TREASURES OF THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING

Selected Translations from the Pali Canon
with Commentaries by
AJAHN THIRADHAMMO

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ARUNO PUBLICATIONS

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Published by:
Aruno Publications,
Aruna Ratanagiri Buddhist Monastery,
2 Harnham Hall Cottages, Belsay,
Northumberland NE20 0HF, UK

Contact Aruna Publications at www.ratanagiri.org
This book is available for free download at
www.forestsanghapublications.org

ISBN 978-1-870205-64-1

Cover photo by Gary Morrison
Cover and book design by Nicholas Halliday

The body-text is typeset in Gentium, distributed with the SIL Open Font Licence by SIL International.
First Edition, 10,000 copies, printed in Malaysia – 2013

DEDICATION

To the memory of friends in the Sangha
who have passed on:
Jotiko, Anando, Ayya Rocana,
Venerable Ñanaviro, Venerable Paññavuddho,
Savako, Jitindriyo, Venerable Jotipañño.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The seeds for this project were planted some twenty-five years ago when I contributed a selection of translations from the Pali Canon with commentary to a publication in Great Britain. The material has grown and been rewritten many times since then.

I took up the project again while in New Zealand. Heidi Ankers began the editing work in New Zealand; it was later continued by Jayasiri in Brussels. Nicholas Halliday has designed another exceptional cover and has worked wonders with the difficult layout. Ajahn Chandapalo and Ajahn Abhinando read through the text and made useful comments.

I wish to express my gratitude for the kind permission given by Venerable Nyanatusita to reproduce extracts from translations published by the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy. I am also grateful to Wisdom Publications for kind permission to reproduce extracts from its extensive publications of translations from the Pali Scriptures, and to the Pali Text Society for kind permission to quote

some of the excellent translations by Dr. K.R. Norman.

I would also like to acknowledge the persistent encouragement I received from Ajahn Munindo; without it this book would still be just a file in my computer. And a word of appreciation to Venerable Yuttadhammo-Sirimangalo for all his efforts to produce the Digital Pali Reader, which made quick and easy reference to Pali texts possible.

Once again my *Anumodana* to the Kataññuta group of Malaysia, Singapore and Australia whose generosity and energy have enabled this book to be printed and made available to the public.

Ajahn Thiradhammo

Birken Forest Monastery,
British Columbia.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.	Aṅguttara Nikāya
Bud. Dict.	Buddhist Dictionary
CDB	The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi
D.	Dīgha Nikāya
DPPN.	Dictionary of Pali Proper Names;
IBW	In the Buddha's Words, compiled and edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi
J.	Jātaka
LDB	The Long Discourses of the Buddha, translated by Maurice Walshe
LoB	The Life of the Buddha, Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli
M.	Majjhima Nikāya
MLDB.	The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi
PEBM	Poems of Early Buddhist Monks, translated by K.R. Norman
PEBN	Poems of Early Buddhist Nuns, translated by Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids & K.R. Norman
PED.	Pali-English Dictionary, Rhys Davids, T. W. and Stede, W.
S.	Saṁyutta Nikāya

Skt.	Sanskrit
TI.	The Itivuttaka, translated by John D. Ireland
TBW.	Treasury of the Buddha's Words, translated and compiled by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli
TU.	The Udāna, translated by John D. Ireland
Vin.	Vinaya Piṭaka

SOURCES

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Quotations from Aṅguttara Nikāya, An Anthology, Part 1 translated by Nyanaponika Thera, Buddhist Publication Society, P.O. Box 61, 54, Sangharaja Mawatha, Kandy, Sri Lanka. www.bps.lk

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This book is a collection of passages from the Buddhist scriptures, with commentaries. It presents a basic outline of the life of the Buddha, his teachings (Dhamma) and the monastic community (Sangha) which he founded, the traditional 'Triple Gem' of Buddhism.

The sources for this book are the Pali Canon, the scriptures preserved in the Pali language and accepted by the Theravada or Southern School of Buddhism.[1] My intention has been to introduce interested people to some of the treasures available in these scriptures. At the same time these quotations, mainly of the Buddha's own words, may help to provide some authoritative basis for Buddhist practice. Without constant reference to them, misinterpretations are too often passed on as the Buddha's authentic teaching. Since many of the Buddha's teachings are in effect themes for meditative reflection, some of the material is best approached as a contemplation rather than as merely information to be absorbed.

The first chapter is an account of the Buddha's life-story, mostly autobiographical, from his youth through his spiritual quest and up to his final passing. It is mainly narrative, as the teachings themselves are explained in Chapter Two. This second chapter on the Teachings is arranged as an unfolding of spiritual interest, some beneficial guidelines, the development of spiritual practices and a deepening of wise reflection, culminating in the realization of awakening. The main emphasis is on the way of practice familiar to the Thai Forest Tradition, most particularly that of Venerable Ajahn Chah, which is characterized by a simple and morally refined lifestyle, the development of meditative exercises and wise reflection upon the Buddha's teachings. The third chapter on the Community is

arranged as an introduction to the purpose and meaning of spiritual community.

THE PALI CANON

Shortly after the Buddha's passing, the senior members of the Sangha convened a council to review the large body of the Buddha's orally preserved teachings, called the 'Dhamma-Vinaya'.[2] This was codified into the 'Vinaya Piṭaka' (Basket of Discipline) and five collections of the 'Sutta Piṭaka' (Basket of Discourses), often referred to as the Pali Canon.[3] These five collections consist of the Dīgha Nikāya (Long Discourses), Majjhima Nikāya (Middle Length Discourses), Saṁyutta Nikāya (Connected [by theme] Discourses), Aṅguttara Nikāya (Numerical Discourses) and Khuddaka Nikāya, the 'Minor Collection' of various texts, including the Dhammapada, Udāna, Itivuttaka, Sutta Nipāta, Theragāthā, Therīgāthā, etc. (The last two of these scriptures consist of poems by early Buddhist monks and nuns). Following the custom of India at that time, the Pali Canon extant at the Buddha's death was preserved orally and passed down from teacher to disciple. Some 400 years later it was committed to writing in Sri Lanka.[4]

In the Pali Canon we not only learn about the Buddha's teaching, but are also introduced to the political, social, religious and cosmological world of sixth century BC India. Indirectly, the stories of the context for teachings or disciplinary rules fill out a picture of life in those times. Conversely, life in those times coloured the way the teachings were given. Hence some background may be useful.

Politically, tensions were growing between the emerging autocratic kingdoms and the traditional oligarchic tribal republics. We meet King Bimbisāra of Magadha and later his son Ajātasattu, and King Pasenadi of Kosala, as well as individuals and groups from the republics. While the political conditions at the Buddha's time were

mostly stable and peaceful, towards the end of his life the kingdoms began expansionist policies which eventually saw the demise of the tribal republics, including the Sakyan republic from which the Buddha came.

Socially, the traditional village-based agrarian society was being shaken by the growth of cities and a money economy. The traditional social structure of four classes, brahmin priest, warrior, merchant and worker, was challenged by the appearance of new classes of rich landowners, merchants, craftsmen and government officials. At the same time there was a growing sense of dislocation and alienation, fear and insecurity.

In religious life there were two prominent groups, the renunciants (*samana*) and the brahmin class (*brahmana*). The *brahmana* were the preservers of the Vedic tradition which forms the basis of what we know today as Hinduism, brought from central Asia by the Indo-Ariyans who began filtering into northern India from about 1600 BC. Many of them were very learned and committed to spiritual values, although some were becoming rich landowners. They are often depicted in the Canon as claiming superior social status due to (religious) purity of birth, but when conversing with them the Buddha explains that superior status results from one's conduct rather than one's birth. The *samana* were of the non-Vedic tradition and had renounced the household life to commit themselves fully to the spiritual quest. They espoused a wide range of beliefs, from determinist to materialist to sceptic. Some were austere ascetics and many were wandering philosophers who travelled about debating their views. Six leaders of groups are often mentioned in the Canon, all espousing views which the Buddha refuted.

Religious beliefs centred around four fundamental concepts: 1) each individual has an intrinsic essence (Skt: *atman;* Pali*: attā*); 2) continuous cycles of death and rebirth (*samsāra*, lit. 'wandering

on'); 3) the effectiveness of action (*kamma*) in conditioning future rebirth; and 4) liberation from the round of rebirth (*vimutti)* through spiritual exercises. There was, of course, a great variety of interpretation and debate regarding these principles. The view which emerged from the Upanishads, the late Vedic literature, was that the goal of spiritual practice was the union of the individual essence (*atman*) with the universal essence (*Brahman*) through the practice of a variety of methods, e.g. spiritual study, austerities, yoga, etc.

The concept of future rebirths meant that one could be reborn in a number of different 'realms', from the suffering of hell through the hungry ghost realm, the animal realm or the human realm, to a number of pleasurable heaven realms. Buddhist cosmology lists thirty-one different realms[5] (fortunately, twenty-six of them are heavenly realms!). There is frequent mention in the Canon of various types of heavenly beings (*deva*) or beings in the lower realms who appear to the Buddha or his disciples. Whether one accepts this belief or not, it may be helpful to consider that the Buddha and many of his disciples were very adept at meditation, which can lead to psychic powers beyond our normal understanding.

It is important to keep in mind that the Pali Canon is principally 'narrative' rather than 'normative'. That is, it is the record of the Buddha's teachings and his conversations at different times with people of varying spiritual capacities, rather than a body of prescribed doctrine. This narrative style contains a significant amount of repetition, which I have reduced. Since it was preserved orally for many centuries, the style can also be somewhat terse and formal. Hopefully the commentary will provide further explanation.

Bearing in mind that any anthology and any translation is a subjective enterprise, I have attempted to include a variety of translations, some my own and some from reliable contemporary translators. To keep the book manageable, I have unfortunately had

to leave out much interesting and valuable material. However, this book is intended merely as a taste of the treasures in the Pali Canon, and for those interested in further reading most of the translated texts are now readily accessible. Different translators, of course, have their own choice of renderings for Pali terms. While at first this may appear confusing, it can also be a useful meditative reflection to discover the experiential meanings behind specific terms. I have attempted to summarize the most common terms and the various renderings of them in the Glossary. Being merely a student of Pali rather than a scholar, I have been guided by other translations and by meditative reflections upon the meanings of these texts.

Most of the formal terms appearing in the texts would have been familiar and full of meaning to the listeners in the time of the Buddha. Today, however, many of them can come across as cumbersome and stilted technical definitions. I have thus tried to steer a middle way between making the concepts they express accessible to the modern reader, hopefully without compromising their literal meaning or having to resort to lengthy endnotes or references. (Of course, language preferences are also very subjective). These selections should not, however, be a substitute for an in-depth study of the original texts or their authoritative translations.

I have retained the conversational form with the original names, even though these may be unfamiliar to most readers. The Buddha spent most of his time with the monastic Sangha, so most of the teachings are addressed to 'bhikkhus', which I have retained, as technically bhikkhus are not monks in the Christian sense, but rather wandering mendicants. I have also retained some common Pali terms such as *dukkha* and *kamma*, and some particular ones such as Dhamma and Nibbāna, as their full meaning cannot be adequately conveyed in only a word or two. *Dukkha* is the basic unsatisfactoriness or imperfection of life, which manifests as various kinds of physical and/or mental pain. *Kamma* is intentional action,

which invariably gives results dependent upon the ethical quality (skilful or unskilful) of the action. Dhamma (with a capital) is the Buddha's teaching. Nibbāna is the peaceful cessation of suffering. Ideally, the meaning of these terms will become clearer through the readings. More information on translation is given at the beginning of the Glossary.

The references to the four main Nikāyas are given by the Pali Text Society's Pali version volume and page number (some have several references, as texts or parts of texts are repeated in various places in the Canon); or by discourse (*sutta*) number if the whole discourse is referred to. These references are usually relatively easy to find in other translations as well. For example, in the Wisdom Publications series of translations the same references are given at the top of each page, with the page numbers given in square brackets in the text. The references to the other texts are given by discourse (*sutta*) number or verse number. The parts of selections in bold-italics are my summaries of the situation and not quoted text. I have added relevant endnotes for those interested, but ignoring them will not detract from a clear understanding of the selections themselves. In a few of the translations certain terms have been inserted in square brackets to clarify the terminology.

1 THE BUDDHA

Historically, the religion known as Buddhism is traced to the Buddha, the 'Awakened One', who is believed to have lived in northern India from 563 to 483 BCE. The Pali canonical tradition, however, places the teachings of the Buddha far beyond the sphere of one particular figure. The Buddha is quoted as saying that he has 'found the ancient path, the ancient trail, travelled by the Fully Enlightened Ones of old.'[7] The older texts also enumerate and give details of the lives of six previous Buddhas who lived in the distant past, and a future Buddha.[8] While there is no comprehensive biography of the Buddha in the Pali Canon, several parts of the Canon quote lengthy autobiographical details of episodes in his life,[9] while other biographical fragments are scattered throughout it.

Although it is extremely difficult to separate the early material in the main core of the Pali Canon completely from the later material, it is possible to distinguish some later texts in the fifth collection of the Sutta Piṭaka. Thus the Nidānakathā, the introduction to the Jātaka (a collection of stories of the Buddha's previous lives), 'is the earliest attempt in Pali to give a connected life-story of the Buddha.'[10] This text, although including very old material, may only date from the 5th century CE.[11] It contains biographical details from the distant past lives of the Buddha up to the donation of the Jeta

Grove Monastery in the early years of his teaching (J.1-95). It thus summarizes some of the material contained in various parts of the Canon.[12] Three suttas in the Sutta-Nipāta[13] have been described as 'precious remnants of that ancient spiritual ballad-poetry' which are 'rich in legend-like features and mythical paraphernalia'.[14]

Worth noting is the difference in style and content between what is recorded in the early canonical texts, and in the later ones and post-canonical texts about the Buddha's life. The early texts present the Buddha as a wise and sensitive human being engaging in discussion with brahmins and renunciants, teaching, caring for and sometimes rebuking his disciples, wandering for alms-food and, later in life, experiencing the discomforts of ageing and sickness. In contrast, later texts tend to portray him as a supernatural being with exemplary qualities, his life embellished with miraculous occurrences.[15] However, it is important to bear in mind that all the texts contain a mixture of historical, supernatural, allegorical and metaphorical material.[16] Although some accounts in them may not meet our idea of modern historical validity, that does not mean they are therefore purely fictional, as they may have allegorical meaning. When considering the wonders surrounding the Buddha's birth and death for example, it may be relevant to consider Joseph Campbell's important observation on the validity of the 'close relationship maintained in the Orient between myth, psychology, and metaphysics.'[17]

A number of different titles are used to refer to the Buddha. He referred to himself as the 'Tathāgata', a word of uncertain derivation but meaning either 'the thus-gone-one' or 'the thus-come-one'. His disciples often refer to him as 'bhagavant', the Revered One (some translators use Blessed One or Lord), others use 'Bhante', Venerable Sir. Some people refer to him by his clan name, Gotama. He is also occasionally referred to as 'the son of the Sakyans' or 'Kinsman of the Sun'.

It may seem strange that the early Buddhist scriptures record very little of the founder's personal history. Of course, those who live close to such persons are much more concerned with what they actually taught than with the details of their personal lives. In the Buddha's words, here are some autobiographical details of his life.

EARLY LIFE

1. I was delicate, most delicate, supremely delicate. Lotus ponds were made for me at my father's house solely for my benefit. Blue lotuses flowered in one, white lotuses in another, red lotuses in a third. I used no sandalwood that was not of Benares. My turban, tunic, lower garments and cloak were all made of Benares cloth. A white sunshade was held over me day and night so that no cold or heat or dust or grit or dew might inconvenience me.

I had three mansions,[18] one for the winter, one for the summer and one for the rainy season. In the rainy season mansion I was entertained by minstrels with no men among them. For the four months of the rainy season I never went down to the lower mansion. Though meals of broken rice with lentil soup are given to the servants and retainers in other people's houses, in my father's house white rice and meat were given to them. (A.I,145; adapted from Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translation, LoB, p.9)

This text is a poetic expression of a luxurious lifestyle. Similar phraseology is also used to signify a wealthy lifestyle in reference to two other people, the former Buddha Vipassi (D.II,21), and Yasa, (Vin.I,15) the son of a wealthy merchant of Benares. Although later tradition describes the Buddha as being born into the royal family of a rich kingdom, the Pali Canon suggests that he was the son of the temporary chief of a small aristocratic tribal republic known by the name of Sakya.[19] The republic was situated in the foothills of the Himalayas with a capital at Kapilavatthu, and was tributary to the powerful kingdom of Kosala.[20]

In the Canon the Buddha says he belonged to the warrior/noble class, his clan name was Gotama, his father's name was Suddhodana and his mother's name was Māyā (D.II,3ff). His mother died seven days after his birth (M.III,122) and he was nursed by his stepmother Mahāpajāpati (M.III,253). There is mention of the young child being visited by a holy sage who prophesied his spiritual success (Sutta Nipāta 679). Mention is also made of the Buddha's son Rāhula, whose mother is only identified as 'Rāhula's mother'.[21]

2. Whilst I had such power and good fortune, yet I thought: 'When an untaught ordinary person, who is subject to ageing, not safe from ageing, sees another who is aged, they are shocked, humiliated and disgusted; for they forget that they also are no exception. But I too am subject to ageing, not safe from ageing, and so it cannot befit me to be shocked, humiliated and disgusted on seeing another who is aged.' When I considered this, the vanity of youth entirely left me.

I thought: 'When an untaught ordinary person, who is subject to sickness, not safe from sickness, sees another who is sick, they are shocked, humiliated and disgusted; for they forget that they also are no exception. But I too am subject to sickness, not safe from sickness, and so it cannot befit me to be shocked, humiliated and disgusted on seeing another who is sick.' When I considered this, the vanity of health entirely left me.

I thought: 'When an untaught ordinary person, who is subject to death, not safe from death, sees another who is dead, they are shocked, humiliated and disgusted; for they forget that they also are no exception. But I too am subject to death, not safe from death, and so it cannot befit me to be shocked, humiliated and disgusted on seeing another who is dead.' When I considered this, the vanity of life entirely left me.
(A.I,145, adapted from Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translation, LoB, p. 9)

This passage indicates that the Buddha-to-be or 'Bodhisatta' was a reflective and sensitive person who was shaken by the realities of the human condition. This was expressed allegorically as the delicate and sheltered Bodhisatta's direct encounter with an old person, a sick person and a dead person. There is canonical support for this story, as the Buddha mentions this same confrontation occurring to Vipassi, the previous Buddha, and then says that it will also occur to all future Buddhas (D.II,12ff). The images of old age, sickness and death are also known as three of the four Heavenly Messengers. (M.III,179ff)

3. Now I, bhikkhus, before awakening, while I was still an unawakened Bodhisatta, being myself subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement, sought what was likewise subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement. Then I reflected: 'Why do I, being myself subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement, seek what is likewise subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement? Suppose that I, being myself subject to these things, having seen the peril in them, should seek the unborn, unageing, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled, incomparable peace from bondage — Nibbāna?' (M.I,163; abridged).

Sensitive awareness of the frailty of human life frequently leads people to depression, despair or pessimism — unless they discover the possibility of a solution to this human predicament. The solution lies in the spiritual realm, that particular area of human knowledge which deals with life's ultimate questions. The Bodhisatta became aware that such a solution was possible through turning away from that which is born in order to realize that which is unborn. This attitude was symbolized by his seeing a religious mendicant dedicated to the search for spiritual truth, the fourth Heavenly Messenger (D.II,28).

RENUNCIATION

4. a) Now I, before awakening, while I was still an unawakened Bodhisatta, reflected: 'Confined is the household life, a path of dust. Going forth [to homelessness] is wide-open. It is not easy, living in a house, to lead the religious life completely fulfilled and purified, as polished as mother-of-pearl. Suppose I were to shave off my hair and beard, clothe myself in ochre robes and go forth from the home life into homelessness.' (M.I,240; II,211)

b) Later, while still young, a black-haired boy endowed with august youth, in the beginning of life, although my unwilling mother and father lamented with tearful faces, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on ochre robes and went forth from the home life into homelessness. (M.I,163;240; II,93;212)

In the culture of India during the Buddha's time, as in Buddhist countries today, it was recognized that a serious spiritual search could best be undertaken by those who had surrendered the responsibilities of the household life in order to devote all their energies to the spiritual journey. His clear insight into the mortal and corruptible nature of human existence compelled the Bodhisatta to sacrifice the comforts of a wealthy social position and the pleasures of a secure family life for the hardships and insecurity of a homeless mendicant life, fully dedicated to the age-old quest for Truth.

5. I, thus gone forth, striving after what is good, searching for the incomparable, excellent path to peace, approached Alāra Kālāma and said to him: 'Friend Kālāma, I want to live the religious life in this teaching and training.'

This said, bhikkhus, Alāra Kālāma replied: 'The venerable one may abide here. This teaching is such that an astute person in no long time may enter on and abide in it, realizing himself through higher knowledge just as his own teacher.' So I,

bhikkhus, very soon, very quickly, mastered that teaching.

Then I reflected, bhikkhus: 'This teaching does not conduce to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to higher knowledge, to awakening or to Nibbāna.' So not getting sufficient from this teaching, I abandoned and left this teaching. (M.I,163f; 240; II,93;212, abridged)

India in the sixth century BC was already rich in a great variety of spiritual teachings and practices. As was appropriate for a young man seeking the ultimate answers to life's questions, the Bodhisatta sought out a recognized master to give him instruction. The pupil, however, very soon mastered the teaching but was not satisfied. His spiritual yearning was not yet satiated.

The account continues with his seeking out another teacher, Uddaka Rāmaputta, who taught him a higher meditative attainment.[22] The Bodhisatta again quickly mastered this teaching and was again unsatisfied. He then set off on his own spiritual experimentation.

6. I thought: 'Suppose, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrain and crush my mind with my mind?' Then, as a strong man might seize a weaker by the head or shoulders and beat him down, constrain him and crush him, so with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrained and crushed my mind with my mind. Sweat ran from my armpits as I did so.

Though tireless energy was aroused in me, and unremitting mindfulness established, yet my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful effort. But such painful feelings as arose in me gained no power over my mind.

I thought: 'Suppose I practise the meditation that is without breathing?' I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths in my

mouth and nose. When I did so, there was a loud sound of winds coming from my ear-holes, as there is a loud sound when a smith's bellows are blown.

I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths in my mouth and nose and ears. When I did so, violent winds racked my head, as if a strong man were splitting my head open with a sharp sword. And then there were violent pains in my head, as if a strong man were tightening a tough leather strap round my head as a head-band. And then violent winds carved up my belly, as a clever butcher or his apprentice carves up an ox's belly with a sharp knife. And then there was a violent burning in my belly, as if two strong men had seized a weaker by both arms and were roasting him over a pit of live coals.

And each time, though tireless energy was roused in me and unremitting mindfulness established, yet my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful effort. But such feelings as arose in me gained no power over my mind.
(M.I,242ff abridged; II,93; 212; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translation, LoB, pp.17ff)

Though very diligent in his endeavours to win through to some spiritual truth, the Bodhisatta was still not satisfied. Not having achieved significant results from various meditation practices, he undertook to follow some of the ascetic practices for which India is renowned.

7. a) Such was my asceticism that I went naked, rejecting conventions, licking my hands, not coming when asked, not stopping when asked ... I clothed myself in hemp, in hemp-mixed cloth, in shrouds, in refuse-rags, in tree bark, in antelope hide, in kusa-grass fabric, in bark fabric, in wood [shavings] fabric, in head-hair wool, in animal wool, in owl's wings.

I was one who pulled out hair and beard, pursuing the practice of pulling out hair and beard. I was one who stood continuously, rejecting seats. I was one who squatted continuously, devoted to maintaining the squatting position. I was one who used a mattress of spikes; I made a mattress of spikes my bed. I dwelt pursuing the practice of bathing in water for the third time by nightfall ... Such was my asceticism ...

I would go off to some awe-inspiring grove and dwell there — a grove so awe-inspiring that normally it would make a man's hair stand up if he were not free from lust. I would dwell by night in the open and by day in the grove when those cold wintry nights came during the eight-day interval of frost. I would dwell by day in the open and by night in the grove in the last month of the hot season. And there came to me spontaneously this stanza never heard before:

Chilled by night and scorched by day,
Alone in awe-inspiring groves,
Naked, no fire to sit beside,
The hermit yet pursues his quest.

I would make my bed in a charnel ground with the bones of the dead for a pillow. And cowherd boys came up and spat on me, made water on me, threw dirt at me and poked sticks into my ears. Yet I never knew the arising of an evil mind [thoughts] about them. Such was my abiding in equanimity. (M.I,77ff; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translation, TBW 3, pp.249ff)

b) I thought: 'Suppose I take very little food, say a handful each time, whether it is bean soup or lentil soup or pea soup?' I did so. And as I did so, my body reached a state of extreme emaciation; my limbs became like the joined segments of vine stems or bamboo stems because of eating so little. My backside became like a camel's hoof; the projections on my spine stood forth like corded beads; my ribs jutted out as gaunt as the crazy

rafters of an old roofless barn; the gleam of my eyes, sunk far down in their sockets, looked like the gleam of water sunk far down in a deep well; my scalp shrivelled and withered as a green gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun. If I touched my belly skin, I encountered my backbone too; and if I touched my backbone, I encountered my belly skin too, for my belly skin cleaved to my backbone. If I relieved myself, I fell over on my face then and there. If I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair, rotted at its roots, fell away from my body as I rubbed because of eating so little. (M.I,242ff; II,93; 212, adapted from Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translation, LoB, p.18.)

Ascetic practices like these were common among the various religious sects which proliferated during the sixth century BC. The Pali word for austerity means 'heat'. Austerity was a way of developing psychic heat, leading to the possible attaining of special powers. The Bodhisatta tried the whole range of ascetic practices, but found them unsatisfactory for his quest.

An impressive image of the 'Fasting Buddha' (technically this is the Bodhisatta as he was not yet awakened), found in the ruins of the ancient Buddhist city of Taxila, north-east Pakistan, is now in the Lahore Museum.

A NEW PATH

8. I thought: 'Whatever a *samana* or *brahmana* has felt in the past, or will feel in the future, or feels now — painful, racking, piercing feelings due to striving — can equal this but not exceed it. But by this severe austerity I have not attained any superior human condition worthy of the Noble Ones' knowledge and vision. Might there be another way to awakening?'

I thought of a time when my Sakyan father was working and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree — quite secluded from sensual desires, secluded from unprofitable things, I had entered upon and abided in the First Absorption, which is accompanied by thinking and reflecting, with joy and happiness born of seclusion. I thought: 'Might that be the way to awakening?' Then, following up that recollection, there came the recognition that this was the way to awakening.

Then I thought: 'Why am I afraid of such pleasure? It is pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual desires and unskilful states.' Then I thought: 'I am not afraid of such pleasure, for it has nothing to do with sensual desires and unskilful states.'

I thought: 'It is not possible to attain that pleasure with a body so excessively emaciated. Suppose I ate some solid food — boiled rice and sour milk?' (M.I,246f, adapted from Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translation, LoB, p.21)

The Bodhisatta had experienced a vast range of spiritual practices, which were traditionally held to be the only means for realizing Truth, but he remained unsatisfied. In his disappointment and disillusionment he sought a different way. Turning away from the path of painful self-mortification, he thought to try the way of 'non-sensual spiritual pleasure'. This was a unique and controversial move. Five ascetics who had been attending him during his superhuman privations left him in disgust, thinking he had given

up the spiritual struggle. Alone and on a new course, the Buddha-to-be renewed his spiritual search.

9. Now when I had taken ample nutriment and had regained strength, aloof from sense pleasures, aloof from unskilful things, I entered upon and dwelt in the First Absorption, which is accompanied by thinking and reflecting, with joy and happiness born of seclusion. But such pleasant feeling as arose persisted without gaining power over my mind.

With the allaying of thinking and reflecting I entered upon and dwelt in the Second Absorption, which has the mind internally tranquillized and fixed on one point, free from thinking and reflecting, with joy and happiness born of concentration. But such pleasant feeling as arose persisted without gaining power over my mind.

With the fading of joy I dwelt in equanimity; mindful and clearly aware, experiencing in my being that pleasure of which the Noble Ones say: 'Equanimity and mindfulness is a pleasurable abiding', I entered upon and dwelt in the Third Absorption. But such pleasant feeling as arose persisted without gaining power over my mind.

With the giving up of pleasure and pain, and with the disappearance of former mental ease and dis-ease, I entered upon and dwelt in the Fourth Absorption, which has neither pain nor pleasure and is purified by equanimity and mindfulness. But such pleasant feeling as arose persisted without gaining power over my mind. (M.I,247f)

The development of these four stages of increasingly deeper concentration on, and absorption into, the meditation object gives the mind greater strength and power, which can then be used to progress towards the goal of awakening. The Bodhisatta had already

developed them previously, but now he was using them as a tool to strengthen the mind rather than as an end in themselves. Having discovered a new path, re-established his resolve and reached an exceptionally refined degree of mental development, he was open to a profound human experience — the experience of awakening.

AWAKENING

10. With the mind thus composed, purified, cleansed, unblemished, without defilement, malleable and workable, steady and immovable, I directed my mind to the knowledge and recollection of former existences. I recollected a variety of former abidings[23] thus: one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many an age of disintegration, many an age of integration, many an age of disintegration-integration; such was my name, such my lineage, such my appearance, such my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my span of life. Thence passing away, I arose in another existence where such was my name, such my lineage, such my appearance, such my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my span of life. Thence passing away, I arose here. Thus with characteristics and details I recollected various former abidings.

This was the first knowledge attained by me in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed and light arose, accordingly as I dwelt vigilant, ardent and resolute. But such pleasant feeling as arose persisted without gaining power over my mind.

With the mind thus composed, purified, cleansed, unblemished, without defilement, malleable and workable, steady and immovable, I directed my mind to the knowledge of the passing

away and reappearance of beings. With clairvoyant vision, purified and surpassing that of humans, I saw beings passing away and reappearing. I understood that beings are inferior or superior, beautiful or ugly, well-faring or ill-faring according to their actions (*kamma*). Indeed, those worthy beings who were possessed of bad conduct of body, bad conduct of speech and bad conduct of mind, revilers of Noble Ones, of wrong view, acquiring actions from wrong view, upon the breaking up of the body after death arose in states of privation, an unfavourable destination, in a place of suffering, in purgatory. But those worthy beings who were possessed of good conduct of body, good conduct of speech and good conduct of mind, not revilers of Noble Ones, of right view, acquiring actions due to right view, upon the breaking up of the body after death arose in a favourable destination, a heavenly world.

Thus with clairvoyant vision, purified and surpassing that of humans, I saw beings passing away and reappearing. I understood that beings are inferior or superior, beautiful or ugly, well-faring or ill-faring according to their actions (*kamma*).

This was the second knowledge attained by me in the second watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed and light arose, accordingly as I dwelt vigilant, ardent and resolute. But such pleasant feeling as arose persisted without gaining power over my mind.

With the mind thus composed, purified, cleansed, unblemished, without defilement, malleable and workable, steady and immovable, I directed my mind to the knowledge of the exhaustion of the outflows (*asāva*).[24] I had direct knowledge, as it really is, that: 'This is *dukkha*; this is the arising of *dukkha*; this is the cessation of *dukkha*; this is the path to the cessation of *dukkha*'. I had direct knowledge, as it really is, that: 'These

are the outflows; this is the arising of the outflows; this is the cessation of the outflows; this is the path to the cessation of the outflows'. Knowing thus and seeing thus, my mind was freed from the outflow of sense pleasure, the outflow of becoming and the outflow of ignorance. In freedom the knowledge came: 'There is freedom'; I had direct knowledge: 'Birth is exhausted, the religious life has been fulfilled, what was to be done is done, there is no more of being thus.'

This was the third knowledge attained by me in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose, darkness was destroyed and light arose, accordingly as I dwelt vigilant, ardent and resolute. But such pleasant feeling as arose persisted without gaining power over my mind. (M.I,247ff; cf. M.I,22f;117)

The awakening was an unimaginably extraordinary and momentous experience, both for the Bodhisatta personally and for all humanity. This somewhat prosaic account describes an experience which transcended time, space and self-imposed limitations on reality. Ignorance was completely eradicated and the Bodhisatta awakened to the ineffable, unconditioned Nibbāna. Henceforth he would be known as the Buddha, the Awakened One. A being who had awakened to this unique truth of life was now living in the world.

Needless to say, this experience was hard to explain in words and concepts, but as the Buddha began to teach he expressed it in a variety of ways. One was by way of the Four Noble Truths: *dukkha*, its origin, its cessation and the path to its cessation, the essential core teaching of all Buddhas (explained in the chapter on Dhamma). Another way that awakening is expressed is as the exhaustion of the 'outflows' of selfhood which seek for sense pleasures, further becoming and ignorance. The Awakened One was now liberated from the tyranny of selfhood. The first two of these 'Three Knowledges' (*tevijjā*) were also realized by some of the Buddha's disciples,

although they are not specific requirements for the realization of awakening.

11. Before my awakening, bhikkhus, while I was still an unawakened Bodhisatta, I reflected, 'What in regard to the world is the gratification, what the danger and what the escape?'

Then I reflected, 'Whatever happiness and ease arise because of the world, this is the gratification from the world. That the world is impermanent, subject to suffering and its nature is change is the danger from the world. The removal and giving up of desire and lust for the world is the escape from the world.'

. . .

But when I knew directly, as they really are in the world, gratification as gratification, danger as danger, escape as escape, I could claim to have awakened to the incomparable perfect awakening in this world with its celestials, its Evil Ones (Māra) and its Deities (Brahmas), among humanity with its renunciants and priests, its leaders and people. Knowledge and insight arose, 'Unshakeable is liberation, this is my last birth, there is no more renewed existence.' (A.I,258f)

Another way in which the awakening is expressed is as fully comprehending the gratification from, the danger of and the escape from the world. This is perhaps a more familiar way of expressing in practice the second and third of the Noble Truths, the origin and cessation of *dukkha*. Just because there is real gratification in the world, human beings are liable to become entranced by it and forget about the dangers of impermanence.

In other texts this three-way formula is used with reference to a variety of other aspects of the world, for example, the 'world' of the senses. It is also stated that the awakening was assisted by the

development of mindfulness of breathing and the basis of psychic power, seeing the peril in pleasures, and being proficient in entering and emerging from the concentration absorptions.[25]

12. So also, bhikkhus, have I seen an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled by the Fully Enlightened Ones of former times. And what, bhikkhus, is that ancient path, that ancient road, travelled by Fully Enlightened Ones of former times? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path, that is: right understanding, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

This is that ancient path, that ancient road travelled along by Fully Enlightened Ones of former times, and going along it I came to know directly ageing and death, I came to know directly the origin of ageing and death, I came to know directly the cessation of ageing and death, I came to know directly the way leading to the cessation of ageing and death.

Going along it I came to know directly birth ... coming-into-existence ... grasping ... thirst ... feeling ... contact ... the six sense bases ... name and form ... consciousness ... formative activities; and their origin, their cessation and the way leading to their cessation. (S.II,106f)

Several times the Buddha's experience of awakening is expressed as the understanding of Conditional Causality (explained in Chapter 2). This was really the essential key to the Buddha's awakening. While other spiritual seekers were looking for the ultimate essence of life, the Buddha awoke to the truth of conditioned processes — that there was no permanent self-entity (*attā*), but all was not-self (*anattā*), just physical and mental processes. The culmination of the Bodhisatta's contemplative inquiry from the very beginning of his spiritual search was formally presented in a twelve-link sequence.[26]

Having been initially confronted with ageing and death, he had continuously inquired as to their origins, and now he had discovered their origination, which then revealed the way of their cessation and the path for realizing their cessation. This was more generally presented as the Four Noble Truths, with *dukkha* expressing not only ageing and death, but all forms of unsatisfactoriness or suffering. The causally-conditioned nature of *dukkha* had now been revealed, and if it was causally-conditioned, it could also be causally-de-conditioned. Liberation from ageing, death and all suffering was now a possibility.

13. So, bhikkhus, being myself subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement — having seen the peril in what is subject to these things — seeking the unborn, unageing, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled, incomparable peace from bondage, Nibbāna — I realized the unborn, unageing, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled, incomparable peace from bondage, Nibbāna. Knowledge and insight arose, 'Unshakeable is liberation, this is my last birth, there is no more renewed existence.' (M.I,167, abridged)

With the experience of full awakening, the reflection which initiated the Bodhisatta's six strenuous years of ardent spiritual search and striving (text 3) came to full completion. He had now realized the unshakeable liberation from 'birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement', the 'incomparable peace from bondage, Nibbāna'. The awakening occurred on the full-moon day of May. This is referred to as Vesākha Pūjā and is the most important Buddhist festival day. Since he was now a Buddha, one who makes the path to liberation known to others, this was not the end of the story. However, this Truth was indeed very different from what most people know, and was thus exceptionally hard to articulate.

14. It occurred to me, bhikkhus: 'This Dhamma which I have found is profound, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond logic, subtle, comprehensible only to the wise. But this is a humanity which loves desire, is delighted by desire, delighting in desire. Thus for a humanity which loves desire, is delighted by desire, delighting in desire, this is a subject difficult to comprehend, that is to say, origination by way of causality.[27] And indeed this is a subject difficult to comprehend, that is to say, the stilling of all activities, the giving up of all basis of rebirth, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna. And if I were to teach Dhamma and others did not understand me, that would be a weariness and vexation to me.'... As I was reflecting thus, my mind inclined to not bothering, to not teaching Dhamma. (M.I,167f; Vin.I,4f; S.I,136f; cf. D.II,36f)

The truth which the Buddha realized is quite contrary to the usual way of the world, although perhaps some people can imagine it. Rather than having to keep feeding desires continuously, what would it be like if those desires were to cease? Would it not be peaceful, and with so much more time to devote to more meaningful things in life? But trying to teach the majority of people this seemingly incomprehensible teaching might appear futile. However, the celestial being Brahma Sahampati realized the serious consequences of this decision by the Buddha and beseeched him to teach for the sake of 'beings with little dust in their eyes'.

15. Then I, bhikkhus, having known Brahma's entreaty, out of compassion for beings, surveyed the world with the eye of an Awakened One. I saw, bhikkhus, as I surveyed the world with the eye of an Awakened One, beings with little defilement, with much defilement, with keen faculties, with dull faculties, with good qualities, with bad qualities, easy to teach, hard to teach,

and a few who dwelt seeing the faults and fear in the world beyond.

Just as in a pond of blue lotuses or a pond of red lotuses or a pond of white lotuses, only a few blue, red or white lotuses are born in the water, grow up in the water, do not rise above the water but thrive completely immersed in the water — only a few blue, red or white lotuses are born in the water, grow up in the water, rest on the surface of the water — only a few blue, red or white lotuses are born in the water, grow up in the water, stand up out of the water, untainted by the water. Then I, bhikkhus, addressed Brahma Sahampati in these verses:

> **Open are the doors to the Deathless,**
> **For those who hear, let them show faith;**
> **Considering vexation, I inclined not to teach Dhamma,**
> **Which is excellent for human beings, Brahma.**
> (M.I,169, abridged)

Thus, recognizing that there were some people in the world who could comprehend this profound teaching, the Buddha overcame his original hesitation and decided to make the path to awakening known. Buddhist tradition recognizes that there are also many Silent Buddhas (Pacceka Buddha), beings who have similarly realized full awakening themselves but do not have the abilities or inclination to teach. Fortunately, Gotama Buddha was not silent.

Celestial beings are recognized in Buddhism as beings of advanced spiritual development; some have reached the higher levels only attainable through refined meditation practice rather than mere virtuous actions. Several of the brahmanical deities, Brahma in this quotation and in other quotations Indra (Sakka, cf. D. *sutta* 21), have been co-opted into being partial to Buddhism. Metaphorically and psychologically they represent very noble human qualities.

TEACHING

16. The Tathāgata is perfected and fully awakened. Listen, bhikkhus, the Deathless has been attained. I shall instruct you; I shall teach you Dhamma. Following what has been advised, you will soon enter on and abide in, know and experience for yourself that unsurpassed culmination of the religious life for the sake of which a person of good family rightly goes forth from the home life into homelessness. (Vin.I,9)

The Buddha considered who would most likely understand his profound yet subtle teaching. He first remembered his two initial teachers (see text 5 above); however, both of them had already passed away. Next he recalled the five ascetics who had attended upon him during his asceticism, and sought them out in the Deer Park at Sarnath, near present-day Varanasi. To them, on the Full Moon day of July (Āsālha Pūjā), he gave his first teaching, the Setting Rolling of the Wheel of Dhamma Discourse, (see text 46), with immediate results.

17. Then the venerable Aññāta Kondañña, having seen, reached, known and penetrated into Dhamma, having crossed over doubt, without uncertainty, having attained perfect confidence in the Master's Teaching without depending upon another, said to the Revered One: 'May I, sir, receive the going forth in the Revered One's presence. May I receive the acceptance?' 'Come, bhikkhu', the Revered One said, 'Well-taught is Dhamma. Live the religious life for the complete ending of suffering.' (Vin.I,12)

The five ascetics, being serious and earnest spiritual seekers, were very receptive to this new teaching, especially coming as it did from the newly-awakened Buddha. One of them, Aññāta Kondañña, awoke to the 'vision of Dhamma', realizing the first stage of awakening (stream-entry). This was another momentous event,

since it meant that the Dhamma could be realized by others through the Buddha's teaching. Aññāta Kondañña then asked to become a committed disciple of the Buddha. He thus became the first bhikkhu to enter the Buddhist monastic community (Sangha). He was soon followed by the other four ascetics as they also penetrated to the true meaning of the Buddha's message.

Four stages of awakening are recognized: stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning and the full awakening of arahantship. They are distinguished by the number of 'fetters' which are relinquished or weakened at each stage.[28]

18. As he was sitting near, the Revered One gave Yasa, the young man of good family, a graduated teaching, that is, on giving, on morality, on heaven; on the disadvantage, the folly, the affliction of sense pleasures and the benefits of renunciation.

When the Revered One knew that Yasa, the young man of good family, was of ready mind, receptive mind, free from obstruction, exultant, gladdened, then he made known the condensed teaching of the Buddhas: *dukkha*, arising, cessation and path. And just as a clean cloth without stain would properly take dye, even so as Yasa sat there the pure, stainless, vision of Dhamma arose, that is, 'whatever phenomena arise, all that is subject to cessation'. (Vin.I,15)

While the Buddha was still residing at the Deer Park, he met the son of a wealthy merchant of Varanasi who was overwhelmed with spiritual despair, much as the Buddha himself had been before his renunciation. Yasa thus became the first non-monastic to receive the teaching and fully comprehend it. He too requested the going forth into the Sangha. Meanwhile, Yasa's father, mother and former wife all received and understood the teaching, becoming the first male (*upāsaka*) and female (*upāsikā*) lay disciples. When Yasa's

friends heard about his ordination they also became interested, and upon hearing the Buddha's teaching were also awakened and asked for acceptance into the Sangha.

19. Wander about, bhikkhus, for the benefit and happiness of the manyfolk, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, benefit and well-being of human and celestial beings. Let not two of you go by one path. Teach the Dhamma which is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle and beautiful in the end. Explain the religious life in the spirit and the letter, completely fulfilled and pure. There are beings with little dust in their eyes, who through not hearing Dhamma are wasting away, but who will grow through understanding Dhamma. (Vin.I,21)

When the number of fully-awakened disciples reached sixty, the Buddha exhorted them to wander further afield in order to share the teaching with other suffering beings. The disciples were seemingly so successful that they brought many new followers to the Buddha for ordination. Since this was not always convenient, the Buddha then allowed the other bhikkhus to perform the ordination ceremony themselves, using the Going for Refuge formula.[29] Later, when the Sangha was much larger and various incidents occurred, this procedure was changed so that the local Sangha undertook the ordination ceremony as a formal communal 'Act of the Sangha' (*sanghakamma*).

20. Then King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha saw Dhamma, attained Dhamma, found Dhamma, penetrated Dhamma, crossed beyond doubt, put away uncertainty, reached full confidence and was independent of others in the dispensation of the teacher ...

'Excellent, Venerable Sir! Excellent, Venerable Sir! Just as,

Venerable Sir, what was upturned is set upright, what was concealed is revealed, one gone astray is shown the path, a lamp is held up in the darkness for those with eyes to see, the Revered One has made known the Dhamma in various ways. I, Venerable Sir, go to the Revered One for refuge, and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha. Henceforth, let the Revered One receive me as a lay follower for as long as breath lasts.' (Vin.I,36)

The Buddha travelled to Rājagaha, the capital of the kingdom of Magadha, where he met King Bimbisāra and a large number of citizens. Upon receiving the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, King Bimbisāra and many citizens realised the first level of awakening. The King was the first of a number of local rulers to become disciples of the Buddha. Shortly thereafter he gave the Bamboo Grove as a residence for the Sangha.

King Pasenadi of Kosala and his Queen Mallikā also became disciples. However, though King Pasenadi had many discussions with the Buddha, it is never stated that he attained any level of awakening.[30]

THE PERSON

The central figure in the Pali Canon is, of course, the Buddha, who is portrayed in many different ways. As an awakened being he is a multi-faceted person, at once displaying humane compassion and exceptional wisdom, yet also somewhat enigmatic in regard to the nature of his being, and extraordinary in his display of psychic powers. On the one hand he is a lover of quiet and solitude; on the other he is open to discussions with provocative wanderers or disputing brahmins. He is energetic in giving encouraging discourses to his disciples, but does not hesitate to rebuke them forcefully at times for inappropriate conduct or distorted views. In the course of his forty-five years of teaching he met many people and dealt with many situations, not all of them agreeable. Besides the encounters which led to people's awakening to the Dhamma, he

also faced attempts to discredit himself and the Sangha, and even attacks on his life. Below are a few episodes which give a glimpse of his character, with a hint of good-natured humour.

21. Thus have I heard. At one time the Revered One was staying at Sāvatthi, in Jeta's Grove at Anāthapindika's Park. And at that time the wanderer Pottapāda was at the debating-hall near the Tinduka tree, in the park of a single hall of Queen Mallikā, staying with a large company of three hundred wanderers.

Then the Revered One dressed in the forenoon, and taking his bowl and robe went to Sāvatthi for alms-round. Then it occurred to him, 'It is too early to wander for alms in Sāvatthi. What if I approach the debating hall in Queen Mallikā's park and the wanderer Pottapāda?' The Revered One then went to the debating hall in Queen Mallikā's park.

At that time the wanderer Pottapāda was sitting with a large company of wanderers, noisily and loudly speaking various kinds of unedifying talk, such as about kings, robbers, ministers . . .

Then the wanderer Pottapāda saw the Revered One approaching from afar and called his followers to order, saying, 'Little noise, gentlemen, restrain the noise, gentlemen. The Samana Gotama is coming. He enjoys quiet and praises quiet. If he sees that this company is quiet he may think to visit us.' At this the wanderers were silent. (D.I,178)

Wherever the Buddha stayed, he would usually go daily into the nearest town or village to collect alms-food. Sometimes he and his disciples would also make visits to the nearby parks where other renunciants stayed during their wanderings through the countryside. Since many of the wanderers were less inclined to meditation, these gathering places or parts of them were usually where discussions of various views and teachings were held. The

Buddha and his disciples would invariably be questioned by other renunciants or would question them on their views. This usually provided an occasion for the Buddha to present his teachings or refute those of others.

22. ***While travelling in Magadha with a large company of bhikkhus, the Buddha stopped at a brahmin village. At that time the head brahmin, Kūtadanta, wished to make a great sacrifice involving the slaughter of several thousand animals. Hearing of the Buddha's arrival, he thought to ask him how to perform this sacrifice. So the villagers, Brahmin Kūtadanta and several hundred brahmins who had come for the sacrifice went to meet the Buddha. Brahmin Kūtadanta asked the Buddha how to perform the sacrifice. The Buddha responded by telling him a story from the past of King Mahāvijita who, being very wealthy, wished to make a great sacrifice which would be for his benefit and happiness for a long time. So the king consulted his chaplain, who gave him this advice:***

'Your Majesty's country is beset by thieves, it is ravaged, villages and towns are being destroyed, the country is infested with brigands. If Your Majesty were to tax this region, that would be the wrong thing to do. Suppose Your Majesty were to think, "I will get rid of this plague of robbers by executions and imprisonment, or by confiscation, threats and banishment", the plague would not be properly ended. Those who survived would later harm Your Majesty's realm. However, with this plan you can completely eliminate the plague. To those in the kingdom who are engaged in cultivating crops and raising cattle, let Your Majesty distribute grain and fodder; to those in trade, give capital; to those in government service assign proper living wages. Then those people, being intent on their own occupations, will not harm the kingdom. Your Majesty's revenues will be great, the land will be tranquil and not beset

by thieves, and the people, with joy in their hearts, will play with their children, and will dwell in open houses.'

And saying, 'So be it!' the king accepted the chaplain's advice ...

Then King Mahāvijita sent for the chaplain and said: 'I have got rid of the plague of robbers; following your plan my revenue has grown, the land is tranquil and not beset by thieves, and the people with joy in their hearts play with their children and dwell in open houses.' (D.I,135f; Maurice Walshe translation, LDB pp.135-6)

In this passage the Buddha expresses his vision of a peaceful and prosperous society. On other occasions, perhaps because he realized the growing influence of kings, he mentions the virtues of the 'wheel-turning monarch', a just and righteous king who is guided by Dhamma and offers protection to all in his realm.

The Pali Canon mentions a number of brahmins who came to meet, discuss with, consult or refute the Buddha. Sometimes they had to overcome their class pride, as they would have to show respect to someone who was not a brahmin. However, since many of the brahmins were very learned and respected spiritual values, the conversations were usually respectful and high-minded. In this encounter the Buddha continues the story of how the king performed a sacrifice where no animals were killed, no trees were cut down, no grass was mown and the slaves and workers were well-treated, and it was very successful. Kūtadanta asks the Buddha if there is a more profitable sacrifice, and the Buddha explains his complete path of practice, culminating in awakening. At this Kūtadanta goes for refuge, sets free the animals to be sacrificed, and after a talk by the Buddha on the Four Noble Truths, attains the vision of Dhamma.

There is a tone of playful provocation running through the discourse; why would a brahmin ask a *samana* about a brahmanical sacrifice? Perhaps so that the Buddha could teach him the 'best sacrifice',

which would also not involve slaughtering animals.

23. Patācārā, although born into a rich family, eloped with a servant and went to live in a distant village. When the birth of her second child was near she set off to return to her family. However, mid-way a great storm broke, and as the second child was born she asked her husband to make a shelter. While cutting grass he was bitten by a snake and died. In the morning she found him and blamed herself for his death. As she continued on her way, her two children also died. Upon reaching her hometown, she heard that her parents and her brother had died in the storm. Maddened with grief, she wandered around naked, reviled and abused by people. She wandered towards the Jeta Grove where the Buddha was staying, and recognizing her receptiveness, he approached her. People tried to prevent her from going to him, but the Buddha welcomed her and encouraged her to recover her mental composure. He then told her of the universality of death, that relatives were no refuge from death, and that the wise follow the path to Nibbāna. Upon hearing this she realized the first stage of awakening and asked for the going forth. She describes her attainment of Arahantship:

Tending field with plough and whip, sowing seeds in the earth, nourishing wife and children, the young man enjoys wealth.

Why do I, complete in moral conduct, following the teacher's doctrine, not Nibbāna acquire? I am not indolent or proud.

I washed my feet and watch the water. I see the wash-water flow down the slope.[31]

Thereupon my mind concentrates, as training a noble horse.

Taking a lamp I entered my dwelling; I considered the couch, then sat on the bed.

Taking the pin, I drew down the wick.

The extinguishing of the lamp — the liberation of the mind!

(Therīgāthā 112-116; introduction summarized from the Commentary to Therīgāthā by Mrs C.A.F. Rhys Davids in her translation 'Poems of Early Buddhist Nuns')

A number of women, some of whom, like Patācārā, very quickly realized the teaching, asked to join the community of nuns (bhikkhuni-Sangha). Some, after experiencing severe sorrow and loss, were very receptive to the Buddha's teaching on suffering. One of the best known examples is the story of Kisā Gotamī. Deranged from grief at the death of her only son, she carried the corpse around, asking people to give her medicine for the child. A wise person directed her to the Buddha staying in the Jeta Grove. When she requested medicine he told her to find a pinch of mustard seed, but it must be from a household where no one had ever died. Elated that she would soon have her medicine, she hurried into Sāvatthi. However, going from house to house, she soon realized that every household had experienced death. Coming to her senses, she took leave of her dead child and returned to the Buddha. When he gave her a short teaching on the inevitability of death she attained stream-entry; then she sought out the bhikkhunis for ordination.

Patācārā was acknowledged by the Buddha as the foremost bhikkhuni proficient in the Vinaya. She must also have been a gifted teacher, as she had many bhikkhuni disciples. One set of verses in the Therīgāthā scripture is given by thirty disciples of Patācārā, and another by 500 of her disciples. The Therīgāthā contains verses by more than seventy awakened bhikkhunis.

24. Thus I heard. At one time the Blessed One was living at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrel's Sanctuary. Now at that time there was a leper called Suppabuddha at Rājagaha. He was a pauper and a miserable wretch.

Once when the Blessed One was sitting expounding the Dhamma surrounded by a large gathering of people, the leper saw the great crowd in the distance. He thought, 'Surely there will be something to eat being distributed there. Suppose I approach that great crowd; perhaps I might get something to eat there?' He approached the crowd, and he saw the Blessed One sitting expounding the Dhamma, surrounded by a large gathering of people. He thought, 'There is nothing to eat being distributed here. It is the monk Gotama expounding the Dhamma to an assembly. Suppose I listen to the Dhamma?' He sat down there at one side, thinking, 'I shall hear the Dhamma.' Then the Blessed One surveyed the whole assembly, reading their minds with his mind and wondering who was capable of recognizing the Dhamma. He saw Suppabuddha the leper sitting in the assembly. Then he thought, 'He is capable of recognizing the Dhamma.' For the benefit of Suppabuddha the leper he gave progressive instruction on generosity, on virtue and on the heavens, and then on the inadequacy, the vanity and the defilement in sensual pleasures and the blessings in renunciation. When he saw that his mind was ready ... he expounded the teaching peculiar to the Buddhas: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path to its cessation ... The spotless, immaculate vision of the Dhamma arose in [Suppabuddha the leper]: all that is subject to arising is subject to cessation. (Udāna 5:3; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translation, LoB, pp.171-2)

The places where the Buddha and his disciples stayed were outside the towns but close enough for people to visit and listen to the teachings. They were usually quite public, so that anyone was free to come; the teachings were open to all. However, it is very hard to tell from outward appearance who might be ripe for understanding the teachings. The Buddha's power of mind-reading is often mentioned in the Canon. It was generally believed that anyone who was adept at meditation would be able to attain certain psychic powers, and

the Buddha and a number of his disciples were considered to have them.

Unfortunately, shortly after his awakening to the Dhamma, Suppabuddha the leper was killed by a roaming cow. The Buddha was asked and revealed what previous action had led him to being a leper (insulting a previous Silent Buddha) and where he was reborn (in a heaven where he 'outshines' the others).

25. At one time the Revered One was staying at Sāvatthi, in Jeta's Grove at Anāthapindika's Park. Now at that time the Venerable Nandaka gave a Dhamma discourse in the assembly hall, explaining, rousing, enthusiastic and gladdening. Then the Revered One, emerging from seclusion towards evening, approached the assembly hall. Drawing near the doorway, he stood waiting for the discourse to conclude. When he knew that the discourse had ended, he coughed and knocked at the door, and the bhikkhus opened the door. The Revered One entered the hall and sat down on the prepared seat. Upon sitting down he said to the Venerable Nandaka, 'Indeed, this was a long Dhamma teaching you addressed to the bhikkhus, my back was aching as I stood outside the door waiting for the Dhamma discourse to finish.'

When he had spoken, the Venerable Nandaka, being embarrassed, said to the Revered One, 'I knew not that the Revered One was standing outside the door. If I had known I would not have spoken so much.'

Then the Revered One, knowing that Venerable Nandaka was embarrassed, said to him, 'Well done, well done, Nandaka. It is suitable for young men of good family who have gone forth out of faith from the home life to homelessness to be sitting together in Dhamma discourse. When you come together,

Nandaka, there are two options, either talk on Dhamma or the "noble silence."'[32] (A.IV,359)

Although the Buddha is usually presented as the one who gives the teachings, some of the discourses are given by his senior disciples, or sometimes a senior disciple is asked by the bhikkhus to elaborate on or explain a short teaching by the Buddha. Venerable Nandaka was credited by the Buddha with being the foremost teacher of bhikkhunis. In this passage it seems the Buddha was teasing Venerable Nandaka, but then also praised him.

26. ***On one occasion as the Buddha was wandering around the lodgings, he came upon a bhikkhu sick with dysentery, lying in his own excrements. On finding out that he had no one to attend him, the Buddha said to his attendant-monk, Ānanda:***

'Go, Ānanda, bring water, we will bathe this bhikkhu.'

'Even so, Venerable Sir', the Venerable Ānanda assented to the Revered One. When he brought the water, the Revered One poured the water and Venerable Ānanda washed him. Then the Revered One took him by the head and Venerable Ānanda by the feet, and they lifted him up and laid him on a bed.

The Buddha then had the Sangha convened, and questioning them about this bhikkhu, said:

'You have not, bhikkhus, a mother or a father who attends on you. If you, bhikkhus, do not attend one another, who is there to attend you? Whoever, bhikkhus, would attend me, should attend the sick.' (Vin.I,301)

The founding of the monastic community gave rise to a great deal of complexity in the life of the Buddha. The Vinaya Piṭaka presents him as adjudicating every detail of monastic life and personally judging each case of misconduct, which entailed questioning the supposed offender and then providing a ruling on the case. The

incident mentioned here led to the Buddha's laying down in detail the formal guidelines on who should attend to whom, how to attend to sick bhikkhus and how sick bhikkhus should make themselves easy to attend to. Such formalizing of the details of monastic living shows that the Sangha had now grown into a large and well-run institution.

27. Thus have I heard. At one time the Revered One was staying at Sāvatthi in the Eastern Park, at Migāra's mother's mansion. Now at that time a dearly loved grand-daughter of Visākhā, Migāra's mother, had died. Then Visākhā, with clothes and hair wet from mourning, went to the Revered One early in the day. Upon paying respects she sat down at one side.

The Revered One enquired, 'Well, Visākhā, why have you come with wet clothes and wet hair so early in the day?'

'A dearly loved grand-daughter has died. That is why I have come with wet clothes and wet hair so early in the day.'

'Would you wish, Visākhā, for as many children and grandchildren as there are people here in Sāvatthi?'

'Yes, Revered One, I would like as many children and grandchildren as there are people here in Sāvatthi.'

'But, Visākhā, how many people in Sāvatthi die every day?'

'Ten people die in Sāvatthi in a day, Venerable Sir. Nine people ... eight people ... seven people ... six people ... five people ... four people ... three people ... two people ... one person dies in Sāvatthi in a day. Sāvatthi is never free from people dying.'

'What do you think, Visākhā, would you ever be without wet clothes and wet hair?'

'No, Venerable Sir. Enough of having many children and grandchildren.' (Udāna 8:8)

Visākhā was the most generous woman supporter of the Sangha. Once when she had served a meal to the Buddha and the bhikkhu Sangha, she requested eight favours. The Buddha responded by saying that he was beyond granting favours. She said that they were allowable things which she wished to offer: rain cloths for the bhikkhus, food for arriving bhikkhus, food for departing bhikkhus, medicine for sick bhikkhus, food for sick bhikkhus, food for bhikkhus attending the sick, a regular supply of drinking porridge and bathing cloths for the bhikkhunis. After she explained the practical benefits for the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, the Buddha asked her what benefits she saw for herself. She explained that if she thought that someone who was at one of the stages of awakening had received one of her offerings, she would be gladdened, and this would lead to her mind becoming concentrated and to the arising of the Spiritual Faculties, Spiritual Powers and Awakening Factors.[33] The Buddha praised her for recognizing these benefits and granted her the eight favours. With so many bhikkhus coming to Savatthi to see the Buddha and then departing, she would feed some 500 bhikkhus each day in her house. The residence where the Buddha was staying at the time of this conversation was also provided by her.

There is a certain irony in this conversation, since Visākhā is said to have had twenty children. They and their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren all had many children, so that before she died at age 120 she had 84,020 living descendants!

28. *The brahmin Dona saw the Buddha sitting meditating under a tree.*

The brahman went up to him and asked: 'Sir, will you be a god?'
'No, brahman.'
'Sir, will you be a heavenly angel?'
'No, brahman.'
'Sir will you be a spirit?'

'No, brahman.'
'Sir, will you be a human being?'
'No, brahman.'
'Then, sir, what indeed will you be?'
'Brahman, the taints by means of which, through my not having abandoned them, I might be a god or a heavenly angel or a spirit or a human being have been abandoned by me, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with, and are no more subject to future arising. Just as a blue or red or white lotus is born in water, grows in water and stands up above the water untouched by it, so too I, who was born in the world and grew up in the world, have transcended the world, and I live untouched by the world. Remember me as one who is enlightened.' (A.II,38f; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translation, LoB, pp.187-8; in this translation the alternative spelling 'brahman' is used for 'brahmin').

As an Awakened One the Buddha was no longer an ordinary human being, since he had abandoned the usual human attachments. Thus it is very hard to define him clearly other than as an Awakened One. On another occasion he said that he was 'deep, immeasurable, unfathomable like the great ocean'. On a number of occasions various people asked whether he would exist after death or not. This he refused to answer, partly because it was a distracting speculation not conducive to the goal of spiritual practice, but also because the questioner was usually defining the Buddha in his own familiar worldly way, which of course no longer applied.

29. The Revered One stayed at Parileyyaka in the protected jungle thicket beneath an august *sal* tree. Then as the Revered One was meditating in solitude the reflection arose in his mind, 'Formerly I was not living easeful, beset with those bhikkhus of Kosambi, makers of disputes, makers of quarrels, makers of

contention, makers of contentious talk, makers of legal issues in the Sangha.

Now, living alone, without a companion, I am living happily and easeful, away from those bhikkhus of Kosambi, makers of disputes, makers of quarrels, makers of contention, makers of contentious talk, makers of legal issues in the Sangha.' (Vin.I,351)

Some years after the Buddha's awakening, a serious dispute arose between two factions of bhikkhus at Kosambi. Unfortunately, not even the Buddha was able to resolve the dispute and he left Kosambi, staying for some time in a quiet grove before travelling on to Sāvatthi. Eventually, when the lay supporters of Kosambi realized that the Buddha had left town because of the quarrelling bhikkhus, they stopped paying respects or giving them alms-food. The quarrelling bhikkhus then recognized that they must seek out the Buddha to settle their dispute. When they approached Sāvatthi the Buddha told the resident bhikkhus and lay supporters to listen to both sides and support those who were speakers of Dhamma.

It is very fortunate that the preservers of the Vinaya recorded even the difficulties the Sangha endured, as this became the basis for precedents on how to deal with similar issues in future. In relating to this incident the Buddha is quoted as defining separate communities of bhikkhus, the beginning of what later became a great number of different sects.

30. Once when Devadatta was alone in retreat this thought arose in his mind: 'Who is there whose confidence I can win over and thereby acquire much gain, honour and renown?' Then he thought, 'There is this Prince Ajātasattu. He is young, with a glorious future. Suppose I win over his confidence? Much gain, honour and renown will accrue to me if I do so. ...'

Then Prince Ajātasattu felt prodigious confidence in Devadatta owing to his supernormal powers. After that he waited upon him evening and morning with five hundred carriages and five hundred offerings of milk-rice as a gift of food. Devadatta became overwhelmed with gain, honour and renown. Ambition obsessed his mind, and the wish arose in him: 'I will rule the Sangha of bhikkhus.' Simultaneously with the thought his supernormal powers vanished. (Vin.II,185 abridged: Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translation, LoB p.257)

Another unpleasant episode was the saga of Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin. Through his development of meditation he had attained psychic (supernormal) powers; however, he did not attain the 'vision of Dhamma' and so was still unawakened. He became overwhelmed by desire for 'gain, honour and renown'. This eventually led him to attempt to take control of the Sangha, create a schism in the Sangha and finally attempt to assassinate the Buddha. Fortunately, all these efforts failed. However, the record of this provides a valuable lessen regarding spiritual pride and led to a number of Sangha procedures on how to deal with such issues in future.

THE LAST DAYS

31. a) In *the last months of the Buddha's life, Māra, encouraging him to pass away, reminded him that now there were bhikkhus and disciples, bhikkhunis and female disciples, laymen disciples and laywomen disciples* '... who are accomplished, trained, skilled, learned, knowers of the Dhamma, trained in conformity with the Dhamma, correctly trained and walking in the path of the Dhamma, who will pass on what they have gained from their Teacher, teach it, declare it, establish it, expound it, analyze it, make it clear; till they shall be able, by means of the Dhamma, to refute false teachings that have arisen and teach the Dhamma of wondrous effect.' (D.II,105-6; Maurice Walshe translation, LDB, pp.246-7)

b) ***Responding to questions from the wanderer Vacchagotta, the Buddha said that there were many more than five hundred each of the groups of bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, male celibate lay-followers, female celibate lay-followers, male non-celibate lay-followers and female non-celibate lay-followers who had realized some level of awakening. Vacchagotta replied by saying how complete the religious life under the Buddha was and added:***

'Friend Gotama, just as the River Ganges, flowing towards the ocean, sloping towards the ocean, tending towards the ocean, remains touching the ocean, so this assembly of the good Gotama, of householders and those gone forth, flowing towards Nibbāna, sloping towards Nibbāna, tending towards Nibbāna, remains touching Nibbāna.' (M.I,494)

The Buddha had been teaching for some forty-five years throughout much of northern India. He had guided many thousands of people to the realization of some stage of awakening, and had established a flourishing bhikkhu Sangha and bhikkhuni Sangha with many devoted lay supporters. Just minutes before his final passing the Buddha asked the 500 bhikkhus present if anyone had any final questions, but all were silent. The Buddha said that this was because the least-attained of them was a stream-enterer who no longer had any doubts.

32. Ānanda, I am now decrepit, old, aged, one who has traversed the span of life, reached the term of eighty. Just as an old cart is made to go on with the help of supports, so too the Tathāgata's body is made to go on with the help of supports. It is only when the Tathāgata withdraws attention from all signs and, with the cessation of certain feelings, enters the signless concentration, that his body is at ease.

Therefore, Ānanda, you should make yourself your lamp,[34]

yourself and no other your refuge. You should make the Dhamma your lamp, the Dhamma and no other your lamp. And how does a bhikkhu do that? Herein, bhikkhus, in regard to the body one abides contemplating the body, earnestly, clearly knowing and mindful, having put away desire and disappointment concerning the world. Herein, bhikkhus, in regard to the feelings ... conditions of mind .... phenomena one abides contemplating phenomena, earnestly, clearly knowing and mindful, having put away desire and disappointment concerning the world (see text 59). (D.II,100)

Finally, after living some eighty years, the Buddha's body reached its limits. Only through the powers of his meditation could he maintain some degree of physical comfort. His emphasis upon taking one's self as lamp and refuge reinforces the contemplative nature of his teaching — only within oneself can the source of suffering be discovered, and only with the Buddha's specific path of spiritual practice, as outlined in the Dhamma, can suffering be fully resolved.

33. Then the Revered One said to the bhikkhus, 'Thus, bhikkhus, I declare to you — it is the nature of all conditioned things to decay; strive on with vigilance.' These were the Tathāgata's last words. (D.II,156)

After having taught for some forty-five years, the Buddha summarized his teaching with these simple yet profound words, encouraging his disciples to the very end to practise his teachings with vigilance and due diligence in order to realize true peace. The Bodhisatta was initially moved to pursue the spiritual path through witnessing the perishability of human life, and now the Buddha was experiencing it for himself, but with the utmost well-being and equanimity. The account continues by reporting that the Buddha then entered into successively refined absorptions before entering *Parinibbāna* (final Nibbāna).

ENDNOTES

1 Shortly before his passing the Buddha confirmed that whatever is to be recognized as his teaching should conform to that in the Suttas and Vinaya. D.II,124

2 Vin.II,284ff; Gethin, p. 39-40.

3 'While parts of the Pali Canon clearly originated after the time of the Buddha, much must derive from his teachings. There is an overall harmony to the Canon, suggesting "authorship" of its system of thought by one mind.' Harvey, p.3

4 Details given in LDB, page 46; pages 52-3 also give a full list of the 15 'books' of the Khuddaka Nikāya.

5 A list is given at LDB, p.38-39.

6 For discussion of dating, see Schumann pp.10ff; Winternitz II,572; Gethin, p. 14.

7 S.II,105; LoB, pp.27f; text 12.

8 Six previous Buddhas: D.II,12ff; S.II,5ff; Future Buddha, Metteya: D.III,76; the Buddhavamsa, a later canonical text, enumerates twenty-seven previous Buddhas. On this text Winternitz (Vol. II, p.156) says: '... but we will have to count the Buddhavamsa as belonging to the latest products of the canonical Pali literature. It

is indeed full of that worship and deification of Buddha which is not known to the oldest Tipitaka texts, but which is in full bloom in the Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, especially that of the Mahāyāna.' DPPN II,295 mentions that: 'The Lalitavistara has a list of fifty-four Buddhas and the Mahāvastu of more than a hundred.'

9 M. *sutta 26*; D. *sutta* 16; Vinaya Pitaka, Ch.1

10 Jayawickrama, p.xii.

11 cf. Winternitz II,pp.108ff; Jayawickrama, pp.xi ff.

12 Jayawickrama, p.xiii; i.e., D. *sutta* 14; M. *suttas* 4,12,26,36,75,85,100,123; Sutta Nipāta *suttas* Ch.III, 1,2,11; Vinaya Ch.1; Buddhavamsa; etc.

13 Sutta Nipāta 405ff.; 425ff.; 509ff.

14 Winternitz, Vol.II, pp.93-4.

15 Winternitz (Vol.II,pp.37ff) points out the inter-mingling of these elements in the Mahaparinibbāna-Sutta, the Discourse on the Buddha's Final Passing (D. *sutta* 16).

16 e.g. M.III,122; cf D.II,12ff

17 The Hero with a Thousand Faces, p. 164; Winternitz (II,p.201) says: 'Indians have never made any distinction between saga, legend and history and writing of history was in India always a kind of epic poetry. Thus for the Buddhists, all legends on the Buddhas of earlier times and the earlier births of Gotama Buddha in the Buddhavamsa, in the Cariyāpitaka and the Jātaka-book are also history just like the whole Buddha legend.'

18 The word used (*pāsāda*) is sometimes translated as 'palace' (as in LoB, p.9). However, 'mansion' suits the context better, since: a) the Buddha-to-be was not a member of royalty; and b) a *pāsāda* was one of the buildings the Sangha was allowed to use -- probably not a 'palace' but more likely a large multi-storied building or 'mansion'.

19 Confusion over the Bodhisatta's family's status has arisen due to the word 'rāja'. Originally meaning a tribal chief, it only came to mean a supreme ruling king later, as the position of kingship grew in importance; cf. Thomas, pp.20ff; PED, 568.

20 D.III,83; M.I,110; 124; etc.

21 Vin.I,82. She is traditionally known as Yasodharā. Cf. DPPN II, 741.

22 This level of concentration and the level the Buddha learned from his first teacher were incorporated into the Buddha's teachings as, respectively, the fourth and third *arūpa-jhānas* or 'formless absorptions'. cf. Bud.Dict. p.83.

23 I use the word 'abidings' rather than 'lives' in order to emphasize the possibility of different kinds of 'existence', i.e. also psychologically, rather than only those similar to this earthly existence.

24 *āsava*: the three 'outflows of selfhood' are sense desire, becoming and ignorance. Sometimes a fourth, (wrong) views, is mentioned.

25 Conditional Causality (S.II,10;103ff; cf. Vin.1,1-2; Ud.1-3); the gratification and danger of, and escape from, the four elements (S.II,169ff); five groups (*khandha)*(S.III,27ff); six senses and six sense-objects (S.IV,6ff;97); feelings (S.IV,233); five faculties (S.V,203). Mindfulness-of-breathing (S.V,316); the basis of psychic power (S.V,264ff); the nine absorptions (A.IV,438ff).

26 *paticcasamuppāda*; usually translated as 'dependent origination'. Some explanations do not include all twelve links, for example, in this presentation only eleven are given. In the Great Discourse on Causation only ten links are given (D. *sutta* 15).

27 *idappaccayatāpāccasamuppāda;* usually translated as 'specific conditionality, dependent origination', i.e., Bhikkhu Bodhi, CDB p.231.

28 Of the Ten Fetters -- personality-belief, sceptical doubt, attachment to rites and rituals, sensual lust, ill-will, lust for fine material existence, lust for immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness, ignorance -- the stream-enterer has relinquished the first three, the once-returner has relinquished the first three and attenuated the next two; the non-returner has relinquished the first five; the arahant has relinquished all ten.

29 The Going for Refuge formula is a recitation for those who profess allegiance to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha: *Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi; Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi; Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi. Dutiyampi Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi; Dutiyampi Dhammaṁ ... Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi; Tatiyampi Buddhaṁ ... Dhammaṁ ... Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.*

30 In chapter three of the first volume of the Samyutta Nikaya, twenty-five discourses of the Buddha with King Pasenadi are recorded. See M. *sutta* 89 for the King's exuberant praise of the Buddha.

31 The Commentary explains that she splashed water on her feet three times and each time the water flowed further than previously before seeping into the ground. She took this as a metaphor for human life: some people live (flow) only a little before dying (her children), some 'flow' longer before dying (her husband), and some 'flow' some distance before dying (her parents). Since this was exceptionally poignant to her, it focused her mind in concentration. Her story is told in more detail in 'Great Disciples of the Buddha' pp. 293ff.

32 The 'noble silence' is defined at S.II,273 as the Second Absorption where 'initial and sustained thought (*vitakka-vicāra*)' cease.

33 The Five Spiritual Faculties and Five Spiritual Powers are faith, wisdom, energy, concentration and mindfulness. The Seven Factors of Awakening are mindfulness, investigation of dhamma, energy, joy, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity.

34 "*Dipa*" usually translated as 'island'; however, I think that the dynamic, interdependent and symbolic (of wisdom) image of 'lamp' is more in keeping with the Buddha's message, rather than the isolated image of 'island'. Also, I wonder how familiar people in central India were with islands, except perhaps in the Ganges.

2 THE DHAMMA

Dhamma (Skt: Dharma) is a pre-Buddhist term meaning the nature of things, the truth of reality, the way it is. The Buddha used this term because it was so prevalent and well known, but in explaining it he gave his own interpretation; that is, when he said to people that he would teach them Dhamma, he taught them his own path of practice for the realization of the truth of the way things are. Thus for Buddhists 'Dhamma' came to mean specifically the Buddha's teachings as preserved in the Buddhist scriptures. We can thus say that Buddha-Dhamma is the particular Buddhist path to realizing the universal truth of the way things are. Another common and more mundane meaning of the word 'dhamma' is 'things', 'phenomena' or 'objects of the mind'.[1]

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

34. Then, monks, King Yama[2] questions that man, examines him and addresses him concerning the first divine messenger: 'Didn't you ever see, my good man, the first divine messenger appearing among humankind?'

And he replies: 'No, Lord, I did not see him.'

Then King Yama says to him: 'But, my good man, didn't you ever see a woman or a man eighty, ninety, or a hundred years old, frail, bent like a roof bracket, crooked, leaning on a stick, going shakily along, ailing, youth and vigour gone, with broken teeth, with gray and scanty hair or bald, wrinkled, with blotched limbs?'

And the man replies: 'Yes, Lord, I have seen this.'

Then, King Yama says to him: 'My good man, didn't it ever occur to you, an intelligent and mature person, "I too am subject to old age and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind"?'

'No, Lord, I could not do it. I was negligent.'

. . .

When, monks, King Yama has questioned, examined, and addressed him thus concerning the first divine messenger, he again questions, examines, and addresses the man about the second one, saying: 'Didn't you ever see, my good man, the second divine messenger appearing among humankind?'

'No Lord, I did not see him.'

'But, my good man, didn't you ever see a woman or a man who was sick and in pain, seriously ill, lying in his own filth, having to be lifted up by some and put to bed by others?'

'Yes, Lord I have seen this.'

'My good man, didn't it ever occur to you, an intelligent and mature person, "I too am subject to illness and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind"?'

'No, Lord, I could not do it. I was negligent.'

. . .

When, monks, King Yama has questioned, examined, and

addressed him thus concerning the second divine messenger, he again questions, examines, and addresses the man about the third one, saying: 'Didn't you ever see, my good man, the third divine messenger appearing among humankind?'

'No Lord, I did not see him.'

'But, my good man, didn't you ever see a woman or a man one, two, or three days dead, the corpse swollen, discoloured, and festering?'

'Yes, Lord I have seen this.'

'Then my good man, didn't it ever occur to you, an intelligent and mature person, "I too am subject to death and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind"?'

'No, Lord, I could not do it. I was negligent.'

(A.I,138-40 abridged; Bhikkhu Bodhi translation; IBW p.29)

These three 'divine messengers' are the primary existential conundrums which all reflective humans confront at some point in their lives. Who has not asked, 'What happens when we die?', or pondered, 'What is the true purpose of life if it ends in old age and death?' And of course we soon realize that everyone, rich or poor, famous or obscure, powerful or powerless, all faces the same fate; we are all equal before death. Unfortunately, some people are overwhelmed by these impending experiences and choose to ignore, deny or avoid dealing with them. For others they are a valuable opportunity to look deeper into the purpose and meaning of their lives, and perhaps make some important decisions about the future direction they wish to take. Being stirred (*saṁvega*) by these inevitable realities and seeking an answer to these issues is where the spiritual journey begins.

However, while some people may be impelled to seek for a spiritual answer when confronted by any of these 'divine messengers', their

spiritual enthusiasm may wane when they obtain some degree of consolation or relief. Thus the Buddha encouraged serious seekers to reflect often upon these inevitabilities of life (A.III,71). Although the vivid memory of the 'divine messengers' may pass away, these facts of life themselves do not.

35. The unstable world is brought to an end; this is the first expounding of Dhamma taught by the Revered One who knows and sees, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Awakened One. Because of knowing and seeing and hearing this, I went forth from the home-life into homelessness.

The world is without shelter or protection; this is the second expounding of Dhamma ...

The world is not one's own; one must pass away leaving everything; this is the third expounding of Dhamma ...

The world is deficient, unsatisfied, a slave of craving; this is the fourth expounding of Dhamma taught by the Revered One who knows and sees, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Awakened One. Because of knowing and seeing and hearing this, I went forth from the home-life into homelessness. (M.II,68ff)

Each person has his or her own reasons for engaging in the spiritual quest. These four reasons were given by one of the Buddha's early disciples. While we may all appreciate the truth of these statements intellectually, it is often only our deep personal experience of them which challenges our normal view of life. If we reflect upon our life, it may become evident just how much of our behaviour is conditioned by these four facts. How much of our energy goes into seeking stability, protection, self-assurance and security? And how successful in these aims are we really? Only in the spiritual realm can we fully come to know what these qualities are in the ultimate sense.

36. Bhikkhus, all is burning. And what is the all that is burning? The eye is burning, forms are burning, eye-consciousness is burning, eye-contact is burning; also, whatever is felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with eye-contact for its indispensable condition, that too is burning.

Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion; I say it is burning with birth, ageing, death, with sorrow, with lamentation, with pain, with grief, with distress.

The ear is burning, sounds are burning ...

The nose is burning, odours are burning ...

The tongue is burning, flavours are burning ...

The body is burning, tangibles are burning ...

The mind is burning, mind-states are burning, mind-consciousness is burning, mind-contact is burning; also, whatever is felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with mind-contact for its indispensable condition, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of greed, with the fire of aversion, with the fire of delusion; I say it is burning with birth, ageing, death, with sorrow, with lamentation, with pain, with grief, with distress. (Vin.I,34-5; S.IV,19-20)

In the course of their lives some people come to realize the limitations of the sensory realm. Initially we may think that we have complete control over sense impressions — we just need to keep away from those to which we are averse and enjoy only those we like. However, sooner or later we come to see how difficult it is to control them. We are continually 'burned' by averse impressions. We are 'burned' by desirable impressions too, because we can't get enough of them. Delusion burns us with confusion, doubt and fear.

This quotation is an extract from what is traditionally called the Fire Sermon, the Buddha's third discourse, delivered for the benefit of one thousand newly-accepted bhikkhus who had formerly been fire-worshipping ascetics. This teaching was so profound that they were all fully awakened upon hearing it.

37. Now I say this, Nigrodha: whatever discerning persons come to me who are honest, open and straightforward — I will instruct them, I will teach them Dhamma. If they practise in accordance with what is taught, in this very life, within seven years, they will enter on and abide in, know and experience for themselves that unsurpassed culmination of the religious life for the sake of which a person of good family rightly goes forth from the home-life into homelessness. Let alone seven years — six years; let alone six years — five years ... a fortnight; let alone a fortnight — in seven days they will know and experience this for themselves. (D.III,55)

The Buddha offers us the possibility of realizing spiritual liberation. This is sometimes referred to as the culmination of the religious life, of which liberation is the ultimate purpose. It must be realized by each one of us for ourselves, through practising the teachings rather than merely studying or worshipping them. Most people require instruction in order to do this, and some leave the security and confines of the home-life in order to dedicate themselves to the fullest extent to achieving liberation.

The Buddha offered teachings not depending upon a person's class, status or intelligence but to those who showed the important qualities of integrity and earnestness, the fundamental basis for true spiritual endeavour. Integrity is that openness and truthfulness which enable us to see things clearly, while earnestness is that

perseverance and commitment which keep us penetrating ever deeper into Truth, in spite of all the obstacles.

Note that the Buddha has tremendous confidence in human beings' ability to put his teachings into practice and realize the truth of liberation in this very life — whether in seven years or just seven days!

38. a) Nibbāna, though very subtle and fine, is not hard to obtain for one intent upon the goal, who is skilled in mind and of gentle manner, and who practises the moral conduct of the Buddha. (Theragāthā 71)

b) Nibbāna, as taught by the Fully Awakened One, is indeed the highest happiness: the sorrowless, stainless peace, wherein *dukkha* is dissolved. (Theragāthā 227)

The Buddha's teaching directs us to Nibbāna, something difficult to describe but within reach of every individual. Out of respect for the lofty heights of spiritual truth, we frequently push that goal beyond the realm of human possibility. But as these quotations from some of the Buddha's early disciples demonstrate, the very existence of people who have practised and realized the teachings is an emphatic reminder that Nibbāna is realizable by any honest and persevering individual who follows the teachings of the Buddha.

Nibbāna is something exceptionally pleasant and worthwhile, whether it is expressed as 'the highest happiness' or as 'the sorrowless, stainless peace'. It is also where '*dukkha* is dissolved', that is, where the unsatisfactoriness of life (as mentioned in the first three texts above) ceases or is resolved. And it can be realized in this life — like human happiness, Nibbāna can be experienced here and now.

THE WORLD

39. I say, friend, that where one is not born, does not age or die, or pass from one state to another, or arise again — that 'world's end' is not to be known, seen or reached by travelling. Yet I say that there is no end of *dukkha* without reaching world's end. Rather, it is in this fathom-long body, endowed with perception and mind, that I make known the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world and the way to the cessation of the world. (S.I,62)

The Buddha was fundamentally a meditator who focused primarily on subjective experience rather than objective reality. Thus while most people understand the world as an external reality, the Buddha understands it through how we perceive and interpret it. This is really the only way in which we can truly come to understand reality, which is actually only a perception and interpretation in our own mind. And, most importantly, it is in our own mind that we can end *dukkha*. This underscores the importance of mental development or meditation as the means of realizing the truth of 'the world'.

SELF -RELIANCE

40. Now look, Kalamas, do not be led by oral sayings or tradition or hearsay; nor by the authority of scriptures; nor by reasoning or inference; nor by reasoned reflection; nor by accepting a view after pondering; nor by possible conformity; nor because we respect this *samana*.

When, Kalamas, you know yourselves, 'These things are unskilful, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the wise, these things, if undertaken, lead to harm and suffering'; then abandon them.

What do you think, Kalamas, when greed ... aversion ... delusion arises in a person, does it arise to their welfare or harm?

To their harm, Venerable Sir.

...

When, Kalamas, you know yourself, 'These things are skilful, these things are blameless, these things are praised by the wise, these things, when undertaken, lead to welfare and happiness'; then abide with them.

What do you think, Kalamas, when non-greed ... non-aversion ... non-delusion arises in a person, does it arise to their welfare or harm?

To their welfare, Venerable Sir.[3] (A.I,188f)

The Buddha visited the Kalama people, who were experiencing doubt about which visiting religious teachers were speaking truth and which speaking falsehood. He encouraged them to contemplate for themselves what was really skilful or unskilful. Some people may take this to imply a rejection of tradition, texts and teachers. However, what the Buddha is saying is that we should first be guided by teachings, and then carefully consider, reflect upon and investigate them to see if they are indeed beneficial. Spiritual experience is a personal experience. We need to assume a certain responsibility for our spiritual development, and be able to discern clearly what is helpful for us by learning to trust our own inner wisdom and rigorously putting the teachings to the test of experience — are they really beneficial, or do they just sound impressive?

41. Within oneself is peace to be found, not from another will a bhikkhu find peace. For one who is inwardly calmed, nothing is accumulated, how then rejected?

Just as in the centre of the ocean no waves arise, but all is still; so, steadfast and free of lust, on what is there for a bhikkhu to build arrogance? (Sutta Nipāta 919-920)

Spiritual peace is a subjective experience rather than an external reality. It is found by looking within oneself through the development of internalized meditation practices. The development of Calm Meditation (*samatha kammathāna*) through the use of various concentration exercises can produce a strong temporary feeling of inner quiet. When the mind can be collected upon a meditation object such as the sensation of natural breathing at the nostrils, wandering thoughts are calmed and mental noise is silenced. That mental noise or internal dialogue is mostly obsessive self-reference through either affirmation or denial. The silencing of mental noise is the silencing of this self-reference, with its disturbing pride and desire.

Calm Meditation, however, only provides a temporary experience of quiet. It is through the development of Insight Meditation (*vipassanā kammathāna*), with an emphasis upon penetrating investigative awareness, that we are able to see the true nature of things clearly, and free ourselves from the very structures and sources of disturbing self-reference. Inner quiet then becomes as stable and natural as the waveless depths of the sea.

42. a) By oneself is wrong done, by oneself is one soiled; by oneself is wrong not done, by oneself is one purified. Purity and impurity depend upon oneself; no one can purify another. (Dhammapada 165)

b) Though one be victorious in battle over a thousand times a thousand people, yet the victory supreme is victory over oneself. (Dhammapada 103)

The source of our suffering lies within ourselves. The basic cause is identification with a self, which is out of harmony with the intrinsic selflessness of the universe. Thus the Buddha's teaching focuses on internal spiritual practices rather than external religious

ceremonies. In our desire to escape from our suffering we try to manipulate the external world, but we always manipulate it in relation to ourselves. Hence we are never able to get beyond ourselves, and we only create more self-centred suffering rather than penetrating to its source. Victory over oneself is the rooting out of the self-centred, self-affirming, self-supportive activities which are the primary source of suffering.

43. a) Truly oneself is one's own refuge — what other refuge can there be? With oneself well-tamed one acquires a refuge hard to obtain. (Dhammapada 160)

b) You yourself ought to strive: the Buddhas only show the way. Those who enter upon this way and meditate are released from the bonds of Death. (Dhammapada 276)

c) By endeavour, vigilance, restraint and self-control, let the wise make an island for themselves which no flood can overwhelm. (Dhammapada 25)

The Buddha emphasized the need for individual effort and self-reliance. We have little real control over the external world, but we can exercise some degree of control over ourselves, so that is where we must start our practice. 'Oneself is one's own refuge' literally means 'depend upon yourself', 'look to yourself', 'have confidence in yourself'. This 'self' is the conventional empirical self which can choose to do good or evil, makes decisions and initiates action. We need to assume responsibility for our actions before we can gain control over them. Our suffering is created by our own ignorance. We remedy it through gaining confidence in our own inner wisdom; the Buddha just shows us the right direction. The emphasis on self-reliance is also a reminder not to become overly dependent upon charismatic or impressive teachers. In their presence it may seem that we are progressing spiritually, but unless

we do the work ourselves we are only living on borrowed wisdom.

NOBLE FRIENDSHIP

44. Ānanda: 'Sir, fully half of this religious life is good friendship, good companionship, good association.'

Buddha: 'Not quite so, Ānanda, not quite so. It is the whole, not the half, of this religious life, this good friendship, good companionship, good association.'[4] (S.V,2)

Although self-reliance is an important foundation for spiritual practice, we can also greatly benefit from the support and guidance of a 'noble' friend. A noble friend can point us towards the right path, encourage us beyond our own limits and make us aware of those aspects of ourselves of which we are frightened or to which we are blind and resistant. In the Buddha's teaching, companionship with the noble is formally represented by the religious community (Sangha) of monks and nuns who have fully committed themselves to a life of spiritual practice and often offer guidance from their own experience. Monks, nuns or laypeople who have realized a sufficient degree of insight are known as the '*Ariyā*' or '*Savaka Sangha*', the real Refuge of the Sangha and the most noble of friends. They are at least partially awakened, and can be correctly identified only by their wisdom, not their physical appearance. More generally, however, a noble friend is anyone who offers us good advice and wise reflection, so that we can more easily discern a beneficial and skilful path in life.

45. a) If you should find a wise person who, like a revealer of treasure, points out your faults and reproves you, associate with them. Association with such a person is for the better, not the worse. (Dhammapada 76)

b) If, even for a moment, an intelligent person associates with someone wise, he will quickly apprehend the Truth — just as

the tongue apprehends the flavour of soup. (Dhammapada 65)

We can never over-estimate the value of associating with someone wise, since we can benefit from their guidance as quickly as the tongue tastes the flavour of soup. Even a short time with a noble friend can help us unravel the confusion in our minds and bring us closer to realizing Truth. A noble friend's words are far more valuable than treasure, for they help us unburden ourselves from the thoughts and actions that weigh us down and prevent us from realizing peace. Noble friends' advice may not be to our liking, but if they are really noble friends their words are meant for our benefit, although it may take some time to appreciate this! Often we suffer because we refuse to recognize or acknowledge our own faults or accept that we make mistakes. Others may see this more clearly than we do.

THE PATH

46. Bhikkhus, these two extremes should not be practised by one who has gone forth from the home-life into homelessness. What two? There is devotion to indulgence in sense-pleasures, which is low, common, of ordinary people, ignoble and unprofitable; and there is devotion to self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble and unprofitable. Avoiding both these extremes, the Tathāgata has realized the Middle Way, which gives vision, gives knowledge, and leads to peace, to higher knowledge, to awakening, to Nibbāna.

And what is that Middle Way? It is this Noble Eightfold Path, that is, right understanding, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the Middle Way realized by the Tathāgata, which gives vision, gives knowledge, and leads to peace, to higher knowledge, to awakening, to Nibbāna. (Vin.I,10; S.V,420)

The Buddha's path is the Middle Path, a path avoiding all extremes in practices, attitudes and views. The two main extremes are self-affirming sensual indulgence and self-denying asceticism. Both of these lead to a reinforcing of self-view, because they are still centred upon the self, holding on to it through either pleasurable sensuality or painful mortification. The Middle Path is a very subtle and refined balance between affirmation and negation. More specifically, it is not just wavering indecision, but a precise path comprising eight factors which must all be nobly right and harmonized. When these eight right factors come together, one's way of life becomes a noble spiritual path.

47. And what, bhikkhus, is right understanding? Knowledge of *dukkha*, knowledge of the origin of *dukkha*, knowledge of the cessation of *dukkha*, knowledge of the path to the cessation of *dukkha*; this is called right understanding. (S.V,9)

Right understanding has a number of aspects to it. As the definition says, it is having some initial knowledge of the fact of *dukkha* in one's life, and the incentive to do something about it. Basically this means recognizing that human life has its limitations and will be a constant source of suffering if we are not wise to that. Knowledge of the origin of *dukkha* implies having the insight that *dukkha* is conditioned by other factors, a preliminary appreciation of conditional causality. Knowledge of the cessation of *dukkha* means that we have some awareness of the principle of action and result (*kamma-vipāka*), that beneficial actions will result in the cessation of *dukkha*. Knowledge of the path means that we have some confidence in spiritual practice which adopts a holistic approach, combining skilful living, meditation and wisdom.

48. And what, bhikkhus, is right aspiration? Aspiration for renunciation, aspiration for non-ill-will, aspiration for

harmlessness; this is called, bhikkhus, right aspiration. (S.V,9)

Fundamental to right aspiration is renunciation or the attitude of relinquishment of the supports of selfhood (even spiritual ones). The aspiration to non-ill-will is a reminder that relinquishment is not punishment or self-torture, but an open-hearted giving up of falsehood. Harmlessness is the universal hallmark of truly authentic spiritual practice, which is tolerant and compassionate enough to allow and include all possibilities, even those we may not like.

49. The Revered One, while staying at Rājagaha on Vulture's Peak, gave abundant Dhamma-talk to the bhikkhus: such is moral conduct, such is meditation, such is wisdom. Meditation, when augmented with moral conduct, gives great fruit and great benefit. Wisdom, when augmented with meditation, gives great fruit and great benefit. The mind, when augmented with wisdom, is completely freed from the outflows of selfhood (*āsava*), that is, the outflow of sensuality, the outflow of becoming, the outflow of views and the outflow of ignorance. (D.II,81)

The path leading to liberation can be practised and experienced with the help of noble friendship and our own self-motivation. This path is the development of skilful moral conduct, meditation and wisdom. Meditation grounded in harmonious and supportive behaviour bears the fruit of spiritual wisdom — liberation of mind and freedom from suffering. In practice, however, this process occurs in successive harmonized stages. A basis of moral behaviour enables the development of meditation. When we then bring the collectedness and clarity of meditation to bear upon our behaviour, we gain insight into the attitudes and actions which cause suffering. By applying wisdom we can free ourselves from this disturbing behaviour and arrive at a more refined level of collectedness and clarity, which can then reveal more refined levels of disharmonious

behaviour. Wisdom arises from seeing these causal patterns of self-inflicted suffering, and wisdom is used to free ourselves from these patterns of 'outflowings of selfhood'.

SKILFUL CONDUCT

50. a) Skilful conduct (*sīla*) is the beginning, the foundation and the chief cause of all good things. Thus one should purify skilful conduct.

Skilful conduct is the boundary, the control and the brightening of the mind; and it is the abiding of all the Buddhas. Thus one should purify skilful conduct. (Theragāthā 612-3)

b) Sandalwood, tagara, lotus, jasmine: above all these kinds of fragrance, the fragrance of virtue is by far the best. (Dhammapada 55)

Skilful conduct gives stability and viability to spiritual practice. It is the foundation upon which spiritual practice is built, and grounds that practice in one's ordinary day-to-day life. Otherwise spiritual practice can too easily become an ancillary habit, an exceptional experience which is seemingly not feasible in normal life, or just a one-off experience which we are unable to reproduce. Skilful conduct also gives the mind control and boundaries as aids to meditation, so that although the mind may be churning out all kinds of crazy and immoral things, our conduct is rooted in harmonious and wholesome actions. Thus we can watch and know the entire range of our selfish expressions, without needing to follow or react to them, or blindly deny or ignore them.

51. Ānanda, skilful conduct gives freedom from remorse as its gain and advantage; freedom from remorse gives delight as its gain and advantage; delight gives joy; joy gives tranquillity; tranquillity gives well-being; well-being gives

concentration; concentration gives knowledge and vision of things as they really are; knowledge and vision of things as they really are give disenchantment and dispassion; disenchantment and dispassion give knowledge and vision of freedom as their gain and advantage. So indeed, Ānanda, skilful conduct gradually leads on to the highest. (A.V,2)

Skilful conduct provides a foundation for the causal arising of the successive stages of spiritual development. It is not merely an end in itself, although some people may take the freedom from remorse or purity of being which morality engenders as a state of high spiritual attainment. However, often there is still attachment to that purity, rather than using this worldly state to realize the further qualities of concentration, knowledge and vision of things as they really are, disenchantment and dispassion, culminating in freedom.

52. Renouncing false speech, they abstain from false speech, they speak truth, adhere to truth, are reliable and trustworthy, and do not deceive the world.

Renouncing slanderous speech, they abstain from slander, having heard something here they do not announce it there in order to cause dissension, having heard something there they do not announce it here in order to cause dissension; they reunite those who are divided, a promoter of friendships, rejoicing in concord, devoted to concord, delighting in concord, a speaker of words furthering concord.

Renouncing unkind speech, they abstain from unkind speech, they speak words which are gentle, pleasant to the ear, lovable, agreeable, polite, that are desirable and pleasing to many people.

Renouncing frivolous speech, they abstain from frivolous

speech, they speak at the right time, speak what is true, speak what is good, speak on Dhamma and Vinaya; they speak words which are worth treasuring, timely, reasoned, measured and beneficial. (M.I,179-80)

Speech, both our own speech and that of others, has a powerful effect upon our lives. How often have we 'burned' with regret over an angry outburst to a loved one? How long have we churned over in our minds some unkind words thrown at us by someone we trusted? Bringing more awareness to our speech can help us to see the effects it is creating in ourselves and in others. Also our speech mirrors our thoughts and moods, for example in the proverbial 'Freudian slip', and thus is an opening to our often unconscious mental activity.

In the Buddha's time speech was the primary means of communication. To relate right speech to modern times, it would be suitable to apply the same standards to 'right communication', as the written word has often as much effect as the spoken word, and much communication is now entirely in writing by means of the Internet and other technologies.

53. And what, householder, is accomplishment in virtue?

Herein, householder, the disciple of the Noble Ones abstains from killing living beings, from taking what has not been given, from sexual misconduct, from lying and from intoxicants which cause heedlessness. This is called 'accomplishment in virtue'. (A.II,66).

These five guidelines for skilful conduct are known formally as the Five Precepts, which are considered to be the normal standard for lay followers. There are, of course, various levels of strictness with which we can train to increasing levels of refinement. Most important, though, is to acknowledge honestly what our conduct is really like. What aspects of our conduct need more awareness

and restraint? What causes us to step outside these guidelines? And what are the results? Only by clearly knowing our 'self' can we learn to be free of 'self'.

54. Bhikkhus, these five trades should not be pursued by a lay-follower. What five? Trade in weapons, trade in human beings, trade in flesh, trade in intoxicants and trade in poisons. (A.III,208)

Right livelihood is one of the factors of the Eightfold Path. Since many people spend a fair amount of time earning a livelihood, if this activity is not supportive of spiritual practice, or even of a healthy physical and mental life, then perhaps it is not a good idea to continue it. How does your means of livelihood influence your spiritual practice?

These three aspects of skilful conduct, right speech, right action and right livelihood, are grouped as the category of morality in the Eightfold Path. We develop these qualities by bringing mindfulness and clear knowing to our speech, actions and way of earning a living. Just having these particular right forms of skilful living pointed out to us can be a helpful beginning; however, a considerable degree of self-awareness, honesty and wisdom is required to be able to transform these principles into ways of being. The Pali word for morality, *sīla*, literally means 'character'; that is, skilful conduct is integrated into our character. Moreover, only by directly experiencing the beneficial results of skilful living do we gain the supportive confidence to further develop and refine our practice of skilful living.

55. ***The Buddha addresses Anāthapindika*:**

Householder, the disciple of the Noble Ones, with wealth acquired by energetic effort, accumulated with the strength

of arms and sweat of brow, righteous and righteously gained, does four worthy deeds. What four?

The disciple of the Noble Ones, with wealth acquired by energetic effort, accumulated with the strength of arms and sweat of brow, righteous and righteously gained, makes himself happy and pleased, and maintains himself in proper happiness. He makes his mother and father, his wife and children, his servants and workers, his friends and colleagues happy and pleased, and maintains them in proper happiness. This is the first case of wealth which has gone to a good cause, gone to advantage and been suitably made use of.

Again, householder, the disciple of the Noble Ones, with wealth acquired by energetic effort, accumulated with the strength of arms and sweat of brow, righteous and righteously gained, guards against misfortunes, such as by fire, water, kings, robbers, disagreeable inheritors. In order to defend against misfortune, he makes himself secure. This is the second case of wealth which has gone to a good cause, gone to advantage and been suitably made use of.

Again, householder, the disciple of the Noble Ones, with wealth acquired by energetic effort, accumulated with the strength of arms and sweat of brow, righteous and righteously gained, makes the five-fold offering: to relatives, to guests, to the departed, to rulers, to celestials. This is the third case of wealth which has gone to a good cause, gone to advantage and been suitably made use of.

Again, householder, the disciple of the Noble Ones, with wealth acquired by energetic effort, accumulated with the strength of arms and sweat of brow, righteous and righteously gained, supports those renunciants and brahmins who abstain from pride and negligence, who are established in patience and gentleness, who are taming themselves, calming themselves,

attaining Nibbāna — he establishes a beneficial offering which is heavenly, resulting in happiness and leading to heaven. This is the fourth case of wealth which has gone to a good cause, gone to advantage and been suitably made use of. (A.II,65f)

Anāthapindika (lit. 'feeder of the poor') was a very wealthy merchant of Sāvatthi and one of the most devoted supporters of the Buddha and Sangha. He offered the Jeta Grove, where the Buddha spent much time, after purchasing it for the exorbitant price of its surface covered in gold coins. The Buddha had a number of wealthy lay supporters, and his message was well received by the growing number of merchants. He thus recognized the benefit of teaching people how to use their wealth skilfully. Some people are quite gifted at obtaining wealth. As long as it does not involve any means of wrong livelihood, that wealth is 'righteously gained', but how can it then be used righteously for our own benefit (in moderation) and the benefit of others? Wealth often implies some degree of power or influence, which entails responsibility. Thus the Buddha gives these helpful guidelines for using it so that great benefit may arise.

56. Bhikkhus, if beings knew, as I know, the result of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would they allow the stain of meanness to obsess them and take root in their minds. Even if it were their last morsel, their last mouthful, they would not enjoy eating without having shared it, if there was someone to share it with. But, bhikkhus, as beings do not know, as I know, the result of giving and sharing, they eat without having given and the stain of meanness obsesses them and takes root in their minds. (Itivuttaka sutta 26; John D. Ireland translation, TI, p. 18.)

Giving, sharing, generosity are the basis of spiritual practice, in that we are learning to give up, let go, surrender our grasping of selfhood. We all know that it is good to give, but how many of us realize just

how profound this practice is as a basis of self-surrender? Without this attitude as a foundation we often pursue spiritual practice with an attaining mind, which is ultimately self-defeating. We end up trying to gain spiritual progress for ourselves, the proverbial 'spiritual materialism' syndrome, rather than practising the giving up of selfhood in everyday acts of joyful generosity.

57. a) Health is the greatest possession; contentment is the greatest treasure,[5] trustworthy people are the best relations; Nibbāna is the greatest well-being. (Dhammapada 204)

b) And how is a monk contented? Here a monk is satisfied with a robe to protect his body, with alms to satisfy his stomach, and having accepted sufficient, he goes on his way. Just as a bird with wings flies hither and thither, burdened by nothing but its wings, so he is satisfied ... In this way, sire, a monk is contented. (D.I,71; Maurice Walshe translation, LDB, p.101.)

Contentment and simplicity of life-style are universal aids to peace of mind, whether for a monastic or a lay person. The four basic supports for human life are food, clothing, shelter and medicine, and their purpose is to support our spiritual aspiration rather than to become self-satisfying ends in themselves. With few possessions to worry about and contentment with what we have, our life is uncluttered and unencumbered, so that our heart/mind can rise above the mundane concerns of the world as a bird flies aloft when it wishes. We then have more time and energy available for sustained spiritual practice. Everyone needs basic material comforts, but how much is sufficient to provide the fundamental support for seeking the real 'comfort' of spiritual liberation?

58. And what, bhikkhus, is right effort? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu generates resolve, endeavours, exerts, supports

the mind and strives for the non-arising of unarisen evil, unwholesome states.

He generates resolve, endeavours, exerts, supports the mind and strives for the giving up of arisen evil, unwholesome states.

He generates resolve, endeavours, exerts, supports the mind and strives for the arising of unarisen wholesome states.

He generates resolve, endeavours, exerts, supports the mind and strives for the persistence of arisen wholesome states, for their non-confusion, their further development, abundance, increase and fulfilment.

This, bhikkhus, is called right effort. (S.V,9)

As the Buddha makes clear, right effort is energy directed towards a specific purpose. Some people are capable of generating tremendous energy, but often it does not appear to result in anything significant. This may be due to not having these criteria firmly established, so that in fact we are merely taking two steps forward and three back. We can strive very hard but is it really for something wholesome, or if we have achieved something wholesome, do we try to maintain it? The training of the mind is especially challenging because the power of old habits is so strong. However, with sustained right effort even the most stubborn habits can be changed.

RIGHT MINDFULNESS

59. This is, bhikkhus, the direct path for the purification of beings, for the passing beyond sorrow and grief, for the disappearance of suffering and dejection, for reaching the right path, for the realization of Nibbāna, namely the four Attendings with Mindfulness. What are the four?

Herein, bhikkhus, with regard to the body one abides contemplating the body, earnestly, clearly knowing and mindful,

having put away desire and disappointment concerning the world.

With regard to feeling tones one abides contemplating feeling tones, earnestly, clearly knowing and mindful, having put away desire and disappointment concerning the world.

With regard to mind one abides contemplating [conditions of] mind, earnestly, clearly knowing and mindful, having put away desire and disappointment concerning the world.

With regard to phenomena one abides contemplating phenomena, earnestly, clearly knowing and mindful, having put away desire and disappointment concerning the world. (M.I,55)[6]

Living in a more skilful and contented way gives rise to inner confidence and settledness of being. These are stable supports for the development of mindfulness or clear awareness, which facilitates insight (*vipassanā*) into the nature of reality. The calm that arises from concentration gives temporary inner peace, while the wisdom of seeing reality clearly produces deep and stable peace. It is the calm and clearly aware heart/mind which can penetrate to the true nature of reality. Calmed of its interpreting, judging, elaborating, etc., the heart/mind can focus steady attention on what awareness reveals, and sees more clearly, directly and truthfully.

Contemplating these four expressions of our sense of self means that awareness surveys and delves into them as direct experiences, rather than thinking about, analyzing or merely interpreting them. Only awareness freed of self-interest can become an awareness which is bare, honest, objective and non-judgemental.

60. I ascended to the high terrace of the Attendings of Mindfulness and contemplated the people who were indulging in the notion of individuality which I had previously thought so much about.

When I saw the Way, boarding the ship and not holding to a view of self, I saw the ultimate harbour.

The Buddha removed the ties which for a long time had been latent in me and for a long time had been established in me. He cured me of the ill effects of the poisonous defilements. (Theragāthā 765, 766, 768)

When body, feeling tones, conditions of mind and phenomena are seen directly with clear awareness, insight into their true nature as impermanent, unsatisfactory and impersonal begins to dawn. The illusion of separate individuality is pierced. For example, body is experienced as organic physical processes rather than an object which we think we own and control. Experiencing this in ever greater depth takes us closer to living in harmony with this truth. Then the ties of personal identification with these constantly-changing processes are cut, and the complexities we build upon them cease.

61. Steadfast in body and steadfast in mind —
Whether standing, sitting or lying down —
Having firmly established mindfulness,
One acquires excellence, first and foremost.
And having obtained such excellence, one goes
Unseen by the King of Death. (Udāna, sutta 5.10)

With practice mindfulness becomes a power in itself, which then infuses our whole way of life. Living with clear awareness brings profound presence of mind, and by living with full presence of mind (mind-full-ness), we are completely awake to the 'excellence' of the truth of reality at its deepest level. Fundamentally, this is the realization of 'not-self' or the impersonal nature of reality. Abiding in this truth, we see there is no 'self entity' which 'dies'; there are only 'self-processes' which naturally arise and pass away.

MINDFULNESS OF BODY[7]

62. And how does one, in regard to the body, abide contemplating the body? To this end, one goes into the forest, to the foot of a tree or to an empty hut, sits down cross-legged with body upright and raises mindfulness to the forefront. Just mindful one breathes in, mindful one breathes out. Breathing in long, one knows, 'I breathe in long'; breathing out long one knows, 'I breathe out long'. Breathing in short, one knows, 'I breathe in short'; breathing out short, one knows, 'I breathe out short'. One trains thus, 'I shall breathe in ... breathe out experiencing the whole body'. One trains thus, 'I shall breathe in ... breathe out calming the bodily formation.

Just as, bhikkhus, a skilled turner or his assistant when making a long turn, knows, 'I make a long turn'; when making a short turn, he knows, 'I am making a short turn'. Just so, bhikkhus, when breathing in long ...

In this way, in regard to the body one abides contemplating the body internally, or one abides contemplating the body externally, or one abides contemplating the body both internally and externally. One abides contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or one abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the body, or one abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the body. Or mindfulness that 'there is body' is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and right mindfulness. One abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.[8] (M.I,56)

The development of mindfulness proceeds from the coarse to the more refined. Body is the first object for developing mindfulness, because it is more stable and substantial, slower to change, longer-lasting and, usually, more honest than the slippery convolutions of the mind.

The most important observable bodily activity is the natural breathing process. Thus the breathing is used as the basic meditation object. Breathing is always present as long as we are alive, and is the most fundamental nutriment for sustaining life. Focusing attention on natural breathing can lead to the development of concentration, while awareness of the subtle changes in breathing patterns conditioned by our changing physical and/or mental states can lead to insight.

63. He who has perfected, well developed, and practised in due order mindfulness of breathing, as taught by the Buddha, illuminates this world like the moon released from a cloud.

Truly my mind is purified, unlimited, well-developed; having penetrated and having been applied, it illuminates all the quarters. (Theragāthā 548-9; K.R. Norman translation, PEBM, p.60.

With mindfulness, the natural and seemingly automatic process of breathing can become a stepping-stone to progressive development of the mind in concentration and awareness. With practice the mind can become lucid and radiant. Through the emphasis of continuous focusing on breathing, the mind develops ever-increasing concentration, while through emphasizing awareness the heart/mind gains increasing insight into impermanence and impersonality, cutting through the problems we create due to ignorance of the true nature of reality.

64. Again bhikkhus, when walking, one knows, 'I am walking'; when standing, one knows, 'I am standing'; when sitting, one knows, 'I am sitting'; when lying down, one knows, 'I am lying down'; or one knows accordingly however the body is placed.

Again bhikkhus, in going forward or backward, clearly knowing one acts; in looking ahead or around, clearly knowing one acts;

in bending or stretching, clearly knowing one acts; in wearing the robes and carrying the bowl, clearly knowing one acts; in attending to the calls of nature, clearly knowing one acts; in eating, drinking, chewing or tasting, clearly knowing one acts; in walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep and waking up, clearly knowing one acts; in speaking or being silent, clearly knowing one acts.

In this way, in regard to the body one abides contemplating the body internally, or one abides contemplating the body externally, or one abides contemplating the body both internally and externally. One abides contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or one abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the body, or one abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the body. Or mindfulness that 'there is body' is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and right mindfulness. One abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. (M.I,56-7)

The second exercise for developing mindfulness of the body is to bring attention to all our bodily activities. Most of those activities are so ordinary that they are just blind habits. However, habits are the dwelling-place for our deep-seated sense of self. We act in certain habitual ways because this comforts, satisfies and shelters our sense of self: 'I' am known by how 'I' act, so we can investigate our actions and observe what aspect of self they are supporting.

The Buddha realized that bringing awareness into the private home of self — the realm of our usual, ordinary habitual activity — is the key to self-knowledge and the door to self-liberation.

65. I am a disciple of the well-farer, travelling in the eight-fold vehicle which is the way. With my dart drawn out, without

***āsavas*, gone to a place of solitude, I rejoice.**

For I have seen well-painted puppets or dolls , fastened by strings and sticks, made to dance in various ways.

If these strings and sticks are removed, thrown away, mutilated, scattered, not to be found, broken into pieces, on what there would one fix the mind?

This little body, being of such a kind, does not exist without these phenomena; as it does not exist without these phenomena, on what there would one fix one's mind? (Therīgāthā 389-92; K.R. Norman translation, PEBN, p. 214.)

Mindfulness of body exposes the body's puppet-like nature as controlled and directed by self-affirming actions and self-preserving habits. When our usual habits are thrown into disarray, so is our sense of self. It is because we ignore these self-controlled habits that they become a repository for ignorance. We then cloak the world in a veil of preconceptions and expectations, and are unable to see its spontaneous unfolding. Through awareness of our self-contained framework of habits we see that there is nothing to hold onto, nothing to 'fix the mind', and we can begin to flow with life more peacefully.

This passage is taken from the verses of one of the awakened bhikkhunis. Accosted by a young man admiring her beauty, she tried with these verses to convince him of this awakened view of the body.

66. Again, bhikkhus, one reviews this body as it is placed or directed in regard to the elemental qualities: there are in this body the elemental qualities of earth, water, fire and air. Thus one abides clearly reflecting upon body.[9]

In this way, in regard to the body one abides contemplating

the body internally, or one abides contemplating the body externally, or one abides contemplating the body both internally and externally. One abides contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or one abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the body, or one abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the body. Or mindfulness that 'there is body' is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and right mindfulness. One abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. (M.I,57)

Another way to reflect upon the nature of body is to see it as the coming together of various elemental qualities. In the Buddha's time the four basic qualities were represented by earth, water, fire and air. The earth element represents the quality of solidity and firmness. We find it predominating in the hard parts of the body like the nails, teeth and bones. Water has the qualities of fluidity and cohesion. These predominate in the bodily liquids such as saliva, tears, blood, etc. The fire element is heat, but also the quality that causes maturing, ripening and ageing. This quality predominates in the metabolic processes and digestion. The air element has the qualities of upholding, supporting and filling out, and it is instrumental in movement, as in the breath moving in and out of the body.

All physical things are a composite of these four elemental qualities, but because they have different amounts of each quality, there is a tremendous variety in the physical realm. When physical things deteriorate or decay, they simply return to different combinations of these same four elemental qualities. Nothing is lost — it just changes composition.

67. a) Leaving the five hindrances in order to attain rest-from-exertion; taking the doctrine as a mirror, my own knowledge and vision, I considered this whole body inside and out. Both

inside and outside the body seemed empty. (Theragāthā 171-2; K. R. Norman translation, PEBM, p. 24.)

b) Knowing the body is like foam; realizing its mirage-like nature, cutting off the flower-tipped sensual realm, one goes unseen by the King of Death. (Dhammapada 46)

When one develops the spiritual exercise of mindfulness of body, one begins to experience the body as it really is, rather than through a cloud of concepts. One sees it as 'empty' of an ultimate controller. It is not 'I' who digests food, but simply the elemental quality of fire which produces the digestive activity. The body is truly a mysterious process of physical activities over which 'I' really have very little control. We also become penetratingly aware of the fragile and ever-changing nature of body as an organic living entity. The four elemental qualities come together for each short lifetime; then they disperse like foam tossed up on the seashore and scattered to the winds.

Since it is the five physical senses which tie us to the body, enchantment with them drops away when they are seen clearly, as it does when we see the fragile, fleeting beauty of flowers. Through deep insight into the nature of body, one passes unseen by death through non-identification with the dying body.

MINDFULNESS OF FEELING TONES

68. And how does one abide contemplating feeling tones in regard to feeling tones? Here, bhikkhus, when feeling a pleasant feeling, one knows, 'I feel a pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unpleasant feeling, one knows, 'I feel an unpleasant feeling'; when feeling a feeling which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, one knows, 'I feel a feeling which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant'.

When feeling a sensory pleasant feeling, one knows, 'I am

feeling a sensory pleasant feeling'; when feeling a spiritual pleasant feeling, one knows, 'I am feeling a spiritual pleasant feeling'; when feeling a sensory unpleasant feeling, one knows, 'I am feeling a sensory unpleasant feeling'; when feeling a spiritual unpleasant feeling, one knows, 'I am feeling a spiritual unpleasant feeling'; when feeling a sensory neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant feeling, one knows, 'I am feeling a sensory neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant feeling'; when feeling a spiritual neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant feeling, one knows, 'I am feeling a spiritual neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant feeling'.

In this way, in regard to feelings one abides contemplating feelings internally, or one abides contemplating feelings externally, or one abides contemplating feelings both internally and externally. One abides contemplating the nature of arising in feelings, or one abides contemplating the nature of passing away in feelings, or one abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in feelings. Or mindfulness that 'there is feeling' is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and right mindfulness. One abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. (M.I,59)[10]

Feeling (*vedanā*), in the Buddhist definition, is just the basic affective tone of our experience, most simply as either pleasant, unpleasant or neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant, distinct from the mental or emotional reactions which it often initiates. Feelings are present whenever there is consciousness, whether we are aware of them or not. Sometimes they may be quite subtle, and other times we are simply not aware of them. In practice there is actually a continuum of feeling tones, which range from the most ecstatically pleasant to ordinarily pleasant, neutral or slightly unpleasant, to excruciatingly unpleasant. Through development of the exercise described here, we become increasingly aware not only of the incredible range of feeling tones and the influence they exert over us, but also of the fragility of these feelings to which we give such importance.

This exercise also specifically advises being aware of feeling tones which arise from both sensory and spiritual sources. Thus one may be able to appreciate the difference in the quality of feelings from these two distinct sources. Spiritual feelings would arise from unselfish acts such as generosity or kindness, as well as from spiritual practices such as patience or meditation.

69. Bhikkhus, when the uninstructed worldling is being contacted by a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, and laments; he weeps, beating his breast and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings — a bodily one and a mental one. Suppose they were to strike a man with a dart, and then strike him immediately afterwards with a second dart, so that the man would feel a feeling caused by two darts. So too, when the uninstructed worldling is being contacted by a painful feeling ... he feels two feelings — a bodily one and a mental one.

Being contacted by that same painful feeling, he harbours aversion towards it. When he harbours aversion toward painful feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion towards painful feeling lies behind this. Being contacted by painful feeling, he seeks delight in sensual pleasure. For what reason? Because the uninstructed worldling does not know any escape from painful feeling other than sensual pleasure. When he seeks delight in sensual pleasure, the underlying tendency to lust for pleasant feeling lies behind this. He does not understand as it really is the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of these feelings. When he does not understand these things, the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling lies behind this.

If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels it attached. If he feels a painful feeling, he feels it attached. If he feels a neither-painful-

nor-pleasant feeling, he feels it attached. This, bhikkhus, is called an uninstructed worldling who is attached to birth, ageing, and death; who is attached to sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair; who is attached to suffering, I say. (S.IV,207ff; Bhikkhu Bodhi translation, CDB, p.1264)

Through clearly observing feelings, we also come to understand the intricate realm of emotional reactions. From feeling arises the mental and emotional activity which is the basis for our motivations — desire to have and hold on to pleasant feelings, aversion to and resistance against unpleasant feelings, and ignorance and confusion from neutral feelings. We come to realize how automatic and powerful are the 'underlying tendencies' to aversion, lust and ignorance in relation to the feeling tones which arise in the course of sentient life. It is humbling to know just how much our life revolves around the pursuit of pleasant feelings and avoidance of unpleasant feelings, and just how strongly we are attached to this rapidly changing display of fleeting feelings.

70. One who sees that pleasant feeling is unsatisfactory,
Who sees that painful feeling is like a stinging dart,
Who sees that neutral feeling is impermanent —
Truly that one rightly sees and understands feelings.
Thus understanding feelings, one is freed of the outflows.

When the body breaks up, one has reached Dhamma, attained the highest knowledge and has gone beyond all ways of definition. (S.IV,207)

Mindfulness of feelings brings a new perspective into focus. Pleasant feelings begin to lose their impelling glamour. They start to appear unsatisfying because of their constantly changing and hence constantly disappointing nature — we can't stay happy all the time! But that's not bad; that's nature, and realizing this enables us to be free from the frantic, obsessive search for elusive pleasure,

and find peace.

Understanding the true nature of feelings also allows us to uproot many of the emotional complications in which we entangle our lives — no need to get so excited, they're only passing feelings. We no longer need to indulge in fear of and hostility towards painful feelings, since they are just passing by. Since most people identify with emotions, freeing ourselves from reactions to feelings means that we transcend all such normal ways of definition.

MINDFULNESS OF (CONDITIONS OF) MIND

71. And how does one in regard to mind abide contemplating [conditions of] mind? Here, bhikkhus, one knows a lustful mind as lustful, a mind without lust as without lust; one knows a mind with hate as a mind with hate, a mind without hate as without hate; one knows a deluded mind as deluded, an undeluded mind as undeluded; one knows a contracted mind as contracted, a distracted mind as distracted; one knows a great mind as great, an insignificant mind as insignificant; one knows an inferior mind as inferior, a superior mind as superior; one knows a concentrated mind as concentrated, an unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated; one knows a liberated mind as liberated, an unliberated mind as unliberated.

In this way, in regard to the mind one abides contemplating the mind internally, or one abides contemplating the mind externally, or one abides contemplating the mind both internally and externally. One abides contemplating the nature of arising in the mind, or one abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the mind, or one abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the mind. Or mindfulness that 'there is mind' is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and right mindfulness. One abides independent, not

clinging to anything in the world. (M.I,59)

Mindfulness of conditions of mind broadens the range of awareness much further. From the relatively simple theme of three or six feelings, awareness broadens out to the more varied expression of innumerable mental states, which also include emotions. The sixteen conditions listed here are by no means the only conditions which occur in the mind. We probably already have some experience of the first three pairs from developing awareness of feelings: for example, greed for pleasant feeling, hatred for unpleasant feeling and delusion for neutral feeling. The other five pairs are significant conditions to become aware of, as they are fundamental to the practice of developing the mind for liberation.

Awareness of this mind of ours exposes just how it really works, how these various conditions arise and cease, and what influence, if any, we have over them. We begin to see our mental activity as being merely created by causally-conditioned mental processes. When we take these conditions less personally we are less surprised, concerned or reactive, and can more peacefully just observe the mind and its conditioning as they are. Most importantly, we can learn to work with the mind in a wiser way through knowing its conditioned patterns, rather than struggling against it.

72. Mind precedes all things,
Mind is supreme, produced by mind are they.
If one should speak or act with mind defiled,
Suffering will follow,
Just as wheel follows hoof of the pulling ox.
Mind precedes all things,
Mind is supreme, produced by mind are they.
If one should speak or act with mind purified,
Well-being will follow,
Like a never-departing shadow.[11] (Dhammapada 1 – 2)

In Buddhist teachings the mind is actually the continuum of dynamically active mental processes, just as the wind is the continuum of moving air. Unlike the brain, the mind has no fixed form or dimension. As consciousness it precedes things, because without mind we would not know things. Mental and physical phenomena are interdependent. Mind does not make the physical, but it is mind which is the more important, as it can acknowledge and recognize, define and qualify, organize and integrate the physical. And it is the moral quality of mind, defiled or purified, which conditions the affective quality of our experiences.

73. Bhikkhus, I know of no other single thing so conducive to such misery as this undeveloped, unpractised mind. The undeveloped mind is indeed conducive to much misery.

Bhikkhus, I know of no other single thing so conducive to such benefit as this developed, practised mind. The developed mind is indeed conducive to much benefit. (A.I,6)

The mind is the source of both misery and joy, depending on how it has or has not been developed. For most people misery and joy just come and go according to passing circumstances, but the mind developed in tranquillity and mindfulness becomes a natural source of ever-increasing benefit. Thus when suffering does arise, it can be calmly and clearly observed, and even turned into a source of wisdom, rather than spinning us into negative reactions and ever-increasing suffering. Instead of defending ourselves from the effects of an undeveloped mind, it is better to start working at the source by developing the mind.

74. Brightly shining, luminous is this mind, but it is defiled by stains which visit. This the unlearned common-folk do not really understand; thus for them there is no development of

the mind.

Brightly shining, luminous is this mind and it is freed of stains which visit. This the learned Noble Disciples really understand; thus for them there is development of the mind. (A.I,10)

One of the Buddha's profound insights was that the true nature of the minds of all human beings is brightly shining and luminous. This was the basis of his extremely positive outlook on human beings. All the moods to which humans are prone are merely 'visitors' which come and go — no emotion, whether negative or positive, is our true nature. Thus we can be free of them. In practice, however, most people identify so strongly with these visiting moods that they are unable to free themselves and experience their own true, luminous nature. Mindfulness of mental states allows us to patiently observe the transient and impersonal coming and going of all moods, so that the luminous host may outshine the transient guests.

75. Just as a solid mass of rock is not moved by the wind, so sights, tastes, sounds, smells and all things to touch, mental objects, pleasant and unpleasant, do not cause a venerable one's mind, which is steadfast and unfettered, to tremble, and he sees its passing away.

My mind stands like a rock, and does not quiver; unattached to lustful things, it is not shaken amidst the shaking world. My mind is thus developed; whence will pain come to me? (Theragāthā 643, 644, 192; K.R. Norman translation, PEBM, p 69 and p. 26.)

The developed mind is not 'shaken' by the ephemeral world of the senses and their feeling tones. It is steadfast in the peace of wisdom and unfettered by subjective interpretations. It is steady like a rock, not through closing off from sense impressions, but by being grounded in the realization of their unstable, ever-passing nature.

This well-developed mind is thus free of pain. It is not uncommon for people to experience this state of mind during an intensive meditation retreat. However, it is then usually just temporary, albeit very valuable for showing that the mind can be tamed through practice.

76. There are, Nigrodha, unwholesome things that have not been abandoned, tainted, conducive to rebirth, fearful, productive of painful results in the future, associated with birth, decay and death. It is for the abandonment of these things that I teach Dhamma. If you practise accordingly, these tainted things will be abandoned, and the things that make for purification will develop and grow, and you will all attain to and dwell, in this very life, by your own insight and realization, in the fullness of perfected wisdom. (D.III,57; Maurice Walshe translation, LDB, p. 394.)

Through mindfulness of conditions of mind we discover many surprising things about ourselves. Most specifically, we start to uncover those aspects which we have previously ignored — the so-called 'unattractive' expressions of our self which we are too ashamed to acknowledge or too frightened to face. Yet these are precisely the dark shadows of our being to which we need to be 'enlightened'. First, though, it is necessary simply to observe carefully from a state of calm collectedness; otherwise the self quickly jumps in with judgements and manipulative side-tracks. These things will be abandoned by seeing through their illusory appearances created by our self-affirming habits. Learning to observe self's theatrics perceptively, without being drawn in by the performance, is the dawning of liberation.

77. When, having kept in check discursive thoughts, sheltered in a cave between the hills, fearless and without impediments

he meditates — no greater pleasure than this can be found.

When, abiding in well-being, having destroyed corruptions, impediments and grief — free of obstruction, greed and the dart of craving — with all outflows ended, he meditates — no greater pleasure than this can be found. (Theragāthā 525-6)

The pleasure of a peaceful, unobstructed mind is beyond words. Only those who have experienced it can know this, as some people do through developing spiritual exercises, for example on meditation retreats. The pleasure of the sense-world pales in comparison. The calm, clear mind rises above life's endless problems because it sees how things really are, rather than problematically struggling to force things into self's preconceived mould. Everything is still there; we just step out of the tempest of the self's machinations.

MINDFULNESS OF PHENOMENA[12]

78. And how, bhikkhus, does one in regard to phenomena abide contemplating phenomena? Here, bhikkhus, in regard to phenomena one abides contemplating phenomena in respect of the Five Hindrances. How?

Here, if sensual desire is present within, one knows, 'sensual desire is present within'. If sensual desire is not present within, one knows, 'sensual desire is not present within'. And one knows how unarisen sensual desire can arise, how arisen sensual desire can be abandoned, and how abandoned sensual desire will not arise in future.

Again, if ill-will is present … mental sluggishness and lethargy … restlessness and worry … doubt is present within, one knows, 'doubt is present within'. If doubt is not present within, one knows, 'doubt is not present within'. And one knows how unarisen doubt can arise, how arisen doubt can be abandoned,

and how abandoned doubt will not arise in future.

In this way, in regard to phenomena one abides contemplating phenomena internally, or one abides contemplating phenomena externally, or one abides contemplating phenomena both internally and externally. One abides contemplating the nature of arising in phenomena, or one abides contemplating the nature of passing away in phenomena, or one abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in phenomena. Or mindfulness that 'there are phenomena' is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and right mindfulness. One abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world (M.I,60)

Through attentively observing the wide spectrum of mental conditions arising and ceasing in the mind, we may observe certain recurring patterns. For example, some conditions cloud or distract the mind, while others tend to energize or brighten it. One particular set of conditions is the Five Hindrances, mental phenomena which 'hinder' the full development of the mind's potential.

The meditation process is not always a smooth ride to peace. In practical terms, we begin to see a whole range of selfish expressions which obstruct the natural calm and clarity of the heart/mind. In essence, though, they are really the nourishment or fertilizer for spiritual insight. That is, each of these 'hindrances' is an expression of our grasping at selfhood. Rather than simply trying to get rid of them, the way to liberation is to discover how to release our grasping by exploring the causal roots of these self-expressions. Thus hindrances, obstacles, and problems challenge us to look deeper into the sources of self-grasping, in order to release increasingly subtler levels of self-identity. Hopefully, of course, we don't need to face all these 'hindrances' at once. Usually they come up at different times and with varying degrees of intensity. With right effort and perseverance we gradually develop the wisdom to handle such

difficulties more skilfully.

79. Again, bhikkhus, in regard to phenomena one abides contemplating phenomena in respect of the Seven Factors of Awakening. How?

Here, bhikkhus, if the awakening factor of mindfulness is present within, one knows, 'the awakening factor of mindfulness is present within'. If the awakening factor of mindfulness is not present within, one knows, 'the awakening factor of mindfulness is not present within'. And one knows how the unarisen awakening factor of mindfulness comes to arise, and how it comes to full development.

Likewise, if the awakening factor of investigation-of-*dhamma* ... energy ... joy ... tranquillity ... concentration ... equanimity is present within, one knows, 'the awakening factor of equanimity is present within'. If the awakening factor of equanimity is not present within, one knows, 'the awakening factor of equanimity is not present within'. And one knows how the unarisen awakening factor of equanimity comes to arise, and how it comes to full development.

In this way, in regard to phenomena one abides contemplating phenomena internally, or one abides contemplating phenomena externally, or one abides contemplating phenomena both internally and externally. One abides contemplating the nature of arising in phenomena, or one abides contemplating the nature of passing away in phenomena, or one abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in phenomena. Or mindfulness that 'there are phenomena' is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and right mindfulness. One abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. (M.I,61)

Another group of special qualities is the seven factors conducive to realizing awakening. These qualities are not only positive spiritual

conditions, but create a balance that is conducive to spiritual endeavour. The three energizing qualities of investigation-of-*dhamma*, energy and joy must be balanced with the three calming qualities of tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. Energy relates to inspiration, earnestness and perseverance, but can overcharge as restlessness and ambitiousness. Calmness conduces to serenity and peace, but can slip into dullness and apathy. With mindfulness watching over them, energy balances with concentration, joy balances with equanimity, and investigation-of-*dhamma* balances with tranquillity. The empowered and balanced mind is now receptive to realizing awakening.

80. a) In this, Udayi, one develops the Factors of Awakening based upon seclusion, dispassion, cessation and maturity of relinquishment — which is abundant, made great, boundless and free of ill-will. As one cultivates the Factors of Awakening in this way, craving is relinquished; with the relinquishing of craving, intentional actions (*kamma*) are relinquished; with the relinquishing of intentional actions, suffering is relinquished. (S.V,86)

b) One whose mind is rightly established in the Factors of Awakening, who, not clinging, is intent upon the giving up of grasping, free of the outflows, a bright light, realizes Nibbāna in this world. (Dhammapada 89)

The development of the Factors of Awakening is synonymous with learning to relinquish those selfish conditions which obscure the bright mind, such as craving, clinging and self-willed actions (*kamma*). We begin by observing these factors arising quite naturally in our mind, then consciously develop them as skilful mental qualities. Eventually our practice is cultivating the factors until they are boundless, that is, unbounded by the self, beyond being 'my' spiritual qualities. The unbounded, brightly shining heart/mind is

capable of realizing Nibbāna — awakening here and now.

81. Again, bhikkhus, in regard to phenomena one abides contemplating phenomena in respect of the Five Groups of Grasping. How?

Herein one knows, 'such is physical form, such its arising, such its passing away; such is feeling, such its arising, such its passing away; such is perception, such its arising, such its passing away; such are mental activities, such their arising, such their passing away; such is consciousness, such its arising, such its passing away'.

In this way, in regard to phenomena one abides contemplating phenomena internally, or one abides contemplating phenomena externally, or one abides contemplating phenomena both internally and externally. One abides contemplating the nature of arising in phenomena, or one abides contemplating the nature of passing away in phenomena, or one abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in phenomena. Or mindfulness that 'there are phenomena' is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and right mindfulness. One abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. (M.I,60)

The contemplation of phenomena also includes particular themes which the Buddha taught as helpful for realizing awakening. The theme of the Five Groups of Grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha* or *khandha* for short) is very meaningful, as basically it is these five 'groups' or personal attributes that humans grasp as being their self.

Through developing the previous exercises in mindfulness, we probably already have some experience of these aspects of self. The first *khandha*, physical form, is the body manifesting as the four elemental qualities. Feelings, the second *khandha*, are the pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling tones. Perception is the recognition of sense impressions, with major influence from memory. Mental

activities are a variety of functions directed mainly by volition or will towards selfhood, that is, wilful formation of selfhood. This also includes thinking and conceptualizing, as well as mental functions such as attention and mindfulness. Consciousness is just the basic knowing that there are sense impressions (perception cognizes them and activities analyze and interpret them).

Through development of this contemplation it may become clear that what we uncritically take to be 'my self' acting is in fact merely one or more of these physical-mental functions arising and passing away. We abide much more peacefully knowing that these are just ever-changing and impersonal functions of body/mind.

82. Physical form is like a lump of foam,
Feeling like a water bubble,
Perception is like a mirage,
Mental activities like a plantain trunk,
Consciousness is like an illusion,
So expounded the Kinsman of the Sun [the Buddha].
However one may reflect,
Or rightly examine,
It is but empty and void,
When one rightly understands. (S.III,142)

In this vivid imagery the Buddha expresses the fundamental illusory and unsubstantial nature of the five groups, which we normally take to be so real and ultimate. It is because we do not investigate clearly that we are ignorant of their true nature. Thus this contemplation is especially valuable for helping us to see through the veil of delusion, in order to live in harmony with these aspects of our being, but without distorted expectations. For example, if we are forgetful, rather than worrying excessively that we are developing some illness, we understand that the perception faculty is not working well, and that all perceptions are impermanent.

83. Again, bhikkhus, in regard to phenomena one abides contemplating phenomena in terms of the six internal and external sense-spheres. How?

Here one knows the eye, one knows forms, one knows the fetter that arises dependent on both. One also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed and how an eliminated fetter cannot arise in future.

Here one knows the ear, one knows sounds ... one knows the nose, one knows odours ... one knows the tongue, one knows tastes .... one knows the body, one knows touch ... one knows the mind, one knows mind-objects, one knows the fetter that arises dependent on both. One also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed and how an eliminated fetter cannot arise in future.

In this way, in regard to phenomena one abides contemplating phenomena internally, or one abides contemplating phenomena externally, or one abides contemplating phenomena both internally and externally. One abides contemplating the nature of arising in phenomena, or one abides contemplating the nature of passing away in phenomena, or one abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in phenomena. Or mindfulness that 'there are phenomena' is established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and right mindfulness. One abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. (M.I,61)

A very insightful area to bring mindful awareness is the senses, which we use continuously in the course of life. The senses are the means of contacting the objective world, and through them we put together a subjective interpretation of that world, to which we then relate. In the Buddha's teaching there are six senses, the five physical senses

of eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, and the aspect of the mind which functions as a sense organ. The mind, of course, only senses mind-objects, for example, thoughts. These sense impressions may then give rise to other mental activity such as memories or emotions, or sometimes to a 'fetter': this means whatever causes the mind to be bound to the sense impression, whether by attraction or repulsion.

Through awareness of this process it is possible to see just how the mind is stimulated by these various impressions, and interesting to note what reaction or fetter this may engender. And then we have some helpful guidelines for investigating the fetter, so that it does not obsess the mind and blind us from seeing clearly.

84. Friends, in dependence upon the eye and form, there is the arising of eye-consciousness, the meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling; what one feels, that one perceives; what one perceives, that one thinks about; what one thinks about, that one conceptually proliferates about. With what one conceptually proliferates as source, proliferating perceptions and deliberations[13] assail a person in regard to past, present and future forms made conscious through the eye.

Friends, in dependence upon the ear and sound ... the nose and odour ... the tongue and flavours ... the body and tangibles ... mind and mind-object, there is the arising of mind-consciousness, the meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling; what one feels, that one perceives; what one perceives, that one thinks about; what one thinks about, that one conceptually proliferates about. With what one conceptually proliferations as source, proliferating perceptions and deliberations assail a person in regard to past, present and future mind-objects made conscious through the mind. (M.I,111f)

Here one of the Buddha's eminent disciples is explaining a teaching given by the Buddha. He presents the basics of the perceptual process from sense consciousness to feeling, perception, thinking, to conceptual proliferation and perhaps further proliferations, memories, etc. This underscores the importance of developing awareness of the senses, in order to see when and how much we are actually conceptually proliferating about some sense impression. The perceptual process is also the source of many possible distortions of perception,[14] so that our thinking and proliferating can be very far from reality. Also, thinking and proliferating tend to follow a habitual pattern which settles into a fixed view. Then whatever the senses contact is interpreted in such a way as to support that view — the 'I'll see it when I believe it' syndrome.

85. On a certain occasion the Venerable Sāriputta and the Venerable Upasena were staying at Rājagaha in the Cool Grove at the Snake's Hood Cave. Now a viper had fallen onto Venerable Upasena's body. Then Venerable Upasena addressed the bhikkhus thus: 'Come, friends, place my body on a bed and take it outside, before it is scattered here just like a handful of chaff'.

Then the Venerable Sāriputta said to the Venerable Upasena, 'But we do not see any alteration in the Venerable Upasena's body or any deterioration in his senses. How is it that the Venerable Upasena says, "Come, friends, place my body on a bed and take it outside, before it is scattered here just like a handful of chaff"?'

'Indeed, friend Sāriputta, for one who thinks, "I am the eye" or "The eye is mine" ... "I am the tongue" or "The tongue is mine" ... "I am the mind" or "The mind is mine", there might be alteration of the body or deterioration in the senses. But, friend Sāriputta, it exists not for me that "I am the eye" or "The

eye is mine" ... "I am the tongue" or "The tongue is mine" ... "I am the mind" or "The mind is mine", thus why would there be alteration of the body or deterioration in the senses?'

'Thus it must be for a long time for the Venerable Upasena that I-making, mine-making and the latent tendency to conceit have been thoroughly uprooted, that it no longer exists for him that "I am the eye" or "The eye is mine" ... "I am the tongue" or "The tongue is mine" ... "I am the mind" or "The mind is mine".'

Then those bhikkhus placed Venerable Upasena's body on a bed and took it outside. And then and there the Venerable Upasena's body was scattered just like a handful of chaff. (S.IV, 40f)

Venerable Upasena had relinquished all identification with the senses as well as the body. Thus his senses and body did not respond in the same way as for someone who still identifies with them. And although this is the response of a fully awakened being, each one of us can respond in new ways to the body when we reduce our identification with it. Our body and the senses mainly react in habitual ways; because of our identification with them, they express our self-identity. How often have we heard people ramble on about their personal ailment as if they would not exist without it?

Try this exercise: rather than deliberately directing the body, relate to it as a sense organ and observe the various sensations which it receives. See if you can allow the body to just receive these sensations, rather than directing the response to them. How does the body respond when left on its own? And, if you notice some noteworthy sensation, see if you can observe what aspect of your self it is expressing.

RIGHT CONCENTRATION

86. Endowed with this body of moral conduct, with this noble restraint of the senses, with this noble mindfulness and clear awareness, and with this noble contentment, he then resorts to a secluded place to sit and sleep. He establishes himself at the foot of a remote tree, in a mountain cave or grotto, a cemetery, a forest, or in the open air on a pile of straw. Then, having returned from the alms-round and taken his meal, he sits down cross-legged, holding his body upright, and raises up mindfulness before him. (D.I,71)

Removing ourselves from our usual familiar environment provides an opportunity to observe our ordinary habits and attachments with greater clarity, since we are not completely enveloped in our automatically self-reactive world. Seclusion (*viveka*) should not, however, be an end in itself. Problems may appear to cease if we are removed from them, but the source of problems is in our own mind, and that is with us wherever we go. Nevertheless, seclusion can be useful for giving us some reflective space to see more clearly how problems are created by the unwise mind. Seclusion has three aspects: physical seclusion, mental seclusion (through meditation exercises) and seclusion from the basis of rebirth (equivalent to awakening).

87. When the storm-clouds thunder in the sky and the fly-ways of the birds are awash with torrential rains, the bhikkhu who has entered a cave meditates — no greater pleasure than this can be found.

When, on the flower-shrouded bank of a river, bedecked with various woodland plants, he sits joyfully meditating — no greater pleasure than this can be found.

When, at night in a lonely grove, with rain pouring down and the fanged and tusked animals roaring, the bhikkhu who has entered a cave meditates — no greater pleasure than this can

be found. (Theragāthā 522-4)

Nature provides ideal places for developing meditation. The natural environment does not assault the senses like the busy urban world, where we are bombarded by an onslaught of competing sense impressions. Natural sights, sounds and scents are soothing and relaxing, and thus are a very beneficial aid to tranquillity of heart/mind. As the mind grows calmer, one gradually becomes aware of the incredible diversity and subtle beauty of the natural world, which can also provide an inviting source of insight into the universal themes of change and impersonality.

88. Giving up worldly desires, he abides with a mind freed from worldly desires, his mind is cleansed of them. Giving up ill-will and hatred ... friendly and compassionate to all living beings, his mind is cleansed of ill-will and hatred. Giving up mental sluggishness and lethargy ... perceiving light, mindful and clearly knowing, his mind is cleansed of mental sluggishness and lethargy. Giving up restlessness and worry ... with an inwardly calm heart, his mind is cleansed of restlessness and worry. Giving up doubt, he abides having overcome doubt, without uncertainty as to wholesome things, his mind is cleansed of doubt.

...

When he sees that these five hindrances have been given up, delight arises, greatly delighted, joy arises, joyful, his body is calmed, with a calm body he feels happiness, with happiness his mind is concentrated.

Being thus aloof from sensuality, aloof from unskilful conditions, he enters and abides in the first absorption, which is accompanied by thinking and reflection, and with joy and happiness born of seclusion. And with this joy and happiness

born of seclusion, he fills, suffuses, overflows and pervades his entire body so that there is no part which is not untouched by this joy and happiness born of seclusion ...

Again, with the cessation of thinking and reflection, he enters and abides in the second absorption, inwardly tranquillized, one-pointed, without thinking and reflection, and with joy and happiness born of concentration. And with this joy and happiness born of concentration, he fills, suffuses, overflows and pervades his entire body so that there is no part which is not untouched by this joy and happiness born of concentration ...

Again, with the fading out of joy he abides with equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending, experiencing bodily pleasure; he enters and abides in the third absorption, of which the noble ones say, 'Being equanimous and mindful is a pleasurable abiding'. And with this [bodily] pleasure without joy, he fills, suffuses, overflows and pervades his entire body so that there is no part which is not untouched by this [bodily] pleasure without joy ...

Again, with the giving up of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of ease and dis-ease, he enters and abides in the fourth absorption, which is neither painful nor pleasant, with mindfulness purified by equanimity. And he sits suffusing his body with the mind purified and cleansed, so that there is no part which is not untouched by this purified and cleansed mind. (D.I,71f)

The initial emphasis in Calm Meditation is to focus attention on a meditation object. Through continuously focusing (and not giving special attention to the usual distractions), the mind gradually becomes more settled on, centred on and unified with the meditation object, and in consequence more tranquil. With some degree of perseverance (how long depends upon individual character and

one's earnestness), most people can experience a quietening down of the usual incessant internal dialogue. And for a few people, strong concentration supported by gladness, delight and joy can induce a state of deep focused absorption called *jhāna*, which can be refined in these four successive degrees.

THE FOUR DIVINE ABIDINGS

Cultivation of the Divine Abidings (friendliness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity) is one of the ways to connect with the spiritual heart and in the process create a more emotionally integrated spiritual life. An integrated heart/mind deepens and enriches meditation experience, pervading all levels of our being. We begin by expressing these qualities towards ourselves until they overflow into the world around us. These four 'Abidings' are not just noble ideals to live up to, but experiences to be embodied so that we become their living personification. They are called 'divine' because experiencing them fully is an exalted, godlike experience. They are four of the traditional forty meditation subjects, friendliness being the second most widely practised subject after mindfulness of breathing.

89. a) Here one, with mind of friendliness, continuously pervades one direction, then the second, the third and the fourth; so above, below, across, in all directions, everywhere, throughout the whole world with mind of friendliness — abundant, made great, boundless, free of hate and ill-will. (D.III,223)

b) Not by hatred does hatred ever cease —
only through non-hate does it cease.
This is an eternal principle. (Dhammapada 5)

The development of friendliness (*mettā*), sometimes translated as 'loving-kindness', progresses through various stages in much the same way as an evolving friendship gradually deepens. The practice

starts with learning to be more friendly towards those aspects of ourselves to which we are averse or resistant. This doesn't mean that we have to like them, but at least we can be less negative and more hospitable towards them. Initially this may mean relating to experiences which are unpleasant with an attitude of non-contention or peaceful co-existence. We can then progress to a more non-reactive receptiveness, and with continued development we can actively befriend the so-called unpleasant experiences, which alters the definitions of what is pleasant and unpleasant — if we are more friendly to disagreeable experiences, they are not so disagreeable anymore.

Judging some personal trait as bad or wrong and then turning it into an object of aversion or rejection is just another conditioned self-activity, albeit sometimes reinforced by society. Similarly to developing a deep friendship, the practice of *mettā* allows us to be less judgemental of apparent faults, and at the same time to come closer to the seemingly unpleasant aspects of ourselves and see them more clearly for what they are — just self-defined tendencies. Through befriending the negativity in our own minds, we can more naturally respond with friendliness to the negativity we experience in others. With continued practice we can develop an expansive attitude of non-judgemental openness or 'unconditional love' towards ourselves and all beings.

90. Here one, with mind of compassion, continuously pervades one direction, then the second, the third and the fourth; so above, below, across, in all directions, everywhere, throughout the whole world with mind of compassion — abundant, made great, boundless, free of hate and ill-will. (D.III, 223)

Compassion starts with ourselves. The word literally means 'suffering with'. Thus we learn to be more open and receptive to our own suffering. Often compassion is merely pity, an unkind

value judgement: 'noble me being so sensitive as to feel sorry for miserable you'. However, when we have genuinely experienced our own suffering, we can touch another's suffering as our own — we are together in suffering. The barriers between human beings dissolve and we are united in our common human suffering. It is no longer 'your' suffering or 'my' suffering, but 'human' suffering, expressing itself through different people at different times.

91. Here one, with mind of empathetic joy, continuously pervades one direction, then the second, the third and the fourth; so above, below, across, in all directions, everywhere, throughout the whole world with mind of empathetic joy — abundant, made great, boundless, free of hate and ill-will. (D.III, 223)

Empathetic joy means rejoicing wholeheartedly in the good fortune and well-being of ourselves and others. We begin by allowing ourselves to fully appreciate the joy and happiness which are natural aspects of the human experience, rather than feeling guilty about feeling good or envying others' well-being. This is not simply indulging in pleasant feelings in order to escape from pain, but rather a recognition and appreciation of the pleasant feelings, happiness and well-being that arise in the course of human existence and give life its special wonder.

In practical terms, empathetic joy helps to counter the emotions of envy and jealousy. Through heartfelt appreciation of other people's well-being, we can rejoice in and share that well-being, just as if it was our own — indeed, now it is.

92. Here one, with mind of equanimity, continuously pervades one direction, then the second, the third and the fourth; so above, below, across, in all directions, everywhere, throughout the whole world with mind of equanimity — abundant, made

great, boundless, free of hate and ill-will. (D.III, 223)

Equanimity or even-mindedness is the most refined of the Divine Abidings. While the other three are active involvement with certain experiences, equanimity is being involved with, but not activated by, joy or pain. Unless the other Divine Abidings have been thoroughly developed beforehand, indifference may be mistaken for equanimity. Indifference, though, is a turning away or shutting down of involvement, whereas equanimity is open and sensitive, yet calm and settled receptiveness to the entirety of experience.

Equanimity arises as a result of comprehending the principle of ethical causality. Though at one level some experiences are indeed tragic, painful or disagreeable, at another level they are occurring in accordance with the principle of ethical causality. Thus we can abide in equanimity, bearing with the unpleasant feelings and possibly able to transform them into the powerful spiritual insight of impersonality.

93. When I went forth from the house to the houseless state, I was not aware of having any ignoble hate-ridden intention.

But I have been aware of love, infinite, well-developed, practised in due order, as taught by the Buddha.

I am a friend to all, comrade to all, sympathetic to all beings, and I develop a mind full of love, always delighting in non-harming. (Theragāthā 645, 647, 648; K.R. Norman translation, PEBM, p. 70.)

Here one of the Buddha's awakened disciples expresses his loving attitude towards all beings. An intention of non-harming is one of the aspects of right aspiration in the Noble Eightfold Path, and thus is a fundamental attribute of spiritual practice. The development of 'love, infinite' (*mettā*) to an advanced degree gives rise to the exceptional experience that every living being is one's friend; that one has no enemies.

94. And what kind of concentration meditation, bhikkhus, if developed and made abundant, conduces to the destruction of the outflows?

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides observing the rise and fall of the five groups of grasping, 'This is physical form, this is the arising of physical form, this is the passing away of physical form; this is feeling. ... perception ... mental activities ... ; this is consciousness, this is the arising of consciousness, this is the passing away of consciousness.

This, bhikkhus, is concentration meditation, developed and made abundant which conduces to the destruction of the outflows. (A.II,45)

Concentration is not only developed so as to experience exceptionally pleasant states of mind; its main purpose is to provide a mental state conducive to being able to contemplate the nature of reality, in order to awaken to the truth of things. Contemplating the five groups of grasping was one of the subjects for developing mindfulness. Now, with increased concentration, awareness can penetrate very deeply into their true nature as continually arising and ceasing. A truly profound insight into this truth can result in the 'destruction of the outflows', which is the equivalent of full awakening. This is the coming together of Calm and Insight Meditation, strong concentration together with deep mindful insight into reality.

THEMES FOR INSIGHT MEDITATION

When we have some experience of right mindfulness and right concentration, the development of meditation is the wise weaving together of Calm and Insight Meditation. With increased awareness of the Factors of Awakening we can readily observe what degree of

tranquillity or concentration there is in the mind. Is the mind tranquil enough, or is it being distracted by various hindrances or spun off into conceptual proliferation? Perhaps it is beneficial to develop the concentration exercises of Calm Meditation for some time. If the mind does seem to be tranquil, clear and alert, then perhaps it is beneficial to develop increased awareness of some of the Attendings with Mindfulness. Alternatively, some of the following themes may be helpful for increasing awareness of the Three Characteristics or other relevant topics leading to a deepening of wisdom.

95. All conditioned things are impermanent:
All conditioned things are unsatisfactory;
All things are not-self.
When, with full realization, one understands this,
One turns away from suffering —
This is the path to purity. (Dhammapada 277-9)

Insight Meditation (*vipassanā*) is the direct realization of the true nature of reality. It is a powerfully transforming vision of things as they really are, free from the distorting influence of our self-centred perceptions. It exposes the truth of things as summarized by the Three Characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and impersonality. These three characteristics of reality are experienced directly as a result of developing Insight Meditation, and are also themes to be thoroughly investigated in order to uproot ignorance from every corner of our life. The more deeply we are able to experience the truth of these fundamental characteristics, the more radically our being re-aligns with the profound peace of things as they really are.

IMPERMANENCE

96. Impermanent, alas, are all conditioned things;

Their nature is to arise and pass.
They come into existence, then they cease.
Their allaying, their calming, is peace. (S.II,192)

Intellectually we all know that things are always changing, but habitually we act to try to hold on to them. The nature of everything is to arise and pass; however, the truth of impermanence goes against virtually everything we want to believe. How often must we see change before we really comprehend it? Clearly and directly seeing the truth of impermanence allows us to relax. We no longer need to squander our energies in railing against the inevitability of change. We realize that the natural ceasing of things is actually extraordinarily calming and ineffably peaceful.

97. It would be better for an untaught, ordinary person to regard this body — formed of the four elemental qualities — as self, rather than the mind. Why? Because this body is seen to last for a year, two years, three years ... a hundred years or more. But that which is called 'thought' or 'mind' or 'consciousness' arises as one thing and ceases as something else, by day or by night. It is just like a monkey swinging through the forest grabbing a branch, letting it go and grabbing another. (S.II,94)

The Buddha challenges us to think in a different way. Most of us would be willing to accept that the body is not our true self, since we can observe its constant changes. But how many of us would be willing to say the same about our mind or consciousness? Because the mind moves so fast it appears to have a stable continuity to it, just as we see a constant flow of water as a stream. Through the development of Calm Meditation the mental processes slow down, so that we can observe the monkey-mind grabbing a thought, letting it go and grabbing another, following its own wild nature. This understanding gives us the possibility of freeing ourselves from that thought-grabbing tendency and being able to peacefully

observe and know the natural flow of mental processes.

98. Just as in summer when the sky is clear and without cloud, the sun, ascending into the heavens, expels all darkness and shines forth bright and brilliant, even so the awareness of impermanence, if developed and practised, exhausts all desire for sensuality, exhausts all desire for material form, exhausts all desire for becoming, exhausts all ignorance and removes all 'I am' conceit. (S.III,156)

Insight into impermanence, blazing forth like the summer sun, can have a profound effect upon our lives. As a living experience, the truth of impermanence bursts forth as awareness of uncertainty, instability, unreliability, undependability, insecurity. This realization completely undermines the basis for so much of our activity, the endless seeking of security from the ever-changing world. When we see that we are really chasing phantoms, we stop: we stop chasing the phantom of sensuality, the phantom of material form, the phantom of further becoming. When we see clearly that there is no 'thing' we can really identify with as ours, this wisdom uproots the concept of a permanent 'I'.

99. Observing the impermanence, the changing nature, the fading and the ending of physical form, of feelings, of perceptions, of mental activities and of consciousness, one knows: 'Now as well as formerly, physical form, feelings, perceptions, mental activities and consciousness are impermanent, unsatisfactory and subject to change'. So seeing in this way — as it really is, by perfect realization — one abandons sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and distress. Leaving these, one is untroubled; untroubled, one abides in well-being; abiding in well-being, one is called 'truly calmed'. (S.III,43)

As an aid to insightful investigation, the Buddha gave the reflection that human beings are composed of five particular components: physical body, feelings, perceptions, mental activities and consciousness — the five groups of grasping (text 81). Instead of trying to penetrate the truth of the way things are through the subjectively prejudiced view of 'myself', 'my body', 'my mind', etc., we can objectively investigate the nature of the five groups. With less of a personal investment in seeing what we want to see, we are able to see the way things are much more honestly and accurately. Clear and honest seeing gives us irrefutable insight into the constant instability of these aspects of our apparently stable self. This in turn frees us from the grief and suffering caused by our frustrated attempts to cling to the illusion of a stable self — we understand how useless this really is, and so can abide in untroubled, truly calmed well-being.

100. While seated in my hut, spiritual anxiety arose in me — 'I have followed the wrong path! I have come under the power of craving!

My life is insignificant, old age and sickness are crushing it. There is no time to be negligent before this body is destroyed.'

Contemplating the rising and passing away of the aspects of a human being (*khandha*) as they really are — with liberated mind I rose to my feet. The Buddha's teaching has been accomplished. (Therīgāthā 94-6)

One of the Buddha's nun disciples was deeply stirred by the perception of creeping old age and sickness. It is often only when we are confronted with a life crisis that our spiritual awareness can be awakened. If our mind is trained in contemplation, perhaps we can turn this crisis into a liberating experience of insight into ultimate truth. This can happen very suddenly!

101. So transient is everything, bhikkhus; so unstable is everything, bhikkhus; so uncomforting is everything, bhikkhus; so much so that it is suitable for you to be disenchanted with all conditioned things, to be dispassionate towards them, to be liberated from them. (S.II,191)

Through clearly seeing the ultimate truth of impermanence, we can become disenchanted with our frantic and illusory search for security in things which are constantly changing; we turn away — and are liberated. We awaken to the continuously emerging wonder of life, flowing with its ups and downs and rejoicing in its ever-joyful mystery. It is not that life changes — change is life.

Although most of us are frightened of change and resist it because we do not know what it will bring, the freedom and joy resulting from opening to the truth of change far surpass the false comfort of holding on to hopes and dreams of security. Change is life. Change is the wonder of life.

DUKKHA

Dukkha is one of the universal characteristics of all conditioned things. The word has a variety of meanings depending on the context, and is thus hard to translate by any one English word. Its particularized meanings, i.e., pain, suffering, dis-ease, discontent, etc., are in effect symptomatic expressions of its universal meaning, i.e., unsatisfactoriness, incompleteness, imperfection, etc.

102. a) Now, as formerly, I just point out *dukkha* and its cessation. (M.I,251)

b) Bhikkhus, develop concentration. Concentrated, a bhikkhu clearly knows things as they really are. And what does he

clearly know as they really are?

'This is *dukkha*', he clearly knows as it really is. 'This is the origin of *dukkha*', he clearly knows as it really is. 'This is the cessation of *dukkha*', he clearly knows as it really is. 'This is the path to the cessation of *dukkha*', he clearly knows as it really is. (S.V,414)

At its most succinct, the Buddha's teaching is concerned with fully realizing the nature of *dukkha* and experiencing its cessation in Nibbāna. That is, through fully comprehending the imperfection of human existence, we are liberated from the anguish of wanting life to be other than the way it actually is. For some people it is a great relief to acknowledge *dukkha*. Suddenly they can open to vast areas of life which they previously ignored or denied, since any recognition of suffering is often taken as a failure. But if we are blind to this fundamental reality of life, how can we understand what life is really about?

Sometimes this aspect of the Buddha's teaching, formally called the Four Noble Truths, is expressed in the form of a doctor's diagnosis: observing the symptoms of *dukkha*, determining its cause, indicating its cure by removal of the cause and prescribing a method of treatment as the remedy. Thus we need to recognize the real nature of *dukkha* honestly in order to determine its cause, and then to undertake a course of spiritual treatment in order to facilitate the removal of the cause. In this way we can arrive at the cure of ultimate well-being by realizing the truth of *dukkha* and its cessation.

103. a) There are three kinds of *dukkha*: *dukkha* as pain, *dukkha* as inherent in conditions and *dukkha* due to change. (S.V,56; D.III,216)

b) And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of *dukkha*? Birth is

***dukkha*, ageing is *dukkha*, death is *dukkha*; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and distress are *dukkha*; association with the disliked is *dukkha*; separation from the liked is *dukkha*; not getting what one wants is *dukkha*; in short, the five groups of grasping are *dukkha*.** (D.II,305)

Dukkha manifests in many ways. Most of us know the painful *dukkha* of such things as ageing, death, sorrow, distress, etc. Some of us recognize the *dukkha* caused by change, for example, separation from what we like or meeting what we dislike. Few of us realize, however, that, *dukkha* is inherent as incompleteness in all that is conditioned or constructed, including the very source of our sense of self, the five *khandhas*. We fail to see that we are really just a collection of ever-changing, causally-conditioned processes, and this is always incomplete and unsatisfying.

104. And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the origin of *dukkha*? It is that thirst which gives rise to again-becoming, connected with delight and lust, finding delight in this here and that there; that is, thirst for sense pleasures, thirst for existence and thirst for non-existence. And where, bhikkhus, does this thirst arise and settle? Wherever in the world there is anything which is agreeable and pleasant, there this thirst arises and settles. (D.II,308)

Thirst, or 'craving' as it is sometimes translated, is a very powerful force, and as such it is designated as the chief cause of *dukkha*, but it is not the first or only cause. It is only the most active force in a continuum of causally-connected factors. Thus thirst arises from what is 'agreeable and pleasant' or, most usually, from feelings. A pleasant feeling arises and we develop a thirst for it, but then it changes and we experience the *dukkha* of disappointment. Ultimately this comes down to our grasping at a permanent self. Just as our body is sustained by its thirst for nutriment, so the sense

of a permanent self is sustained through the activity of three kinds of thirst: thirst for sense pleasures, thirst for existence and thirst for non-existence.

105. a) And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of *dukkha*? It is that complete fading and cessation of this thirst, its relinquishing, giving up, release and renouncing. (D.II,310)

b) Bhikkhus, when one abides contemplating the danger in things that can be grasped, thirst ceases. (S.II, 85)

Once we recognize the truth of *dukkha*, we can rejoice in the fact that it can cease when its origin in thirst is given up. In practice this may not be quite as easy as it first appears, as that thirst is intrinsic to selfhood. We cannot get rid of thirst directly (as that would be thirst for non-existence), but we are released from its power through clearly seeing the danger or detrimental effects of its feeding the self-process. Thus we clearly understand that feelings arise, but they do not need to trigger thirst; they are merely transient feelings.

106. And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path, that is: right understanding, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. (D.II,313)

The Buddha outlined a definite path of spiritual practice which we can follow to achieve the cessation of *dukkha*. This path comprises eight factors, beginning with right understanding, which means clearly understanding the Four Noble Truths of *dukkha*, its origin, its cessation and the path. With the support of morality and meditation this understanding can become ever deeper, so that we can speak of experiential wisdom. Of course, it takes some degree of courage and tenacity to penetrate the shell of resistance we have created

around *dukkha*. However, as these eight factors develop together they provide the tools to pierce this shell, and realization dawns: resisting is grasping; without holding there is only *dukkha* naturally arising and passing away, and no one who suffers.

107. a) I say that *dukkha* ripens as either confusion or search. (A.III,416)

b) Just as, when rain pours down upon a hilltop, the water runs with the slope filling the clefts, the gullies and the creeks; these, being filled, fill the streams ... the rivers ... the great ocean. In the same way ignorance is a condition for formative activities, formative activities are a condition for consciousness ... *dukkha* is a condition for trust, trust is a condition for gladness, gladness is a condition for joy, joy is a condition for tranquillity, tranquillity is a condition for happiness ... for concentration ... for knowledge and vision of things as they really are ... disenchantment ... dispassion ... liberation, and liberation is a condition for knowledge of the ending of the outflows of selfhood. (S.II,32)

Dukkha is the stimulus for spiritual practice because it shakes us out of our complacency. Whether we realize it or not, most of our time is spent in an astonishing variety of ways of trying to evade *dukkha*, and most people usually wander through life reasonably comfortably in this way until they are tripped up by suffering. However, when *dukkha* invades our life, we have to face it in order to find a solution, and for discerning people the only real solution is a spiritual one. Thus they come to have trust in a spiritual teaching, which gives rise to many further positive qualities such as gladness, joy, tranquillity and happiness. These become a basis for Calm and Insight Meditation, which bear the fruit of letting go and liberation. Thus the seed of *dukkha* can bear the fruit of liberation.

IMPERSONALITY

108. Bhikkhus, physical form is not-self. If, bhikkhus, physical form were self, it would not lead to affliction, and it could be obtained of physical form that 'my physical form may be like this; my physical form may not be like this'. But because physical form is not-self, it leads to affliction, and one cannot obtain of physical form that 'my physical form may be like this; my physical form may not be like this'.

Feelings are not-self ... perceptions are not-self ... mental activities are not-self ... consciousness is not-self. If consciousness were self, it would not lead to affliction, and it could be obtained of consciousness that 'my consciousness may be like this; my consciousness may not be like this'. But because consciousness is not-self, it leads to affliction, and one cannot obtain of consciousness that 'my consciousness may be like this; my consciousness may not be like this'. (S.III,66f)

We all know (to some degree) that our body-mind does not always do what we want. However, do we ever follow this investigation far enough to find out who is really in control? From carefully observing body-mind, a clearer insight into their true nature gradually begins to dawn. While there is certainly an abiding 'sense of self' to which we can relate and refer, on closer investigation we see that the continuity of an abiding selfhood is more assumption than fact. And while we do have some degree of control over certain aspects of body and mind, when we look at the bigger picture we also see numerous areas where body-mind just follow their own agendas. For example, we can force the body to eat, but we are not able to control how food is digested. Or, while we can call to mind a certain memory, we often cannot control the successive associations which it triggers off. So if body-mind is really 'my self', why can't I always control 'my self'?

109. 'What do you think, bhikkhus, is physical form permanent or impermanent?'
'Impermanent, venerable sir.'
'Is what is impermanent painful or pleasant?'
'Painful, venerable sir.'
'Is what is impermanent, painful and subject to change suitable to be regarded as: "This is mine, this I am, this is my self"?'
'No, venerable sir.'
'Are feelings ... perceptions ... mental activities ... consciousness permanent or impermanent?'
'Impermanent, venerable sir.'
'Is what is impermanent painful or pleasant?'
'Painful, venerable sir.'
'Is what is impermanent, painful and subject to change suitable to be regarded as: "This is mine, this I am, this is my self"?'
'No, venerable sir.'
'Therefore, bhikkhus, any form ... feeling ... perceptions ... activities ... consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, coarse or subtle, base or excellent, distant or near, all should be seen as it truly is by right understanding as: "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self".' (S.III,67f)

To most people a self is something inherently stable and pleasant. Yet here the Buddha points out that what we normally take to be our self (the five groups of body and mind) is not actually so stable, completely satisfying or comfortable as it appears. So is it sensible to regard these ephemeral, disappointing things as our real self? It would be more reasonable to see them as they really are, and not be disappointed or frustrated when they do not live up to our expectations.

110. ***The wandering ascetic Vacchagotta visited the Revered One.***

'How is it, master Gotama, does self exist?' When this was said the Revered One was silent. 'But then, master Gotama, does self not exist?' For a second time the Revered One was silent. Then the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta got up from his seat and went away. Now, not long after he had gone, the Venerable Ānanda asked the Revered One, 'How is it, sir, that when the Revered One was asked a question by the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta, he did not answer?'

'If, Ānanda, when asked by the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta, "Does self exist?", I had replied, "Self exists", would that have been in conformity with the understanding that all things are not-self? If, when asked by the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta, "Does self not exist?", I had replied, "Self does not exist", then, Ānanda, the bewildered Vacchagotta would be even more bewildered, thinking: "Formerly, I surely had a self, but now I have not!"' (S.IV,400ff.)

The understanding of impersonality or not-self is quite a subtle insight, and approaching it only with rational thought can be very confusing. The Buddha never said, 'There is no self'. This would be holding to a fixed ultimate position which would be out of harmony with most people's conventional understanding of selfhood; that is, a self 'exists' to the degree to which we grasp or identify with aspects of our being. Rather, the Buddha offers the meditative reflection that, 'All things are not-self'; that is, he advises to look again and see clearly. Thus he emphasized the practice of meditation in order to calm conceptual thought and arrive at a direct realization of this truth. Through carefully observing body-mind with open inquiry, one can awaken directly to the truth of impersonality. Rather than only observing the areas of experience which seem to be under our control, we allow a non-judgemental awareness, free of assumptions, expectations and preconceptions, to reveal the true nature of experience as it really is. Impersonality is one of the

fundamental characteristics of all phenomena. All we need to do is wake up to its reality.

111. 'I am' is an imagining; 'I am this' is an imagining; 'I will be' is an imagining. When the sage has gone beyond all imaginings, he is called 'at peace'. The sage at peace is not born, does not age, is not agitated, is not obstructed. He has nothing of which to be born. Not being born, how could he age? Not ageing, how could he die? Not dying, how could he be agitated? Not being agitated, how could he be obstructed? (M.III,246; abridged)

Most people usually assume that there is a permanent abiding entity called the 'self' or 'soul'. Not only have we been conditioned to believe in it, and not only does all our socialization support it, but in Buddhist language we are also born with a 'latent tendency to conceit' or selfhood. However, the Buddha understood that this belief is actually just 'an imagining', since it is really an unconfirmed assumption, based on an unclear awareness of the true nature of reality. The reflection on not-self encourages us to look more clearly at this imagined assumption, so that through direct seeing we can be freed from this illusion and abide at peace with the truth of not-self. No more false imaginings (of a permanently-abiding self) are born, and therefore there is no more imagined 'I' to face ageing or death.

112. '"Empty world, empty world" is said, sir. In what respect is it said "empty world"?' 'It is because of being empty of a permanent-abiding self, or of the nature of a permanent-abiding self, that it is said "empty world"'. (S.IV,54)

Most of us usually relate to the world from a very personal, subjective position. At its extreme this is seeing the world as we want to see it or are conditioned to see it, rather than as it really is. The 'real world' is just as it is, independent of all of our subjective perceptions

and interpretations. Waking up to this 'real world' is the realization of not-self or impersonality. This may not sound very inspiring, but when the world is empty of a self-entity, it is full of the selfless wonder of the unageing, undying, unconditioned.

CONDITIONAL CAUSALITY

113. a) The Awakened One has told the cause of causally-arisen things; and what brings their cessation too. Such is the teaching of the Great Sage. (Vin.I,40)

b) Thus when this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases. (S.II,28)

The insight which led to the Buddha's complete awakening was the penetrating realization of the causally conditioned nature of all phenomena (except Nibbāna). While previous sages posited an eternally-abiding entity, the Buddha identified the coming together and dissolution of various psycho-physical processes, which only appear to be constant. This was a profound breakthrough to a completely new way of seeing reality. For those who were ready for it, object-bound human consciousness was now expanded to awareness of process consciousness,

One of the Buddha's first disciples, Venerable Assaji, expressed the essence of the Buddha's Teaching in the first short verse above, which resulted in Venerable Sāriputta's realizing the first stage of awakening.

114. And what, bhikkhus, is conditional causality? With ignorance as condition, formative (mental) activities come to be; with formative activities as condition, consciousness ... name-and-form ... the sixfold sense bases ... contact ... feeling ... thirst ... grasping ... coming-into-existence ... birth ... with

birth as condition, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and distress come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This, bhikkhus, is called conditional causality.

But with the complete, dispassionate cessation of ignorance comes cessation of formative activities; with the cessation of formative activities, cessation of consciousness ... Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. (S.II,1-2)

The teaching on conditional causality was formally presented by the Buddha in a twelve-linked sequence. This is a detailed explanation of the causal connections which generate human suffering, and also gives the keys to the cessation of suffering. The sequence begins with ignorance as the condition for formative activities, the dispositions or habit patterns produced by the continuity of intentional actions. The formative activities/habit patterns then condition our particular type of consciousness (see text 127a)), which conditions a basis in name-and-form, that is, mental qualities and materiality, and the sixfold sense bases (the five physical senses plus the mind). The sixfold sense bases condition the arising of (sense) contact, which conditions feeling, and if the feeling is strong enough it conditions thirst, grasping, a coming-into-existence and birth of identity, 'I am'. However, since this subject is in actuality only a constructed phenomenon, it also decays and dies, with the attendant sorrow, lamentation, pain, etc. Although the sequence ends on this rather unpleasant note, the important part is that once this process is understood, we then have the knowledge to uproot it through the arising of wisdom in place of ignorance, or to release it through seeing the danger in grasping. And thus the entire sequence comes to cessation and there is the ending of the 'whole mass of suffering'.

115. Neither self-made is this puppet,

Nor made by another is this misfortune.
Dependent on a cause it comes to be;
By dissolution of the cause it fades away.
Just as a seed sown in a field will sprout
Due to touch of earth and damp, these two;
Likewise the (personality) groups, elements and senses —
Dependent on a cause they come to be;
By dissolution of the cause they fade away. (S.I,134)

This exceptional insight provides a completely new way to view phenomena which we are able to see for ourselves. Although it removes the concept of a creator, it still leaves creation as a complex causally-conditioned reality. We have the possibility to influence this creation through clearly understanding the fundamental causal principles to which we are all subject. Thus through wise insight we can become the creators of our own reality, liberated from delusion.

116. 'Venerable sir, who then grasps?'

'Not a proper question', the Revered One replied. 'I do not say "One grasps". ... Since I do not speak thus, you should ask, "Venerable sir, what is the cause of grasping?", this is a proper question. For this the proper explanation is: "With thirst as cause, grasping arises; with grasping as cause, coming-into-existence arises... Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering."' (S.II,14 abridged)

Most people, like the questioner here, naturally assume that there is some 'one' who is acting, speaking or thinking. However, this is really a false, not carefully considered assumption. Since the Buddha was fully awakened to conditional causality, where others saw a self, he saw causal processes. If we are continually distracted by the assumption of a self acting, we fail to investigate any further and

are unable to discover the true causal conditions behind the play of experience. Thus we keep acting out our personalized suffering, without realizing any final resolution.

117. Kaccāna, the world usually depends upon the duality of 'existence' and 'non- existence'. But for those who see, with perfect realization, the truth of the arising of the world, there is not for them any 'non-existence' in the world. And for those who see, with perfect realization, the truth of the passing away of the world, there is not for them any 'existence' in the world.

Kaccāna, this world is mostly blinded by attachment, grasping and adherence. But those who do not obtain or take hold of that attachment and grasping, that obstinacy, adherence and latent tendency, do not take a stand upon 'my self'.[15] They have no doubt or uncertainty that what arises is only *dukkha* arising, what ceases is only *dukkha* ceasing, and their knowledge is independent of others. In this way, Kaccāna, there is right view.

'All exists' is one extreme; 'All does not exist' is the second extreme. Not going to either extreme, the Tathāgata expounds a teaching in the middle: With ignorance as condition, formative activities come to be; with formative activities as condition, consciousness ... Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. (S.II,17, abridged)

The existence view is the belief in eternalism or continued existence after death. The non-existence view is the belief in annihilationism/ materialism, or the end of existence at death. Philosophers and ordinary people have debated each of these two views throughout history. But when we are aware of the constantly-changing, conditioning processes underpinning reality, we do not affirm either extreme position. At the source of these views is the belief in a self which either lives eternally or is annihilated at death. However,

after seeing the continuous arising and passing of phenomena, and especially the causally-conditioned nature of selfhood, such views are without meaning. Who/what lives or dies?

118. Chieftain, for one who truly sees the pure and simple arising of phenomena and the pure and simple continuity of conditioned things, there is no fear. When with wisdom one sees the world as just like grass and wood, not finding any selfishness, one does not grieve with the idea, 'It is not mine'. (Theragāthā 716-7)

Through the deep realization of conditional causality, we come to a different relationship with life. Since everything is merely impersonal conditioned processes, we do not relate so personally to life anymore. We cannot personally own anything, but neither can we personally lose anything. Thus we no longer fear or grieve loss, and we can be at peace whether we gain or lose.

KAMMA

Kamma is the Pali form of the more familiar Sanskrit word 'karma'. However, it is most important to understand that in Buddhism *kamma*/karma means 'intentional action'. It does not mean 'fate', which is a popular definition and one given in modern dictionaries. Rather, *kamma* is intentional action which most often has the potential to give a result (*vipāka)*. However, this potential result can be modified and even cancelled by further appropriate intentional action. Thus action and result (*kamma-vipāka*) are dynamically inter-related but not rigidly deterministic.

119. a) By *kamma* the world goes on, by *kamma* people go on. Beings are bound by *kamma* as a wheel is bound to the cart by a linchpin. (Sutta Nipāta 654)

b) Beings are the owners of their *kamma*, heirs of their *kamma*, born of their *kamma*, related to their *kamma*, supported by their *kamma*. Whatever *kamma* they do, for good or for ill, of that they are the heirs. (A.V,288)

Kamma, 'intentional action', is something we are doing all the time. It is as inherent in human life as gravity. Thus it is fundamentally important to know what it is and how it works. Essentially the 'principle of *kamma*' is ethical causality, moral cause and effect, action and result. Although we may readily acknowledge that we generate actions, it is also important to recognize the associated results (*vipāka*). With a continuity of reflective awareness it is possible to know the causal nature of action and result, even if sometimes it is not immediately clear. In practice it may sometimes be more helpful to reflect back from a certain result to uncover the initiating cause. For example, why are we frequently angry? This also helps us to take more responsibility for actions and their results — we are the owners of our actions.

120. a) Of these three kinds of action [by body, speech and mind], divided and differentiated in this way, I say that action of mind is the most blameworthy in the doing of a bad action. Action of body is not the same, and action of speech is not the same. (M.I,373)

b) I am a teacher of action, of the consequences of action and the energy to do. (A.I,287)

c) It is intention (volition) that I call *kamma*. Having willed, one produces *kamma* through body, speech and mind. (A.III,415)

The Buddha clearly pointed out the supreme importance of mind in coordinating, initiating and motivating human life. The activity of intention, volition or will, implying choice and initiative, is *kamma*, the activating force in our life. Indeed, it is often will or volition

which we identify as the primary element of our sense of self, since it appears as if 'I' can do as 'I' will. The problem is that 'my will' only chooses to initiate activity which tends to maintain and reinforce this sense of self as controller of 'my' world; that is, it is fundamentally a will to reinforce my selfhood. Some people may think they have 'free will', but the will is actually far from free of self and all its self-preserving baggage, habit tendencies, social conditioning, etc. However, we do have some degree of 'free choice' as to whether to follow old habits or break new ground.

121. There are three sources for the origin of *kamma*. What three? Greed, aversion and delusion are the sources of the origin of *kamma*. An action done in greed, aversion or delusion — born of, originating in or arising out of greed, aversion or delusion — is unskilful, blameworthy and its result is painful. It leads to the arising of [further] *kamma*, not to the cessation of *kamma*.

That action done in non-greed, non-aversion or non-delusion — born of, originating in or arising out of non-greed, non-aversion or non-delusion — is skilful, not blameworthy and its result is pleasant. It leads to the cessation of *kamma*, not to the arising of [further] *kamma*. (A.I,263)

We express ourselves through bodily actions, speech and thought, and our most basic responses are either greed, aversion or delusion, or their opposites. Greed, aversion and delusion are the unskilful origins of *kamma* because they are self-affirming, self-centred actions: greed is 'I want'; aversion is 'I don't want'; and delusion is 'I don't know'. Actions performed in non-greed, non-aversion and non-delusion are self-surrendering, selfless actions, and thus undermine the process of 'kammic' will to selfhood. This ultimately frees us from the deluded habit of selfishness, which, since it is out of harmony with the fundamental selfless nature of the universe,

continually results in disappointment and suffering.

122. a) Those wanderers and brahmins who say or hold the view that whatever pleasant or unpleasant or neutral feeling a person experiences is the consequence of what was done in the past — they go too far. Therefore, I say they are wrong. Experience of feelings arises from bile, from phlegm, from wind, from the union of bodily humours, from seasonal changes, from stress of circumstances and from chance external happenings,[16] as well as from the ripening of *kamma*. (S.IV,230, abridged)

b) Bhikkhus, if one speaks thus, 'Just as a person does an action (kamma), just so will it be experienced'; in that case the religious life could not exist and no opportunity would appear for the complete ending of suffering.

But if, bhikkhus, one speaks thus, 'Just as a person does an action (*kamma*) that is to be experienced, just so will the result be experienced'; in that case the religious life can exist and the opportunity appears for the complete ending of suffering. (A.I,249f)

If we had to experience the results of all that we have done in the past, we would be prisoners of our past and could never be liberated. It is thus very important to distinguish between *kamma* and its potential result (*vipāka*). These are two different things, but are mutually inter-related through the principle of conditioned causality. If we don't distinguish between them, we make the simplistic assumption that action (*kamma*) equals result (*vipāka*), and arrive at Determinism rather than Buddhism. It is also more appropriate to say that intentional actions generate potential results, which can then be influenced by further intentional action. These further actions, if skilful, may even cause the initial result to be completely cancelled out. By understanding our actions and their

results, we are able to mould results through the careful cultivation of skilfully related actions. We can thus be the active moulders of our future rather than the victims of our past.

123. a) The results of *kamma* cannot be known by thought, and so should not be speculated about. Thinking thus, one would come to distraction and distress. (A.II,80)

b) Therefore, Ānanda, do not be the judge of people; do not make assumptions about others. A person is destroyed by making judgements about others. (A.V,140)

Since we are acting continuously, often unconsciously, it is virtually impossible to trace particular results back to specific actions. By trying to do so we would only distract ourselves uselessly with speculations, and make false assumptions about ourselves and other people. At best it is only possible to know the general principles of action-result, which we can observe personally with some continuity of self-awareness and reflection.

Most people are, of course, curious to know why something happened to them, and so they look for some logical answer through thinking. However, it is better to investigate the causal aspect of how something comes to be by mindfully observing our bodily actions, speech and mental habits, and thus come to know directly our own personal action-result patterns.

REBIRTH

Theravada Buddhists use the term 'rebirth' rather than 'reincarnation'. Reincarnation literally means that some permanently-abiding entity transmigrates from life to life or is incarnate again and again. The Buddha referred most specifically to the dynamic process of rebirth (literally, 'again becoming'), rather than to the continuity of abiding entities characteristic of

reincarnation.

124. With the divine eye which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate. I understood how beings pass on according to their actions thus: those worthy beings who were ill-conducted in body, speech, and mind, revilers of noble ones, wrong in their views, giving effect to wrong view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappeared in a state of deprivation, in a bad destination, in perdition, even in hell; but those worthy beings who were well-conducted in body, speech, and mind, not revilers of noble ones, right in their view, giving effect to right view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappeared in a good destination, even in the heavenly world. (M.I,22f; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi translation, MLDB, p.106)

The Buddha on the night of his awakening was able to recollect his own previous existences and, as quoted above, the 'passing away and reappearing' of other beings according to their views and actions.[17] Thus he understood that there are some universal principles related to action and result. That is, bad conduct and wrong views lead to a 'bad destination', while good conduct and right views lead heavenward. Other disciples also had these experiences, which it is possible to attain through development of advanced stages of meditation. However, this direct experience of 'passing away and reappearing' was not something experienced by every disciple, or even every awakened disciple.

125. And what, Punna, is dark action with dark result? Here someone generates an afflictive bodily formation, an afflictive verbal formation, an afflictive mental formation. Having generated an afflictive bodily formation, an afflictive verbal

formation, an afflictive mental formation, he reappears in an afflictive world. When he has reappeared in an afflictive world, afflictive contacts touch him. Being touched by afflictive contacts, he feels afflictive feelings, extremely painful, as in the case of beings in hell. Thus a being's reappearance is due to a being: one reappears through the actions one has performed. When one has reappeared, contacts touch one. Thus I say beings are the heirs of their actions. This is called dark action with dark result.

And what, Punna, is bright action with bright result? Here someone generates an unafflictive bodily formation, an unafflictive verbal formation, an unafflictive mental formation. Having generated an unafflictive bodily formation, an unafflictive verbal formation, an unafflictive mental formation, he reappears in an unafflictive world. When he has reappeared in an unafflictive world, unafflictive contacts touch him. Being touched by unafflictive contacts, he feels unafflictive feelings, extremely pleasant, as in the case of the Gods of Refulgent Glory. Thus a being's reappearance is due to a being: one reappears through the actions one has performed. When one has reappeared, contacts touch one. Thus I say beings are the heirs of their actions. This is called bright action with bright result. (M.I,389f; Bhikkhi Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi translation, MLDB, pp.495f)

Our actions of body, speech and mind are responsible for the kind of world which we inhabit, with its attendant contacts and feelings. Simply expressed, this means that afflictive actions give hellish feelings, unafflictive actions give heavenly feelings. It is most important, however, that we should see these causal relationships directly. Otherwise we are just believing in an abstract principle, without personal experience, without an immediate and relevant connection to our own actions and feelings. Thus when you feel angry, what is your (emotional) world like? When you feel affection

towards someone, what is your (emotional) world then?

126. a) Sāriputta, there are these five realms of existence: the hell realm, animal realm, ghost realm, human realm and heavenly realm. I understand these realms of existence, the way and the means to these realms of existence; and I also understand how, at death, when the body breaks up, one is born into them. (M.I,73)

b) Bhikkhus, there is *kamma* which is to be experienced in hell, in the animal realm, in the ghost realm, in the human realm, in the heavenly realm. This is called *kamma*'s distinction. (A.III,415)

These realms of existence were directly perceived by the Buddha and some of his disciples. In the Buddha's teaching materiality and mentality are inter-related, so that it is sometimes hard to determine whether 'realm' refers to a particular material place or a particular mental place. It might be more meaningful to reflect upon what experiences you personally associate with hell and the other realms. When our emotions are very strong, it can sometimes seem as if we have been transported to either heaven or hell.

127. a) Bhikkhus, what one intends, and what one plans, and whatever one has a tendency towards, this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis there is a support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is the production of future renewed existence. (S.II,65; Bhikkhu Bodhi translation, CDB p.576)

b) Radha, that desire, that lust, that delight in, that thirst, that taking up and grasping, that resolution, inclination and latent tendency in regard to form ... feelings ... perceptions ... activities ... consciousness is called the support of coming-into-existence. Their ending is called the ending of the support for coming-into-existence. (S.III,191)

c) Therefore, Ānanda, intentional action (*kamma*) is the field, consciousness is the seed, thirst is the moisture. For beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by thirst, consciousness is established in a lower realm. Thus in the future there is again-becoming, rebirth. (A.I,223)

These passages present a more 'psychological' explanation for the process of coming into a realm of existence. Consciousness is a morally neutral aspect of mind, which is then acted upon, influenced or directed by various types of volition. These can be quite mild, such as a slight tendency, or very strong, such as lust or thirst. One then comes into existence in, or is born into, a corresponding mental/material realm. With clear awareness it is possible to see how this is happening at any particular time in this very life — we are continually being 'reborn' into new realms.

VIEWS

128. ***The Buddha relates a story of a king who had all the people in his realm who were born blind assembled together and introduced to an elephant. The king then asked them what an elephant was like.***

'Those blind people who had been shown the head of the elephant replied, "An elephant, your majesty, is just like a water jar." Those blind people who had been shown the ear of the elephant replied, "An elephant, your majesty, is just like a winnowing basket." Those blind people who had been shown the tusk of the elephant replied, "An elephant, your majesty, is just like a ploughshare." Those blind people who had been shown the trunk replied, "An elephant, your majesty, is just like a plough-pole." Those blind people who had been shown the body replied, "An elephant, your majesty, is just like a storeroom." Those blind people who had been shown the foot replied, "An elephant, your majesty, is just like a post." Those blind people who had been shown the hindquarters replied,

"An elephant, your majesty, is just like a mortar." Those blind people who had been shown the tail replied, "An elephant, your majesty, is just like a pestle." Those blind people who had been shown the tuft at the end of the tail replied, "An elephant, your majesty, is just like a broom." Saying "An elephant is like this, an elephant is not like that! An elephant is not like this, an elephant is like that!", they fought each other with their fists. And the king was delighted [with the spectacle].'

The Buddha then commented upon the 'wanderers of other sects' who held a variety of views and quarrelled amongst themselves. He then spoke the following verse:

'Some recluses and Brahmins, so called,
Are deeply attached to their own views;
People who only see one side of things
Engage in quarrels and disputes.' (Udāna 6.4, John D. Ireland translation, TU, pp. 93-4)

Throughout history there has always been a great diversity of views and opinions about life. The Buddha realized the futility of disputes and the delusion of holding fixed views, since they are usually due to seeing only a part of the whole picture. Holding views is also one of the supports for affirming selfhood, the greatest delusion of all. To someone who can 'see the elephant', all the partial views are incomplete, and so disputing them is a waste of effort. More usefully, we can appreciate each person's contribution to the picture (often their view says more about themselves than about what they see), and be more tolerant of the great diversity of human perspectives.

129. Even though one recites the scriptures only a little, but lives in accordance with the Teaching — giving up greed, aversion and delusion, rightly knowing, with mind truly freed, not clinging to this or another realm — one thus shares in the religious life. (Dhammapada 20)

The Buddha's awakening was a direct experience resulting from his development of meditation in order to see things as they really are. Thus while book-learning can be helpful, putting the teachings into practice directly is the most important thing. Also, though we may not recognize it, book-learning is still subject to perceptual self-bias. Giving up the self-supporting tendencies of greed, aversion and delusion usually requires the development of Calm and Insight Meditation, by which the mind becomes truly freed through the realization of selflessness.

130. 'Vaccha, to resort to the speculative views: the world is eternal or the world is not eternal, the world is finite or the world is infinite, the soul and the body are the same, the soul is one thing and the body another, after death a Tathāgata exists, after death a Tathāgata does not exist, after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist, after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist, is to enter the thicket of views, the wilderness of views, the agitation of views, the writhing of views, the fetter of views. It is connected with suffering, with vexation, turmoil and distress. It does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calming, to direct knowledge, to awakening or to Nibbāna. I, Vaccha, seeing this danger, do not resort to any of these views.'

'But does friend Gotama not have any speculative views at all?'

'Speculative views, Vaccha, have been put away by the Tathāgata. The Tathāgata, Vaccha, has seen[18] this: thus is form, thus is form's arising, thus is form's disappearance; thus is feeling ... perceptions ... activities ... consciousness, thus is consciousness's arising, thus is consciousness's disappearance.

'Therefore, I say with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, relinquishing of all imaginings, all mental

disturbances, all I-making, mine-making and tendencies to conceit, the Tathāgata is liberated without grasping.' (M.I,485-6 abridged)

Trying to answer any of these particular questions is distracting, as it does not lead to awakening but only to further mental turmoil; any answer is mere speculation which cannot be proved. What we can know are physical form, feelings, perceptions, activities and consciousness, and instead of just speculating, we can clearly investigate these aspects of reality so as to know them directly.

Paradoxically, it is only through realizing awakening that one may intuitively be able to know the answers to some of these questions. The unawakened person seeks answers to them based upon wrong assumptions, that is, an unawakened or ignorant view of what 'the world' is. Thus, rather than distract ourselves with mere speculation, it is better to focus our energy on the path to awakening.

131. ***Once the Buddha was staying in a forest and took up a handful of leaves. He asked the bhikkhus which they thought were more numerous, the leaves in his hand or those in the forest. When they replied that the leaves in the forest were more numerous, the Buddha responded:***

Even so, bhikkhus, those things I have known directly are numerous, while those I have taught are few. And why, bhikkhus, have I not taught them? Because they are not beneficial, not relevant to the basis of the spiritual life, and do not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to awakening, to Nibbāna. Therefore I have not taught them.

And what, bhikkhus, have I taught? I have taught, 'This is *dukkha*'; I have taught, 'This is the origin of *dukkha*'; I have taught, 'This is the cessation of *dukkha*'; I have taught, 'This is the path

leading to the cessation of *dukkha*'. And why, bhikkhus, have I taught this? Because this is beneficial, relevant to the basis of the spiritual life, and leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to awakening, to Nibbāna. Therefore I have taught this. (S.V,438)

We have only a limited amount of time and energy, so it is important to focus mainly on what is really useful and necessary for awakening. That which is truly beneficial for realizing awakening is fundamentally quite simple and immediate — the issue of *dukkha*. If we at least know this intellectually, we may make an effort to investigate *dukkha* rather than continue to distract ourselves from it. Knowing *dukkha*, together with the development of skilful behaviour and spiritual exercises, comprises the 'basis of the spiritual life'.

NIBBĀNA

132. a) Nibbāna is the ultimate well-being. (Dhammapada 204)

b) This is peace, this is excellent, that is, the calming of all activities, the relinquishing of all basis (for rebirth), the destruction of thirst, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna. (M.I,436)

Nibbāna, literally 'going out' as a flame goes out, although usually expressed negatively, is the ultimate experience for human beings. All human beings strive for well-being, in whatever way they may conceive it. The Buddha realized that only the experience of Nibbāna is true well-being in the ultimate sense, the cessation of this whole mass of suffering (text 114).

133. a) Sāriputta: 'The ending of greed, aversion and delusion, friend, is called Nibbāna.' (S.IV,251)

b) Ānanda, one without grasping realizes Nibbāna. (M.II,265)

c) Radha, the end of thirsting is Nibbāna. (S.III,190)

d) If greed, aversion and delusion are given up, one does not plan for one's own harm, for another's harm or for the harm of both, and one does not experience any mental anguish or distress. Thus is Nibbāna seen here and now, independent of time, inviting inspection, leading onwards and experienced by the wise for themselves. (A.I,159)

Nibbāna is experienced in a variety of ways. Basically it is the complete uprooting of selfishness, which is experienced as the 'ending of greed, aversion and delusion', being 'without grasping', the 'end of thirsting', without any 'mental anguish or distress', etc. Similarly, this means that there are various ways to work towards it, depending upon one's temperament and abilities. We can even experience it for ourselves here and now, albeit usually just lightly and briefly; however, the practice leads on to deeper and more extensive experiences of liberation as we work through the various expressions of selfhood.

134. a) There is, bhikkhus, a not-born, a not-become, a not-made, a not-constructed ... Since there is a not-born, a not-become, a not-made, a not-constructed, thus there is a leaving behind of the born, become, made, constructed.

...

There is the escape, the peaceful,
The beyond-conceptual-thought, the stable,
The not-born, the unproduced,
The sorrowless, stainless state:
The end of painful things,
The calming of conditions — bliss. (Itivuttaka sutta 43; abridged)

b) There is, bhikkhus, that sphere where there is neither earth element, water element, fire element nor air element; nor the spheres of infinite space, of infinite consciousness, of

nothingness, nor of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; neither this world nor another world, nor both; nor sun and moon. There, bhikkhus, I say there is no coming, no going, no abiding, no passing away, no arising; that is not-established, non-functioning, without foundation. Just this is the end of *dukkha*. (Udāna, sutta 8.1)

c) As a blazing spark struck from iron
Gradually fades to an unknown state,
So the one who's truly won release,
Crossed the flood of sensuality's bonds,
And reached immovable peace —
Goes to a course beyond definition. (Udāna, sutta 8.10)

Nibbāna, the unconditioned, is hard to explain because we are only familiar with the conditioned realm. It is therefore an experience which is beyond the usual definitions of the world. Thus the Buddha frequently referred to it in terms of the negative of what we normally relate to – 'a not-born, a not-become, a not-made, a not-constructed'. This means that it is also beyond the range of conceptual thought and our usual means of definition. However, it can be known directly by penetrating insight, which is usually facilitated through the development of meditation.

135. Bhikkhus, body is impermanent; what is impermanent is *dukkha*; what is *dukkha* is not-self; what is not-self is not mine, is not what I am, is not myself. So should one look upon it as it really is by perfect realization. Thus seeing by perfect realization, the mind is disenchanted and freed from the outflows without grasping. (S.III,45)

While this teaching may be understandable logically, it is only through 'perfect realization' that its full import can be wholly comprehended. This realization brings about a radical shift in our

understanding of reality. We see through the illusion of blinding selfhood which is persistently trying to maintain the pretence of permanence, satisfaction and self, and thus become disenchanted with all the self-supporting strategies which comprise our life of desperate grasping.

136. Look upon the world as empty, Mogharāja, always being mindful. Remove any view of a permanent-abiding self, and you may pass beyond death. If you view the world like this, the King of Death sees you not. (Sutta Nipāta 119)

Through the increasing development of clear awareness, we can see through the illusory appearance of a permanently abiding self-entity, to the world empty of constant self reference. Then instead of a 'me' dying, we understand that there are just physical/mental processes in transition. Of course, this requires ever deepening understanding, and also living in harmony with it. As the saying goes: 'It is easy to be awakened, it is just hard to stay awakened'. That is, although many people know selflessness intellectually or have had a glimpse of it, often their life-style does not fully embody it and thus they keep feeding selfhood.

137. Herein, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: in the seen will be merely what is seen; in the heard will be merely what is heard; in the sensed will be merely what is sensed; in the cognized will be merely what is cognized. In this way you should train yourself, Bāhiya. When, Bāhiya, for you in the seen is merely what is seen ... in the cognized is merely what is cognized, then, Bāhiya, you will not be 'with that'. When, Bāhiya, you are not 'with that', then, Bāhiya, you will not be 'in that'. When, Bāhiya, you are not 'in that', then Bāhiya, you will be neither here nor beyond, nor in between the two. Just

this is the end of suffering. (Udāna, sutta 1.10, John D. Ireland translation, TU, p. 20)

This succinct and very profound teaching explains a way of being in which a self-subject does not arise. Text 84 outlines the normal perceptual process: sense organ contacts sense object, giving rise to sense consciousness and feeling. This part of the process is basically functional; that is, it just happens to us. The next parts of the sequence, however, from perception to thinking to conceptual proliferation, are where selfhood is engendered. If we can just be aware of the act of sensing, then there is no self-subject that arises — no 'you' and 'that (sense object)', no involvement 'in that', etc.

As an exercise, try to be more mindfully aware of waking up in the morning. Perhaps you may notice the change from just a general sense-consciousness, i.e., seeing, to the 'waking up' of self consciousness, i.e., 'I am seeing my room', and then perhaps all the conceptual proliferation which follows.

138. But, bhikkhus, when one does not intend, and one does not plan, and one does not have a tendency towards anything, no basis exists for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is no basis, there is no support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is unestablished and does not come to growth, there is no production of future renewed existence. When there is no production of future renewed existence, future birth, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. (S.II,65-6; Bhikkhu Bodhi translation, CDB, p.576)

Consciousness is a functional activity of the mind, but it is directed by (self-preserving) intentions, plans and tendencies (text 114). However, with the arising of wisdom through seeing how we create

the suffering of renewed existence, we stop intending and planning, and relinquish tendencies so that there is no longer any support for consciousness from those things. For example, we are no longer born into our plans (how often do they work out, anyway?) and thus there is no lamentation when they fall apart. Thus if we notice that we are experiencing some form of suffering, we can reflect, 'What has conditioned this? What has caused me to be born into this new existence?'

In a related context[19] the Buddha gave the simile of a house with windows on the east, north and south. When the sun rose the sunbeam settled on the west wall. If there was no west wall it settled on the ground; if there was no ground it settled on water; and if there was no water it would not settle anywhere. Thus if consciousness (the sunbeam) has nowhere to settle, it is not established anywhere.

HELPING

139. It is not possible, Cunda, that someone stuck in the mud could pull out another who is stuck in the mud. But it is possible that someone not stuck in the mud could pull out another who is stuck in the mud. It is not possible that someone untamed, untrained, not completely calmed, could tame, train or completely calm another. But it is possible that someone tamed, trained, completely calmed could tame, train or completely calm another. (M.I,45)

Even if we have the best of intentions to help people, we are not really able to help another if we ourselves are not 'on firm ground'. The first priority if one wishes to help others is to train oneself thoroughly, so that one not only knows the way of training but is also an experienced example of what one teaches. Some people may therefore conclude that only fully awakened beings should teach. However, people are at various levels of spiritual maturity. As long as one clearly recognizes one's own level and is careful to respect it,

one can still be a much-appreciated guide, ideally out of compassion and not conceit, to those struggling 'in the mud'.

140. Protecting oneself one protects others; protecting others one protects oneself. And how does one, in protecting oneself, protect others? By the repeated and frequent practice of meditation. And how does one, in protecting others, protect oneself? By patience and forbearance, by a non-violent and harmless life, by loving-kindness and compassion. 'I shall protect myself', in that way the Attendings with Mindfulness should be practised; 'I shall protect others', in that way the Attendings with Mindfulness should be practised. Protecting oneself, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself. (S.V,168)

The Buddha often emphasized the importance of developing one's own mind, not only for one's own benefit, but for the benefit of others as well. Many people think that working on oneself is selfish, but it is essentially more selfish to try to change other people when we have not done the work on ourselves. If we are not spiritually developed, we are a possible danger to ourselves and others through not knowing how to control our own mind. Then our ignorance, which often manifests in strong emotional reactions, not only causes harm to ourselves but also affects others, if not directly, then indirectly by occupying our energies and resources. The development of mindfulness thus has multiple benefits for both ourselves and others.

BUDDHA-DHAMMA

141. Ānanda, 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, Ānanda, for what I have taught and explained

to you as Dhamma and discipline will, at my passing, be your teacher. (D.II,154; Maurice Walshe translation, LDB, p. 269-70.)

The Buddha passed away long ago, yet his legacy of the Dhamma and discipline (Vinaya) as recorded in the scriptures and practised by his disciples is still available. Thus we can say that the Buddha is still teaching us. Many people are influenced by the presence of inspiring teachers, but because those teachers are still human, they will eventually pass away. By emphasizing the eternal teaching of the Dhamma, the Buddha is pointing to the essence of spiritual practice — diligently doing the work oneself, which is really what a good teacher encourages too. Focusing on the non-personal Dhamma-Vinaya also bypasses the personality pitfalls into which all too many teachers have stumbled.

142. Who indeed, Vakkali, sees Dhamma, sees me; who sees me, sees Dhamma. Surely, seeing Dhamma, one sees me; seeing me, one sees Dhamma. (S.III,120)

The Buddha was the personification of Dhamma. Someone only really sees (knows) the Buddha when they see (know) Dhamma. Even those who saw the human form of the Buddha did not really 'see' him until they had a full realization of Dhamma. Thus although our usual tendency is to look outside for answers, the Buddha is reminding us that the true answer is to be experienced within our own mind which knows Dhamma.

143. The things of which you know — these things lead to dispassion, not to passion; to detachment, not to attachment; to diminution, not to accumulation; to wanting little, not to wanting much; to being easily satisfied, not to being hard to satisfy; to seclusion, not to socializing; to putting forth energy, not to indolence; to frugality, not to luxury — of them you

should surely know that they belong to the Teaching, to the Training, to the Teacher's instruction. (A.IV,280)

This teaching to the Buddha's step-mother Mahāpajāpati is a succinct summary of the main principles of the spiritual training. To some people the Buddha gave specific and detailed instructions which sometimes became rigid regulations, i.e. the letter of the rule. To others he gave general guidelines which are thus open to interpretation, i.e. the spirit of the rule. Wisdom implies a careful harmonizing of these two principles through one's own experience leading to a direct realization.

144. And the Lord said: 'Ānanda, these sāl-trees have burst forth into an abundance of untimely blossoms ... Divine music and song sound from the sky in homage to the Tathāgata. Never before has the Tathāgata been so honoured, revered, esteemed, worshipped and adored. And yet, Ānanda, whatever monk, nun, male or female lay-follower abides practising the Dhamma properly, and perfectly fulfils the Dhamma-way, he or she honours the Tathāgata, reveres and esteems him and pays him the supreme homage. Therefore, Ānanda, 'We will abide practising the Dhamma properly and perfectly fulfil the Dhamma-way' — this must be your watchword. (D.II,138; Maurice Walshe translation, LDB, p. 262.)

It is often easier to worship great masters than to practise what they taught. But the Buddha emphatically reminds us that true reverence is the practice of Dhamma, living by the Truth. The Buddha did not live in the world to be worshipped, but to teach the way to liberation, to Nibbāna. If we do not practise what he taught, we are being disrespectful to the Buddha and all his efforts. By practising Dhamma we become 'Buddha-like', so that the Buddha lives on in our hearts. And with 'Buddha-like' people — people with greater wisdom and compassion — the world will truly be a better place in which to live.

145. What should be done for his disciples out of compassion by a teacher who seeks their welfare and has compassion for them, that I have done for you, Ānanda. There are these roots of trees, these empty huts. Meditate, Ānanda, do not delay, or else you will regret it later. This is our instruction to you. (M.II,265-6; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi translation, MLDB, p. 873)

The Buddha was not merely a philosopher, but someone who clearly laid out a direct path of spiritual practice based upon the development of morality, meditation and wisdom. This particular path requires special effort, mainly in solitude, to realize a higher degree of self-knowledge and selfless insight. Out of compassion for human beings, the Buddha encourages us to find the time to develop meditation for our own and others' welfare.

ENDNOTES

1 In texts 59, 78, 79, 81 & 83 I have translated it as 'phenomena'. In text 79, as 'investigation of dhamma', it is the investigation of phenomena in the context of Dhamma, that is, in terms of the Buddha's insight into reality.

2 King Yama is the traditional Lord of Death who judges each person according to their deeds and assigns them the appropriate results. Perhaps he is the personification of our own conscience?

3 The same advice is given at A.II, 191 to Bhaddiya, who repeated to the Buddha some derogatory rumour he had heard. I have been guided by Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation in CDB, pp.781-2, note 198.

4 At A.IV,350 the Buddha teaches that with a good friend one will be virtuous, receive helpful talk, be energetic and have noble wisdom. In the quoted text the Buddha ends by mentioning the benefits of having him as a good friend.

5 *Dhana*; at A. IV, 4 & 5 seven other treasures are mentioned: faith, morality, personal conscience, social conscience, learning, liberality and wisdom.

6 I have followed Venerable Anālayo in the translation of certain terms, i.e. 'direct path', 'Attendings with Mindfulness'.

7 cf. A.I,43ff for the benefits of mindfulness of body.

8 See for example S.V,311-341, a chapter on in- and out-breathing.

9 The detailed instructions also include contemplating the thirty-one anatomical parts and the body in various stages of decay.

10 'Sensory' is literally. 'of the flesh' and 'spiritual' is 'without flesh'.

11 The Pali word here translated as 'mind' is *mano* or mind as a sense organ, whereas in the passage above the Pali word is *citta* or mind as mental processes.

12 The detailed instructions also include developing awareness of the Four Noble Truths, which are explained under the section on *dukkha*.

13 '*papañcasaññāsankhā';* Bhikkhu Ñāṇanada (p.6) translates as: 'concepts characterized by the prolific tendency'; Bhikkhu Bodhi (MLDB p.112) translates as: 'perceptions and notions (born of) mental proliferation'. For more on the perceptual and conceptual processes, see Bhikkhu Bodhi's brilliant introduction to the Discourse on the Root of Existence.

14 *vipallāsa.* Four are mentioned: that impermanence is permanent, that suffering is happiness, that not-self is self, that the unattractive is attractive; these may be distortions of perception, mind or views: A.II,52.

15 I have been guided in this translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, CDB p.736, note 32. See also his note 29, page 734 regarding 'existence' and 'non-existence'.

16 Bhikkhu Bodhi, CDB p.1279 has for the last three items: 'change of climate, careless behaviour, assault', and in the note (p. 1436) says: 'Thus *kamma* can still be an indirect cause for the painful feeling directly induced by the first seven causes.' Bile, phlegm and wind are the three 'bodily humours' of Indian Ayurvedic

medicine.

17 This is the Divine Eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), one of the six psychic powers (abhiññā).

18 There is a play on the word *diṭṭhi*, literally meaning 'to see' and thus have a 'view'. Whereas Vaccha asks about various (speculative) 'views', the Buddha has 'seen' directly the nature of the five groups.

19 S.II,103; the context is there being no lust for the Four Nutriments of material food, contact, volition or consciousness.

3 THE SANGHA

'Sangha', literally 'comprising', in its most general sense means 'group', 'assembly', 'crowd' or 'community'. In the Pali Canon the word 'sangha' is used in various contexts. This may be due to a development in its meaning from a general group to specific groups under the Buddha's influence. Eventually it came to refer to either the community of the Buddha's monastic disciples, the bhikkhu sangha and bhikkhuni sangha, or to the *savaka sangha*, literally the 'community of hearers', those monastic or lay persons who have reached one of the stages of sanctity.[1] It is to the *savaka sangha* that one goes for Refuge. However, there are also instances of going for refuge to the bhikkhu sangha. When reference was made to both ordained and lay disciples, the word *parisā (*assembly*)* was used; for example, the fourfold assembly of bhikkhus, bhikkhunis and male and female lay followers.

The bhikkhu sangha and bhikkhuni sangha feature most strongly in the Vinaya Piṭaka, the collection of the monastic rules, and are further qualified in various ways.[2]

The word 'bhikkhu' means a religious beggar or alms mendicant. It is often translated as 'monk', but strictly speaking a bhikkhu is not a monk in the Christian sense of the term. Monks are now

usually self-sufficient in one way or another, through farming, industry or providing services such as education. A bhikkhu is by definition completely dependent upon the support of donors for his subsistence, that is, an alms mendicant.

146. Bhikkhus, there are these two kinds of quests — the noble quest and the common quest.

And what is the common quest? Here those who are themselves subject to birth, ageing, illness, death, sorrow and defilement seek what is also subject to birth, ageing, illness, death, sorrow and defilement.

And what is subject to these things? Wife and children, men and women slaves, goats and sheep, fowl and pigs, elephants, cattle, horses and mares [...].These bases of attachment[3] are subject to these conditions, and one bound to, infatuated with, devoted to them, being subject to these conditions, seeks what is also subject to these conditions.

And what is the noble quest? Here those who are themselves subject to birth, ageing, illness, death, sorrow and defilement, seeing the danger therein, seek the unborn, unageing, unailing, undying, sorrowless, undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna . This is the noble quest. (M.I,161f; abridged)

What the Buddha was emphasizing is that the 'common quest' will inevitably lead to death and sorrow, in contrast to the (possible) experience of the undying, sorrowless Nibbāna, which is the specific goal of the 'noble quest' for which the monastic vocation is ideally established. While the vast majority of people are mainly interested in pursuing the joys of family life and the pleasures of wealth, there are always a few who are inspired to follow a life completely committed to spiritual values. Of course, the Buddha also had a large following of lay disciples of both sexes who tried

to model their lives on his teachings and practise spiritual values as best they could, while still maintaining their family responsibilities.

Although sometimes requiring a degree of fortitude and endurance, the simple monastic lifestyle provides a significant degree of time and solitude in which to develop spiritual exercises.

GOING FORTH (TO HOMELESSNESS)

147. ***A Buddha appears in the world.*** **He teaches the Dhamma good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, with the right meaning and wording, and he makes known a religious life that is entirely complete and pure.**

A person hears the Dhamma, acquires faith in the Buddha and reflects:

'Household life is crowded and dusty; life gone forth is wide open. It is not easy, while living in a home, to lead the holy life, utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Suppose I shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness.' On a later occasion, abandoning a small or large fortune, abandoning a small or large circle of relatives, he shaves off his hair and beard, puts on the yellow robe, and goes forth from the home life into homelessness. (M.I,344-5; abridged; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi translation, MLDB, p.448)

In many cultures throughout the world it is recognized that one who wishes to pursue the spiritual quest seriously should leave behind the encumbrances of the 'crowded and dusty' household life for the broader horizons of a spiritual seeker. In the present day, 'going forth to homelessness' is more symbolic than actual. In the Buddha's time it meant literally giving up home and going off to live in the widespread forests which existed then. At present, shaving the head and putting on the 'yellow'[4] robe represent giving up the

values of the home life for the values of homelessness. This can be expressed in many ways; however, we could say that one gives up the intimacy of family life for the intimacy of knowing one's self; one gives up the comfort of material possessions for the peace of spiritual possessions; one gives up the satisfaction of a career for the benefit of striving for awakening.

Taking on the monastic life style is entirely voluntary and can be relinquished at any time (up to seven times). This may give some people an opportunity to experience this particular lifestyle personally, to see if it suits them. Others may already be adopting a more simplified and spiritual lifestyle and for them 'going forth' is only one step in a naturally unfolding process.

In the Thai Forest Tradition there are often three stages of training: the eight-precept *anāgārika* with shaven head and white clothes; the ten-precept *samanera* or novice, who does not use money and wears the ochre-coloured robe; the fully-ordained bhikkhu. It may take two years or more to reach the third stage.

148. Bhikkhus, this is a contemptible means of subsistence, this gathering of alms. In the world, bhikkhus, it is a form of abuse to say, 'You alms-gatherer! Wandering about clutching a bowl!' Yet this means of subsistence has been taken up by young men of good family, for a reason, for a purpose. They have not been reduced to it by kings, nor by robbers, nor because of debt, nor through fear, nor from loss of an alternative means of livelihood, but with the thought: 'We are beset by birth, ageing and death, by sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; overcome by suffering, afflicted by suffering. Perhaps an end can be discerned of this whole mass of suffering.' (Itivuttaka sutta 91; John D. Ireland translation, TI, p. 68.; cf. M.I,463)

The foundation of the monastic life is relinquishment. This usually first involves relinquishing the distracting external supports of selfhood (for example, fortune and fame), in order to start working on the relinquishment of the internal supports of selfhood (likes and dislikes, opinions and views, etc.)

The daily morning alms-round of gathering food offerings from devoted lay followers is a very powerful and direct reminder of this commitment to relinquishment. Formally speaking, Buddhist monastics are not beggars, since they are not allowed to ask for food unless they are sick. Rather, they silently make themselves available for anyone who wishes to make offerings. In countries unfamiliar with this custom this can make for some interesting reactions! An adaptation of the customary alms-round of continuous walking, used in Britain to good effect, is for Buddhist monastics to stand in a particular place. This allows people to approach them to find out what they are doing, and also enables potential donors to find them again after going off to purchase suitable offerings.

149. ***Venerable Sona was very energetic in his efforts at meditation but was unable to realize awakening. He then began to wonder if he should leave the monastic life and return home. The Buddha read these thoughts and appeared to him. After questioning him about his thoughts, the Buddha continued:***

'What do you think, Sona, when you were formerly a householder were you skilled at the stringed lute's music?'
'Yes, Venerable Sir.'
'What do you think, Sona, when the strings of your lute were too taut, was your lute at that time tuneful and suitable for playing?'
'No, indeed, Venerable Sir.'
'What do you think, Sona, when the strings of your lute were

too loose, was your lute at that time tuneful and suitable for playing?'
'No, indeed, Venerable Sir.'
'What do you think, Sona, when the strings of your lute were neither too taut nor too loose, the strings were evenly tuned, was your lute at that time tuneful and suitable for playing?'
'Yes, Venerable Sir.'
'Even so, Sona, too much exertion leads to restlessness and too little exertion leads to indolence. Therefore, Sona, you should welcome the evenness of energy, penetrate the evenness of the faculties and use it as a theme for reflection.' (Vin.I,181f)

It is not uncommon for people to bring high expectations to the spiritual life. However, when one strips away the usual distractions and amusements, the familiar comforts and securities, what is revealed can be quite surprising, and even disconcerting. A wise approach to spiritual practice is to aim towards the 'evenness of energy' advocated by the Buddha. That is, rather than riding on ideals, we learn to carefully deflate idealism so as to achieve a soft landing in realism.

As individuals we all have our strengths and weaknesses. We usually play on our strengths, since this makes it easier to be successful and earns us praise; and we usually shy away from and try to ignore our weaknesses, as they can be a source of struggle and may embarrass us. However, an important aspect of spiritual life is to 'penetrate the evenness of the faculties', to be able to balance the various aspects of our being. Relying too much on our strengths is not only limiting, but can lead to over-confidence. Giving appropriate attention to our weaknesses is not only very humbling, but can also provide insight into another side of our self, and possibly awaken a reserve of energy of which we are unaware.

Fortunately, Venerable Sona was able to achieve evenness and realize awakening.

INTER-DEPENDENCE BETWEEN MONASTICS AND LAITY

150. Once Sangārava the Brahmin came to see the Blessed One and spoke to him thus:

'We are Brahmins, master Gotama: we sacrifice and cause others to make sacrifices. Now he who himself sacrifices, and he who causes others to do so, both engage in a meritorious practice, the offering of sacrifice that extends to many persons. But one of this or that family who goes forth from home into the homeless life, he tames himself alone, calms himself alone, leads to Nibbāna himself alone. If this is so, he then engages in a meritorious practice involving only one person, namely the act of going forth from home into the homeless life.'

'Well, Brahmin, I shall ask you a question and you may answer as you think fit. Now, Brahmin, what do you think of this? A Tathāgata appears in the world, an Arahant, Fully Awakened, endowed with supreme knowledge and virtuous conduct, sublime, knower of the worlds, incomparable leader of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and men, awakened and blessed. He speaks thus: "Come! This is the way, this is the path which by treading I comprehended and realized that highest consummation of the holy life which I now proclaim. Come! You too may practise thus, so that you too, by your own effort, may comprehend and realize this highest consummation of the holy life and abide in its attainment!"

'Thus this teacher shows the Dhamma and others too practise in that way. And of those who do so, there are many hundreds, many thousands, many hundreds of thousands. What do you think, Brahmin, since this is so, is that act of going forth (into the monk's life) a meritorious practice involving only one person or many people?'

'Since it is so, master Gotama, the Going Forth is a meritorious practice extending to many people.' (A.I,167f; Nyanaponika Thera translation, Wheel 155-58, p.37f)

A common assumption since the time of the Buddha is that someone devoted to spiritual practice is fundamentally selfish. However, as the Buddha explains, individual practitioners who have realized some benefits from the practice are then able to explain and show the way to others. Thus they become a living example for others who may be inspired to follow in their footsteps, as many people who have met an exceptional teacher can verify. Sometimes, as in the example of the Bodhisatta, the mere sight of a religious person can be of benefit to someone. As an alms mendicant it is necessary to wander about and thus be seen, not only in order to collect food offerings, but also to 'fly the flag' of spiritual values.

151. Bhikkhus, brahmins and householders are very helpful to you. They provide you with the requisites of robes, almsfood, lodgings and medicine in time of sickness. And you, bhikkhus, are very helpful to brahmins and householders, as you teach them the Dhamma that is good at the outset, good in the middle and good at the end, with its correct meaning and wording, and you proclaim the holy life in its fulfilment and complete purity. Thus, bhikkhus, this holy life is lived with mutual support for the purpose of crossing the flood and making a complete end of suffering.' (Itivuttaka sutta107; John D. Ireland translation, TI, page 84.)

The Buddhist monastic lives inter-dependently with the laity. In practical terms, one can say that the laity provide material support for the monastic, and the monastic provides spiritual support for the laity. Or one can say that the monastics are the 'spiritual professionals' who, due to the material support offered by the laity, are able to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the spiritual

practice. Then, out of gratitude to the laity for their support, they may offer spiritual support and teachings inspired by what they themselves have realized. Another aspect of this relationship is that the monastic should be 'worthy of offerings'; that is, the support of the laity encourages the monastics to be diligent in their practice.

152. ***On one occasion the Buddha was visited by a village headman who enquired why, if the Buddha was compassionate to all living beings, he taught Dhamma thoroughly to some people and not to others. The Buddha responded:***

'What do you think, headman? Here a ploughman farmer has three fields, one excellent, one moderate and one inferior, rough, saline, of bad soil. When that ploughman farmer wants to plant seed, which field would he plant first, the excellent field, the moderate field or the inferior field, rough, saline, of bad soil?'

'Venerable Sir, that ploughman farmer, wanting to plant seed, would plant first that excellent field; having planted that he would next plant that moderate field; having planted that, he may or may not plant that inferior field, rough, saline, of bad soil. Why? Because it might become cattle-food.'

'Headman, just like that excellent field are my bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. I teach them Dhamma which is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle and beautiful in the end, in spirit and in letter. I explain to them the completely fulfilled and pure religious life. What is the reason? Because, headman, they abide with me as their lamp, with me as their shelter, with me as their protection, with me as their refuge.

'Headman, just like that moderate field are my male and female lay-disciples. I also teach them Dhamma which is beautiful in the beginning ... they abide with me as their lamp, with me

as their shelter, with me as their protection, with me as their refuge.

'Headman, just like that inferior field, rough, saline, of bad soil, are *samana-brahmana*, wanderers of other sects. I also teach them Dhamma ... pure religious life. What is the reason? Because if they understand as little as a single sentence, it will be for their benefit and well-being for many a long day.' (S.IV,315f)

The homeless monastic life provides suitable physical conditions not only for a dedicated spiritual practice, but also for living with like-minded spiritual seekers and in close proximity to spiritual teachers. Those who have committed themselves to following the example of the Buddha in lifestyle and practice are more likely to receive the benefit of the teachings, as they are already practising relinquishment of the supports of 'self' in a practical way. They also have a significant degree of faith or trust in the teachings, a quality which can joyfully empower any undertaking. Having the Buddha as one's refuge implies that one is at least willing to follow his advice so as to see what the results are. However, the Buddha's teachings are open to all, and anyone in any walk of life can benefit from them.

153. At one time when the Buddha was staying at Jeta Grove in Anāthapindaka's Park, the devoted lay supporter Anāthapindaka was gravely ill. He requested Venerable Sāriputta to visit him. Venerable Sāriputta with Venerable Ānanda as his attendant went to Anāthapindaka's house and, upon hearing that his condition was worsening, taught him that he should train not to grasp the six-fold sense sphere (see text 83), nor the contact or feelings arising from it, nor the four elements (text 66), nor the five groups of grasping (text 81), nor the formless absorptions. He explained further:

'Therefore, householder, you should train thus: "I will not

grasp this world, and my consciousness will not become dependent upon this world". Thus, householder, you should train. You should train thus: "I will not grasp the world beyond, and my consciousness will not become dependent upon the world beyond". Thus, householder, you should train. You should train thus: "I will not grasp what is seen, heard, sensed, known, attained, sought after or pervaded by the mind, and my consciousness will not become dependent on that". Thus, householder, you should train.'

When this was said, the householder Anāthapindaka cried out and shed tears. Then the Venerable Ānanda asked him, 'Are you holding on, householder, or are you failing?'

'No, Venerable Ānanda, I am holding on, I am not failing. Even though for a long time I have attended to the Teacher and the bhikkhus worthy of respect, I have never before heard such a Dhamma talk.'

'Householder, not to laypeople clothed in white are such Dhamma talks given, but to those gone forth are such Dhamma talks given.'

'Then, Venerable Sāriputta, to laypeople clothed in white let such Dhamma talks be given. There are those with little dust in their eyes who are wasting away through not listening to Dhamma, but through knowing Dhamma they will develop.' (M.III,261f)

Receiving spiritual support and guidance is particularly helpful in times of crisis, especially as one nears death. It is a great comfort in general, and may very possibly enable some people to make considerable spiritual progress in the final stages of their life.[5] Venerable Sāriputta must have given the devoted supporter such a profound teaching because he realized the seriousness of his condition. Indeed, not long afterwards Anāthapindaka passed away.

Of course, it is only a very skilful teacher who knows just the right kind of teaching to give to someone at any particular time. If a teaching is too profound they may become confused, but if it is not profound enough, a special opportunity for spiritual progress may be missed.

On a previous occasion Venerable Sāriputta encouraged the sick Anāthapindaka by telling him that as a stream-enterer, he need have no worries about an unfavourable rebirth. Anāthapindaka was so inspired that he rose up free from sickness and pain.

THE MONASTIC LIFE

154. Thus having gone forth, he abides restrained by the restraint of the Pātimokkha,[6] possessed of right behaviour and resort, seeing danger in the slightest fault, rightly training in the training principles of action through body and speech, committed to the skilful and purified life, endowed with virtue, with sense-doors guarded, possessed of mindfulness, clear awareness and contentment. (D.I,63)

Living the monastic life involves comprehensive training with regard to bodily actions and speech and, ultimately, mind. The basic monastic rules of the Pātimokkha are the fundamental guidelines for a bhikkhu's skilful conduct. They set out a refined mode of etiquette which requires increased mindfulness, self-awareness and sensitivity to place and situation. Thus the rules point to areas of behaviour of which to be mindful, and mindfulness supports careful following of the rules. The rules also give a communal standard of behaviour for harmonious living together, so that the social environment is also supportive of spiritual practice. The Buddha realized that, while some bhikkhus are naturally suited to living in solitude, the majority usually benefit from some degree of social support, either through formal teaching or helpful friendship.

155. Bhikkhus, there are three things that should be attended to by a *samana*. What three? The training in higher moral conduct, in higher cultivation of mind and in higher wisdom.[7] These are the three things that should be attended to. Thus, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves: 'Keen will be our intent in undertaking these three trainings.'

Suppose, bhikkhus, a donkey were to follow close behind a herd of cows, thinking, 'I'm a cow too, I'm a cow too!' In his markings, his feet and his voice he is quite unlike a cow, yet he follows close behind cows, thinking, 'I'm a cow too, I'm a cow too!'

In the same way, some bhikkhu follows close behind the sangha, thinking, 'I'm a bhikkhu too, I'm a bhikkhu too!' But he has no interest in training in higher moral conduct, in higher cultivation of mind and in higher wisdom. However, he still follows close behind the sangha, thinking, 'I'm a bhikkhu too, I'm a bhikkhu too!'

Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves: 'Keen will be our intent in undertaking the training in higher moral conduct, in higher cultivation of mind and in higher wisdom.' Thus you should train yourselves. (A.I,229; Bhikkhu Vipassi translation)

Most people are only able to recognize a bhikkhu from his outward appearance. However, the Buddha emphasized the inner quality of a serious intention to train in the spiritual practices which are the true purpose of the monastic life. As Ajahn Chah said, 'You should ordain in your heart first, then put on the robe.' And a monastic should aspire to continuous development towards higher and higher spiritual levels. A common danger is complacency at a certain level of proficiency in either moral conduct, meditation or degree of understanding. However, the Buddha emphasized the importance of continuous striving and not being satisfied with any level of attainment.

156. ***At one time the Venerable Anuruddha went to visit the Venerable Sāriputta and said to him:***

'Here, friend Sāriputta, with the purified divine vision surpassing that of humans I can examine the thousandfold world-system, strenuous and active is my energy, ready and unconfused is mindfulness, calm and unexcited is the body, composed and focused is the mind. Yet my mind is not liberated from the outflows without grasping.'

'What, friend Anuruddha, for you is "with the purified divine vision surpassing that of humans I can examine the thousandfold world-system", is your conceit. What for you is "strenuous and active is my energy, ready and unconfused is mindfulness, calm and unexcited is the body, composed and focused is the mind", is restlessness. What for you is "yet my mind is not liberated from the outflows without grasping", is doubt.

'It would be well, Venerable Anuruddha, if you gave up these three conditions, did not give attention to them and focused your mind on the deathless element.'

Then later the Venerable Anuruddha gave up these three conditions, did not give attention to them and focused his mind on the deathless element. Then the Venerable Anuruddha, dwelling alone, withdrawn, vigilant, ardent, resolute, in no long time understood Dhamma for himself with direct knowledge, and knowing for himself, entered on and abode in that unsurpassed culmination of the religious life for which a man of good family rightly goes forth from home life to homelessness. And he knew, 'Exhausted is birth, fulfilled is the religious life, what is done is done, there is no more future life'. And Venerable Anuruddha became one of the arahants. (A.I,282)

The Buddha emphasized the importance of spiritual friendship in the spiritual life (text 44). Formally, a new bhikkhu has a teacher and

is expected to undergo at least five years of training before being released from 'dependence' upon the teacher. However, much of the teaching occurs in the course of daily activities or through seeking out a wise person of whom to ask questions. Sometimes we may have to seek out a special person who we know is wise in a particular field such as meditation. Fortunately, in the Buddha's time there were many bhikkhus skilled at meditation who could provide guidance. Even though Venerable Anuruddha had the gift of the 'divine vision', this talent became a source of conceit, obstructing him from further spiritual progress, something many of us would probably not see for ourselves.

157. ***At one time when Venerable Sāriputta was meditating in solitude the question arose, 'During the time of which of the six previous Buddhas did the religious life last long?' He questioned the Buddha about this and was told that during the time of the Buddhas Kakusandhu, Konāgamana and Kassapa, the religious life lasted long because:***

... they were diligent in expounding the Dhamma in detail to their disciples and these had much of the discourses [of various kinds]. They also designated the training rules for disciples and codified the Pātimokkha.

At the disappearance of those Buddhas and the disappearance of the disciples who were awakened under those Buddhas, the last disciples of various names, tribes and districts who had gone forth from various families established the religious life for a long, long time.

Just as, Sāriputta, various flowers lying on a board were well tied together with string, so that they would not be spread, whirled or scattered about by the wind. What is the reason? Because they were well tied together with string. (Vin.III,8f)

There is a play on words in this text, as the Pali word for string (sutta) is the same as the word for the discourses (Sutta), the image being that the discourses are what binds the religious life. This has certainly been the case in Theravada Buddhism, as each generation is able to consult the Pali Canon to verify its understanding of the meaning of the Buddha's teaching. This becomes even more important as the Buddha's teaching spreads to countries with different traditions, social values and languages. Even translating Pali into English requires quite some thoughtful reflection!

The teaching of Gotama Buddha is set within the context of a lineage of Buddhas stretching back many eons (text 12). While there are many similarities between them, there are also differences.

158. Five things, bhikkhus, lead to the decline of a bhikkhu in training. What five?

Here a bhikkhu in training is busy, has much to do and is accomplished at work. He neglects seclusion and does not give himself to the inner practice of mental calm. This, bhikkhus, is the first cause of the decline of a bhikkhu in training.

Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu in training spends the day doing minor things. He neglects seclusion and does not give himself to the inner practice of mental calm. This, bhikkhus, is the second cause of the decline of a bhikkhu in training.

Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu in training abides in close association with householders and monastics, in unsuitable contact with laypeople. He neglects seclusion and does not give himself to the inner practice of mental calm. This, bhikkhus, is the third cause of the decline of a bhikkhu in training.

Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu in training enters the village not at the proper time *[i.e. not only during the alms-round*] and leaves late in the day. He neglects seclusion and does not give himself

to the inner practice of mental calm. This, bhikkhus, is the fourth cause of the decline of a bhikkhu in training.

Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu in training does not get to hear easily or without difficulty whatever talk is austere, suitable for opening the mind; that is, talk on desiring little, on contentment, on seclusion, on [suitable] association, on putting forth energy, on morality, meditation, wisdom, liberation, knowledge and vision of liberation. He neglects seclusion and does not give himself to the inner practice of mental calm. This, bhikkhus, is the fifth cause of the decline of a bhikkhu in training. (A.III,116f)

The Pali Canon contains many teachings intended to warn those in training of numerous possible pitfalls. While some of these are by no means immoral or contrary to the training guidelines in themselves, they may lead to unskilful habits which can eventually cause neglect of the fundamental principles of the spiritual life. In the above citation the Buddha is, of course, pointing out the importance of spending time developing meditation. Although there are many useful and beneficial things which a bhikkhu could do, such as building work and counselling lay followers, unless the mind is well-developed through meditation one is still vulnerable to unwholesome moods.

159. Bhikkhus, there are ten dhammas which should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth. What are these ten?

1) 'I am no longer living according to worldly aims and values.' This should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.

2) 'My very life is sustained through the gifts of others.' This should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.

3) 'I should strive to abandon my former habits.' This should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.

4) 'Does regret over my conduct arise in my mind?' This should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.

5) 'Could my spiritual companions find fault with my conduct?' This should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.

6) 'All that is mine, beloved and pleasing, will become otherwise, will become separated from me.' This should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.

7) 'I am the owner of my *kamma*, heir to my *kamma*, born of my *kamma*, related to my *kamma*, abide supported by my *kamma*; whatever *kamma* I shall do, for good or for ill, of that I will be the heir.' This should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.

8) 'The days and nights are relentlessly passing: how well am I spending my time?' This should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.

9) 'Do I delight in solitude or not?' This should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.

10) 'Has my practice borne fruit with freedom or insight, so that at the end of my life I need not feel ashamed when questioned by my spiritual companions?' This should be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.

Bhikkhus, these are the ten dhammas to be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth. (A.V,87f; Amaravati Publications translation)

Just as the development of meditation is fundamental for establishing calm and stability of mind, so wise reflections can create the right attitude and be helpful nourishment for right

understanding. Although these reflections are all fairly logical, through a deeper investigation of our responses and answers we may gain clearer insight into how our spiritual practice is progressing and which areas could benefit from further consideration, so as to help towards arriving at a more balanced understanding. Are my old habits gaining or losing strength? Do I really understand the pervasive influence of *kamma*?

Although this teaching is addressed to monastics, it is also a helpful reflection for the laity. This translation is in the Chanting Books used for public recitation in many Forest Monasteries.

CONTINUITY

160. Bhikkhus, five fears which have at present not arisen will arise in future. Be awake to them, and being awake, strive for their avoidance. What five?

Bhikkhus, in the long path of the future there will be bhikkhus who have not developed body, not developed morality, not developed mind, not developed wisdom. And they, being thus undeveloped, will give the ordination to others. However, they will not be able to train them in higher morality, higher mind or higher wisdom. And they too, who have not developed body, not developed morality, not developed mind, not developed wisdom, will give ordination to others who likewise they will not be able to train in higher morality, higher mind or higher wisdom; and those other bhikkhus too will not be developed in body, not developed in morality, not developed in mind, not developed in wisdom. Indeed, bhikkhus, from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt Vinaya; from corrupt Vinaya comes corrupt Dhamma. Bhikkhus, this is the first fear which, though at present not arisen, will arise in future. Be awake to it, and being awake, strive for its avoidance.

Again, bhikkhus, in the long path of the future there will be bhikkhus who have not developed body, not developed morality, not developed mind, not developed wisdom. And they, being thus undeveloped, will give guidance (*nissaya*) to others. However, they will not be able to train them in higher morality, higher mind or higher wisdom ... Indeed, bhikkhus, from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt Vinaya; from corrupt Vinaya comes corrupt Dhamma. Bhikkhus, this is the second fear which, though at present not arisen, will arise in future. Be awake to it, and being awake, strive for its avoidance.

Again, bhikkhus, in the long path of the future there will be bhikkhus who have not developed body, not developed morality, not developed mind, not developed wisdom. When giving a talk on higher Dhamma or the Suttas, they will fall into darkness through not being fully awake. Indeed, bhikkhus, from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt Vinaya; from corrupt Vinaya comes corrupt Dhamma. Bhikkhus, this is the third fear which, though at present not yet arisen, will arise in future. Be awake to it, and being awake, strive for its avoidance.

Again, bhikkhus, in the long path of the future there will be bhikkhus who have not developed body, not developed morality, not developed mind, not developed wisdom. When those teachings spoken by the Tathāgata, profound, profound in benefit, super-mundane, connected with emptiness, are being recited, they will not wish to listen, to lend an ear, to apply the mind for knowledge, and will not think to acquire and thoroughly master them. But when the sayings of poets, mere poetry, with beautiful words and expressions, profane, spoken by disciples, are being recited, they will wish to listen, to lend an ear, to apply the mind for knowledge, and think to acquire and thoroughly master them. Indeed, bhikkhus, from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt Vinaya; from corrupt Vinaya

comes corrupt Dhamma. Bhikkhus, this is the fourth fear which, though at present not arisen, will arise in future. Be awake to it, and being awake, strive for its avoidance.

Again, bhikkhus, in the long path of the future there will be bhikkhus who have not developed body, not developed morality, not developed mind, not developed wisdom. These elders will become luxurious and lax, fall into backsliding, give up seclusion; they will not rouse the energy to attain the unattained, to acquire the unacquired, to realize the unrealized. Those people who come after will fall into imitation of what they see; and they too will become luxurious and lax, fall into backsliding, give up seclusion, and will not rouse the energy to attain the unattained, to acquire the unacquired, to realize the unrealized. Indeed, bhikkhus, from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt Vinaya; from corrupt Vinaya comes corrupt Dhamma. Bhikkhus, this is the fifth fear which, though at present not yet arisen, will arise in future. Be awake to it, and being awake, strive for its avoidance. (A.III,105f)

The Pali Canon contains many warnings of the possible deterioration of the ways of practice and decline in observation of the teachings. Since not all the Buddha's disciples were fully awakened, there was still the possibility of even senior bhikkhus developing wrong view or detrimental ways of living or teaching. We are fortunate still to have the Dhamma-Vinaya as the teacher (text 141); however, the example of senior disciples is also very influential. Thus it can be very helpful to know the Dhamma-Vinaya well, in order to have a reference for our own wise reflection as well as knowing what is suitable conduct for the Sangha.

161. As long as the monks hold regular and frequent assemblies, they may be expected to prosper and not decline. As long as they meet in harmony, break up in harmony, and carry on

their business in harmony, they may be expected to prosper and not decline. As long as they do not authorize what has not been authorized already and do not abolish what has been authorized, but proceed according to what has been authorized by the rules of training ...; as long as they honour, respect, esteem, and salute the elders of long standing who are long ordained, fathers and leaders of the order ...; as long as they do not fall prey to desires which arise in them and lead to rebirth ...; as long as they are devoted to forest lodgings ...; as long as they preserve their personal mindfulness, so that in future the good among their companions will come to them, and those who have already come will feel at ease with them ...; as long as the monks hold to these seven things and are seen to do so, they may be expected to prosper and not decline. (D.II,76-7; Maurice Walshe translation, LDB, p.233.)

This well-known passage expresses the various elements essential for the longevity and smooth functioning of the monastic life, and of society in general. Some of these elements concern ideals of individual behaviour, and some concern ideals conducive to communal harmony. Both of these are essential for developing a beneficial environment supportive of spiritual practice. We may readily agree to some of these elements, but some of them may also arouse our hesitation. For example, it is not common for people in western countries to pay respects to elders, or perhaps we feel it would be better to alter the rules to conform to modern standards. It is good to reflect on the motives for such ideas. Through abiding by these standards the Sangha has survived in many cultures for 2,600 years.

The Buddha modelled the governance of the Sangha upon that of his own democratic tribal republic, and did not appoint any successor. Thus the smooth running of Sangha affairs depended upon mutual concord and consensus, which often entailed frequent meetings and discussions, as well as much patience, tolerance and diplomacy.

162. So this holy life, bhikkhus, does not have gain, honour, and renown for its benefit, or the attainment of virtue for its benefit, or the attainment of concentration for its benefit, or knowledge and vision for its benefit. But it is this unshakeable deliverance of mind that is the goal of this holy life, its heartwood, and its end. (M.I,197; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi translation, MLDB, p. 290)

The Buddha reminds his disciples of possible distractions along the path to the final goal. Through devoted effort some 'successes' may be realized, but there is a danger that they may be taken as an end in themselves, thus distracting from the true goal of the spiritual life. Even though these benefits are all positive things, any grasping of them results in spiritual conceit. This is one of the most insidious forms of conceit to deal with, firstly because it is mixed with positive qualities and secondly because it deals with human understanding which is hard to verify. Notwithstanding temporary successes, it is thus necessary to continue unwaveringly towards the end of all grasping and conceit.

163. The bhikkhu of calmed mind, retired to an empty abode, clearly seeing the right Dhamma, experiences a joy transcending human joy. (Dhammapada 373)

ENDNOTES

1 The *savaka sangha* is often referred to as 'the four pairs, the eight kinds of noble beings', that is, the pair of those who have realized the path and those who have realized the fruit of each of the four stages of awakening: stream-entry, once-return, non-return and arahant. Bhikkhu Bodhi in The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, pp. 53f, mentions that this distinction between monastic sangha and *savaka sangha* is not always consistent.

2 '*Ubhato Sangha'*, the twofold Sangha of bhikkhus and bhikkhunis; '*Sangha Thera'*, Elder (bhikkhu) of the Sangha; '*Sangha Theri'*, Elder (bhikkhuni) of the Sangha.

3 'basis of attachment': *upadhi,* elsewhere translated as 'basis of rebirth'. The text also includes gold and silver as bases of attachment, but they are not subject to illness, death or sorrow.

4 The colour of the monastic robe is called in the Vinaya 'kāsāya', possibly meaning 'brown'. Today the colour ranges from bright orange to varying shades of red/purple and brown. Bhikkhus of the Thai Forest Tradition use the dye of the heartwood of the jackfruit tree, which varies in colour from tan for a new robe to dark brown for an older one.

5 For example, see 'The Last Breath' by Ajahn Pasanno, an account of the last days of Jay Siripongs; available from Abhayagiri Monastery. See www.forestsangha.com for address.

6 The basic 227 rules of conduct which are recited every fortnight before the assembly of at least four bhikkhus.

7 This threefold training corresponds to the threefold division of the Eightfold Path into morality, meditation and wisdom. Cf. Bud Dict. p.209: '*sikkha*'.

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GLOSSARY

The main goals I have followed in translation are to make the terms understandable to most readers and to maintain accuracy. There is a fine line between literal accuracy and implied meaning. Sometimes, however, we can lapse into jargon which may be obscure to non-specialists or even lose its meaning through over-familiarity. I have therefore retained some of the commonly recognized renderings, while for other terms I have used different translations. In an ideal world it would be desirable to have one word as translation for each Pali word, but this is not an ideal world.

I have left *dukkha* untranslated. One of the sources for considerable misunderstanding about Buddhism, I feel, is the unqualified translation of *dukkha* as 'suffering'. Many people approach religion for some sort of consolation, and to be suddenly confronted with suffering without the appropriate context can be quite discouraging. The Buddha seeks to awaken us to truth rather than merely console, so *dukkha* needs to be understood within the context of the Four Noble Truths: that is, that indeed there is *dukkha*/suffering, but it is a conditioned phenomenon and there is a way of bringing it to cessation.

The case of *kamma* is somewhat similar: unfortunately, its popularist non-Buddhist meaning of fate has crept into modern culture. It is not uncommon to hear even 'Buddhists' say when something

significant happens, 'It's just my karma', though *kamma* 'cannot be known by thought' (text 123 a). *Kamma* in the Buddha's teaching is intentional action, which has the potential to produce a result (*vipāka*). As we are continuously acting, it is therefore very difficult (without psychic powers) to know the exact connection between result and action. However, with a continuity of mindfulness it may be possible to know the general patterns of recurring results from specific types of actions, and there is almost always some possibility to change action-result habits (text 122 b).

One of the hardest technical terms to translate is *saṅkhāra*. It literally means 'making together', and as Bhikkhu Bodhi says (CDB, p.45), 'straddles both sides of the active-passive divide'; that is, it is both what makes together and what is made together. Its most prominent activity is will or volition. We experience it as some form of mental activity, whether subtle, as a latent tendency (text 127a) or 'I-making' (text 85), or, more prominently as thinking or conceptual proliferation (text 84).

In the context of conditional causality I have translated *saṅkhāra* as 'formative activities', as it is then more passive, referring to our disposition, habit patterns or programming, the result of past actions which then conditions present consciousness. In the context of the five groups of grasping (*khandhas*) I have translated it as 'mental activities', since here it is more dynamic, as the generator of skilful or unskilful *kamma* activity with the elements of choice and decision. Of course, the more we continue to generate particular types of action, the deeper the programming becomes; and this then affects the amount of choice we have for generating new action, and so it goes on.

Saṅkhāra's third main use is in terms of all conditioned, formed, made phenomena. In this context I have translated it as 'conditioned things' (texts 33 and 101).

Another difficult term is *nāma-rūpa*. I have left it in its literal meaning

as 'name and form'; although 'mentality-materiality' would be closer to the real sense, it is rather cumbersome and still does not express the exact meaning. *Nāma* are the cognitive functions of the mind — feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention — which are needed to give a sense impression a 'name'. *Rūpa* are the four elemental qualities of earth, fire, water and air and the materiality derived from them, that is, body and the material world.

Dhamma (Skt: Dharma) is a pre-Buddhist term meaning the nature of things, the truth of reality, the way it is. For Buddhists 'Dhamma' with a capital 'D' has come to mean specifically the Buddha's teachings as preserved in the Buddhist scriptures. We can thus say that Buddha-Dhamma is the particular Buddhist path to realizing the universal truth of the way things are.

Nibbāna (Skt: Nirvāna) literally means 'to go out' as a flame goes out. It is understood as the going out of the fires of greed, aversion and delusion, rather than the going out or extinguishing of a person or being. It is also the going out or cessation of the 'whole mass of suffering'.

Below are Pali equivalents of some of the translations I have used and some definitions of terms used. Alternative translations are in square [ ] brackets.

Absorptions: *jhāna* – four stages of increasingly deeper concentration, described in detail at text 88.

Activities (mental): *saṅkhāra* – 'making together', various mental qualities, the main one being intention, will or volition, which form, construct, create an experience of subjective selfhood and a supporting reality.

Attendings with Mindfulness: *satipaṭṭhāna*.

Arahant: someone who has attained the fourth and final stage of awakening.

Ariya Sangha: the 'community' of either monastics or laity who have realized one of the stages of awakening: stream-entry, once-return, non-return and arahant.

Āsālha Pūjā: the full-moon day of July, which commemorates the day on which the Buddha gave his first teaching, Setting Rolling the Wheel of Dhamma (see text 16).

Āsava: outflows (of selfhood) – sense desire, becoming, ignorance and (wrong) views. [Taints, corruptions, influxes, pollutions].

Atman: Sanskrit form of the Pali *attā* (better known in form *anattā*, not-self)

Awakening, four stages of: stream-entry, once-return, non-return and arahant; delineated by the 'fetters' which have been eliminated or reduced (see Ch. 1, note 28).

Bases (four) of psychic power: *iddhipāda*, – concentration of wish, energy, mind and inquiry.

Basis of rebirth: *upadhi* – four sources: sensual pleasures, five groups of grasping, defilements, *kamma-vipāka*. [Attachment, acquisitions]

Bhikkhu: fully-ordained male monastic.

Bhikkhuni: fully-ordained female monastic.

Bodhisatta: Buddha-to-be – literally 'awakening being'; used by the Buddha to refer to himself before Awakening.

Brahmana: brahmin priest or member of this social class, preservers of the Vedic tradition which came to be the basis of Hinduism.

Calm Meditation: *samatha kammathāna* – meditation practice with a strong emphasis on concentration in order to attain absorption.

Cannot be known by thought: *acinteyya* – the four things which cannot be known by thought are the sphere of a Buddha, the meditative absorptions, the results of *kamma* (*kamma-vipāka*) and the nature of the world.

Coming-into-existence: *bhava* [existence, becoming]

Concentration: *samādhi*.

Conceptual proliferation: *papañca*.

Conditional Causality: *paticcasamuppāda* – the Buddha's teaching that all conditioned things arise from a cause and cease with the cessation of the cause; usually formally presented as twelve links (see text 114). [Dependent origination]

Consciousness: *viññāna* – one of the basic functions of mind; usually defined in relation to the six senses.

Deva: literally 'radiant' ; celestial being, god, deity.

Dhamma: the Buddha's teaching.

Disenchantment: *nibbidā* [Revulsion]

Dispassion: *virāga*

Dukkha: 1) pain, dis-ease, suffering, 2) unsatisfactoriness, imperfection, incompleteness.

Divine Abidings (four): *Brahma vihāra:* friendliness (*mettā*), compassion (*karunā*), empathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Factors of Awakening: mindfulness, investigation-of-dhamma, energy, joy, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity (text 79).

Feeling (tones): *vedanā*.

Fetter: *samyojana*.

Five Groups of Grasping: *pañcupādānakkhandha* or *khandha* – physical form, feelings, perceptions, mental activities, consciousness.

Five Hindrances: sensual desire, ill-will, mental sluggishness and lethargy, restlessness and worry, doubt.

Five Precepts: refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication; the basic moral standard for a Buddhist.

Formative (mental) activities: *saṅkhāra*, as a factor in Conditional Causality. [Volitional formations, formations]

Formless absorptions: *arūpa-jhāna* – four absorptions using a 'formless' object for concentration: boundless space, boundless consciousness, sphere of nothingness, sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

Four Noble Truths: ariya sacca – *dukkha*, origin of *dukkha*, cessation of *dukkha* and path to cessation of *dukkha*.

Grasping: *upādāna* - four forms: sensuality, views, rules and rituals, personality belief. [Clinging]

Ignorance: *avijjā*.

Impermanence: *anicca*.

Impersonality: *anattā*.

Insight Meditation: *vipassanā kammathāna* – meditation practice with a strong emphasis on mindfulness and investigation, in order to see directly the Three Characteristics of impermanence, *dukkha* and impersonality.

Kataññuta: gratitude, most particularly to one's parents.

Khandha: the five groups of grasping – physical form, feelings, perceptions, mental activities, consciousness. [Aggregates]

Latent tendencies: *anusaya* - seven kinds: lust, aversion, view, doubt, conceit, lust for existence, ignorance. [Underlying tendencies]

Māra: literally 'killer', the Buddhist 'tempter' figure, the 'evil one' representing the sensual realm.

Mental activities: *saṅkhāra*, as one of the groups of grasping its most prominent activity is intention, will, volition.

Mental ease and dis-ease: *somanassa-domanassa*.

Mental sluggishness and lethargy: *thīna-middha* [Sloth and torpor]

Name-and-form: *nāma-rūpa* – a factor in Conditional Causality meaning mental functions of feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention plus materiality of body and world. [Mentality-materiality, mind-body]

Nibbāna: the ultimate 'goal' of Buddhist practice, the cessation of greed, aversion and delusion.

Noble silence: refers to the second absorption where thinking ceases.

Outflows (of selfhood): *āsava*, four – ignorance, sense desire, for existence, views.

Parisā: assembly, used in place of 'sangha' when referring to both monastics and laity.

Paticcasamuppāda: Conditional Causality. [Dependent Origination]

Pātimokkha: the 227 monastic rules and procedures which are recited fortnightly before the collective bhikkhu Sangha.

Psychic powers: *abhiññā* – six kinds: magical powers (i.e. levitation, walking on water, etc.), divine ear, mind reading, divine eye, recalling former abidings, destruction of outflows. [Supernormal powers, higher powers]

Rebirth: punabbhava. (literally 're-becoming')

Renunciant: samana, a religious follower of the non-Vedic tradition, some were ascetics and some wanderers. [Ascetic]

Restlessness and worry: *uddhacca-kukkucca.*

Revered One: *bhagavant*; one of the titles of the Buddha. [Blessed One, Lord]

Samana: non-Vedic renunciant.

Saṁsāra: literally 'wandering on'; the cycle of continuous rebirths.

Saṁvega: spiritual agitation or anxiety at becoming aware of the

fragile human condition.

Sanghakamma: literally 'act of the Sangha', a communal formal monastic procedure.

Savaka sangha: see Ariya Sangha.

Seclusion: *viveka*.

Sīla: skilful conduct, morality, virtue.

Six internal and external sense-spheres; sixfold sense bases: salāyatana – six sense organs and six sense objects.

Spiritual Faculties and Spiritual Powers: faith, wisdom, energy, concentration and mindfulness.

Things as they really are: *yathābhūta*.

Thirst: *tanhā* – three kinds: sensuality, for existence and for non-existence. [Craving]

Three Characteristics: *tilakkhana* -- the 'characteristics' of all conditioned things: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and impersonality.

Three Knowledges: *tevijja* – divine eye, recalling former abidings, destruction of outflows.

Tipitaka: literally 'Three Baskets'; the collective name for the Pali Canon.

Triple Gem: *tiratana* – Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha; also called the Three Refuges.

Unsatisfactoriness: *dukkha*, in its existential manifestation.

Upāsaka: male lay disciple

Upāsikā: female lay disciple.

Vesākha Pūjā: full moon day of May commemorating the Buddha's Birth, Awakening and Passing.

Vimutti: liberation.

Vinaya (Piṭaka): the collection of the disciplinary rules and procedures.

Vipassanā: insight

Viveka: solitude – three kinds: body, mind and *upadhi*.

Worthy One: arahant, one of the titles of the Buddha, and all those who are fully awakened.

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AJAHN THIRADHAMMO was born in Canada in 1949, took *upasampada* at Wat Meung in 1973 and stayed at Wat Pah Nanachat until 1982. He was at Chithurst Monastery for two years and was then in charge of Harnham Vihara until 1987. He then helped establish Dhammapala Monastery in Switzerland and stayed there as abbot until 2005. Ajahn Thiradhammo was Abbot at Bodhinyanarama Monastery in New Zealand until March 2012 and is presently of no fixed abode.

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