings in accordance with his title of the Buddha, otherwise he was no better than a sociologist, but if everyone exactly follows his social teachings just as he taught, they can happily make their way in life.

#### ● How to behave towards other people

Man has a lot of energy and knowledge to build a peaceful world; he should use his power in the right direction for the benefit of himself and others. Because of some people's selfishness, foolishness, unsympathetic mood and ill-will other people unfortunately have to be their victims, even though they want to live peacefully.

People might think that there is an unseen evil power which puts forth various kinds of unjust deeds, violence and fighting. In reality, evil deeds are brought about by people who love doing them because they want to gain something from them. Moreover, it is difficult to refrain from doing evil for the greater part of the mind is easily tempted by evil things. Developing sympathetic mood, if everyone refrains from doing to others what he dislikes having done to himself no one will get into trouble.

Once, when the Buddha accompanying many *bhikkhus* was touring in a country, Kosala, he reached a village named Veludvāra. The villagers respectfully gave him a warm welcome. After they took their seats the head of villagers said, "Lord Buddha, we have a similar desire to live happily with our family indulging in all pleasurable objects and also after death we want to be reborn in a peaceful world. Please tell us the way which fulfils our wishes if possible."

The Buddha gave them a method as follows: "Everyone should think 'I am fond of my life and happiness, and averse to being tortured or killed; other people also certainly feel like me; then why should I treat them in ways which I would hate

<sup>1</sup> S. iii. 187.

myself? I should put myself in their place.' And then everyone should refrain from torment and taking lives, and they should tell one another not to kill or torture others. If everyone practised like this, no one would get into trouble about killing and torment.

Furthermore, everyone should think; I am in fear of losing my possessions. If they are destroyed by thieves or robbers or saboteurs, I will not be happy. Other people also will feel likewise if they lose their possessions. Therefore, I should abstain from taking what is not given or damaging other people's property. I love my wife as well as other female relatives. I cannot condone anyone having unlawful sexual intercourse with them. Needless to say, other people also will have the same feeling. Then why should I commit adultery or indulge in sexual misbehaviour with women? I hate people who spoil my reputation and fortune by telling lies or cheating. Other people do not like being deceived too. Therefore, I should not cheat others by physical or verbal action. If someone estranged my friends from me by slander, it would not please me. Other people also will dislike being separated from their friends. Therefore, I should abstain from creating a rift between friends. I love people who speak to me politely. No one likes to see or hear impoliteness. Therefore, I should always behave towards others in a polite way. In this way, If everyone were to put himself in others' place, all people would be pure in all their manners and they would be able to live happily without causing any harm either to themselves or others.

● **When did the Buddha decide to attain *Parinibbāna*?**

The wider the teachings of the Buddha permeated among people, the more his contemporary religious teachers' reputation decreased, and religious prejudice became more and more fixed in their hearts. They could not bear to see the Buddha any longer and they conspired against him, but no one achieved their aim — to destroy his life. An evil god, Māra, also had a strong aversion to seeing him on the earth. He tempted the

Bodhisatta not to renounce worldly life and attempted to prevent him from attaining Buddhahood. He knew that the Buddha could prolong his life-span as long as he wished to live. Therefore, from time to time, he asked the Buddha not to extend his life-span to keep alive till his mature age. The Buddha declined his request so that he could teach men and gods to be able to take as much advantage from his teachings as they wished, and determined to expound many suitable subjects for people from all walks of life. After knowing that his teachings are absolutely perfect for both worldly and unearthly lives, the Buddha decided to attain *parinibbāna* at eighty years of age.

● **What is Nibbāna?**

The highest aim of Buddhists is to attain Nibbāna. It is not an abode. It is regarded as the highest stage of mental purity. The nature of its great peace cannot be fully expressed in words, in thoughts, or in the form of similes. Yet, some scholars have presented it as something positive; others have on the other hand seen it as something negative. Anyway, the following *sutta* may help people understand what the nature of Nibbāna is.

Once Venerable Sāriputta was staying among the folk of Māgadha at Nālaka village. Then the wanderer Jambukhādaka, paid a visit to him and asked, "You, Buddhists, utter the word of Nibbāna frequently. What is Nibbāna?" Venerable Sāriputta replied, "The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion is called Nibbāna." "Is there any practice to attain Nibbāna?" Jambukhādaka added. "Yes, indeed, it can be attained through the practice of the noble path; right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration", Venerable Sāriputta replied.<sup>1</sup>

If we try to seek the cause of the unhappiness men bring upon themselves, we can find these three primary psychological causes; greed, hatred and delusion. Only when Nibbāna is

<sup>1</sup> S. iv. 251.

attained, the three causes and their effect, unhappiness, are absolutely destroyed and uprooted, and then inner peace appears.

Instead of arguing whether Nibbāna is something negative or positive, everybody should try to attain Nibbāna by following the eightfold noble path. For example, just by having knowledge of a recipe for a cake, one does not have an appetite for it and cannot understand what the taste of the cake will be.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Causes of Downfall



**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES ARE STATED** in detail in the Singālovāda Sutta. The reason for giving this teaching was as follows: when the Buddha was staying in the Bamboo Grove near Rājagaha, one morning he surveyed the world with great compassion to find out people who should be taught. Siṅgāla, a son of a rich family, came into his mind and he thought that if he gave a discourse to Siṅgāla, it would be of benefit to many people. And then he set off on a journey towards where Siṅgāla was. At that time, Siṅgāla with wet clothes and hair was paying respects to the various directions; the east, the west, etc. Even though he did not know himself the meaning and purpose of doing that, he practised this out of respect for his parents' wish. His parents were devout followers of the Buddha, and attained the first knowledge of the Noble Path. They did not wish to force their son to go with them to hear the Dhamma. So, Siṅgāla was not interested in going to the Buddha and listening to the teachings.

It is a good lesson for Buddhist people to take as an example. They should think; even though Siṅgāla's parents were pious, they could not persuade their son to be interested in Buddhism. There are so many things to enjoy that people are not interested in religion in their lives. If we practise the teachings of the Buddha just by way of tradition and neglect religious duties, how difficult it will be to show our children the way to Buddhism. And then they should

pore over Buddhism and practise it very well so that children can follow their good example. At a tender age, children may not be able to follow the higher teaching of the Buddha, but they should be trained to show goodwill towards all beings and to speak politely and pleasantly to everyone, and parents should educate them in the basic religious teachings as much as possible. In this way they can hand over their own religious heritage to the succeeding generations.

Whenever his parents told him to go to the Buddha and his disciples, Siṅgāla said, "It is unnecessary for me to approach them. If I go to them I will have to pay respects to them; doing that will make my back ache and my knees stiff; I should have to sit on the ground and my clothes will be covered with dirt. After sitting, I have to make conversation with them and then I have to invite them to ask for whatever they need. When I give them something, I just lose my money; there is no benefit for me."

They were unable to take their son to the Buddha. Finally, as the father was near to death, he called his son to come beside him and requested him to accept his parting advice. Siṅgāla assured his father that he would follow his final advice. The father had foresight, he therefore asked his son to pay respects to the various directions expecting that one day, while his son was doing so, the Buddha or his disciples would see him and explain to him the real meaning of paying respects to the directions. It worked out as the father had hoped. When the Buddha arrived near to him, he was still paying respects to the directions. The Buddha asked if he knew the purpose of his performing this rite. Siṅgāla confessed that he did not know the meaning but he was doing this respecting and remembering his father's words, and then he appealed to the Buddha to explain to him the meaning of his father's words.

The Buddha said, "Siṅgāla, in the discipline of the noble teaching, a good person does not pay respects to these directions. Actually, he pays respects to parents, teachers, wife and children, friends, servants or employees and noble ones. They are represented by the East, the West, the South, the North, the Nadir and the Zenith

respectively. There are a lot of duties for the six kinds of people to carry out. If a person does not shirk his responsibility to others and if he abstains from the four conducts that make man vicious, the four kinds of unjust action and six kinds of indulgence leading to loss of wealth, he is bound to live happily and harmoniously with them without getting into any trouble, and he will be reborn in a happy heavenly abode after death."

People in many religions feel the East to be of much worth. For example, in Hinduism, morning worship is performed sitting facing east<sup>1</sup>; in Judaism, at the east end is the Ark, and the pews are arranged on three sides so that worshippers face the Ark<sup>2</sup>; in Christianity, the main door of the church is at the west end and most, though not all, of the older churches are orientated, so that the altar is at the east end<sup>3</sup>; in Buddhism, according to my experience, the shrine room occupies the east end of the building. If the east end is not available to place the statue of the Buddha, most Buddhists choose the south end to place it.

Parents should be looked upon as the East because life starts with the care of parents like the day begins in the East. They nurture their children and are benevolent towards them. Therefore, they are sacred people, and children owe gratitude to them. Teachers open the eyes of pupils to their own subjects and develop their general knowledge. They are respected and reliable persons. Therefore, they should be regarded as the South. Wife and children should be acknowledged as the West because they are led by their father. People can sort out their problems with the help of friends and they can escape from danger. Therefore, friends should be recognized as the North. Servants and employees should be described as the Nadir because they faithfully and humbly have to work under their superior. The noble ones should be recognized as the Zenith because they are superiors in morality and dignity.

1 'The World's Living Religions'. Dr. Geoffrey Parrinder, p 31

2 Ibid. p 144

3 Ibid. p 165

● **What are the four kinds of vice?**

First of all, the Buddha explained the four kinds of vice to Singāla: 1) taking life, 2) stealing, 3) having unlawful sexual intercourse and 4) telling lies. When a person commits even one of them, his reputation and moral standards will deteriorate. If his offence is against the law, he must be brought to justice and will hang his head low in public. The shame and humiliation is total. His victims also have to suffer agonies. There is nothing good for any of them.

1. All living beings have to struggle against any possible danger and diseases, and have to supply themselves with nourishment because they love their own life and are afraid of death. Therefore, putting oneself in the place of others, one should respect all forms of life from the tiniest to the biggest creatures and one should refrain from taking the life of beings under any circumstances. Mercy-killing also should not be allowed. Even though a person knows there is no prospect of any recovery whatever, he tends to love his life all the same. Perhaps, when someone cannot bear to see a person so profoundly disabled or suffering from severe pain, he might think that dying is better than living for that person and then if he helps to hasten that person's death, he is accountable for that killing. The best way is to nurse the person as kindly as possible.

To produce the results of killing, the killer must be aware that his victim is a living being and make efforts with intent to kill. The being also must die by his efforts. Even though plants are regarded as living things, if a person destroys them, he has no moral guilt because there is no consciousness in plants. But, Buddhist *bhikkhus* are not allowed to destroy trees and seeds. The rule was made so that they will not be blamed and to protect living beings who live in trees from suffering. If a person kills living beings thinking that they are natural resources for the food

of mankind, he cannot escape from the guilt of that killing. Sometimes, living beings have to die accidentally. In that case, no one is liable for moral guilt; they have to pay their debts for their own sin in accordance with the law of kamma.

**Eating meat**

There are some problems in respect of eating meat. Some people might say, "Buddhists are not allowed to kill animals so why do they eat meat and fish? Eating meat, they are partly involved in killing animals". It should be said, "We neither kill nor ask anyone to kill animals for our food and we do not suggest to anyone how to kill and how many animals should be killed. Therefore, even though we eat meat and fish we have no responsibility for the killing."

There might be some excuse for killing animals on both sides. Butchers and fishermen might say, "We kill animals to supply food to people. If all people were vegetarians, we would not kill animals." Non-vegetarians might say, "If there were no butchers and fishermen, we would live on vegetables. We eat meat because we can easily get it from markets." If there are no butchers and fishermen, when people want to eat meat and fish they would kill animals themselves, and they would have to pay the debt for their own sin. Even though they want to eat meat if they are afraid of having the unpleasant result of killing, they would not take any living being's life.

Buddhist *bhikkhus* are especially blamed for eating meat because people think it is not proper for religious leaders who always teach people not to kill living beings. But the Buddha allowed *bhikkhus* to eat meat because they have to depend totally on lay people who may or may not be vegetarians. So as not to be a burden to their supporters they are not allowed to drop a hint to anyone except relatives about their food unless they are sick or invited to ask for what they would like.



Once, there was a *bhikkhu* named Devadatta, who was notorious for his disobedience to the Buddha. He had a desire to found a rival school after having felt resentment against the Buddha several times. Therefore, knowing that his request would not be allowed, he asked the Buddha to lay down the rules for *bhikkhus*; to live on just vegetables and the food got from going on alms-round from door to door, to live in a place remote from people and just under trees, to use the robes made of rags from garbage heaps or cemeteries. As he expected, the Buddha rejected his request because he knew these practices are not so important for *bhikkhus* to liberate themselves from rebirth and to gain inner peace. Even though a *bhikkhu* follows the rules, if he neglects meditation, he cannot get rid of mental defilements.<sup>1</sup> When his request was turned down Devadatta left the Buddha saying that in reality, the Buddha did not want to practise righteousness very well. He enjoyed living among luxurious things. And then he said, "Come, my friends, if you want to practise the Dhamma rightly."

In connection with food, Jivaka also asked the Buddha, "Lord Buddha, I have heard that you knowingly enjoy eating meat killed on purpose for your food. Is it correct?"

The Buddha said, "I restrict myself and my disciples from eating meat when we see or hear or suspect an animal has been killed on purpose for our food, otherwise we do not mind eating meat. The reason is that we are not fussy about our food and we do not put emphasis on taste. Suppose, a *bhikkhu*, having radiated all quarters and all living beings with loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, stays in a village or a town. He is invited to a meal and offered various food which is vegetable or not. The *bhikkhu* can choose and eat what is proper for him but while he is having food it does not occur to him, 'Indeed it is very delicious food and it would be good for me to be served similar food in future.'

1 DhA. vv 9,10

He wisely reflects, 'I eat this food not for amusement, conceit and not to beautify myself, but just enough for the support of the body, for keeping fit, and to practise righteousness very well.' From wise purpose cankers that had not arisen do not arise and also cankers that have arisen decline. The purpose of eating food is more important than the kind of food whether meat or vegetables. What do you think about the *bhikkhu*? Is he, at the moment, striving for the hurt of himself or others?"

Jivaka said, "His eating does not do anyone harm." The Buddha added, "If a person offers *bhikkhus* what is not allowed, he stores much demerit in five ways; when he catches animals or asks someone to go and fetch them, when the animals which are being fetched experience pain and distress, when he kills or makes someone kill animals, when the animals which are being killed feel pain or distress, when he offers *bhikkhus* improper food not in accordance with the rules."<sup>1</sup>

Our Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw said, "The best way is to avoid eating meat. If *bhikkhus* are not vegetarians, they should be very careful about their food not to be defiled by any part in killing."

2. No one except some religious persons can survive without money. Because of that people have to try to get enough money for their own use, moreover they are worried about losing their possessions because some people follow false ways of making money without thinking of other people. He, who had been subjected to the loss of his possessions, feels unhappiness. Thieves or robbers or saboteurs are afraid of being arrested while they are committing a crime, and after that, even though they are using what they got unlawfully, they pass their days in fear of discovery. When their dishonesty is disclosed they and their families are in disgrace and they must face a due sentence. Therefore, stealing;

1 M. i. 369

including fraud, embezzlement, racketeering, over-charging, refusal to pay taxes, damaging, etc.; is loathed by everybody.

3. The majority of people, who cannot yet overcome passion, indulge in sexual relations. It is allowable for lay people to take pleasure in their married sex. But some people attempt to commit unlawful sexual intercourse or adultery because they have no contentment and satisfaction with their spouses.

According to Buddhism, there are twenty kinds of women with whom a man is not allowed to have sexual intercourse. They are married women, women under a guardian, betrothed women and so on. Anyway, neither men nor women should enjoy having sexual intercourse outside marriage otherwise sexual misconduct will erode their morality, reputation and health.

In the life-time of the Buddha, there was a young man named Khemaka who was handsome and eloquent so that married and unmarried women wanted to be friendly with him. He jumped at the chance to have affairs with them. Even though some people knew his sexual misconduct they had to tolerate him because some felt ashamed to go to the court and some were afraid of his uncle, Anāthapiṇḍika, a rich man. Sometimes, he was caught and brought to the court but he was freed without being charged because of his uncle's influence. When the king and his uncle were criticized concerning his misbehaviour, they felt ashamed. Finally, his uncle took him to the Buddha to listen to the teaching. The Buddha explained to him the bad consequences of sexual misconduct as follows; a person who has an affair with a woman accumulates demerit, does not sleep well at night, is condemned and will have to suffer in a nether world after death. After he listened to the teaching, he completely changed his life and practised the Dhamma and then he attained the first stage of path knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DhA. vv 309, 310

4. People have a high opinion of anyone who always tells the truth. It is very important for everyone to gain trustworthiness and respectability because they are the main sources of having great success in life. On the contrary, telling lies degrades one's status and endangers the interests of others. It is important to tell the truth if a person has to give witness in a court because false evidence damages the interests of the plaintiff or the accused. So everybody should be afraid of telling lies but should be brave enough to speak the truth in order to get greater success in society and should avoid rude manners in deed, in word and in thought, as nobody likes them.

● **What are the four roots of evil actions?**

They are desire, anger, ignorance and fear. The Buddha said, "Whoever does unwholesome deeds, by reason of them, his fame and the company he keeps will downgrade as the moon during the waning half. Therefore, a noble one gets rid of the root of all evil."

In this regard, the commentary says, "When a person favours his relatives or friends, and gets rid of his enemies by using his authority or his judgement which is at fault for fear that he should be destroyed or because of lack of knowledge, he commits evil deeds."

The Buddha taught as follows to abstain from doing evil deeds. Deeds which are regrettable mistakes and result in bad consequences are evil. A fool makes himself a foe by practising unwholesome deeds and has to bear bitter experience with a tearful face. The thing that makes the fool wretched is the way he forsakes righteousness and follows after what is wrong. He is similar to a foolish carter whose cart is broken when he drives it on uneven ground after having diverted from a smooth road. Deeds which result in happiness and do not cause any regrets are good. Everybody should practise wholesome deeds in order not to regret what he had done like the foolish carter.

● **What are the six means for loss of wealth?**

They are: 1) addiction to drinking or using drugs, 2) visiting the streets during inappropriate times, 3) frequent enjoyment of entertainment, 4) gambling, 5) keeping bad company and 6) living in idleness.

1. The habit of taking intoxicants is the most dangerous and ruinous in the world. An alcoholic wastes his wealth because he has to spend more and more money on drink, and he becomes less interested in his business. Drinking a lot makes one prone to exposing one's body and drives one to quarrelling or fighting. A drinker loses his inhibitions therefore he might make an exhibition of himself and might assault people including parents and respectable persons. Under the influence of alcohol he does not hesitate to do evil. By speaking that which he should not speak, and by committing that which he should not commit, his reputation declines and he loses his social status. Addiction to drink causes diseases such as cancer, heart disease and so on. It also weakens intellect so a drinker is liable to error in his business at any time and his rivals can take advantage of his weakness.

There is a good story to give as an example. In the lifetime of the Buddha, there was a rich man whose father was named Mahādhana. He was an only son. His parents pampered him so that he was not interested in learning his parents' business. He was taken up with enjoyments so he spent his childhood in entertainments. When he was of marriageable age, he married a woman who was also brought up under the same circumstances. They got all the fortune from both sides when their parents passed away. They had not enough knowledge of economy but just knew how to spend money. Therefore, they continued enjoying entertainments at will without taking business into account. A group of alcoholics, hoping that if the rich couple were addicted to alcohol, they would have a chance to drink cheaply,

drew up a plan. They drank happily and noisily within the rich couple's sight so that they became interested in drinking.

The rich man became interested in their behaviour when he saw them very often and asked one of his servants what they were doing. The servant, who was secretly put up to it by the drinkers, said, "Master, they are drinking alcohol." "What is the taste of it?" the rich man asked. The servant replied, "It is very delicious. The man who has never drunk cannot cut a dash in high society. Would you like to try it out a bit?" He ordered the servant to fetch alcohol and tasted a little. At first, it left a bad taste in his mouth but he became addicted to drinking later. The group of alcoholics sent drink and food to his house daily.

One day, they got an invitation from the rich man to join him in drinking. From that time, they made themselves at home in his house. The number of alcoholics in his house increased day after day and his money also went on drink completely. Finally, the couple had to make a living by begging from house to house. One day, they approached a monastery to ask for food and when they were in the sight of the Buddha, a meaningful smile passed over the face of the Buddha. Ānanda asked him the reason for his smile and he said, "Look at the couple, Ānanda. In the first part of their life, if they had started their own business without squandering their money, they would have been in the list of the richest couples in Benares or else if they had practised my teaching the man would have been an *Arahant*, and his wife would have been an *Anāgāmi*. After they had lived with all pleasure in their early life, at least, if they started their business in the third part of their life, they would have been in third rank of rich couples or if they had practised my teaching the man would have attained the second stage of Path knowledge and his wife would have attained the first stage of Path knowledge. Now, they had to lose the opportunities as a result of drinking and

living in idleness."<sup>1</sup>

A report in 'The Times' issued on the 16th February 1989 is very interesting. The report said, "Alcohol abuse is costing British industry more than £700 million in lost output and sickness absence", Mr. Norman Fowler, Secretary of State for Employment, said yesterday. "A lot of people do not realise the extent of the problem and how much it is costing," Mr. Fowler said. "Alcohol misuse not only leads to high sickness and accident rates, but also results in people going to work when unfit and not making a full contribution." It causes strained relationships and could mean crucial orders being lost, having a serious effect on company profits. Mr. Roger Freeman, Under Secretary State for Health, said alcohol abuse was a huge burden on National Health Service resources, with about a fifth of all hospital admissions alcohol-related. The total death rate related to alcohol was between 6,000 and 8,000 a year.

Bearing these lessons in mind everyone should refrain from intoxicating drinks so that they do not lead themselves into errors and misfortune in their life.

2. A person, who loves visiting the streets during inappropriate times, endangers himself because he can be vulnerable to attack. He might be suspected of crimes when he is found near an incident and no one might believe his words even if he gives evidence. He might be subject to accusations and get into trouble at any time. His family might follow his example and burglars can easily break into his house when he is going out therefore his family and property are insecure.
3. A person, who enjoys going to entertainments very often, is always thinking where or how a show will be; how the singing will be; how the music will be, and because of that he cannot keep his mind on business and might make mistakes. After

having decided to go to a show, he has to spend some part of his working hours preparing for going to the show and has to spend his money. While enjoying the show he might miss good opportunities for business or burglars can break into his house. After watching the show he might be less interested in his business recalling what he has enjoyed.

4. A gambler is an enemy of losers. He will also lose his property and grieve over the loss. It is not enough to take his words as evidence in a court. He is despised by relatives and friends, and no one wants to help him when he has to face legal action and, further, he has to undergo imprisonment. No one wants to marry him because he is believed to be unable to maintain his family.

Unexpectedly, I read a remarkable story in 'The Times' issued on 26th November 1988, while I was writing about gambling. Although it must be said that one should not accept everything printed in newspapers, the story is very good to take as an example. The paper said, "Mother sold (AFP) — Two brothers sold their mother to a peasant in south-west China to pay gambling debts."

5. A person, who keeps bad companions such as gamblers, drinkers, libertines, tricksters, forgers, robbers, etc. endangers himself and his property. These sorts of people do themselves harm and lead other people astray and into trouble. Not to associate with immoral persons, the Buddha said, "One should stay by oneself if better or equal companions are not available because evil people denigrate their associates; equal companions never downgrade one's state; noble friends help one to make for progress."<sup>1</sup>

One's character is influenced by environment. Although good spirits cannot easily infect one's mind, immoral behaviour can be quickly attracted. It is therefore very

important for people to have a good environment. The impact of environment strikes even animals let alone people. As to this, there are some stories in Buddhist literature. One of them is as follows.

Once, there was a king named Sāma in Benares. In those days the Bodhisatta was one of a courtier's family, and grew up to be the king's temporal and spiritual adviser. The king had a state horse whose trainer was a lame man. The horse used to watch him as he tramped on and on in front, holding the halter; and knowing him to be his trainer, imitated him and limped too. Someone told the king how the horse was limping. The king sent for a vet. He examined the horse, but found him perfectly sound, and so accordingly made report. Then the king sent for the Bodhisatta to find out the reason for the limping. He soon found out that the horse was lame because he went about with a lame trainer. He told the king that the horse had no disease. Its limping was a case of bad example. To become normal, the horse should be trained by a good groom.<sup>1</sup>

A person follows the way practised by his companions whatever good or bad, vicious or virtuous. The one, who keeps foolish company, will soon be like rotten fish which stinks through the wrapping. The one, who associates with the wise will soon grow wise as a sweet smelling flower perfumes the wrapping paper. Taking these examples, everybody should choose right companions to get progress in their own status.

6. Laziness hinders one's prosperity. One tends to procrastinate, thinking; "It is too late, It is too early, it is too hot, it is too cold, I am too hungry or I am too full." Nowadays, there is a lot of competition in the economic sphere. Therefore, a person should not put off what he should do at once. If not, he might play into his rivals' hands. The Buddha said:

1 Jā. N 184

"Mindful amongst the negligent, highly vigilant amongst the drowsy, the man of wisdom advances like a race-horse, leaving the jade behind."<sup>1</sup>

"The idler who does not strive when he should be striving, who, though young and strong, is given to idleness, whose thoughts are weak and wandering, will not attain *magga* insight which can only be perceived by wisdom."<sup>2</sup>

A person, who hurries the work that he ought to do at a steady pace or delays what should be done with utmost speed, spoils his own business. To fulfil his purpose, he should know what work must be done in a given time. Moreover, neither paying enough intention to work and working hours nor getting down to work also sends one's business down. Therefore, a person should guard earnestness as the greatest treasure.

1 Dhp. v 29

2 Dhp. v 280

## CHAPTER FOUR

DOMESTIC  
RESPONSIBILITIES

**THERE ARE OBLIGATIONS** for everybody to fulfill according to their station in life. If they are not delinquent, there will be no danger because of neglected responsibilities, otherwise unpleasant situations such as negligence, resentment, assault, offence, conflict are inevitable among people. To increase loving-kindness, sympathetic mood, compassion and harmony among people, that is, to be able to live happily, the Buddha laid down social obligations for everybody.

The Buddha appeared in India and his teachings have lasted for 2,532 years or so. Some might say, "There have been a lot of changes during that long period, and customs are practised in a variety of ways in different regions. Because of that some of the Buddha's teachings are out of date, and impossible to follow."

The Buddha never intended to restrict people, and never said that one had to follow the rules without trial. He encouraged people to make inquiry into all teachings including his saying in the Kālāma sutta, "Do not believe anything which is based on hearsay, tradition, rumour, what is in any scriptures, any speculation, axiom, plausible argument, bias towards a notion that has been pondered over, famous person's speech, one's respect for a teacher. But when you yourselves know, 'These things are bad, blameworthy, censured by the wise; these things lead to harm and sorrow' abandon them. When you yourselves know, 'These things lead to benefit and

happiness' undertake and observe them." He did not lay down the rules without seeing any advantages. So, removing doubt, the reader should try to fulfil the following social responsibilities to know how far he can make sacrifices for his nearest and dearest.<sup>1</sup>

## THE DUTIES OF PARENTS

The Buddha described the duties of parents to their children as follows:

They must restrain their children from evil; encourage them to do good; give them good education or skill for a profession; arrange a suitable marriage and must hand over their inheritance to them at a proper time.

Parents are the first and foremost real teachers of sons and daughters. Before they can set themselves on their feet, children live with parents and first learn everything from them and then they get education from their teachers. In childhood, their knowledge is not mature. Their mind is liable to waver between good and bad, and mostly they tend towards bad habits. Their mind is like clay or wax, which is malleable to make portrait figures. It depends on the skill of the sculptor to produce good and beautiful images. Likewise, the primary training of children depends largely on wise parents. At this stage wise parents should take every possible care to give suitable moral lessons and general knowledge to their children. Parents should not fail to look after children so that they do not fall into bad habits and keep them aloof from the company of bad ones because their progress is affected by their environment too.

The children who are brought up well behave very well and get a good education and can move in good society. That is why parents should be anxious for their children to receive a good training. Even though some good parents are poor they give their children a good education, sacrificing themselves. Some parents work illegal business

1 A. i. 189

to earn enough money to keep their family but they nurture their children without having their children involved in their business. Some parents, who are less than human, are not like that. They use their children in illegal business. Some abuse and maltreat their own children instead of looking after them with parental love. Even though the children have to undergo their assault when they are young, the more their age and knowledge mature the more they are rancorous against their parents. When they are beside themselves with anger they take revenge on them for their cruelties. Because of that, parents must avoid cruelty and misleading children.

Parents might think good deeds come automatically by forbidding doing evil but they should know that their children tend to hesitate to do good. For example, some children are not bad inherently but they are reluctant to study very well. In that case, parents should persuade them to be interested in their education. Trying to know their physical and mental weakness, parents should be of all possible help to them.

If parents let them live according to their own free will without admonishment because of parental love and kindness, they are not assumed to be good parents. There is an English proverb; "Spare the rod, spoil the child." On top of that the children might become their foe automatically. When they cannot legally earn enough money because of lack of knowledge, they might keep company with evil people and go after illegal money or they might waste or steal parents' money and property. In this way, trouble caused by children will not end there. To avoid this unpleasant situation parents should not shirk from their responsibilities towards their children.

To enrich their better feelings parents should not forget to give them religious knowledge because all religion directly or indirectly polishes men's conduct, character, behaviour, morality and so on. It is not easy for young people to absorb religion. It depends on parents to interest their children in it in their youth. Parents should be clever in giving them their religious heritage as well as themselves studying religions, and should choose an appropriate religion, and practise it respectfully. Otherwise, they cannot expect to be able

to explain to their children what the religion is, why they should practise it, what benefit they can get from religion, etc., and then following their example, the children may be reluctant to practise any religion. As to this, the following story is a very good example.

In the lifetime of the Buddha, there was a treasurer endowed with faith, named Anāthapiṇḍika. His son, Kāla, never showed any desire to visit the Buddha or to hear the teachings. Even though his father asked him to do religious practice he paid no attention to what his father said. His father thought, "If my son adopts such an attitude as this and acts accordingly, hell or lower world will be his end. Now there is no living being who may not be influenced by gifts; I will therefore persuade him with gifts." So, he said to his son, "Dear son, go to the monastery, take upon yourself the obligations of taking precepts on the Fast-day, listen to the Dhamma, and then return. If you do so, I will give you a hundred pieces of money."

Kāla agreed and went to the monastery. But not caring to listen to the teaching, he lay down to sleep in a pleasant place and returned home early in the morning. His father was very pleased and asked his servants to serve him with special food. Kāla refused to eat until he got money because he was afraid his father would break his promise. Only when he got the money, he ate the food.

On the following day the father sent him forth, saying to him, "Dear son, I will give you a thousand pieces of money if you visit the Buddha, learn a single verse and then return to me." Accordingly Kāla went to the monastery and took his seat before the Buddha. But no sooner had he mastered a single verse than he desired to run away. The Buddha therefore caused him to misunderstand the true meaning of the verse. Kāla, failing to understand the verse, said to himself, "I will master the following verse." He therefore remained and continued to listen. Finally he was established in the first stage of insight knowledge.

On the following day he accompanied the congregation of *bhikkhus* presided over by the Buddha to his father's house. When his father saw him, he said to himself, "Today the demeanor of my son pleases me", and straightaway the following thought occurred to the son,

"I hope my father will not give me the money today in the presence of the Buddha. I hope he will conceal the fact that it was for the sake of money that I took upon myself the obligations of observing precepts." The father presented rice-porridge to the congregation of *bhikkhus* presided over by the Buddha, and presented the same to his son. Kāla sat down in silence, ate the porridge and the food.

When the Buddha finished his meal, Kāla's father placed the purse containing a thousand pieces of money before his son and said, "Dear son, you will remember that I persuaded you to take upon yourself the obligations of learning a stanza by promising to give you a thousand pieces of money, here is your money." He was greatly embarrassed and said, "I care not for the money" and he refused to touch the money. The father asked the Buddha about the strange demeanor of his son. The Buddha said, "Your son attained that which surpasses the attainment of a Universal Monarch so he does not want to get your money." Even though the father knew the condition of his son, he wanted to get a confirmation from the Buddha.<sup>1</sup>

There is no need to put pressure on children to practise religion. By discussing religion with them or having them read books on religion to them in leisure time, parents can interest them in religion.

If children are weak in their education, parents are obliged to arrange something for them to gain an honest livelihood by giving capital or training for a job. When they are skilled in doing some kind of job, they can survive anywhere at any time. Money and property might be lost by fire, flood, corrupt government, thieves, enemies, one's own foolish children or one's own mismanagement. The best way is for them to gain good education or training for a job.

Parents mostly arranged their children's marriage formerly and children willingly accepted their arrangement. Nowadays the custom is gradually fading away. Children might think that the custom is out of date; the best way is for them to choose their own spouse themselves; there is no parents' role in choosing their spouse.

<sup>1</sup> DhA. v 178

In reality, parents have had much experience in married life. Because of that, they want to choose a suitable spouse for their children so that the children can avoid matrimonial troubles, and they want to give them matrimonial advice.

In the lifetime of the Buddha, there was a famous woman named Visākhā who attained the first stage of path knowledge. After she got married her father told her how to behave in her husband's house as follows; "Dear daughter, if you see any fault in your father-in-law or mother-in-law or your husband, say nothing about it to other people. If other people speak ill of your family, you must not tell them what you have heard. Give only to those who return borrowed articles. Do not give to those who do not return borrowed articles. Give to poor relatives, servants who are sick even though they cannot repay you. You should stand and not remain sitting when you see your father-in-law or mother-in-law or your husband. You should not eat before they have eaten. You should serve them first before you eat. You should not go to bed before them. You should first perform the major and minor duties which you owe them before you go to bed. You should respect your husband's parents as you would a flame — useful if tended properly but dangerous if neglected, and you should look upon your husband as a divinity."<sup>1</sup>

Some married people might think it is not incumbent upon them to look after father-in-law and mother-in-law because they do not stay in the same house any longer with them after getting married. However, whether or not they live with them, if they defer and do not forget their duty to them, loving-kindness will permeate the family, and they can live happily together. Parents will also reciprocate by helping their children, including daughter-in-law or son-in-law, as far as they possibly can. When married people have to live with parents, even if they cannot follow the above mentioned duties, if they respect them or if they do not harbour jealousy against each other, there will be no tension in the family. If not, resentment and confrontation will increase.

<sup>1</sup> DhA. v 53



## THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN

Children must support parents in return when they have income; must look after parents' affairs on their behalf; must keep the tradition of the family; must behave towards parents to be worthy of their inheritance and they must give alms for departed parents and must share merit with them.

Good parents' love is boundless and they treat their children with very tender care and give the best education for their good and future welfare. They merit children's gratitude, respect, obedience and care especially in their old age. As soon as they know an embryo is conceived the wife and husband happily and tenderly care for it. The expectant mother has to forgo hard work or some pleasures in order to give birth to a healthy child. Her husband also has to try to get more money in order to bring his child up or sacrifice some of his indulgences to save money for his child.

After their child is born, their happiness is beyond description, and the baby is nursed with tender care, and the urine and stool are cleared without the least complaint or disgust, and then they are always anxious to provide the best of health, education, wealth and so on for their child, and they nurture their child to the best of their ability. Parents always regard their son and daughter, whatever their age, as babies and they tend to admonish them. They never complain about going to the aid of their children when their children are in financial, social or legal difficulties. They are ready to protect and care for their beloved ones at the risk of their own lives, their property and health. The kindness and love of parents are so much and so great that parents cannot be repaid in full.

In the lifetime of the Buddha, there was a king in India who was given the name 'Ajātasattu' which means 'enemy of his father before he was born' because when he was conceived his mother had a strong desire to drink his father's blood. So, his father pierced his right arm with his royal knife and took blood out and gave it

to his wife. Royal fortune-tellers said "The child will murder his father." When his mother heard about it, she wanted to have an abortion but her husband did not allow her to do so even though he realised the danger to his life.

When Ajātasattu grew up, he associated with Devadatta, an evil-minded *bhikkhu*. Taking Devadatta's advice, he tried to kill his father even though he came to the throne in accordance with his father's wish. He ordered his men to imprison and starve his father to death. And then he ordered his men to cut the sole of his father's feet and to put salt in the wounds and to roast the feet on a fire. Finally, his father passed away. At the same time, his wife gave birth. When the king heard the news, happiness and affection permeated his whole body, and his father immediately came into his mind. He thought that his father would also have had the same feeling of joy. He ordered his men to set his father free at once. But, he was horrified by the news of his father's death. There was no help for it. He asked his mother if his father loved him. His mother replied "You should know how your father loved you in view of the following incidents; even though he was aware of the danger to his life from you, he never allowed you to be murdered. And then when you were young, you had a whitlow. One day you could not sleep very well because of the pain and you cried bitterly. So, your father cuddled you and put your finger in his mouth to warm it to get you off to sleep. You got over it and fell asleep. While you were sleeping, your whitlow burst in his mouth. But, instead of spitting out the pus, your father swallowed it because he was afraid you might wake up."

When Ajātasattu heard his mother's reply, he was in anguish over the loss of his father and he repented of what he had done. From that time, he could not get to sleep because he always had nightmares.<sup>1</sup>

Children might not realise their parents' generosity when they are young. But, when they become parents themselves, they should know how worthy parents are of gratitude. Foolishly, some young

1 DA Sāmaññaphala Sutta.

people might think that they become human beings because of their parents' passion or lust, and their parents have to look after them by law or for their own satisfaction: because of that, there is no need to take gratitude to parents into account. In any case, whether or not we become human beings by nature or by our parents' passion, we are indebted to our parents because they care for us before we are able to look after ourselves.

Thinking of their indebtedness to parents children should help their parents in housework and look after them in illness, and even if they cannot give material support to them, at least they should be concerned about their spiritual welfare or should obey and behave respectfully towards them so that they can live happily for the rest of their life. If they do so, they will gain the praise of their parents and their neighbours. That home in which they live will be blessed with prosperity and happiness, peace and harmony.

In order to avoid misunderstanding that causes undesirable estrangement in the family, married people love to live independently and leave parents alone in their home. It seems good for both parents and the married couple. It does not matter for parents when they are strong enough to manage their life. But, the older they become, the more they need other people's help. It is pitiful to see old people who are all alone in a house, with very few friends and no family near them, who have to go shopping for themselves. Even though they can manage to live by spending their own savings they cannot get enough loving care from social workers. Therefore, at least one of their sons or daughters should live with their old parents even though they moved away from parents when they were young, and should provide the best care for them in return.

Sons and daughters have a responsibility to be worthy of their parents' inheritance by obeying their words and gratifying them by showing that their sons and daughters have been successful in everything. As far as good parents are concerned; they are always anxious to give a good education to their sons and daughters so that they can move in the highest society, and they, sacrificing themselves, bring their children up well even if they are poor.

When they see that their sons and daughters have great success in life, they are very happy. Good parents do not nurture their children in the hope of gaining profit from them as they invest their money, but sons and daughters, should not be reluctant to support or to look after parents when they earn enough money.

There might be a problem for parents who have a large family. Parents tend to favour the son or daughter who pleases them. In that case, other sons and daughters might think their parents are partial towards the good one. Even though they forget their duties to parents, they do not like to see discrimination by their parents and they feel resentment against their parents. And then they are liable to shirk their obligations and are jealous of their brother or sister who is of help to their parents.

Parents hand over their possessions to sons and daughters at a proper time. Sons and daughters also will not hesitate to take their inheritance. But, parents should not part with their possessions altogether because they cannot be certain that their sons and daughters will reciprocate loving care. There are a lot of people who neglect parents after they get their parents' belongings or they can manage their life themselves.

The following event happened during the lifetime of the Buddha. A certain brahman had four sons, and his wealth amounted to eight hundred thousand pieces of money. When his sons reached marriageable age, he arranged marriages for them and gave them four hundred thousand pieces of money. After the sons got married, their mother died, whereupon the sons took counsel together, saying, "If our father remarries, the family fortune has to be divided among our half-brothers and sisters and there will be nothing left for us. Come then! let us coax our father to win his favour." Accordingly, though without genuine love, they waited upon him, providing him with the choicest food and the finest clothes, massaging his hands and feet, and performing all of the other duties.

One day they spoke to their father of the disadvantage of living in a separate house and said, "We will wait upon you alternately so long as you live; give us the rest of your wealth also." In compliance

with their request their father gave each of them a hundred thousand pieces of money more and he divided all the rest of his wealth and possessions into four portions and handed it over to them. Nothing but under and upper clothes was left for himself.

First, he lived with the eldest son. For a few days, his eldest son ministered to his needs, but his daughter-in-law did not wish him to remain in her house. Therefore, one day, when he returned to the house after bathing in a river, his daughter-in-law, who stood at the gate, said to him "Did you give your eldest son more money than you gave your other sons? You gave each of your sons two hundred thousand pieces of money exactly. Don't you know the way to the house of your other sons?" His daughter-in-law's words made him angry and he departed from her house, and he went to the house of his second son. But, a few days later, he was driven from the house as he had been driven from the house of the first, and his two youngest sons' wives also treated him unkindly in the same way. Finally, he found himself without a single house where he could live.

Thereafter, he had to live by begging for his food from door to door. In the course of time he became worn out by old age, and his body withered away as the result of poor nutrition. One day he thought "There is not one of my sons to whom I can go for refuge. Possibly if I go to Gotama Buddha, I might receive a friendly greeting and good advice." And then he went to the Buddha and sat respectfully on one side.

The Buddha greeted him in a pleasant manner and said to him, "How are you, *brahman*? You look too weak to carry your body and your clothes are wretched. What happened to you?" "O Gotama, I have four sons living on the earth. Taking the advice of their wives, they have driven me out of their houses after they got all my possessions. Now, I have no place to live peacefully. I hope that you can tell me how I should cope."

The Buddha said, "Well then *brahman*, learn these verses thoroughly, and when the people, including your sons, are gathered together, recite them before the assembly", and he gave the following verses. The meaning of the verses is as follows; "I was pleased with

their birth. I desired to see their progress but they, taking their wives' words, expelled me from their houses as dogs pursue pigs. They call me, "Dear father, dear father" and then they forsake me in my old age. They behave like ogres. As a horse who is grown old and useless is neglected by his owner, a father who is forsaken by his sons has to live by begging for his food from door to door. A walking-stick is more useful than those who do not look after their parents. It can keep off wild bulls and dogs, and it helps an old man in the darkness and shallow water. By its help, a weak person can keep his balance when he nearly slips."

The *brahman* learnt these verses by heart and went to an assembly which his sons were attending, and he recited them. When people heard the *brahman* reciting them, they inquired whose father he was and then they condemned his sons and agreed to punish them. At that time, this was the law of mankind; if sons and daughters failed to support parents, they were put to death. Therefore, the sons of that *brahman* fell at their father's feet and begged him to spare their lives and they promised to look after their father. The father forgave his sons and they took him to their houses and warned their wives to look after him well or else they would be punished by death.

The old *brahman* continued his life happily and thanked the Buddha for his verses.<sup>1</sup>

### ● Giving alms for departed parents

Sons and daughters have a responsibility to offer alms for their departed parents, and must share merit with them. According to Buddhism, one's mind-process continues to the next life so long as one does not get rid of craving. Those, who have right view, believe in the consequences of their own good or bad deeds, are endowed with right conduct in body, speech, thought, and do not affront the noble ones, are reborn in a heavenly or human abode after they pass away. They enjoy their life there in accordance with good deeds they did in their previous life.

<sup>1</sup> DhA. v 324

Those who are in contrast with the good ones are reborn as animals or hungry ghosts or demons; these are a kind of lower heavenly beings, who have to feel pleasure and misery for fifteen days alternately.

A vicious person, who never thinks to do good deeds is reborn in Hell. When a person goes down to Hell, he is seized by the guardians of Hell, and they present him to their master, King Yama, saying, "Sir, he had no respect for his parents, did not honour recluses, did not pay due respect to the elders of the family. Cross-examine him and decree a punishment for him."

Then, King Yama cross-questions him saying, "My good man, did you not see the first *deva*-messenger, who is a newborn baby lying on his back, falling prostrate in his own excrement?" He replies, "Yes Sir, I saw him." King Yama speaks thus to him, "My good man, although you were sensible and grown up, did it not occur to you; I too am liable to rebirth; in order to be free from rebirth I shall do what is pure in body, speech and thought?" "No Sir, I was too indolent and foolish to do good deeds" he replies. King Yama speaks thus to him, "Your evil deeds belong only to you because they were not done by your parents, relatives, friends or others but only by you. That is why, you must experience the harvest of your evil deeds."

And then, King Yama asks him, "Even if you were sensible and grown up, when you saw the second *deva*-messenger, who is eighty or ninety or more years old, leaning on a stick and going tremulously on the streets, did it not occur to you; 'I too am liable to be old; it is not easy for me to do good deeds in my old age like him. I should do what is lovely in body, speech and thought before I am old?'"

"When you saw the third *deva*-messenger, who is afflicted with illness, suffering, falling prostrate in his own excrement, rising and getting to bed with the help of others, did it not occur to you; 'I too am liable to illness. When I am ill like him, it is impossible for me to do good deeds. Therefore, I should do good deeds when I am in good health?'"

"When you saw the fourth *deva*-messenger, who is an evil doer, arrested by the authorities, subjected to various punishments, did it not occur to you; 'Indeed, the evil doer has to be subjected to the death penalty and he has no chance to do good deeds now. As for me, there are still a lot of opportunities to do good deeds. I shall do wholesome deeds now?'"

"When you saw the fifth *deva*-messenger, who is dead, did it not occur to you; 'I am still alive. I will not be able to do meritorious deeds after I pass away. I shall do wholesome deeds?'"

However the man is cross-examined, when he cannot give any evidence of his own good deeds, King Yama by his silence indicates that he should be subjected to punishments in accordance with his past deeds. If he can remember and tell some part of his good deeds, he can escape from Hell.<sup>1</sup>

Only if a departed one is reborn as a hungry ghost because he attaches to somebody or something when he is about to die, can he get the result of sharing merit. It is difficult for hungry ghosts to get food, clothes and shelter. They are always starving and hoping to get these things. The Buddha said, "Hungry ghosts stand and wait outside the walls, at cross-roads and beside gate-posts returning to their former houses to hear their relatives' sharing merit in order to be free from the bad circumstances."

When someone passes away, surviving relatives weep, sorrow and mourn. Those actions are unhelpful to him. They only tire the mourners. The best way is for the surviving relatives to give donations for the departed relative saying, 'Let this be for our departed relative; may he be happy when he hears or knows our sharing merit.' But, on account of his past unwholesome deeds, sometimes no one remembers to offer alms for the departed one or in other cases he is at a distant place even though abundant food and drink are served for him by his relatives. The hungry ghost who deserves to be free from the

bad circumstances, knows that these donations are for him, and as soon as he says, "Well done, well done, well done", he is released from his bad status, and then he gets celestial food and clothes, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The Buddha said that as water, rained on the uplands, flows down to the low lands, as swollen streams and rivers swell the ocean, what is given for them here benefits the hungry ghosts.

I assume that this is why Buddhist people sharing merit use water and pour it from one cup to another. Ordinary water freed from contamination is pure, clear, cool and can flow or spread. Likewise, the donors' mind also is not contaminated by selfishness, attachment, greed, pride, anger, etc. at the moment when they are offering alms for departed ones. Their intention is only that the departed relatives get free from misery. Their mind is pure and generous. Because of that, their merit affects the departed ones.

If the departed ones are not hungry ghosts, the merit is not in vain. The donor can get five results from offering his donations. These are as follows; the donor is loved by other people, good or noble people will come to him, he is well-known as a generous person, he can bravely stand in an assembly, and he is certainly going to the heavenly planes after death. So, everybody should offer alms to other people and then he should share merit with departed ones.

<sup>1</sup> Khuddakapāṭha, Tirokuṭṭha Sutta.

## THE DUTIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

A husband must not treat his wife disparagingly but courteously and tenderly; must be faithful to his wife; must give his wife control and authority over domestic matters; must provide his wife with clothes and ornaments.

A wife must be able to perform household duties very well; must be industrious in discharging her duties; must manage well the wealth that her husband brings to her; must be faithful to her husband; must be hospitable to relatives from both sides of the family.

In order to get nuptial happiness, both husband and wife should carry out the above-mentioned duties as far as they can. The most important rule for both is to be faithful to one another. If one partner perhaps does not get any pleasure from sex with the spouse or is not content with married sex, he or she might try to get sexual pleasure with another. One should notice that infidelity hurts one's spouse deeply, and causes matrimonial and social troubles. If the worst comes to the worst, divorce will be inevitable. There is a saying which Burmese women use; it is possible for a wife to share a cake but not her husband with other women.

Extra-marital relations trouble at least three people. An adulterer and adulteress are preoccupied with thoughts of meeting their partner secretly and trying to conceal their misconduct, and they are prey to anxiety and fear. Their dishonest activities fester in their own spouse's mind. Their moral reputations deteriorate in society. They make more enemies. That is why, by trying to comprehend one's physical and mental needs, and complying with one another's wish or controlling one's excessive sexual desire by moral or social sense, everybody should be content with married sex and should abstain from adultery. Otherwise, one might try to commit adultery by using one's authority, money, good-looks and so on.

One day, in the lifetime of the Buddha, King Pasenadi Kosala, while going out in the city, happened to see a beautiful young woman standing at the window of her house and he instantly fell

in love with her. So the king tried to find ways and means of getting her. Finding that she was a married woman, he sent for her husband and made him serve at the palace. He tried to find the fault of the man in the hope of giving him a death sentence and marrying his widow. However, the man was so conscientious in his duty that the king could not find any fault in his work. Later he was sent on an impossible errand by the king. He was to go to a certain place on foot, twelve miles away from Sāvatti, bring back some lotus flowers and talcum powder, and arrive back at Sāvatti the same evening in time for the king's bath.

Hurriedly taking a food packet from his wife, he set out on his errand. On that evening, King Pasenadi, fearing that the young husband might arrive back in time, had the city-gates closed early. The young man, finding the city-gates closed, placed the talcum on the city-wall and stuck the flowers in the earth. Then he declared loudly, "O citizens! Be my witnesses! I have today accomplished my errand in time as instructed by the king. King Pasenadi, without any justification, plans to kill me." After that, he left for the Jetavana monastery to take shelter and find solace in the peaceful atmosphere of the monastery.

Meanwhile, King Pasenadi, obsessed with sexual desire, could not sleep, and kept thinking how he would get rid of the husband in the morning and take his wife. At about midnight, he heard some eerie sounds; actually, these were the doleful voices of four persons suffering in Lohakumbhī Niraya. Hearing those weird voices, the king was terrified. Early in the morning, he went to the Buddha, as advised by Queen Mallikā. When the Buddha was told about the four voices the king heard in the night, he explained to the king that those were the voices of four beings, who were the sons of rich men during the time of Kassapa Buddha, and that now they were suffering in Lohakumbhī Niraya because they had committed sexual misconduct with other people's wives. Then, the king came to realise the depravity of the deed and the severity of the punishment. He decided then and there that he would no longer covet another man's wife. "After all, it was on account of

my intense desire for another man's wife that I was tormented and could not sleep the whole of last night," he reflected.<sup>1</sup>

A man and a woman should evaluate one another closely before they decide to get married with the intention of living together till the end of their life. After they get married they should respect their own spouse's wish and opinions, and they should comply with one another's preference without insisting on their own benefit and liking. Sometimes differences of opinion may arise between married couples. But they should never come to bitter quarrels during their married life. If there are immensely different in views and preferences or if they have no physical satisfaction in their married life, a divorce might be considered by both. Especially, when they have children they should not lightly think of getting a divorce. A divorce affects not only the couple but also their children. They should be interested in the well being of their own children. There are millions of things children need from their parents. Marriage is all about sharing — doing things and looking after children together. A single-parent might be incapable of organizing adequate care for children because he or she might lack the ability to combine work and parental responsibilities. Children suffer if they are neglected or do not get sufficient care from their parents.

In any case, to get nuptial happiness and to be united for the whole of life, a couple must be well matched in faith, morality, generosity and wisdom. Moreover, if husband and wife both have a grateful attitude towards helpers or one another, self-control, good livelihood, and use loving words to one another, they will certainly prosper in their married life, and those who oppose them will be given no cause to rejoice and they can live happily rejoicing with bliss that what they desire for each other is goodness and virtue.

The reader can learn how important morality is for both husband and wife from the following story. When the Buddha was staying at Jetavana, a *brahmin* who had four daughters came to the Buddha and told his problem. The problem was that four suitors courted his daughters. One was fine and handsome, the second was old

1 DhA. v 60. Based on translation by Daw Mya Tin.

and well advanced in years, the third was wealthy and the fourth was a moral man. He could not decide to whom he should give his daughters in marriage. So, he thought he would tell the matter to the Buddha who would be sure to know, and then he would give the girls to the most suitable man.

He went to the monastery and paid respects to the Buddha and told him everything from the beginning to the end. To this the Buddha replied, "In one of your past lives, as now, you asked the same question; but you cannot remember the case because rebirth has confused your memory." And then the Buddha told the *brahmin* how he answered the problem when he asked in a certain previous life, as follows; "Beauty and noble birth is good. The one who has years is worthy of respect. But, even though one has other qualities, a man is to be despised if he fails in moral standards." When the *brahmin* heard this, he decided to give all his daughters to the moral person.<sup>1</sup>

From now on I would like to present the Buddha's original teachings in connection with conjugal matters rather than to write my own idea because I have no experience of matrimony.

### ● Seven kinds of Wives

When the Buddha was staying at the Jeta Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's park, one day he went to Anāthapiṇḍika's house for alms. At that time the people of the house were making a great noise. When the Buddha asked the reason of the noise, Anāthapiṇḍika said, "It is my daughter-in-law. She is rich and has been brought from a wealthy family. She pays no heed to her father-in-law, mother-in-law, and her husband; neither does she venerate, honour, reverence nor respect the Buddha."

The Buddha called Sujātā, and asked if she would like to listen to his teaching, and when she agreed, the Buddha told her about the seven kinds of wives, and asked which of them she was. They are the one like a slayer, the one like a robber, the one like a master, the one like a mother, the one like a sister, the one like a companion, the one like a handmaid. Sujātā said, "I do not

<sup>1</sup> Jā. No. 200

fully understand what you have put so briefly. You should explain to me so that I can understand the meaning of the words."

The Buddha explained to her as follows: "A wife, who has an inflammable temper, is unfaithful to her husband and treats him contemptuously and aggressively, should be regarded as a slayer; a wife, who wastes or uses or gives her husband's wealth without getting his consent, should be regarded as a thief; a wife, who has no desire to carry out her duties but has a domineering attitude towards her husband, and treats him unkindly, is lazy and gluttonous, should be regarded as a master; a wife, who looks after her husband as a mother, and uses his wealth economically, should be regarded as a mother; a wife, who regards her husband as a brother, and respects him, and complies with her husband's wishes, should be regarded as a sister; a wife, who is happy whenever she sees her husband as a person feels when he sees his friend from whom he has been long parted, is moral and high-born, treats her husband respectfully, should be regarded as a friend; a wife, who feels no resentment against her husband even though she is threatened with lashing or killing, is obedient to her husband's words, is free from anger, and pure and calm in her heart, should be regarded as a handmaid.

In accordance with their behaviour towards their husbands, the first three kinds of wife are to be reborn in Hell, and the others are to be reborn in Heaven. Which of them are you?" Sujātā replied, "Lord Buddha, may you think of me as a wife who should be regarded as a handmaid from this day forth." The Buddha and her family were pleased with her reply.<sup>1</sup>

### ● How to live with a husband

Once when the Buddha was staying in Jātiya Wood, a man named Uggaha paid him a visit, and invited him to his house to offer food. On the following morning the Buddha went to his house, and Uggaha served and satisfied the Buddha with various kinds of food. After the Buddha finished eating Uggaha said,

<sup>1</sup> A. iv. 91



"Lord Buddha, these girls of mine are going to their husbands' houses to stay with their families. Teach them for their good and happiness how to behave towards their husbands."

The Buddha told the girls to train themselves in the following ways; a wife should get up earlier than her husband, and go to bed later than him, and should be ready to do what her husband wants, and treats him courteously and kindly; a wife should pay respect to all, whether parents or other respectable persons whom her husband reveres, and should be hospitable to them; a wife should be able to do housework or home-crafts deftly, and should not be lazy; a wife should know whether her husband's men work very well or not, and should know their physical and mental needs and should provide bonuses for them; a wife should use economically the money which her husband gives, and should not waste it or keep it dishonestly.<sup>1</sup>

It is assumed that it is impossible for them to practise some of the responsibilities because they descended from a rich family and married men who had equal standard with them.

Nowadays wives as well as husbands have to work and earn money. They do not have to depend on their husband for money. Because of that they might think these principles are out of date and they automatically lower themselves by following the rule. If so, it proves that they cannot get rid of pride and cannot give real loving-kindness to their husbands. There is no reason for them not to fulfil the responsibilities if they really love their husbands. Wives should put the rules to the test. There will be no disadvantages by practising the rule. When wives put the rules into practice, it is sure they will gain their husbands' affection and increasing loving care.

<sup>1</sup> A. iii. 36

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES



#### THE DUTIES OF FRIENDS

Man is a social being. As soon as he is born there is at least one near to him. Even though he starts his life with crying, he is welcomed with a smile except by those who do not have normal human feelings. The condition of his health, education, wealth and so on depend on the environment in which he has to be born. His social circle becomes wider and wider in accordance with his age. When he is young his parents have to supervise him so that he does not associate with improper companions otherwise he might get into trouble. When he comes of age he may look for his own companions but he should pick out friends carefully because all companions cannot be regarded as friends and he cannot hope for help from all of them when he is in need. There is a proverb; a friend in need is a friend indeed. No one should choose his friends because of their status or wealth. All friends are valuable. The following story is very good to learn how pleasant it is to hear even the word of friend.

Once our Buddha was born as the son of a wealthy merchant in one of his previous lives. One day, as he was sitting at a cross-roads with three friends, he saw a hunter driving his cart full of meat towards them. One of them went to the hunter and asked, "Hey, hunter, give me a piece of meat." The hunter replied, "A man, who asks another for something, should speak politely. You



deserve to get a piece of meat appropriate to your manner of asking" and he gave the young man a piece of worthless meat. And then the second one went to the hunter and asked, "Oh, elder brother, may I get a piece of meat?" The hunter answered, "The name of a brother is a strong link to join each other. You shall receive such a piece of meat as the words you have spoken," and then he gave the latter a joint of beef. The third one went to the hunter and asked, "Dear father, do you mind if I ask for a piece of meat?" The hunter replied, "You should receive a piece of meat suitable to your words. Hearing the cry of dear father fills one's heart with pity" and then he gave the young man a savoury piece of meat and heart. And then the youngest one, our Bodhisatta, went to the hunter and asked, "My friend, will you be kind enough to give me a piece of meat?" The hunter replied, "You shall receive a piece of meat suitable to the words you have used. The one who has no friends looks like a traveller who ventures into a wilderness. I am thrilled with delight to hear the cry of my friend" and then he pledged the young man to give all his cartful of meat and drove the cart to the latter's house. The young man treated the hunter with great hospitality and respect, and asked the hunter to abandon hunting and to work under him. They lived together as inseparable friends.<sup>1</sup>

To differentiate true friends from those who are friends only in appearance, the Buddha described to Siṅgāla an unreliable friend's character as follows.

A person, who always thinks of getting something from you, comes to your house with empty hands and praises some of your belongings so that you cannot help giving him the things and then he happily returns carrying your gifts. He wants a lot from you for very little. He comes to you only when he is in difficulties. He associates with you for his own benefit. When you come to his house, he might say, "Oh, it was a pity you could not come to me yesterday. There was a lot of food. I was hoping you would come. If you had come to me yesterday you would have been served with delicious food but there is nothing to serve you today. I expect I

1 Jā. No. 315

will be able to serve you with special food when you come next time." Wearing expensive clothes or using valuable things he might say, "These things suit you. I want to give you them but they are just enough for me. I am so sorry for that." When you ask him for help he expresses his inability or when you borrow something from him he is flat ready to lend you telling the defects of his belongings. But he is ready to accompany you to drink alcohol, to visit the streets during unfitting times, to gamble, to go to watch entertainments, and he encourages you to do such bad deeds. He approves of both your good and bad deeds, and he praises you in your presence but criticizes you in your absence.

The Buddha told Siṅgāla about four kinds of people whom he should regard as comrades. One of them is a helpful friend. He comes running to his friend's side as soon as he knows the friend is in trouble and when his friend asks him for some money for such things as legal action he never hesitates to give more money than is needed. He looks after his friend, and also his friend's possessions and family.

As to this, the commentary said, "Even when his friend is under the influence of drink, a helpful person does not go away from the friend so that he can protect his friend from any possible danger and whenever his friend goes out he looks after the friend's family and possessions."

We may say the statement is not acceptable because we have already learnt that associating with a drinker causes one to lose one's wealth. That is right. But, we should keep it in mind that nobody is perfect. Suppose one of our friends is not inherently bad but he starts to get into bad habits and makes some mistakes. As we see his immoral practice once or twice, if we abandon him once and for all, we also are out of the list of good friends. If we continue our friendship with him without admonishing him for his mistake, we are in the list of unreliable friends. Therefore, we should first explain to him the bad consequences of his immoral practice and urge him to give up his bad habit. If he neglects our suggestion or is unable to get out of his bad habit, we should not cling to him.

A person who shares his friend's sorrow and happiness must also be regarded as a true friend. He tells his secrets to his friend but never betrays his friend's secret. When he sees his friend in danger, he determines to help the friend even at the risk of his life.

A comrade always points out what is good for his friend. He restrains his friend from doing evil. He tells his friend what he has not yet heard and he shows him the way leading to heaven and inner peace.

There is a story relevant to this subject. In the lifetime of Kassapa Buddha, there was a young brahman, named Ghaṭikāra, a potter, and the chief supporter of the Buddha. He had a friend named Jotipāla. One day, the potter told his friend to go to the Buddha. Jotipāla said "What use is it to see this little recluse?" Whenever the potter asked his friend to accompany him to go to the Buddha, his friend refused his proposal. One day, they went to a river to bathe. When they arrived at the river the potter said, "The monastery is very near here. Let's go to the Buddha." His friend refused his proposal as usual. Finally, the potter, having laid hold of his friend by the hair, coerced his friend to go to the Buddha. Then it occurred to Jotipāla, "Indeed, it is wonderful that the potter, being of lowly birth, dare hold me by the hair. This surely cannot be insignificant," and then he agreed to go to the Buddha. When they heard the Dhamma, Jotipāla told his friend to go forth from home into homelessness. The potter said, "I have to look after my blind and ageing parents. I will be glad to see you in the Order of the Buddha." And then Jotipāla received ordination and practised the Dhamma very well."<sup>1</sup>

A sympathetic person is unhappy to see his friend's failure but rejoices to see his friend's success in life, and he does not want to listen to the friend's ill fame but rejoices to hear his friend's good reputation.

After studying the lessons one should be guided by one's sense of who is suitable to be a friend, and should associate with a good person because one can have great success in life with the help of a good companion.

1 M. ii. 45ff

Once when Ānanda told the Buddha that half of the achievement in the holy life consists in good companions, the latter replied, "Ānanda, you should not say that because people can completely achieve their objective in the holy life with the help of good companions." It is not sufficient for people to choose good persons just to associate with. They should make friends. To strengthen friendship among people the Buddha gave a lesson how to behave towards one another as friends.<sup>1</sup>

A person must be generous in giving what his friend needs; must talk with his friend courteously; must look after his friend's well being; must treat him like himself, and must keep his word and promises.

His friends will reciprocate as follows; they will look after him and his property when he is unable to take care of them himself; will be a refuge when he is in danger; will not forsake him in his trouble, and will help his family.

Moreover, people should study the following teachings of the Buddha relating to the subject of friend.

"If, as he fares, he meets no companion who is better or equal, let him firmly pursue his solitary career; there is no fellowship with the foolish."<sup>2</sup>

"Should one see a wise man, who like a revealer of treasures, points out faults and reproves, let one associate with such a wise person; it will be better, not worse, for him who associates with such a one."<sup>3</sup>

"Truly, he who moves in company with fools grieves for a long time; association with fools is ever painful as with a foe. Happy is association with the wise, even like meeting with kinsfolk."<sup>4</sup>

1 S. i. 87

2 Dh. v. 61

3 Dh. v. 76

4 Dh. v. 207

"The intelligent man who leads others not falsely but lawfully and impartially, and is guarded by the truth, is called, 'One who stands in the truth'."<sup>1</sup>

"Trust not in those whose words are lies,  
nor those who only know  
Self-interest, nor who have sinned,  
nor who too pious show.

"Some men have nature like the kine,  
thirsty and full of greed;  
Have words in truth a friend to soothe,  
but never come to deed.

"These hold out dry and empty hands;  
the voice conceals their heart;  
From those who know not gratitude  
(vain creatures!) keep apart.

"Put not the trust in woman or  
in man of fickle mind,  
Nor such as having made a pact  
to break it are inclined.

"The man who walks in evil ways,  
to all things threatening death,  
Unsteadfast, put no trust in him,  
like keenest sword in sheath.

"Some speak smooth words that come not  
from the heart, and try to please.  
With many a show of friendship feigned;  
put not the trust in these.

"When such an evil-minded man  
beholds of food or gain,  
He works all ill, and go he will,  
but trust will be the bane."<sup>1</sup>

● **The marks of an enemy:**

"He smiles not when you see him,  
no welcome will he show,  
He will not turn his eyes that way,  
and answers you with 'No'.

"Your enemies he honours,  
he cares not for your friends,  
Those who would praise your worth,  
he stays, your slanderers commends.

"No secret tells he to you,  
your secret he betrays,  
Speaks never well of what you do,  
your wisdom will not praise.

"He joys not at your welfare,  
but your evil fame;  
Should he receive some dainty,  
he thinks not of your name,  
Nor pities you, nor cries aloud —  
O, had my friend the same.

"These are the sixteen tokens by  
which a foe you see,  
These if a wise man sees or hears  
he knows his enemy."

● The marks of a friend:

"The absent he remembers;  
returned, he will rejoice;  
Then in the height of his delight  
he greets you with his voice.

"Your foes he never honours,  
he loves to serve your friends,  
Those who would slander you,  
he stays; who praise you, he commends.

"He tells his secrets to you,  
your secret ne'er betrays,  
Speaks ever well of all you do,  
your wisdom loves to praise.

"He joys to hear your welfare,  
not in your evil fame  
Should he receive some dainty,  
he straight thinks on your name,  
And pities you, and cries aloud —  
O, had my friend the same!

"These are the sixteen tokens in  
friends established well;  
Which if a wise man sees or hears  
he can a true friend tell."<sup>1</sup>

## THE DUTIES OF EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE

An employer must assign his employees to the job according to their ability and physical and mental strength; must give them due payment, and should add bonuses to their wages; must look after them in sickness; must share special foods with them, and must let them off work when appropriate.

An employee must reciprocate by getting up before his employer; going to bed after him; taking only what is given; performing his duties well, and upholding his employer's good name and fame.

Some of the above-mentioned rules are concerned with the relations between an employer and his workers in domestic business. But, nowadays, if we study the economic system followed by most developing countries, we can see that their governments or business firms practise nearly the same systems as the Buddha taught, and their people can live in prosperity.

The duties of both parties show that there must be mutual good relationship between an employer and his employees to get progress in business. Moreover, the prosperity of a business depends upon good management. Even though a person has enough capital, if there is mismanagement or if he hasn't enough knowledge how to invest his money correctly or effectively in a profitable business, economic progress is unlikely. If he runs his business with unskilled workers, shoddy work and bungling will soon destroy his business. When due wages and salary are not paid, skilled workers will not be interested in working for him.

Once the Buddha uttered the following stanza at the end of his Dhamma talk.

"With humblest start and trifling capital,  
A shrewd and able man will rise to wealth,  
Even as his breath can nurse a tiny flame."

When the Buddha stayed in Jivaka's mango grove near Rājagaha, a *bhikkhu* who could not learn a single verse by heart attained Arahantship by following the Buddha's instruction for concentrating on a piece of white cloth, rubbing with his hand and repeating the words, 'Removal of impurity; removal of impurity'.

That dull *bhikkhu*'s swift attainment of Arahantship amazed the *bhikkhus* and they asked the Buddha why it happened. The Buddha said, "In one of his previous lives, the *bhikkhu* laughed in order to scorn a dull *bhikkhu* who was learning a passage by heart. His scorn discouraged the *bhikkhu* from learning or reciting the passage. And now, in consequence, he himself proved a dullard. Each new line he learned drove the last out of his memory and four months slipped away while he was studying this single stanza. In another one of his lives, he was a king and was making a royal procession round his city, he wiped the sweat from his face with a spotless white cloth and it was stained. He thought, "It is this body of mine which has spoiled the original purity and whiteness of the cloth. Impermanent, indeed, are all component things." Thus he grasped the idea of impermanence. And now, in consequence, the characteristic of impermanence came into his mind in a flash, while he was meditating and this insight knowledge effected his freedom from all mental defilements."

The Buddha continued his sermon as follows: "The *bhikkhu* has just now risen to great benefit in his spiritual life through me; in one of his lives it was to great wealth that he attained, also through me."

Once when Brahmadata was ruling in Benares, I was born into the treasurer's family. I had a keen eye for signs and omens. One day, on my way to attend the king, I came upon a dead mouse lying on the road and, taking note of the position of the planets at that moment, I said, "If any decent young fellow with his wits about him starts a business using this dead mouse as capital, he can become a rich man." When a poor young man of good family heard my words, he picked up the mouse and sold it as cat food for a farthing. He bought molasses with the farthing. He then offered a tiny drop of the molasses with drinking water to flower-

gatherers returning from the forest. They thanked him for relief of their fatigue and each of them gave him a handful of flowers. He sold the flowers. With the money he bought more molasses and went to the flower meadows and provided the flower-gatherers with molasses and water. That day he got a lot of flowers and sold them. Thus he obtained eight pence in a short time.

"The next day, when he went past the royal garden he saw a quantity of rotten branches and leaves fallen down by a stream and he found that the gardener did not know how to clear them away. He asked some of his young friends to help the gardener and served them with the molasses and water. The gardener offered him the wood. He sold it to a potter for sixteen pence and five bowls and vessels. Having now twenty-four pence in all, a plan occurred to him. He went to the vicinity of the city-gate with a jar full of water and supplied mowers with water to drink. They said, "You've done us a good turn, friend. What can we do for you?" "Oh, I'll tell you when I want your aid"; he said. He made friends with the harbour-master and the mayor asking them to give information about the arrival of horse-traders. On hearing that the horse-traders were arriving with five hundred horses to sell the next day he went to the mowers and asked each of them to give him a bundle of grass and to agree not to sell their own grass until he had sold his. He got five hundred bundles of grass and since the traders were unable to buy grass for their horses elsewhere, they had to purchase his grass for a thousand pounds.

"Only a few days later the authority of the port gave the news of the imminent arrival of a large cargo ship in port, another plan occurred to him. He hired a chariot and went to the port in great style appearing to be a wealthy merchant. He bought all the goods on credit, having given a valuable ring as a gift to secure the deal. On hearing that the ship had arrived in port about a hundred merchants came to the port to buy the goods only to be told that they could not have any because a great merchant had already made a deal for them all. They had to buy the goods from him so he got 200,000 pounds.

"To show his gratitude, he gave half his money to me. When I asked how he got this fortune he told me how, starting with only a dead mouse, he had become a wealthy man by following my advice. Satisfied with his skill in business I give my daughter in marriage to him so that his fortune might not fall into anybody else's hands."

To make one's business prosper, one must be endowed with the wherewithal; diligence, a good knowledge of one's own business, savings, helpful friends and wisdom in using money. If a person is energetic, mindful, pure in his thought, word and deeds, and if he does everything with care and consideration and earns his living according to the law, his fame and fortune steadily increase.

A person might think he can get rich by following a short cut. The Buddha encouraged people to gather wealth by functioning steadily and firmly in business as bees gather honey or termites build their hill, and then he gave advice on how to use money as follows: "A person should divide his wealth in four and he should enjoy one part at will for daily use and charity; he should put two parts to business; and should put the fourth aside for emergencies and his old age."

## CHAPTER SIX

### SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITIES



#### THE DUTIES OF TEACHER AND PUPIL

A teacher should train his pupils in the best discipline; should teach them well what ought to be taught; should teach them all arts and sciences; should introduce them to his friends and associates who should respect them as himself and he should provide for their safety in every quarter, that is, he should give them full support telling people of their ability so that they can survive anywhere by using their knowledge.

A pupil should reciprocate as follows; he rises from his seat to greet and salute his teacher as soon as he sees him; he waits on him, trusts him and obeys his words; he offers personal service to his teacher, and he studies his instructions thoroughly.

These rules were laid down on the basis of the ancient educational system. Maybe in those days there was no public education such as nowadays. Young people had to live with their teacher and studied under their guardianship.

We cannot say that a teacher completes his duty to pupils just by teaching school lessons in the classroom. He should know how the immature feel and appreciate the motives of their actions whether

they are good or bad; and above all he must be able to discover their abilities and inclinations so that he can direct them effectively instead of dissipating their time and energy in tasks against their inclination.

He should teach his pupils the difference between right and wrong or the advantages and disadvantages of an act. He should not dictate, but he should never hesitate to teach them to observe discipline laid down for the performance of their duties towards their nation, family, employers, organization or their neighbours, etc. When he sees his pupils' misbehaviour, he should not neglect his responsibility to correct it. And then he should have enough experience to handle the problem of pupils' discipline, and he must have exemplary morality, discipline and character to gain the respect of his pupils.

But the relationship between wayward pupils and a teacher might often be difficult, sometimes so difficult that even a conscientious teacher fails, despite his best efforts because bad pupils do not understand their teacher's good intentions. Even though a good teacher teaches or admonishes pupils for their mistakes with loving-kindness and compassion, bad pupils might insult him.

Indeed parents are primarily responsible for their children's conduct. If they neglect their children or encourage their misbehaviour in their early years instead of curbing the actions of indiscipline, it is difficult for teachers to train them. It is not easy to beautify a draft portrait which is badly sketched.

Teachers should think of the interest of all pupils, and they should be inspired by sympathy with the immature, that is, they must regard them with affection and treat them with understanding, and without discriminating between good and bad pupils, they should teach them patiently, otherwise bad pupils cannot get any benefit from going to school. As for wayward pupils, teachers cannot avoid punishing them although they may be resentful against the teachers. But when their knowledge is mature in accordance with their age, they will thank the teachers for protecting them from any possible deterioration.

In the lifetime of the Buddha, there was a *bhikkhu* who was fiery tempered. No matter how little was said to him, he fell into

a rage, and spoke roughly. When the Buddha heard about him, he sent for him to come to an assembly, and asked him if he was really as irascible as the other *bhikkhus* said. The *bhikkhu* admitted he was. Then the Buddha said, "This is not the first time that you have been easily angered. You were just the same before", and he added an old story about one of the *bhikkhu*'s past lives, as follows:

Once a king called Brahmadatta ruled in Benares, and he had a son named Prince Brahmadatta. The king provided his son with all necessities, and sent him to a far off foreign country to complete his education. By this means he might learn to quell his pride, and to endure heat or cold, and be made acquainted with the ways of the world. After the prince met the teacher he agreed with him to pay a fee, otherwise he must attend on him in return for his lessons.

One day, the teacher, accompanying the prince, went to the river near the school to bathe. On the way to the river there was an old woman who was strewing white seeds on a big plate in front of her. When the prince saw them, he could not control a desire to eat the seeds, and he picked up a handful, and ate them. The woman thought, "The young fellow must be hungry", and she said nothing. Next day the same thing happened again at the same time. Again the woman said nothing to him. When he did it again on the third day, the woman cried out saying, "The teacher is letting his pupil rob me."

The teacher turned back, and asked the woman what had happened. The woman said, "Master, I have been drying seeds, and your pupil took a handful, and ate them. This he has done today, and he did it yesterday and the day before. Surely he put me to great inconvenience." The teacher said, "Don't cry, mother. I will see that you are paid." The woman replied, "Oh, I want no payment, master; only teach your pupil not to do it again." The teacher said, "See here, then, mother", and he caused two pupils to take the prince by his two hands, and he beat him three times on the back with a bamboo stick telling him not to do it again. The prince was very angry with the teacher's action, and he determined to murder the teacher but he hid his animosity against the teacher

in his heart. When the time came to go away, he said to the teacher affectionately, "Teacher, when I come to the throne, I will send for you. Then come to me; let me do you a service in return."

He arrived in his country, and showed proof of what he had learnt to his parents. His father was pleased with his ability, and he made his son the king of Benares. When the prince enjoyed the splendour of royalty, he remembered his teacher, and anger rose within him. He thought, "I must take revenge on that fellow", and he sent off a messenger to fetch his teacher. The teacher thought, "I shall never be able to appease the king while he is young." So he did not go to the king. But when the king's time of rule was half over, he thought that he could bring home the benefit from his punishment to the king, and he went to the latter. The king was glad, and caused him to be led into his presence. As soon as he saw the teacher, his blood was up, his eyes grew bloodshot, and he said, "The place which you beat still hurts me; you gave me a heavy punishment for a trifle; I still feel ashamed; I must take revenge on you for that; your life must end today."

The teacher replied, "Great king, understand this; this is not a sufficient reason for anger. Indeed, if you had not been taught this lesson by me, you would have gone on taking cakes and sweets, fruit and the like without permission until you became covetous through these acts of theft. Then by degrees you would have been lured on to house-breaking, highway robbery, and murder; then you would have been arrested, and given various punishments including the death sentence. Consequently, you could not have got all this prosperity which you now enjoy. It is through me that you have attained to such magnificence, isn't it?" When the king's men heard the teacher's words, they said, "Of course, my lord, all your magnificence really belongs to your teacher; you should be grateful to him." The king recognised the goodness of his teacher, and he apologised to him for all the inconvenience he had caused, and on top of that he said, "I bestow on you all my power; teacher, please receive my kingdom." But the teacher refused saying, "No, my lord; I have no wish for the kingdom." The king asked the teacher to

continue to regard him as a pupil, and to teach him throughout the whole of his life, and he gave a promise to obey his words.<sup>1</sup>

## THE DUTIES OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS

Religious leaders must restrain people from doing evil; encourage them to do good; treat them with loving-kindness; teach them what they have not heard; clarify what they have already heard and tell them the path to heavenly planes.

The followers should minister to good religious teachers as to the Zenith; by kindly deeds, words and thoughts; by keeping doors open for them; by supplying their needs.

In the Pāli text the ones who should be regarded as the Zenith are *Samaṇas* and *Brahmins*. They taught people religious ways in the lifetime of the Buddha. That is why I translate these words as "religious leaders" although most Buddhists would not agree to the use of the term religion for Buddhism. Religion means belief in the existence of a supernatural ruling power, the creator and controller of the universe, who has given to man a spiritual nature which continues to exist after the death of the body. Actually, the meaning is not relevant to Buddhism. Maybe we can accept that Buddhism is one of the various systems of faith.

A *Samana* or *bhikkhu* is one who has already extinguished mental defilements or one who is trying to get rid of mental defilements. For so long as a person remains in the Holy Order, at least he is expected to observe monastic rules, to learn the scriptures, to teach the laymen, and to meditate deeply on spiritual matters.

Once the Buddha told his disciples as follows: "*Bhikkhus*, people regard you as *bhikkhus* or monks, and you also acknowledge having the status of monk yourselves. Accordingly you should train your



selves to follow the practices which are fitting for monks so that, such being your designations are true, and such being your vocations are real. Moreover, you should have good conduct to merit all the gifts of these things you make use of: robes, food, lodging and medicines, and to give the donors great benefit from their offerings, and to further ensure that your aim in becoming monks is not in vain.

"The bad mental qualities such as covetousness, malevolence, wrath, grudging, hypocrisy, spite, jealousy, stinginess, treachery, craftiness, evil desire and wrong view drag monks towards Hell. They stain a monk's morality, and degrade a monk's status or dignity. When a monk is preoccupied by these elements, if he does not try to get rid of them, one cannot say that he follows the practice fitting for monks. Purification of all these evil, unskilled states does not depend on appearance such as wearing robes, going naked, ceremonial bathing, fasting, reciting some verses and so on. Only the one who gets rid of mental defilements by following the practice fitting for monks is purified. When a monk beholds the self purified of all these evil elements, delight is born in his mind; rapture is born from delight; when he is in rapture, the body is impassable and the mind is concentrated. And then, when he suffuses the whole world everywhere with a mind of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, he attains inward calm. I say it is by inward calm that he is following the practice fitting for monks. I do not say that the simple wearing of robes makes a *bhikkhu*."<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned above, *bhikkhus* need to possess charisma to be regarded as mentors by their followers. After they have studied the teachings of the Buddha they should train themselves first, so that their followers can trust in them, otherwise the followers will not obey what they say, and their preaching will not be conducive to the happiness of mankind. Even if a *bhikkhu* possesses good morality and conduct, he cannot hope that all his followers will keep his words in their hearts because people have different temperaments. Some people are docile. They like truth and have sense enough to accept one's good guidance and alter their character. Some people

have an obstinate character. Even if a person teaches them or corrects their mistakes or warns them about their mis-behaviour or explains their misunderstanding in the hope that they may benefit, they flout him and his teachings. They even tend to turn against that person let alone change their attitude. Some people like being flattered. They do not like being criticized but they love people who praise whatever they do. Therefore, *bhikkhus* have to be careful when they carry out their duties to prevent people from evil. In order to avoid affronting people, the Buddha told his disciples of five kinds of talk which will be ill-received by various types of listener; by those lacking faith, talk concerning faith will be ill-received; by the immoral, talk of morality will be ill-received; by the ignorant, talk of knowledge will be ill-received; by the stupid, talk of insight knowledge will be ill-received; by mean people, talk of generosity will be ill-received. The reason is that when people hear talk which is not in conformity with their temperament, they are irritated, angered, upset, made obstinate; they show temper, ill-will and sulkiness. Because they perceive the absence of these qualities in themselves, and they get no joy and gladness from the talks.<sup>1</sup>

#### ● How should *bhikkhus* talk?

The Buddha told *bhikkhus* to take precautions when they talk with people as follows: "A person should know condemnation and flattery, and knowing them, he should neither condemn nor flatter anyone's behaviour — he should teach just the truth; he should not go behind a person's back, and face to face with a person should not blame him." The Buddha gave further explanations to *bhikkhus* as follows; if a person says that those who enjoy happiness in association with sensual pleasure or practise self-mortification in order to purify their mind, are wrong, and they have anguish, annoyance, trouble and fret, then he disapproves of those people. If a person says that those who reject happiness in association with sensual pleasure or reject self-mortification, are right and they have no anguish,

1 M. i. 281ff

1 A. iii. 178

annoyance, trouble and fret; they are right, then he flatters their behaviour.

What is neither approval nor disapproval, but just the teaching of the truth?

A person should say, without mentioning personalities, that enjoying happiness in association with sensual pleasure, and practising self-mortification, cause anguish, annoyance, trouble and fret. A person should never say a word behind anyone's back which is neither factual nor effectual; he should train himself not to say behind anyone's back anything which is factual but which will cause trouble; he may occasionally say a word which is factual behind someone's back if he knows his words will be beneficial to that person.

A person should never criticize anyone face to face if he knows his criticism is neither factual nor effective; he should train himself not to criticize anyone face to face if he knows his criticism is factual but will cause trouble; he may occasionally criticize a person face to face if he knows his criticism is factual and will be beneficial to that person.<sup>1</sup>

When a *bhikkhu* finds his follower making mistakes, he should tell the truth carefully without putting blame on him or criticizing him for his mistakes. If for the sake of his own benefit he ignores the wrong-doer or encourages that person's misbehaviour, then there is no advantage for that person to regard the *bhikkhu* as a teacher. Lay people should also listen to *bhikkhus* who point out their mistakes, and they should have the good sense to conclude, from the words, whether they are reasonable, and then they should change their behaviour, otherwise, even if *bhikkhus'* words are excellent, they cannot help them.

<sup>1</sup> M. iii. 230ff

### ● How should a *bhikkhu* exhort people?

A *bhikkhu* should urge people to give charity, to observe five or eight precepts, to practise righteousness and so on. He should explain to them about the four noble truths and the way leading to them. When people are sick, he should go to them, and should comfort them by giving sermons or by teaching them how to concentrate on the attributes of the three gems; Buddha, his teachings and his noble *bhikkhus*. When visiting *bhikkhus* come to him, he should urge his followers to offer food to them or to listen to their teachings. When people give him food, whether or not it is to his liking, he should eat it himself that is, he should not waste food deliberately.<sup>1</sup>

Only in this manner can a *bhikkhu* gratefully requite people's help for his necessity because he is not allowed to be involved in social affairs by the *Vinaya* rules. People might say, "Why did the Buddha forbid *bhikkhus* to partake in social affairs? If *bhikkhus* have loving-kindness and compassion, they should help people anyhow. Is it blameworthy for them to participate in social affairs?"

That is right. Superficially, it is not blameworthy for *bhikkhus* to be involved in social affairs in the eye's of people. They will welcome wholeheartedly the *bhikkhus* who participate in social activities. But no one needs to ordain in the Buddha's Order for the purpose of doing social activities.

The sole purpose of becoming a *bhikkhu* is to learn the Dhamma, to try to purify himself by practising meditation and keeping morality, and to teach people the Dhamma. If a *bhikkhu* partakes in social activities, people will certainly favour him, and they will be ready to provide him with what he needs. As for *bhikkhus* who do not become involved in social activities, they will be discriminated against. People will become less interested in the moral *bhikkhus* and their teachings, and they will gradually keep away from them. The difference between *bhikkhus* who do social work and moral *bhikkhus'* life style will

<sup>1</sup> A. iii. 262

become greater and greater. When nearly all *bhikkhus* try to get people's favour by doing social activities instead of learning and practising the teachings of the Buddha, then the Dhamma will fade away, and the *bhikkhus'* standard of behaviour will fall.

Foreseeing this fact, the Buddha restricted his noble *bhikkhus* from participating in social activities. It does not mean that they must neglect people who are in trouble. But, when they help people, they should be very careful because intention is very important. They should help people out of compassion, not to get any benefit for themselves. Then it is not improper.

The source of oral and bodily manners is mind. A person does not trouble any living beings if his mind is enriched with loving kindness and compassion. So, a *bhikkhu* should try to cultivate loving kindness, and he should not say anything which causes discord among people. If there is disagreement among people on the grounds of his words, we cannot say he is endowed with loving-kindness. In order to make people happy and to see harmony among people, a *bhikkhu* should speak words which neither torment himself nor cause harm to others, and he should speak kindly words, and words that are graceful to the ear, and are based on truth, benefit and reasoning or logic. He should not speak of others' faults. In this way, a *bhikkhu* can treat people with loving-kindness. Moreover, when noble *bhikkhus* come to him, he should invite them to meet his followers, and should urge them to offer to the *bhikkhus*. These deeds will benefit both him and his followers. For the *bhikkhu's* part, the deeds have already automatically liberated him from the defilement of miserliness.

### ● Five kinds of avarice of *bhikkhus*

There are five kinds of avarice — for lodging, followers, consumer goods, qualifications and learning. When, without good enough reason, a *bhikkhu* begrudges a good *bhikkhu* lodging in a monastery belonging to the community, he is defiled with avarice for a lodging. *Bhikkhus* have to depend on lay people. They might have individual friendly followers. If a *bhikkhu* forbids his followers from associating with other good *bhikkhus*, or if he tells about other *bhikkhus'* faults with the intention of separating them from his followers, he is defiled with avarice for followers. When a *bhikkhu* knows his followers offer something to other *bhikkhus* or other *bhikkhus* get more requisites than he gets, he feels jealous and then he tries to destroy others' fortune in any way, he is defiled with avarice for consumer goods. If a *bhikkhu* does not want to hear of the good reputation of other *bhikkhus*, and tries to degrade their reputation by gossiping, he is defiled with avarice for qualifications. If a *bhikkhu* does not wish to share his knowledge with other *bhikkhus* because he is afraid the others are superior to him, or if even though he knows about something, when other *bhikkhus* come and ask about it, he pretends not to know it, he is defiled with avarice for knowledge.

If a person grudges other people their success and fame, whenever he sees those who are superior to him, he will suffer unhappiness and adversity not only in this very life but also after death. The following story is very remarkable.

In the lifetime of the Buddha, there was a *bhikkhu* named Losaka Tissa. His past kamma was too bad for him to get enough food throughout his life. No matter how lavish the charity, he got only a little food — just enough to keep himself alive. Whenever he went to collect food, even though his alms-bowl was empty, it always seemed full of food so that people thought that there was no place to put food into his bowl. He won Arahantship by meditating on his sorrow and transitoriness. But even this Arahantship could not help him to get enough

food. On the day when he would pass away, Venerable Sāriputta, the chief disciple of the Buddha thought to himself, "Losaka Tissa is passing away today. I want to see that he gets enough food to eat before he attain *parinibbāna*." And then he accompanied Losaka Tissa to Sāvatti for alms round. But no one offered them any food because of Losaka Tissa's bad kamma. Therefore, Venerable Sāriputta asked him to go back to the monastery, and he collected food, and asked some of his followers to give it to the latter. Even though the followers arrived at the monastery, they could not find Losaka Tissa, and they ate the food themselves. When Venerable Sāriputta arrived back at the monastery, he knew that Losaka Tissa had not eaten anything yet. But noon was already passed. It was impossible for Losaka Tissa to eat food which is only allowed to be eaten before noon. Therefore, Venerable Sāriputta went to King Kosala to ask for food which is mixed with four kinds of things; sugar, honey, butter and sesame oil. *Bhikkhus* are allowed to eat this food as a medicine at any time. After he got the food, he returned to Losaka Tissa, and offered it to the latter by holding the bowl so that the food in it would not vanish away. Losaka Tissa ate as much as he wanted, and was satisfied, and that selfsame day he passed away by the death whereby his existence ceased for ever.

*Bhikkhus* asked the Buddha the cause of Losaka Tissa's getting so little food, and the latter told them about Losaka Tissa's misdeed in one of his previous lives as follows:

In the lifetime of Kassapa Buddha, a certain layman founded a residence for a certain *bhikkhu* in his village, and supplied him with the four requisites. The *bhikkhu* took his meals regularly in the layman's house. One day a *bhikkhu* who was freed from mental defilement, making his round for alms, stopped at the door of the layman's house. When the man saw the *bhikkhu*, pleased with his deportment, he invited him into his house, and reverently served him with delicious food. After he had listened to a short discourse by the *bhikkhu*, he invited him to stay in his monastery for as long as he would live. The *bhikkhu*

went to the monastery, and was welcomed by the resident *bhikkhu* with all friendliness.

They went to the layman's house next morning for their meals. When the resident *bhikkhu* saw the attentions bestowed on the visiting *bhikkhu* by the layman, he thought, "I am losing my supporter", and then he decided to drive the visiting *bhikkhu* away from his monastery. The visiting *bhikkhu* could read the other's thoughts therefore he made a decision to leave the monastery early the next morning.

Next day, when it was time for him to set out on his round for alms, the resident *bhikkhu*, thinking to himself, "The visiting *bhikkhu* is undoubtedly asleep now, and I will awaken him with the sound of the bell", knocked on the bell with the outer surface of his finger nail.

Having done so, he entered the village. After preparing food, the layman was waiting for the two *bhikkhus* to come to him together.

Noticing the absence of the visiting *bhikkhu*, he asked, "Reverend Sir, where is the visiting *bhikkhu*?" The resident *bhikkhu* replied, "I don't know what happened to the visiting *bhikkhu*. Though I knocked on the bell and tapped at his door, I could not wake him. So, I left alone."

The layman reverently served him with food, and washed his bowl carefully, and after he filled it with food, he asked him to take the food for the visiting *bhikkhu*. The resident *bhikkhu* took the bowl, and thought to himself, "If the visiting *bhikkhu* always gets such good food as this, he will never leave the monastery", and then he threw that food on his way to the monastery. When he arrived back at the monastery, he did not find the visiting *bhikkhu*, and he thought to himself, "He must be an *Arahant*, and he left my monastery because he must have already known of my jealousy." He repented of what he had done. Whenever the thought of his sin came into his mind, he felt unhappiness, and he was reborn in Hell after death. Through-out the period from the lifetime of Kassapa Buddha to Gotama Buddha, he had to

suffer misfortunes in his various lives.<sup>1</sup>

If a *bhikkhu* invites noble visiting *bhikkhus* to meet his followers, the families can get good advantage of their benevolence in five ways. When they see the noble *bhikkhus*, their hearts are calm, and they are happy therefore they have stepped a step along the way to the heavenly abode. When the noble *bhikkhus* approach, they stand up, salute and offer seats. That leads them to birth in higher rank in the life to come. When they treat noble *bhikkhus* kindly, their mind is free from all stain of meanness. It leads them to great power. Offering as many things as they can leads them to great wealth, and asking whatever they want to know, and listening to teachings leads them to great wisdom.<sup>2</sup>

#### ● How to propagate the Dhamma

The last three duties of a *bhikkhu* are concerned with teaching people. The Buddha suggested to *bhikkhus* that when two *bhikkhus* go somewhere to teach people, they should not take the same route, so that they can propagate his teachings effectively. He sacrificed his wealthy and comfortable life with the intention of teaching people peaceful ways to live happily and harmoniously. Therefore, *bhikkhus* should carry out their duties without suppressing and hurting people's feelings. Even if *bhikkhus* are insulted, they should put up with it. The following story should be exemplary for *bhikkhus*.

In the life time of the Buddha, there was a *bhikkhu* named Puṇṇa who wanted to go to a certain place to teach people. Before he set out on his journey, he went to the Buddha to ask for a meditation method. The Buddha gave him a suitable meditation method, and asked where he was going. Puṇṇa replied, "There is a district called Sunāparanta. I will live there, and teach people."

The Buddha said, "Puṇṇa, the people of Sunāparanta are not civilized enough to listen to you. If they revile and abuse you, how will it be for you there?" "If they behave in such a

manner, I will think, 'Goodly indeed are these people, indeed very goodly are these people in that they do not yet strike me a blow with their hands' Puṇṇa said.

The Buddha asked him again how it would be if the people of Sunāparanta struck him a blow with their hands. Puṇṇa said, "If they strike me a blow with their hands, I will think, 'Goodly indeed are they, indeed very goodly are they in that they do not yet strike me a blow with clods of earth'."

The Buddha asked him again how it would be if the people of Sunāparanta struck him a blow with clods of earth. Puṇṇa said, "If they strike me a blow with clods of earth, I will think, 'Goodly indeed are they, indeed very goodly are they in that they do not yet strike me a blow with a stick'."

The Buddha asked him again how it would be if the people of Sunāparanta struck him a blow with a stick. Puṇṇa replied, "If they strike me a blow with stick, I will think, 'Goodly indeed are they, indeed very goodly are they in that they do not yet strike me a blow with a knife'."

The Buddha asked him again how it would be if the people of Sunāparanta struck him a blow with a knife. Puṇṇa replied, "If they strike me a blow with a knife, I will think, 'Goodly indeed are they, indeed very goodly are they in that they do not yet deprive me of life with a sharp knife'."

The Buddha asked him again how it would be if the people of Sunāparanta deprived him of life with a sharp knife. Puṇṇa replied, "If they deprive me of life with a sharp knife, I will think, 'There are some *bhikkhus* who are disgusted with the body and are bored with their life, and look about for a knife with which to kill themselves. I have come upon this very knife without having looked about for it'."

The Buddha said, "It is good, Puṇṇa, it is good. You will be able to live in the district among the people of Sunāparanta possessed as you are of this patience and moderation. You, Puṇṇa, now do that for which you deem the time is right."<sup>1</sup>

1 Jā. No. 41

2 A. iii. 243

1 M. iii. 267ff

### ● The intention of preaching the Dhamma

There are various purposes for giving religious teachings. No matter that the purposes are varied, we can summarize them as follows; some religious teachers intend to exploit their own religion, and then they amuse their followers' emotions concerning their own religion, and prejudice their followers against other religions or other people's rights, but some religious teachers give religious lessons to help people, and to ease people's physical and mental hardships. We can infer that if a person hurts himself or others on the grounds of any religious teachings, he and his teachings are not good.

The Buddha differentiated the two aspects of giving religious lessons as follows; "It is impure and improper for a *bhikkhu* to teach people with such a mind; 'People will be satisfied with my teaching, and they will obey me, and they will make an offering of their support'. It is pure and proper for a *bhikkhu* to teach people with such a mind; 'After people have listened to my teaching, if they have a sense of the capacity to discriminate between false and true, and then if they follow righteousness only, it will be good.'<sup>1</sup>

After the Buddha had passed away, the duties of teaching people about religion shifted entirely onto the shoulders of *bhikkhus*. People also rely on them concerning learning and listening to the teaching of the Buddha. Therefore, they go to monasteries to offer alms, to observe precepts, to listen to teachings, and to meditate. When they are invited or when people are sick, occasionally *bhikkhus* go to their followers' houses.

The Buddha told his disciples how to keep their dispositions on those occasions as follows: a *bhikkhu*, who expects that people will give him only excellent things in abundance and respectfully, is unworthy to go to families because if it does not happen to him accordingly, he will blame the families for the lack of offering, and he will feel unhappy.

<sup>1</sup> S. ii. 199

A *bhikkhu*, who has such a mind; 'It does not matter for me whether people offer something to me or not', is worthy to go to families because even though he does not get anything, he does not blame the families for the lack of offering, and he can live calmly.

And when a *bhikkhu* goes among families, he should be unattached as the moon moves in her course without any obstruction. He should have such a mind; 'May those people, who desire gains, gain! May those people, who want merit, get merit!' And then he should be happy to see other people who get what they desire.'<sup>1</sup>

### ● How should followers behave towards *bhikkhus*?

The duty is fulfilled in the actions such as going to monasteries to invite *bhikkhus* to religious occasions, doing *bhikkhus* a service by offering to do what they need, telling people to give alms when *bhikkhus* come to them and listening to them respectfully when they give religious lessons.

A person should avoid personal devotion to an individual *bhikkhu* so that he can carry out the above mentioned duties whenever he meets any *bhikkhus*, otherwise, he might neglect other *bhikkhus*, and what is more, he might give offence to them.

The Buddha gave an explanation of the disadvantages of devotion to one *bhikkhu* as follows: "When a person becomes very devoted to a *bhikkhu*, and he falls into an offence such that the Order should punish him, then he will think; 'The Order has punished the *bhikkhu* who is dear and loved by me.' And he will be no more full of devotion for the *bhikkhus*, and from being without that devotion he will not follow other *bhikkhus*, and from not following other *bhikkhus* he will not hear the teachings of the Buddha, and from not hearing the teachings he will fall away from the Dhamma. In the same way, when the *bhikkhu* who is dear and loved by him moves to a certain place or disrobes or is dead, perhaps the person will fail to

<sup>1</sup> S. ii. 201

listen to other *bhikkhus*, and from the lack of hearing the teachings of the Buddha he will fall away from the Dhamma. These are the disadvantages of devotion to one *bhikkhu*.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, when a person becomes very devoted to a *bhikkhu*, he will listen just to him without having a standard to judge his morality and words, and he will provide him with what he needs. Therefore, he might be misled by him and he will offer alms just to that *bhikkhu*. If his individual *bhikkhu* is a noble person, it is good. If not, his offering does not produce much good result. To avoid this uncertainty, the Buddha always encouraged his disciples to make offerings of alms dedicated to the Order even if a person offers alms to an individual *bhikkhu*. For example, when the Buddha's maternal aunt, Mahāpajāpati Gotamī offered him a pair of the best new robes, he told her three times, "Give it to the Order Gotamī, if you give it to the Order I will be honoured and the Order too. In the distant future there will be many who are just *bhikkhus* in name wearing the yellow robes around their neck. If a person offers even to them, dedicating the offering to the Order, the result of his offering will be too great to measure."<sup>2</sup>

#### ● Studying and listening to religious teachings

Everybody should study about all kinds of religions in order to gain these advantages: to learn something new, to improve one's understanding of religious teachings, to dispel any doubts about religion, to strengthen one's views on religion, to be able to choose and practise correctly, and to live happily and calmly. But even though a person studies or listen to good teachings, he cannot be worthy of those advantages if he thinks any the less of preachers of other religions and their teachings or if he studies the teachings frivolously or if he is already prejudiced against them, or if he studies religious teachings to find flaws or to tear the preachers' reputation to shreds.

1 A. iii. 269

2 M. iii. 256

Therefore, when a person intends to study about religions, first he should remove religious prejudice from his heart, and then he should use his own discretion about what to accept or reject, otherwise, he cannot avail himself of advantages from studying about good religious teachings. After he studied religions, he should put into practice the teachings preached in the spirit of loving-kindness, compassion and the service of humanity in order to subdue evil, cruel and lustful thoughts and to gain peace and happiness.

#### ● Keeping doors open for *bhikkhus*

One of duties of a lay follower is to keep doors open for *bhikkhus*, that is, a lay follower should provide moral *bhikkhus* with food, robes, lodging and medicaments as far as he can in order to enable them to survive without worries or desires and to concentrate on their sole purpose of working towards spiritual liberation. Even though *bhikkhus* are always in and out of his house, if he does not offer anything to them, that is not different from shutting the doors for them.

The Buddha said, "it is improper for *bhikkhus* to visit a family of sevenfold conduct. What seven? When they go to a family, they do not rise pleasantly, do not salute pleasantly, do not offer a seat pleasantly, they say they have nothing for fear that they will have to offer something, they give poor quality things even if they have good things, they give little even if they have a lot, and they give it without respect."<sup>1</sup>

*Bhikkhus* are entirely dependent on the support of lay followers because they are not allowed to occupy any kind of job to earn money. The Buddha did not prescribe the mode of living or life-style for *bhikkhus* in order to drive them to living in idleness. The purpose is to make them humble. No one likes to depend on others because a dependent is always in an inferior position. Moreover, being free from occupation, they can fully spend their time on practising and propagating the teachings

1 A. iv. 8



of the Buddha. If *bhikkhus* are provided with what they need, and if they train themselves to be contented with what they have, they will never break the rules of monastic life.

Therefore, by offering alms, lay followers can help them to purify their morality. But they should not offer alms to *bhikkhus* in the hope of getting something back, and they should not place restrictions on the freedom of *bhikkhus* as a condition of their support because they might feel disappointment and resentment when things happen contrary to their expectations and then after giving requisites, they should not despise *bhikkhus* thinking that we are donors and they are recipients.

It is difficult for some *bhikkhus* to tell even their lay followers to give what they need even though they are invited to ask for whatever they want. Because they know that asking and being asked can cause unhappiness if their expectations are not fulfilled in one of the lives of our Bodhisatta, he hesitated to ask for a pair of sandals for twelve years for fear of distressing himself and his lay follower. The following story is also relevant to the subject.

Once when Brahmadata was ruling in Benares, our Bodhisatta was born in a *brahmin* family in a certain village, and they called him young Aṭṭhisena. When he grew up, he studied at university (Takkasilā), and afterwards, seeing the misery of desires he took to the religious life, and he lived long in the Himalayas. There he practised meditation very well. One day, when he went to the city of Benares to get some salt and vinegar, the king saw him, and then, being pleased with his manner, he sent for him, and offered him good food and his royal garden. The king went to wait on the Bodhisatta two or three times each day.

One day, being pleased with his preaching of the Dhamma, the king told the Bodhisatta to ask for whatever he desired including even his throne. But, the Bodhisatta did not say, "Give me so and so." The king thought, "Other hermits ask me to give them something; but as for noble Aṭṭhisena, ever

since I promised to give him even my throne, he asks for nothing. I should ask the reason for that." So, one day, after the early meal he sat on one side, and asked the Bodhisatta the cause of other hermit's making requests and his making none. The Bodhisatta replied, "O king, I do not ask you to give something so that we do not upset each other because no one likes the person who demands something from them, and likewise no one likes his request to be rejected." The king said, "Hermits should tell their lay followers what they need, otherwise, they will be always in need, and their followers will also lose an opportunity to do merit. That is why, if you ask even for my throne, I will not hesitate to give it you." The Bodhisatta said, "O king, the wise lay followers know what they ought to offer to hermits at the right time even though wise hermits never ask for anything." The king said, "Sir, if so, I give you a thousand pairs of oxen and cows." The Bodhisatta replied, "Great king, I took the religious life to be free from secular affairs; I have no need of oxen and cows." The king kept the teachings of the Bodhisatta, giving alms and doing other good deeds throughout his life, and the Bodhisatta did not fall away from his meditation.<sup>1</sup>



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## ● AUSTRALIA

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NSW 21941
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## THE GREATEST INHERITANCE

The Myanmar people today can take great pride in the purity and achievements of the Buddha's *Sāsana* in Myanmar, and in the success of the Myanmar Sangha in propagating the teachings abroad. We must teach and culture our children so that future generations too can take pride in the Buddha's *Sāsana*, realize its value, and know how to worship and revere the Triple Gem. This is the greatest inheritance we can leave for future generations. This is the way to ensure the propagation, purity and success of the Buddha's *Sāsana* for posterity.

~ *Thabyekan Sayadaw*

## NIBBANA .COM THERAVADA BUDDHISM WEBSITE

This Buddhism website is managed by a Buddhist family of Myanmar origin living in London, aiming to present the English Translation of the Tipitaka, Dhamma Teachings of the eminent Buddhist monks from Myanmar (Burma), past and present, as well as the articles written by distinguished monks and lay authors on Buddhism and cultural aspects of the Buddhists as practiced in the "Land of Pagodas". All Texts at this site can be copied and saved for your own study.

<http://www/nibbana.com>

With bad advisors forever left behind,  
From paths of evil he departs for eternity,  
Soon to see the Buddha of Limitless Light  
And perfect Samantabhadra's Supreme Vows.

The supreme and endless blessings  
of Samantabhadra's deeds,  
I now universally transfer.  
May every living being, drowning and adrift,  
Soon return to the Pure Land of  
Limitless Light!

~The Vows of Samantabhadra~

I vow that when my life approaches its end,  
All obstructions will be swept away;  
I will see Amitabha Buddha,  
And be born in His Western Pure Land of  
Ultimate Bliss and Peace.

When reborn in the Western Pure Land,  
I will perfect and completely fulfill  
Without exception these Great Vows,  
To delight and benefit all beings.

~The Vows of Samantabhadra  
Avatamsaka Sutra~

# DEDICATION OF MERIT

May the merit and virtue  
accrued from this work  
adorn Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land,  
repay the four great kindnesses above,  
and relieve the suffering of  
those on the three paths below.

May those who see or hear of these efforts  
generate Bodhi-mind,  
spend their lives devoted to the Buddha Dharma,  
and finally be reborn together in  
the Land of Ultimate Bliss.  
Homage to Amita Buddha!

**NAMO AMITABHA**

**南無阿彌陀佛**

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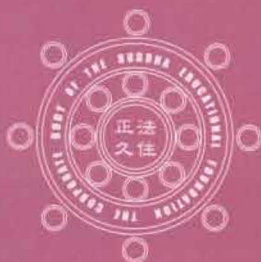
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we request that it be treated with respect.  
If you are finished with it,  
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offer it to a monastery, school or public library.  
Thanks for your co-operation.  
**Namo Amitabha!**



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