THE FUNDAMENTALS OF BUDDHISM

Sayādaw U Sīlānanda

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The **Venerable Sayādaw U Sīlānanda** (1927-2005) was nominated by the most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw of Burma (Myanmar) to carry out the honourable mission of spreading the Dhamma in the West, more than 30 years ago.

The Venerable Sayādaw is the Abbot of Dhammānanda Vihāra in California and the Spiritual Director of the Theravāda Buddhist Society of America, Dhammachakka Meditation Center and the Tathāgata Meditation Center of San Jose. In Burma, he is also one of three Spiritual Directors of the Mahāsī Meditation Center in Yangon.

Born to a devout Buddhist family in Mandalay on 16 December, 1927, the Venerable Sayādaw received his early education at an American Baptist Mission School for boys. He was ordained as a novice monk and began formal religious training at the age of 16, receiving full bhikkhu ordination four years later.

The Venerable Sayādaw holds two Dhammācariya degrees and has taught at the Athithokdayone Pāḷi University. He was an External Examiner at the Department of Oriental Studies, University of Art and Sciences in Mandalay, Myanmar. He was the Chief Compiler of the Tipiṭaka Pāḷi-Burmese Dictionary and was one of the distinguished editors of the Pāḷi Canon and associated Commentaries at the Sixth Buddhist Council held in Rangoon (Yangon) from 1954 to 1956.

The Venerable Sayādaw is the author of seven Burmese Buddhist books and three in English namely: **THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS, VOLITION:** ▶

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Sayādaw U Sīlānanda

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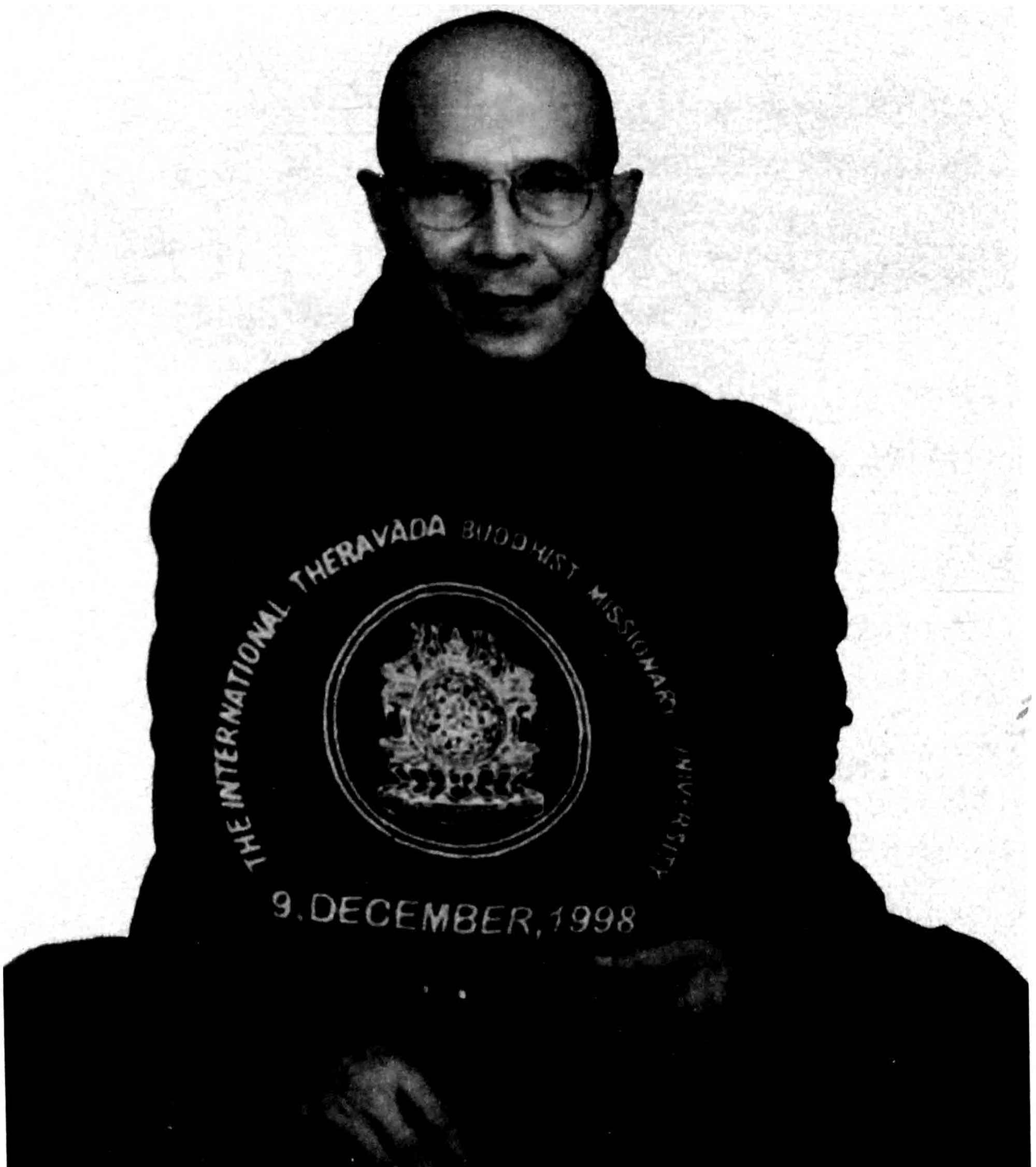


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Sayādaw U Sīlānanda

(1927-2005)

EULOGY *for*
SAYĀDAW U SĪLĀNANDA
by
"Sayādaw's student for
more than 25 year"
USA

I have dedided to talk about how wonderfully Venerable U Sīlānanda represented the ideal virtues of a monk. Those virtues are enumerated in the beginning of the Mettā Sutta and Sayādaw himself once commented on them. Using those two things as references I will comment very briefly on how he lived up to those virtues. It is my hope that all of us will thank him by striving to emulate his fine example as best we can. I have edited the material slightly.

First, the Sutta says: **He who is skilled in good and who desires to attain the state of calm (Nibbāna) should act thus.** Sayādaw commented, "One who is skilled in good knows how to do things." Sayādaw knew how to do many things very well. He was an expert in Tipiṭaka (the Pāḷi Canon) especially Abhidhamma, he was a linguist and master of many languages — thankfully English, a writer of many books, a teacher of many students, a computer devotee, a Dhamma pioneer bringing the Buddha's message to many lands; but mostly he was skilled in kusala, speaking and acting in a wholesome way.

The Sutta says: **A monk should he able.** Sayādaw commented, "A monk should be able to strive for liberation from the round

of rebirths. He should be able and ready to put forth effort to practise meditation." Sayādaw always centered his activities around the practice of meditation even when it would have been easier to do other things and he always encouraged his students to focus on meditation, on the practice.

The Sutta says: **A monk should be uptight, perfectly upright**. Sayādaw commented, "A monk should be straight, perfectly straight, very straight. That means he should be honest, not just ordinarily honest, but perfectly honest." Sayādaw's life is a testament to the fulfillment of this virtue.

The Suttta says: **A monk should be compliant**. Sayādaw commented, "The Pāḷi word is *suvaco*. That means of easy speech. '*Easy of Speech*' means one to whom you can say admonishing words with ease, one who is willing to accept correction." Sayādaw never allowed his great abilities and accomplishments to impede his observance of this practice. Although a great teacher, he was always ready to learn and accept criticism.

The Sutta says: **A monk should be gentle**. Sayādaw commented, "A monk should be gentle in deeds, gentle in words and gentle in mind." Although Sayādaw had a formidable array of talents, his gentle manner allowed students of great diversity to readily approach and learn from him. *Mettā* always crowned his sharp sword of wisdom.

The Sutta says: **A monk should be humble**. Sayādaw commented, "A monk should be humble. A monk should not be proud. People, ordinary people, those who are not *Arahants*, tend in get pride — pride in their birth, pride in their education, pride in their knowledge, pride in their ability to do things, pride in their attainment. Monks must try to get rid of this pride and be

humble because when one is proud, one is not approachable. One cannot teach properly. One cannot be a good leader or teacher for people. A monk must be humble. The more advanced beings are spiritually, the more humble they become." Sayādaw never allowed arrogance or condescension to impede his practice and stressed the propriety of humility in our relationship to the deep and profound teachings of the Buddha.

The Sutta says: **A monk should be contented**. Sayādaw commented, "Monks must be contented. Contentment here means satisfaction with what one already has. Lay people provide monks with the four requisites. It is like harrassment to ask lay people for many things. Contentment is a good quality for both monks and lay people. When you have contentment, you have happiness. The Buddha said: "**Contentment is the best of wealth, the best of riches.**" Sayādaw was a missionary monk, so he often encountered lay people who did not know how to provide for him properly. Complaints just never happpened. Instructions and corrections were given occasionally. And we learned to do better while Sayādaw's *khanti pāramī* reached the celestial realms.

The Sutta says: **A monk should be controlled in senses.** Sayādaw commented, "A monk should be controlled so that he does not get any *akusala* (unwholesomeness) through the six sense doors. In other words one is to be mindful." Sayādaw's conduct exemplified a life dedicated to mindfulness.

The Sutta says: **A monk should be discreet**. Sayādaw commented, "That means a monk must be intelligent and have wisdom." Sayādaw's academic achievements attest to his intelligence. The ability to communicate profoundly the Dhamma to so many, so well attests to his wisdom.

The Sutta says: **A monk should not commit any wrong such that the wise might censure him.** Sayādaw commented, "A monk must carefully and heedfully act in such a way that no wise person will criticize him." Sayādaw assiduously pursued this goal throughout his life. May we also pursue this lofty goal.

From the Dhammapada (406-408) let me conclude with these verses that describe his and our goal very well:

"He who is friendly amongst the hostile,
who is peaceful amongst the violent,
who is unattached amongst the attached,
him I call a Noble One.

In whom lust hatred, pride, dishonesty are
fallen off like a mustard seed from the point of a needle,
him I call a Noble One.

He who utters gentle, instructive, true words,
who gives offense to none,
him I call a Noble One."

EULOGY *for*
SAYĀDAW U SĪLĀNANDA

by

Luyen Pham
Tathāgata Meditation Center
San Jose, USA

t is a privilege and an honor for me to represent Tathāgata ▲ Meditation Center to give a eulogy for Sayādawgyi U Sīlānanda today.

We have known Sayādaw and become his students for almost 20 years. During this time, we have learned a lot from him as well as about him. Sayādaw is really a great teacher and a great person with many exceptional qualities.

First, Sayādaw is very **inspirational**. Without him, there is no Tathāgata Meditation Center (TMC). Not very long from the first encounter with him, a *Vipassanā* meditation group was formed in 1987. We continued on a monthly basis from home to home until the center was founded in 1991. Under his spiritual guidance, the TMC continues to develop and the yearly activity schedule becomes busier each year. Besides the monthly weekend retreat with Sayādaw, we have a 9-day retreat with him every Thanksgiving. The center's facility is too small for the number of yogis wanting to practise under Sayādaw's guidance every Thanksgiving retreat.

Second, Sayādaw is very **energetic**. Sayādaw worked very hard. His yearly schedule is almost full before the coming year

arrives. He once said that there was no retirement for him. He would work until the last moment of his life to spread the teachings of the Buddha if he could. And he did.

Third, Sayādaw is very **serious**. Even he knows the Dhamma very well, before each Dhamma talk, he always prepares the materials so that he can deliver the best sermon for the audience.

Fourth, Sayādaw is full of ***mettā*** (loving-kindness). Wherever and whoever needs his meditation guidance and his Dhamma knowledge, he would go if his busy schedule allows him. He puts the benefits of people above all.

Fifth, Sayādaw is very **humble**. It is rare to find a person with such greatness but no less humility like him. Never in our contact and being around him, we see any exception to this quality.

Sixth, Sayādaw is a very **peaceful person**. Sayādaw is always at peace with people and with himself. His facial expression and body composure never fails to show this peaceful ness.

Seventh, Sayādaw is a very **simple person**. He is always content in any environment. During the construction of the Half Moon Bay monastery, he was staying at TMC. Even though the facility is very humble and the room is too small, especially after he brought in a fraction of his books, he is comfortable with it.

What a blessing for us all at TMC.

Dear Sayādaw,

You departed us leaving many beloved and unforgettable memories and a big Dhamma heritage. Your elaborations of the original teachings of the Buddha are a treasure for us at TMC. Physically, you are no longer with us but in our hearts, you always are.

Your wisdom and Loving-kindness are two wings to lift our life so that we can live it to the utmost. We will do our best to deserve your love and trust. We will continue your mission, our mission at TMC. We will follow your footstep in spreading the teachings of the Buddha, especially the Four Foundations of Mindfulness meditation practice, at TMC to the last moment of our life. No retirement, Sayādaw! No retirement!

May you forever attain Nibbāna in your next life if you have not been there already.

Farewell, Sayādaw. We all love you. As always!

Your Dhamma sons and daughters

at Tathāgata Meditation Center (TMC)

San Jose, USA

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The Buddha

1

INTRODUCTION
The Fundamentals of Buddhism

The course we are beginning today will be called The Fundamentals of Buddhism. As it is called The Fundamentals of Buddhism, this course is just the fundamentals. We will not go deep into the teachings. As to the fundamentals we need to know the **Three Gems** or **Three Refuges** in Buddhism.

The subjects we are going to teach in this course may be known already to many of you, but I hope there will be some subjects or some topics which you need to understand more clearly or which you need to polish your understanding of these subjects. So there may be things which are already known to you and there also may be some things which are new to you. So if there are things you already know, please be patient because hearing what you already know can fortify your understanding, (it can) make your understanding firmer and clearer.

With regard to the fundamentals of Buddhism, the first thing we should know is about the person with whom what we call Buddhism started. That person, as you all know, was the Buddha. Also we need to know something — at least in this class — something about what he taught or some of his teachings. Also we need to know who preserved the teachings of the Buddha and

who brought down the teachings of the Buddha from generation to generation until the present time. These three are called the Three Gems in Buddhism — the **Buddha**, the **Dhamma** and the **Saṅgha**.

THE BUDDHA

Before learning the teachings of the Buddha we first need to know the Buddha. Now the Buddha was a historical person. He really lived and taught over 2500 years ago in what are now known as Nepal and India. At the time of the Buddha there was no India, there was no Nepal, but they had other names. So the Buddha was a real person who lived and taught over 2500 years ago in Nepal and India.

He was born and brought up as a prince. And he renounced the world at the age of 29. He renounced the world because he wanted to find a way to end all suffering. He saw beings suffering and so he wanted to save (them). That means he wanted to help beings save themselves from suffering. In order to find the way to end all suffering, he had to give up his kingship, his parents, his wife, his child, his kingdom. So he renounced the world and went into the forest, took off his garb and took the dress of a monk, and became a recluse. For six years he practiced austerities. He practiced many forms of severe practices with the view of gaining the way to end all suffering.

At the end of six years he attained what he was after, that is, he found the way to end all suffering. He practiced that way himself and he got the best results of the practice, that is, he became the Buddha, the Fully Enlightened One.

He taught all beings for 45 years. He taught everyday to all who came to him for guidance. And at the age of 80, after teaching for 45 years, he passed away.

So at the age of 29 he renounced the world and he spent six years in the forest. So he became the Buddha at the age of 35. He taught for 45 years until he passed away at the age of 80.

If we want to know what year he was born and what year he passed away, and what year his enlightenment took place, we are fortunate that we have these dates. According to the reckoning traditionally handed down in Theravāda Buddhist countries, Buddha passed away in 544 BC on the full moon day of May.

You may want to know how we get that year. Now in 1956 the whole world celebrated the 2500th year of the Buddha's passing away. So 1956 was 2500 years after the death of the Buddha. So if we subtract 1956 from 2500, we get 544. So the Buddha passed away in 544 BC and his passing away took place on the full moon day of May.

Now he taught for 45 years. So we add 45 to 544 and we get 589 as the year of his enlightenment. So he became the Buddha on the full moon day of May again in the year 589 BC.

When did his renunciation take place? In what year did he renounce the world? How many years did he spend in the forest? Six years. So add six years to 589. So you get 595 BC. That took place on the full moon day of July.

When we get the date of the year of his renunciation as 595 BC, we only need to add 29 to 595. So we get 624 BC as the year of his birth. So Buddha was born as Prince Siddhattha on the full moon day of May in the year 624 BC or 624 years before Jesus

Christ came to the world. We will learn more about the Buddha in our next class.

Now some characteristics of the Buddha — we want to know what the Buddha was. Was he a god, or was he God, or was he a prophet, or was he a savior, or was he just a human being? We want to know that.

Buddha was not God with a capital G. Sometimes when friends meet each other, they would ask who is your God or something like that. Buddhists sometimes say that Buddha is our God, but that is not true. Buddha was not a God with a capital G. That means Buddha was not a creator as in Christianity. And Buddha was not a god with a small g. Buddha was not a celestial being. Buddha was not a *deva*. Buddha was a human being. He was not a prophet. He was not a messenger of God. He was just a human being. But he was an extraordinary human being because by his own human effort he attained the highest spiritual attainment that a being is capable of. Buddha was only a teacher. Buddha was not a savior.

Sometimes when we meet friends from other religions, they ask: "Can Buddha save?" And our answer is: "No." It may be discouraging to know that Buddha cannot save us. Buddha cannot save us because it is impossible to save. 'Saving' in the Buddhist sense really means helping a person save himself. Sometimes we use the word 'save'. Buddha appeared in the world to 'save' beings. Here 'saving' does not mean turning beings into enlightened persons, but teaching them and guiding them on the path to enlightenment or helping them to help themselves.

When a person becomes enlightened, that means that person eradicates mental defilements, impurities in his or her mind. Now

can anybody enter into your mind and take those impurities out of your mind? Can anybody do that? Not even the Buddha can do that. That is why it is impossible to save beings just by praying. What Buddha did was help beings save themselves by teaching them. So Buddha was not a savior. He was only a teacher. Since he was only a teacher, he can only teach us and the rest is up to us. We must make effort ourselves. Buddha himself once said: You yourself must make effort; Buddhas are only teachers. So Buddhas are not saviors, but they are teachers. They are infallible teachers. They can show us the way, the right way, the correct way, the sure way to emancipation or to the eradication of all mental defilements.

In order to become the Buddha he had to make a super human effort. Even in his last life, even in the life when he became the Buddha, he had to practice severe meditation for six long years. Before that, not even for countless years, but for countless eons, countless lives, he had to fulfill what are called *pāramitās* (perfections) or necessary qualifications to become the Buddha. So he became the Buddha not for nothing. He had to make effort himself. He had to sacrifice many, many things in order to become the Buddha.

What are the qualities of the Buddha? Whenever we say the word '**Buddha**', we always say the Fully Enlightened One. So Buddha was the Fully Enlightened One. He became enlightened by his own effort without the help of any human being or celestial being. And he possessed total purity of mind. That is one great quality that Buddha possessed, total purity of mind.

Now, our minds are always with impurities — attachment, greed, hate, delusion, pride, and so on. It is said that the mind of the Buddha was totally free from all impurities. Since his mind

was totally pure, he was not capable of anger, not capable of attachment, not capable of pride, and so on. So even though there was provocation, he would never get angry. This total purity of mind is one outstanding quality that Buddha possessed.

When we hear the words 'total purity of mind', we may think this quality is not so great. But if we compare our minds to the mind of the Buddha, which is totally pure, we understand that it is a great quality, an admirable quality.

Now for us we get attached to things which are desirable. We see something that is beautiful and we are attached to that thing or we are attached to persons. And on the least provocation we just get angry. We do not think about getting angry. We get angry the minute we are provoked. In such circumstances it would be very difficult, almost impossible, not to have attachment, not to get angry. But the Buddha, since he possessed total purity of mind, since his mind was totally pure, would never get attached to anything at all or he would never get angry with anything or any person.

Now his cousin Devadatta attempted to take his life how many times? Three times. Devadatta attempted to kill the Buddha, but it is said that Buddha was not angry with him. Actually Buddha had compassion for Devadatta. It is said that Buddha had the same attitude towards his son as towards Devadatta and other persons who tried to kill him. So the total purity of mind is a great quality. And it is very, very difficult to possess such a quality. The Buddha did possess that quality as a result of his super human effort.

The other quality the Buddha possessed was omniscience, that is, knowing all or knowing everything. In order to get this quality also the Buddha had to spend countless eons or countless

lives. So actually it is no wonder that Buddha possessed this great quality of knowing everything, when we see how long he fulfilled his perfections to achieve this knowledge.

Now in order to become a doctor how many years does a person have to spend? How many years?

Student: Eight years.

Sayādaw: Eight years. Before that eight years he had to attend other schools, maybe for twelve years. Right? So for about twenty years a person has to learn in order to become a doctor. When he becomes a doctor, it is no wonder because he had twenty years of effort in this endeavor. Buddha did not attend school, but he spent billions of lifetimes acquiring the necessary perfections. So it is no wonder that the Buddha possessed omniscience or all knowing wisdom.

This all knowing wisdom was not for the Buddha to show off or to boast of. It is a tool for him or he used it as a tool to teach other beings. With the help of omniscience he knew exactly what to teach, how to teach, and when to teach. That is why his teaching was always successful.

Now we should know what to teach. Right? But actually teachers nowadays do not know exactly what to teach because they do not know what qualifications their listeners have. Now actually I cannot decide what to teach you because I do not know how much about Buddhism you already know, or whether you are complete beginners, or whether you are advanced students of Buddhism. I don't know. So I don't know exactly what to teach, but I thought of a course on the fundamentals of Buddhism. So I must begin with the Buddha and so on. But the Buddha would know what to teach to any person or to any audience.

Also Buddha knew how to teach. Buddha taught beings in different ways. He used the method which would be most beneficial to the person he taught or to the individual he was teaching. So he knew exactly how to teach.

Also he knew exactly when to teach. Sometimes a person is not ready to accept his teachings, not ready to understand his teachings, or to practice what he taught. The Buddha knew when to teach such a person, whether that person is mature enough to understand him and to follow his teachings.

So with these three qualities (knowing what to teach, how to teach, and when to teach), it is no wonder that the Buddha was always successful with his teachings. If you have read the discourses, you will find that at the end of the discourse so-and-so became enlightened or that many beings, including celestial beings, became enlightened or saw the truth, and so on. Buddha possessed omniscience not to show himself off, but to help beings get free from suffering.

There are many more qualities of the Buddha. It is said that even if a Buddha would talk about the qualities of another Buddha for the whole life and nothing else, the qualities of the other Buddha would not be exhausted. So there is no end of the qualities of a Buddha.

THE DHAMMA

So now we will go to the Dhamma. There are Three Gems in Buddhism. The first is the Buddha. The second is the Dhamma. What is the Dhamma? We usually translate it as teachings, the teachings of the Buddha. The Dhamma actually means what the Buddha realized at the moment of his enlightenment and what he taught to all beings. That is the Dhamma. So Dhamma does not mean only those we find in the books but also those that many people experience during their meditation. In other words the Dhamma means the **Path**, the **Fruition**, **Nibbāna**, and **His teachings**. There are four Paths, four Fruitions, Nibbāna, (and the teachings). So when we say Dhamma, we mean all these ten things, that is, when we say Dhamma with regard to the Three Gems.

By the way, the word '*Dhamma*' has many meanings. We cannot translate the word '*Dhamma*' by one English word. So the meaning here is with the context. We must understand the meaning of the word according to the context, according to where it is used. So when we say the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, we mean the Dhamma that is the Path, Fruition, Nibbāna, and also his teachings. Or in other words Dhamma means what he realized, what the Buddha realized at the moment of enlightenment, and also what his disciples realized at the moment of enlightenment, and also what the Buddha taught to the world.

Now how big is the body of his teachings? It is said that Buddha talked very fast. During the time when an ordinary person says one word, the Buddha could say 120 words. Unbelievable! There are people nowadays who talk very, very fast and still we

understand them. So with that speech Buddha taught for 45 years everyday. So his teachings would be very, very great.

Even the gist of his teachings comprises 40 volumes now, about 300-400 pages each. There are so many teachings of the Buddha that sometimes we might say that there are too many things to know; we cannot hope to understand his teachings. But on one occasion Buddha summarized his teachings in just one verse. I think we should all know that verse. Many of you already know what that verse is. That verse epitomizes all the teachings of the Buddha. That verse is very simple. '**Do not do any evil, cultivate good**, and **purify your mind**. **This is the teachings of the Buddhas**.' So there are only three things, very simple to understand, but very, very difficult to put into practice.

'Do not do any evil.' Do not do what is bad. We sometimes or we often do what is bad. 'Cultivate good.' Do what is good. Sometimes we don't want to cultivate good. We don't want to do what is good. So Buddha said: "Do what is good." That is practicing charity, keeping moral precepts, practicing meditation. That is what is meant by 'cultivate good'. And then, 'Purify your mind.' Our minds are always contaminated with impurities. And so Buddha urged his followers to purify their minds. When mind is purified, the person experiences total happiness. So if we can just follow these three pieces of advice, we would be the most happy people in the world. 'Do not do any evil, do what is good, and purify the mind. This is the teachings of the Buddhas.'

Buddha did not just say 'purify your mind'. He taught us what to do to achieve the purification of mind. He gave us three steps to be practiced one after another along the path to spiritual attainment.

The first of these steps in Pāḷi is called *sīla* (**moral purity**). **Moral purity is the basis of all spiritual practices. Moral purity means purity of bodily and verbal actions.** We do not do anything wrong with our bodies and we do not do anything wrong with our speech, that is, we abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and we abstain from telling lies, backbiting and so on.

The second stage Buddha taught is *samādhi* or **purity of mind, purity of mind through concentration**. So concentration of mind is the second stage to practice. In order to practice concentration there are a number of subjects of meditation. We will talk about that later in the course.

The third stage is called *paññā* (**wisdom**). **Actually wisdom here means the knowledge of the true nature of things, the knowledge of the true nature of the body and mind or of mind and matter, and also the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths.** This third step, wisdom, is actually the outcome of the second step, concentration, which is based on the first step, *sīla* or moral purity. So if we want to reach the higher stage of spiritual achievement, we have to go through these steps one by one. Without achieving the first one, moral purity, we cannot hope to reach purity of mind. Without purity of mind, which is concentration, we cannot hope to gain the knowledge of the true nature of things and we cannot hope to penetrate into the Four Noble Truths.

So Buddha gave us this, let us call it a blueprint, for the spiritual growth for his disciples. If anybody follows these three steps, he or she is sure to reach the final stage of spiritual attainment.

THE SAṄGHA

Now we come to the Third Gem in Buddhism, the Saṅgha. Saṅgha means a group or a community of individuals. Here it is **the community of individuals who follow his teachings and who have become enlightened. So the enlightened disciples of the Buddha are called Saṅgha (the community of individuals).**

Also the community of monks, nuns, and novices, who follow his teachings, rules and discipline — this community is also called Saṅgha. The second Saṅgha, **the community of monks, nuns and novices, may be comprised of both enlightened and unenlightened individuals.** But the first Saṅgha, the community of individuals who have become enlightened is comprised of enlightened persons only. Both of them are collectively called Saṅgha.

Buddhists are encouraged to take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha. It is the Saṅgha, especially the second Saṅgha, that preserved the teachings of the Buddha and brought them down to the present generation. It is the community of monks and maybe nuns also in the olden days that preserved the teachings of the Buddha and handed down the teachings from generation to generation until the present time. So we need to be grateful to the Saṅgha for bringing the teachings of the Buddha up to the present. If there were no Saṅgha, we would not be here today practicing meditation, or talking about Buddha's teachings, or learning about Buddha's teachings. **So it is the Saṅgha that perpetuates the teachings of the Buddha and hands down the teachings from generation to generation.**

Also the members of the Saṅgha are not the mediators between the Buddha and the people. Lay people can approach

the Buddha directly. They don't have to go through monks. **So monks are not the mediators between the Buddha and people and other beings. They are just spiritual guides for lay people.** Now, monks, since they have renounced the world, have more time to devote to the study and the practice of Buddha's teachings. So they are in a more favorable condition than lay people to practice the Dhamma, and to study, and to preserve the Dhamma. So that is why we take refuge in the Saṅgha too. Out of gratitude we take refuge in the Saṅgha. It is the Saṅgha that brought us the teachings of the Buddha.

So as I said, the Buddha's teachings or Buddhism was handed down from generation to generation for more than 2500 years. Along this 2500 year journey there appeared divisions of Buddhism. It is a sad thing to talk about divisions of Buddhism. I want there to be only one Buddhism, but I cannot help. There are now in the world two major divisions of Buddhism. The first one is called **Theravāda Buddhism** and the second one is called **Mahāyāna Buddhism**. Theravāda Buddhism was for some time or even now in some places called Hīnayāna Buddhism, but that name was not accepted by Theravāda Buddhists. That is because Hīnayāna really means inferior vehicle. So I belong to Theravāda Buddhism. We call ourselves Theravāda Buddhists. Theravāda means the teachings of the elders or something like that.

So Theravāda Buddhism preserved the teachings of the Buddha in the original form. So it is understood that the original teachings of the Buddha were to be found in its entirety in Theravāda Buddhism.

Mahāyāna Buddhism I think is different. There are additions to the teachings of the Buddha. Some new Suttas were added.

Some new discourses were added and so on. That is according to our interpretation.

So there are two divisions of Buddhism nowadays. The first one, Theravāda Buddhism, flourishes in countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. These five countries are known as the five Theravāda Buddhist countries. Theravāda Buddhism is also found in Nepal and Vietnam. I was told that Vietnam is the only country where both Theravāda Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism flourish. We can find Mahāyāna Buddhism in Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, Japan and here (the United States) now.

Theravāda Buddhism was also called southern Buddhism because it spread towards the south, from the middle of India towards south India, then to Sri Lanka, and then east to Burma, Thailand and so on. Mahāyāna Buddhism is called northern Buddhism because it spread to northern countries from India, like Bhutan, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea. So there are two divisions of Buddhism nowadays, Theravāda Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Since I am a Theravāda Buddhist, I know about Theravāda Buddhism only. Please do not ask me about Mahāyāna Buddhism. I am not qualified to talk about Mahāyāna Buddhism with authority. I don't want to make mistakes or I don't want to misrepresent Mahāyāna Buddhism or any other religion. So ask me about Theravāda Buddhism and I will answer as best I can.

This class, that is, today's class is meant to be an introduction to the fundamentals of Buddhism. So the Three Gems are dealt with. We will spend much more time with the Second Gem, the Dhamma, than with the Buddha and the Saṅgha. That is because

actually we are more interested in what the Buddha taught, the Buddha's teachings, than maybe in the personal life of the Buddha. I tell you this not because I am not grateful to the Buddha. We should be very grateful to the Buddha for leaving this heritage behind. But we are selfish persons. So we always think of the benefits we will get from understanding and the practice of the teachings. So the teachings are more important for us than the life of the Buddha or actually the Saṅgha. So we will spend more time in studying the important teachings of the Buddha. This class is an introduction to the fundamentals of Buddhism. OK.

* * *

So the student asked: "*Bhante*, do you make use of magic powers?" He said: "Oh, it is easy for me." Then the student said: "*Bhante*, please create an elephant, put the trunk up, making noise and have it rushing at you, say to kill you." So the teacher created that image as the student had asked. When the image he created went to him to crush him, he was afraid, and so he got up from his seat. (*Bhante* Sayādaw U Sīlānanda laughing). He was afraid of his own creation.

So the student took hold of the robe and said: "*Bhante*, do *Arahants* have fear?" (*Bhante* Sayādaw U Sīlānanda laughing some more). Only then he realized that he was not an *Arahant* yet. Then he put up his hands (in supplication) and said: "Friend, please be my refuge." The student said: "I came here just for this purpose." Then he taught him a practice of meditation. He practiced the meditation and became an *Arahant*.

So even for sixty years they (the *jhānas*) can push the mental defilements away. Although for sixty years no mental defilements had arisen in his mind, when there is the condition, the elephant coming to crush him, he was afraid. So he wanted to run away. *Jhānas* cannot eradicate, cannot destroy mental defilements altogether. But they can push them away, maybe not just in the *jhāna* state, for many years. Since they are not eradicated completely, they can come back as in this story. Those eradicated by *Magga* never arise again. This may be an extreme case, that is, a monk being able to push away mental defilements for sixty years, although he was a *puthujjana*.

OK. I think I have explained fairly fully, not yet fully, but fairly fully the factor of Right Concentration. I think this shows you what I told you about the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path is just the tip of the iceberg. There is a lot more to know about the Four Noble Truths and the Eight Factors.

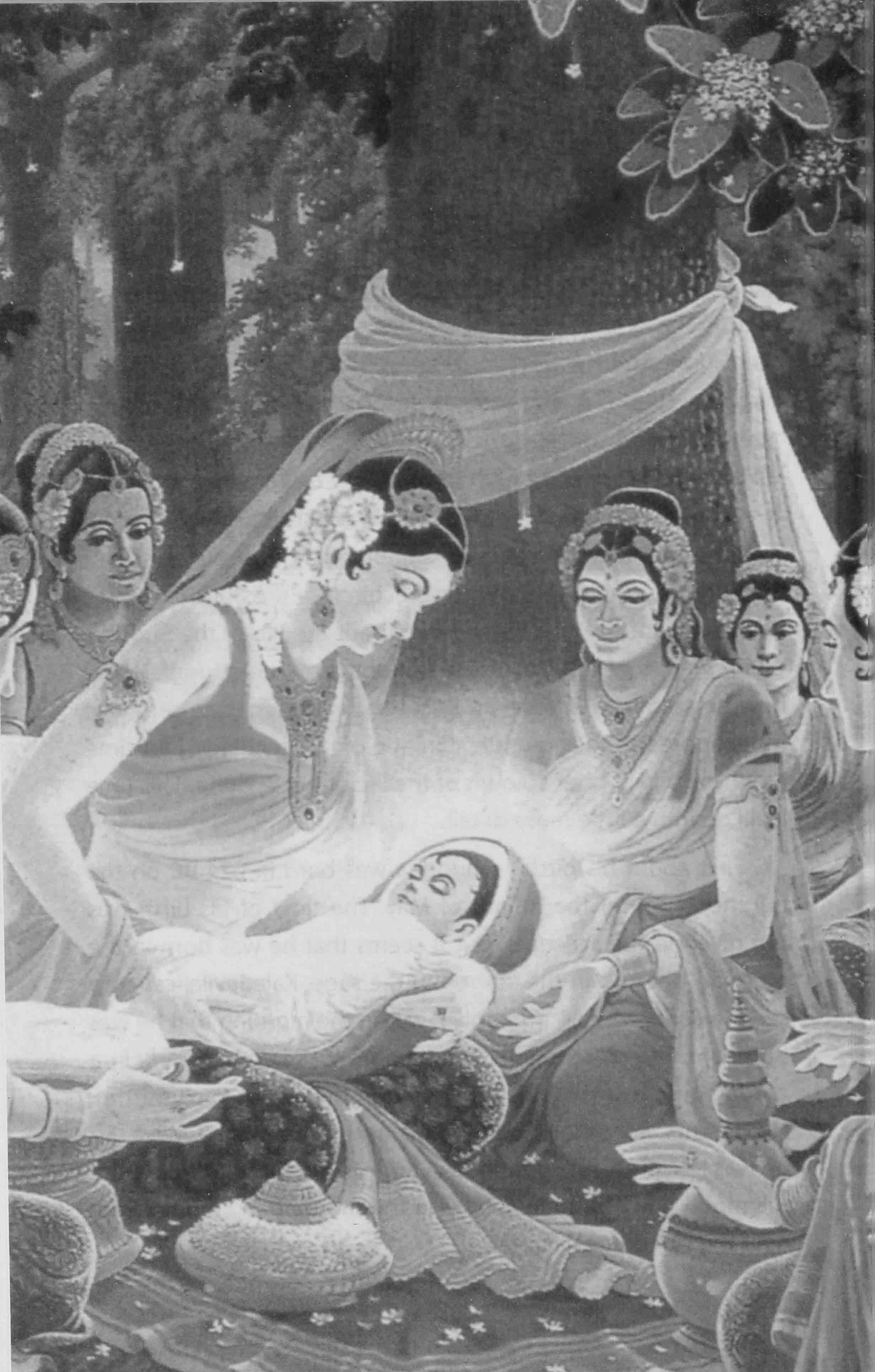
Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

2

LIFE *of* *The* BUDDHA

ast time I told you we will be with the Buddha for some more time. So today I will tell you something more about the life of the Buddha. When we study the teachings of the Buddha, I think it is important to know something about the life of the Buddha. When we know the life of the Buddha, how he struggled and how he sacrificed in order to become the Buddha, we can have more appreciation and understanding of his teachings. Last time I told you a very brief account of the life of the Buddha. This time I will go into a little more detail.

First about his birth — Buddha was born in 624 BC on the full moon day of the month of May. The time of his birth was not given in the accounts, but it seems that he was born in the morning because in the afternoon the sage, Kaladevila, came to see the *Bodhisatta*. So probably it was in the morning that he was born, and the place where he was born was Lumbini Park, in a garden or in a small forest not far from the city of Kapilavatthu. His parents were King Suddhodana and Queen Mahā Māyā. So he was born to King Suddhodana and Queen Mahā Māyā on the full moon day of May in 624 BC in the morning in Lumbini Park near the city of Kapilavatthu.



In the afternoon the ascetic, named Kaladevila or Asita, came to the palace to see the newborn baby; Kaladevila was in the habit of coming to King Suddhodana, taking food there and talking with him or whatever. This time he came to see the newborn baby. When he arrived, King Suddhodana made the newborn baby pay homage to the ascetic, but the feet of the newborn baby got on the head of the ascetic. So the ascetic Kaladevila bowed down to the infant baby. When the king saw this, the king himself also bowed down to his own son.

When the ascetic saw the child, first he laughed and then he cried. The king was alarmed and so asked the reason for his laughing and crying. Then the ascetic said: "I laughed because this child will definitely become a Buddha for the benefit of all beings." He said: "I cried because I will not live to see this child become a Buddha." That was because he was going to die before the child became the Buddha. So first he laughed, and then he cried, and he told the king that the child would definitely become a Buddha.

On the fifth day after the birth of the child the king held a name giving ceremony. Eight Brahmans were invited to read the signs, the special signs in the child. Now seven Brahmans, the seven older Brahmans, read the signs and made the prophecy that if the child were to lead the household life, he would become a universal monarch. If the child chose to become a monk, chose to renounce the world, then he would become a Buddha. The youngest of them all, Kondañña by name, gave only one prophecy that a person possessing such signs will not remain in the household life, but definitely will renounce the world and will become the Buddha. The name Siddhattha was given to the child. Siddhattha means 'purpose accomplished'.

Another incident important in the life of Siddhattha was the plowing ceremony done by the king himself. In order to promote cultivation in the olden days the king, and his ministers, and his officials did a ceremonial plowing of the fields. So at that ceremony the king took his son with him and then left his son with attendants under a tree. Then the king went to participate in the plowing ceremony. Then the attendants, the nurses and others, wanted to see the personage of the king. So they left the child under the tree and went to see the grand ceremony. When nobody was around — actually the child was covered, a curtain was put around him. So when nobody was there, the child sat up and then practiced the breathing in and breathing out meditation. It is said that he attained the first *jhāna*. After some time the attendants remembered that they had left the child. So they went back to the child. To their surprise they saw the child sitting in meditation. So they were surprised and they informed the king. The king came to his son. When he saw his son in the meditative posture, actually sitting in the first *jhāna*, he bowed down to the infant. This was the second bowing of the father to his son.

This incident is important because it was the recollection of this incident that the ascetic Gotama remembered. After some years he became the ascetic Gotama. Ascetic Gotama was able to discover the right path or right practice.

Our books do not say when this plowing ceremony took place. Since the *Bodhisatta* was an infant, not old enough to go to the ceremony with his father, and also since the plowing ceremony was done every year, we may take it that this particular plowing ceremony took place when the *Bodhisatta* was less than one year old.

So Siddhattha grew up as a prince. At the age of sixteen he was married to Princess Yasodharā. In those times people married young. He enjoyed the life of a prince. He enjoyed a life of luxury for thirteen years. It is said in our books that King Suddhodana, his father, did not want him to become a Buddha because he wanted him to become a universal monarch. So King Suddhodana provided him with every kind of sensual pleasure available in those times. For thirteen years Siddhattha enjoyed the life of a prince.

In his 29th year the gods thought that it was time to remind Prince Siddhattha of his mission. So they showed him the four signs, the four great signs. The prince was in the habit of going to his pleasure garden every now and then. One day he went to his pleasure garden and on his way he saw an old man. Then four months later he saw a sick man. Four months later he saw a dead man. After seeing these three signs, he came to see the realities of life, that life is full of suffering. People have to become old, sick and at the end die. And he could not escape old age, disease and death.

So on the last trip to the pleasure garden he saw a recluse, maybe sitting peacefully under a tree meditating. When he saw the recluse, he understood that he must renounce the world in order to save beings or in order to help beings save themselves from the sufferings of the round of rebirth.

So he turned back to his palace after seeing that recluse. At that time, when he got into the chariot, the news of the birth of a son came to him. Normally a father would be very delighted when the news of the birth of a son came to him, but Siddhattha here was not delighted because he was bent on renouncing the world. So he considered the birth of a son a bondage. When he

heard the news, he said: "Oh, a Rahu has been born, a bondage has been born." When King Suddhodana heard what Siddhattha had said at the news, he named the child, the child of Siddhattha, Rāhula.

So after saying that, the *Bodhisatta* went back to the palace. As soon as he went back to the palace, he was treated to the sensual pleasures by his retinue. When they were entertaining him, he went to sleep. When he woke up, he saw people, especially women, who had been entertaining him in disarray, sleeping here and there. So he saw this (scene) as a cemetery. He decided then and there to renounce the world.

Before leaving the palace, he wanted to see his wife and son. So he went to the sleeping chamber of his wife and saw his wife sleeping with one arm over the head of the newborn child. He wanted to pick up the child and maybe kiss him or something like that, but he thought: "If I do that Yasodharā will wake up and I will not be able to renounce the world." So he said to himself: "I will see him after I become the Buddha."

That night with one follower, with one servant, he left the palace. That was on the full moon day of July. At the city gate — it is said that the city gate was very difficult to open. About a thousand men would be needed to open the city gate. But the gods opened the gate and he was able to get out easily.

At that time Māra, the Evil One, appeared to him and tried to persuade him, telling him that after seven days he, the *Bodhisatta*, would become a universal monarch. The *Bodhisatta* said: "I do not want to become a universal monarch; I want to become the Buddha and to help beings save themselves." So he dismissed Māra, the Evil One, and went on.

In one night it is said that he reached the River Anomā. First he caused the horse to jump (from one bank to the other bank of the Anomā River). On reaching the other bank, he cut off his hair and put on the robes of an ascetic.

After meeting King Bimbisāra, he met two teachers — not at the same time, one after the other. First he met the teacher called Āḷāra Kālāma. He practiced with that teacher and he attained what that teacher had attained. He found out that attainment did not lead to emancipation or did not lead to freedom from suffering.

So he left that teacher and went to another teacher called Uddaka Rāmaputta. He learned from that teacher the practice of meditation. He practiced and he reached what that teacher taught. He found again that that attainment could not lead him to eradication of mental defilements and to escape from suffering. He also left that teacher.

After that he was alone. He went from place to place. He reached a place called Uruvelā, a delightful, peaceful place fit for meditation. So he settled there and practiced what are called 'practices difficult to practice', austere practices. At that time Kondañña, the person who foretold that the *Bodhisatta* would definitely become the Buddha, was there. Kondañña went to the sons of the other Brahmans because the other Brahmans had died and only their sons still lived at that time. So he went and told them where the ascetic Gotama was and asked them whether they would like to go with him. Three did not want to go with him, but four of the sons decided to go with him. The five of them went to where the ascetic Gotama was practicing austerity and attended to his needs.

His austere practices were related by himself after he became the Buddha. We may read about these practices in some discourses in the Majjhima Nikāya (the Collection of Middle Length Sayings). So he practiced so severely, he practiced so much, that he became very, very weak. You may have seen pictures of the ascetic Gotama practicing austerities where just the skin and bones remain. At that time Māra, the Evil One, came and dissuaded him from the practice. He said: "You are going to die. You are too thin now. There are pleasures to be enjoyed." But the *Bodhisatta* dismissed him and went on with his austere practices. That went on for nearly six years.

Towards the end of six years the *Bodhisatta* reviewed his practice. He thought to himself: "I have been practicing these austere practices for many years and I have not come any nearer to my goal. It might not be the right way." Then he decided these practices were not the correct practice. At that critical moment he recollected the incident at the plowing ceremony, that he as a child entered into the first *jhāna* and that he was very peaceful and happy at that time. So he thought to himself: "Might that be the right path?" Then he decided: "Yes, that is the right path." So he decided to follow that path.

However, his body was very weak. In that bodily condition he knew that he could not carry on the practice. So he began to take food again. Formerly he reduced his intake of food little by little. So sometimes he ate only a handful of pea soup or sometimes he might eat just one seed or one fruit in a day.

After he decided to take food again, the five disciples were disillusioned with him. They thought that the *Bodhisatta* had abandoned the right path and was now going after luxury. So

they left him in disgust and went to another place. The *Bodhisatta* was left alone again.

After the *Bodhisatta* gained strength, on the full moon day of May in 589 BC he was sitting under a tree. At that time a lady named Sujātā came to him and offered him rice porridge. He accepted the porridge along with the bowl. Then he took a bath in the Nerañjara River nearby. Then he ate the porridge and put the bowl in the river. It is said that the bowl went upstream and then sank.

During the daytime he sat alone under a tree. In the evening he walked towards what is now known as the Bodhi tree. The Bodhi tree is actually a banyan tree, but since bodhi or enlightenment was gained under that tree, the tree is now called a Bodhi tree. So he went towards the Bodhi tree and on his way to the Bodhi tree a grass-cutter met him and offered him eight bundles of grass. Then after reaching the Bodhi tree, he spread the grass on the ground and sat at the foot of the Bodhi tree, facing eastward.

Then he made a very firm resolution: "Let my skin, sinews and bones remain, let my flesh and blood dry up, but I will not give up effort to gain what can be gained only by manly effort." That means he made a resolution not to change this posture — "I will not get up from this posture until I attain Buddhahood." So he made this firm resolution.

At that time it was about sunset. Māra, the Evil One, came again, this time, according to our books with his army, a great army. Māra tried to frighten the *Bodhisatta* away from the place, but the *Bodhisatta* stood firm. I mean 'sat firm'. In the end Māra was defeated.

So after the defeat of Māra the *Bodhisatta* practiced meditation in order to reach Buddhahood. During the first watch of the night he practiced again the mindfulness of breathing meditation and he gained the four *jhānas* in succession — first, second, third and fourth. Also he gained the four immaterial *jhānas*. Also he gained the supernormal knowledge by which he could remember all his past lives.

During the first watch of the night he gained the supernormal knowledge of remembering all his past lives. During the middle watch of the night he gained the supernormal knowledge by which he could see beings dying in one existence and being reborn in another existence. And he also saw that a particular being died in one existence and was reborn in another existence according to his own *kamma*. This being is reborn in hell as a result of the unwholesome deeds he did in the previous life. And this being is reborn in the celestial world as a result of the wholesome deeds he did in a previous life and so on. So the *Bodhisatta* could see all these beings dying and being reborn as if it were on a screen.

This helped the Buddha to formulate the Law of *Kamma*. The Law of *Kamma* promulgated by the Buddha was not just founded on logic. Actually it was founded on his own intuition, on his own direct understanding. He saw the Law of *Kamma* and Dependent Origination before he became the Buddha.

So he practiced *Vipassanā* on these twelve factors of Dependent Origination, back and forth, again and again. As a result of *Vipassanā* practice at dawn he gained the supernormal knowledge with which he was able to eradicate all mental defilements. At the same moment he gained what we call 'omniscience' (knowing everything).

With the attainment of the supernormal knowledge of the destruction of defilements and omniscience he became the Buddha. The *Bodhisatta* became the Buddha on the full moon day of May in 589 BC at the age of 35.

After he became the Buddha he spent eight weeks under and near the Bodhi tree. Exactly two months after his enlightenment he gave his first sermon to the five disciples at Isipatana near Bārāṇasi where they were living. And about midnight that night the Buddha gave his second sermon to the *yakkhas*, Hemavatta and Sattagiri. Five days after the full moon day or on the fifth day after the full moon Buddha gave his third sermon, the sermon on the non-soul nature of all things.

After the first sermon one of the five disciples became a *Sotāpanna*. On successive days each one (of the disciples) gained *Sotāpannahood*. So on the fifth day the Buddha taught them the sermon on the non-soul nature of things and they all became *Arahants*.

The Buddha spent the first Rainy season at Isipatana. After that the Buddha visited Rājagaha where King Bimbisāra lived. Buddha met King Bimbisāra and King Bimbisāra offered him the Bamboo Grove. Buddha accepted it and spent the second Rainy season there.

One year after his enlightenment the Buddha visited his native city, Kapilavatthu, in order to see his father and his relatives. So he met his father and his relatives. He preached to his father and his father became enlightened as a *Sotāpanna* first, and then as a *Sakadāgāmī* and then as an *Anāgāmī*. So his father reached three stages of enlightenment on his first visit.

Also his half-brother Nanda and his son Rāhula were ordained. They became monks. Also many princes of the Sakya race became monks under him.

The Buddha taught for 45 years. When he taught, he taught day and night. The Buddha did not sleep as we do. He just lay down on his right side and took rest. When we read about his daily routine, his daily schedule (His daily schedule is given in the Commentaries), we find that the Buddha rested for no more than four hours a day. At other times he was doing something — teaching lay people, teaching monks, or teaching and answering questions of celestial beings. So about twenty hours a day he worked specifically for the welfare of all beings.

Now after becoming the Buddha he could easily retire, but he did not retire. He taught day and night to all beings who came to him or who met him. He helped countless beings save themselves during these 45 years. So the Buddha was the most energetic religious teacher known to history. He worked for 45 years. For those 45 years he worked day and night just taking rest for about four hours a day, not more than four hours a day. When we study his daily routine, we cannot help but admire his compassion for all beings and his effort, his mighty effort to save as many beings as possible. Here 'save' does not mean saving himself, but helping beings save themselves. So he taught for 45 years for the welfare of all beings, not only human beings but all beings, and for lay people as well as monks.

At the age of 80 he passed away on the full moon day of May in a grove of Sala trees near the city of Kusinārā. So the Buddha passed away at the age of 80 on the full moon day of May.

The full moon day comes to be very important to all Buddhists. It was on the full moon day of May that he was born. It was on the full moon day of May that he became enlightened as a Buddha. And it was on this day that he passed away. So we call it the thrice blessed day in the life of the Buddha.

There are some things to understand about the Buddha. As I said before in my first class, Buddha was not God (with a capital G), because according to Buddha there is no God who creates the universe and its inhabitants. Then was the Buddha a god (with a small g)? Was he a celestial being? No, he was not a god or a celestial being. He was not a prophet or a messenger of God simply because according to him there was no God; God was non-existent. Was Buddha a savior? Did Buddha save beings? Not in the Christian sense. Buddha just helped beings save themselves. So he was not a savior. Then what was he? Buddha said: "**Just know me as a Buddha.**" He was a human being. Right? But he was not an ordinary human being; he was an extraordinary human being. He was a human being so extraordinary that he excelled the gods, the celestial beings, the Brahmas who were the higher celestial beings. So the Buddha came to be known as the best among all beings, not just the best of all human beings but the best of all beings including the gods and Brahmas.

The Buddha possessed innumerable qualities. Among them we should understand the total purity of mind and omniscience. These are very important qualities. So the Buddha's mind is totally pure without any trace of any mental defilement. And the Buddha possessed what we call omniscience, that is, he knows everything. The Buddha himself claimed to be omniscient to Upaka the ascetic whom he met on his way to Bārāṇasi. There the Buddha said: "I am the knower of all." That means I am

omniscient. So Buddha possessed these qualities, total purity of mind and omniscience.

Where is the Buddha now? Does he exist in some form somewhere? According to the teachings of Theravāda, Buddha is no more; just as a flame goes out, the Buddha died and there was no more existence or no more rebirth for him. So according to Theravāda teachings, there is no Buddha now.

Then how can he help us when he is no more with us? Now somebody invented the electric box (radio) and made use of electricity. They are no more. Right? But we are enjoying the benefits of this invention. The man who invented wireless is no more now, but we enjoy listening to the radio and all these things. Although the Buddha is not with us now, he left his teachings. Before he died, he said: "**When I am gone, my teachings will be teachers for you.**" We have his teachings now. So we enjoy his teachings, the benefits of his teachings. Although the Buddha is no more now, since his teachings are available, it is as good as having the Buddha.

Can Buddha forgive sins? We are using this word in the Buddhist sense, so we mean unwholesome actions or unwholesome deeds, unwholesome speech and unwholesome thoughts. These we call *akusala*. Let us call them sins. Can Buddha forgive sins? Let us say we do some *akusala*. Can we ask pardon from the Buddha? — Please forgive our sins. Can Buddha forgive us? No. Buddha cannot forgive sins simply because it is impossible to forgive. And these are not sins because the Buddha said that they are sins, but because they are sins. It is the other way round. They are sins and the Buddha said that they are sins. Buddha did not create sins. When we do sins, it is just our actions. We do something. This is our doing, our action. So this cannot be

undone by anybody. So the Buddha cannot forgive sins. It is not because he did not want to forgive, but because he cannot forgive sins, or because it is impossible to forgive sins. That is why we say Buddha does not forgive sins.

Is Buddha capable of love and compassion? Buddha had great love, boundless love and compassion for all beings. But the love the Buddha had for beings was not love mixed or accompanied by attachment, or ill will, or delusion. It is *mettā*, the wholesome desire for the well-being of all beings. Also the Buddha had great compassion for all beings without any exception.

So in Buddhism we do not say the Buddha had compassion for his followers only and not for people who were not his followers. Whether you were his follower or not, Buddha had compassion for you. So Buddha's love and compassion for beings is for all beings without exception. The Buddha is capable of the greatest love and the greatest compassion.

Was the Buddha capable of doing harm to others? Since the Buddha possessed total purity of mind, the Buddha would never do anything harmful to any being at all. Even for those who attempted to take his life, Buddha felt only compassion and not anger. And Buddha did not harm any being at all. So there is no mention of Buddha ever killing any living being, or killing many people, or inflicting punishment or suffering on beings. So we can live safely with the Buddha. We will not get any harm or punishment or whatever from the Buddha. The Buddha is not capable of doing harm to any being.

How many Buddhas are there? Is there only one Buddha? Yes, there is only one Buddha at a time. Although there were many, many Buddhas in the past and there will come many Buddhas

in the future; at one given present moment, at the present time, there can be only one Buddha in the world. It is explained in our books that the world cannot hold two Buddhas at a time. If there is only one Buddha at a time although many Buddhas have appeared in the past and many Buddhas will appear in the future.

Can you become a Buddha? Can anybody become a Buddha? Yes, if he or she is willing to fulfill the perfections (the *pāramīs*), if he or she is willing to suffer in *saṁsāra* for a long, long time accumulating the perfections. So in theory anybody can become a Buddha, but not everybody becomes a Buddha in reality. Only a very, very few become Buddhas. That is because to become a Buddha is not an easy job. It takes a very long time to accumulate the necessary qualifications; also those who aspire for Buddhahood have to practice, have to sacrifice many things in their lives. They even have to sacrifice their own lives. So it is very difficult to fulfill these qualifications. So it is difficult to become a Buddha.

For example, every native citizen can become the president of the United States. They have the right to become president of the United States, but not everybody will become the president. Only one will become president at one time. In the same way although we can say beings have the potential to become the Buddha, not everybody will become the Buddha. Only a very, very few will become a Buddha.

Since anybody who is willing to suffer in *saṁsāra* and accumulate perfections can become a Buddha, must everybody try to become a Buddha? In Theravāda you are not forced to try and become a Buddha. You are given a choice. You can try to become a Buddha, or a *Pacceka Buddha*, or an *Arahant*. So at

least there are three choices or three ways open to you. You can choose any one that you like. According to Theravāda teachings, we do not say that you must try to become a Buddha. If you want to, if you are willing to fulfill *pāramīs*, and you are willing to help beings save themselves, then you can try to become a Buddha. If you don't want to spend a long, long time in *saṁsāra* and you want to get out of *saṁsāra* pretty soon, then you may choose the path of *Arahants*. So it is up to you whether you try to become a **Buddha**, a ***Pacceka Buddha*** or an ***Arahant***.

How long does it take for a person to become a Buddha after the formal aspiration for Buddhahood? 'Formal aspiration' means making the aspiration in the presence of another Buddha. Do you know how long? Four incalculables and 100,000 eons or world cycles. Right? This is the shortest time. For some Buddhas it is eight incalculables and 100,000 world cycles. For another kind of Buddha it is sixteen incalculables and 100,000 world cycles. That number is for world cycles.

In one world cycle there can be many, many lives. So we have to go through billions of lives accumulating the qualifications to become a Buddha. If you are prepared to do that, you may aspire for Buddhahood.

When we talk about astronomy, we do not talk in years, not in miles, not in kilometers, but in light years, millions of light years. Right? So in the same way when we talk about the time a person accumulates *pāramīs*, we talk about incalculables. 'Incalculables' means the number is so big that it is almost incalculable. It almost cannot be counted. If you want to count it is the digit one followed by 140 zeroes. That is one incalculable. OK.

These are some important things to know about the Buddha. Sometimes I may take more time because I want you to understand many things. Also this class is only once a month. So I wish we could have this class twice a month, or four times a month or every week day.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

3

FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

he subject of today's class is the Four Noble Truths. The teaching of the Four Noble Truths is very important among the teachings of the Buddha. Actually whatever the Buddha taught during his 45 years of ministry can be reduced to the teaching of the Four Noble Truths. So it is an important subject.

Before we go into the Four Noble Truths, first we must understand what 'truth' means according to the teachings of the Buddha. Now what is truth? It is very simple; it is something that is true. So it is something that is real, something that is not otherwise than it is stated.

So truth is not like illusion in a magic show because in magic shows the illusions are untrue. Also it is not deceptive like a mirage. You see a mirage from a distance and you think that water is there, but when you get close to it, it disappears or runs away from you. So truth is not like a mirage, which is deceptive.

Also truth is something that can be discovered or that can be known. That is what is called 'truth' in Buddhism. So actually anything which is true, which is real, is called 'truth' in Buddhism. Truth need not be lofty. Truth need not be good, but whatever it is, if it is true to what has been described, then it is the truth.

Now hotness of heat in fire — heat in fire is the truth because it is always true that whatever thing it comes into contact with, it will heat it up or burn it. That heat in fire is a truth.

As you may know, the Second Noble Truth is craving. Craving is an unwholesome mental state, but it is also called 'truth' in Buddhism. So in Buddhism truth need not be good only. Truth need not be wholesome only. It can be both good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome.

People say that there is only one truth and that different teachers express it in different ways, but **in Buddhism there is not one truth; there are four truths**. These four truths are called '**Noble Truths**'.

They are called 'Noble Truths' because they are to be realized by, they are to be penetrated by the Noble Ones. In Buddhism those who have attained enlightenment are called 'Noble Ones'. Those are the Buddhas, the *Pacceka Buddhas*, *Arahants*, and also those who have reached the lower stages of enlightenment. These persons are called 'Noble Ones'. The four truths taught by the Buddha are called 'Noble Truths' because they are to be penetrated by, they are to be understood by, they are to be realized by the Noble Ones. Actually when they become Noble Ones, they have already penetrated these Four Noble Truths. Here we use the term 'Noble' (to describe) those who are trying to become Nobles. **So these truths are called 'Noble Truths' because they are to be penetrated by Noble Ones.**

The second meaning of 'Noble Truth' is that it is the truth of the Noble One. Here 'the Noble One' means the Buddha. So these are the truths of the Buddha. **That means these are the truths discovered and made known by the Buddha.** Others who

penetrate these truths do so depending or relying on the Buddha. That is why in this sense they are called 'Noble Truths' because they are the truths of the Buddha, the truths possessed by the Buddha, or the truths discovered and taught by the Buddha.

The third meaning is that these are called 'Noble Truths' because they are Noble-making. That means when a person penetrates them, he becomes a Noble. So these truths make someone that penetrates them a Noble Person. That is why these truths are called 'Noble Truths'. **In this sense they are called Noble Truths because they make someone Noble. Or when a person penetrates them, he or she becomes a Noble Person.**

NOBLE TRUTHS

What are these Noble Truths? There are four of them. First I want you to be familiar with the names of these Four Noble Truths in Pāḷi, both in Pāḷi and English. The First Noble Truth is called *'dukkha'*. Right? And truth is *sacca*. So *dukkha sacca* or let's just say *dukkha*. The Second Noble Truth is *samudaya*. The Third Noble Truth is *nirodha*. Then the Fourth Noble Truth (It's a long name) is *dukkha nirodha gāminī paṭipadā*.

1) FIRST NOBLE TRUTH

It is important to understand the meaning of these words first. The first word is *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is translated as suffering. As I have told you many times, the English word 'suffering' does not cover all the shades of meaning possessed by the word *'dukkha'* in Pāḷi. The word *'dukkha'* is explained in the Commentaries as being composed of *'du'* and *'kha'*. There are many meanings of *'du'* and there are many meanings of

'*kha*'. In the Visuddhimagga the meaning of du is given as despicable or vile. And '*kha*' means empty. Something that is despicable and something that is empty is called '*dukkha*'. Why is it despicable? Because it is the cause of all dangers and suffering. It is empty, that is, it is empty of an everlasting entity. It is empty of beauty. It is empty of lastingness. It is empty of pleasure. So it is called '*dukkha*'. So in this sense '*dukkha*' means something which is despicable and at the same time which is empty.

The other meaning of *dukkha* given in other Commentaries is: Something that is difficult to endure or something that is difficult to bear. '*Du*' means difficult and '*kha*' means endure or bear. So something which is difficult to bear is called '*dukkha*'. So this meaning makes more sense for us because whenever we hear the word '*dukkha*', we understand some kind of pain or suffering. As you will know a few moments later, even what we call 'happiness' is, according to the analysis of the Buddha, *dukkha*. So we will understand the word '*dukkha*' as **something despicable and empty** or **something difficult to endure**.

2) SECOND NOBLE TRUTH

The Second Truth is called '*samudaya*' or '*dukkha samudaya*'. It is important to understand the meaning of the word '*samudaya*'. *Samudaya* is composed of '*sam*' and '*u*' and '*aya*'. Here '*aya*' means cause, '*u*' means arising, '*sam*' means coming together or combined with something. So the whole word '*samudaya*' means a cause of the arising, actually of *dukkha*. It is the cause of the arising of *dukkha* when combined with other conditions. That is important — 'when combined with

other conditions'. Mostly we think that the cause of *dukkha* is what? Craving. Right? But craving is not the only cause of suffering. There are other causes or conditions also, but craving is most prominent among them. And so we just say craving is the cause or origin of *dukkha*. Craving does not arise alone. It always arises with a companion. What is that? Ignorance. Also there are other conditions. When craving has the companionship of ignorance and others it can cause *dukkha*. So the meaning of the word *'samudaya'* should be understood that way. **It is the cause of the arising of *dukkha* when combined with other conditions.**

3) THIRD NOBLE TRUTH

The Third Truth is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering. In Pāḷi it is called *'dukkha nirodha'* or just *'nirodha'*. Here the word *'nirodha'* is divided into *'ni'* and *'rodha'*. The word *'ni'* means no or absence. *'Rodha'* means a prison or confinement. Here 'prison' means the prison of the round of rebirths. So the Third Noble Truth is called *'nirodha'* because there is the absence of or the cessation of the prison of *saṁsāra*, the prison of the round of rebirths. This is one meaning of the word *'nirodha'*. Technically (the definition) given in the Commentaries is: The truth on the attainment of which there is the absence of the prison of *saṁsāra*. That means when a person attains Nibbāna, there will be no more *saṁsāra* for him in the future. So the Third Noble Truth, which is Nibbāna, is called *'nirodha'*.

There is one more meaning. Here the Commentaries explain that the word is just taken as *nirodha*. It means non-arising in the future. Sometimes we translate it as cessation.

'Cessation' really means non-arising in the future. When a person attains enlightenment and eradicates mental defilements, he eradicates these mental defilements so that there is non-arising in the future. So *nirodha* is made to mean non-arising in the future. This Third Noble Truth is called '**non-arising in the future**' because it is the condition or it is the object of enlightenment consciousness, which brings about the non-arising in the future of mental defilements.

4) FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH

The Fourth Noble Truth, as you may know, is **the Eightfold Path** or **the Eight Factors of Path.** At the moment of enlightenment a Path consciousness arises and these eight factors accompany that consciousness. Path consciousness takes Nibbāna as object and so these eight factors also take Nibbāna as object. Taking Nibbāna as object, the Path consciousness is here said to go to the object. So it is the path or practice that goes to the cessation of suffering, that goes to Nibbāna. It is called '***dukkha nirodha gāminī paṭipadā***'. So in reality the Fourth Noble Truth is that which realizes the Third Noble Truth, which takes the Third Noble Truth as object. So it is not quite the Path leading to the cessation of suffering. It takes the cessation of suffering as object, so it is already there actually.

These are the meanings given in the Commentaries. I think understanding in this way can help us to understand the Four Noble Truths better. After understanding the word meanings of the Four Noble Truths, we will just call them by their popular names — **the Noble Truth of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of**

Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Path that goes to the Cessation of Suffering.

Now these Four Noble Truths are important, I said. First it was the Buddhá that discovered these Four Noble Truths. These Four Noble Truths are not created by the Buddha. Actually they were hidden under a thick growth of ignorance when there were no Buddhas in the world. Then a Buddha appears and discovers and penetrates these Four Noble Truths. The discovery and penetration of these Four Noble Truths makes him a Buddha. Then after that the Buddha reveals these Four Noble Truths to the world. **So the Four Noble Truths are not created by the Buddha, but they were discovered and taught by the Buddha.**

Then the Buddha was not indebted to anyone for the discovery of these Four Noble Truths. That means the Buddha does not need anybody's help or anybody's teaching to discover these Four Noble Truths. He discovered and he penetrated these Four Noble Truths all by himself, depending on himself only. You may have read the Buddha's First Sermon. In that Sutta the Buddha said: "**In the Dhammas unheard of before." That means these Four Noble Truths were not known by beings before the Buddha appears in the world.** The Buddha taught them in his very first sermon.

You all know that exactly two months after his enlightenment, the Buddha taught his first sermon to the five disciples. In the First Sermon the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths. So we know that the Four Noble Truths are important, that they are an important part of the Buddha's teachings because he taught them first, in his first sermon to his five disciples.

Also the Four Noble Truths are important because there can be no enlightenment without the realization of these Four Noble Truths. The Buddha once said: "It is through not understanding, not penetrating the Four Noble Truths that I, as well as you have to wander so long through the round of rebirths." So the Buddha said it is through not understanding, not penetrating the Four Noble Truths that he as well as his disciples had to go through this round of rebirth for a long, long time. Since it is impossible to gain enlightenment without realizing, without seeing by direct knowledge these Four Noble Truths, these Four Noble Truths are very important.

The Buddha was very firm and sure about these Four Noble Truths. He said: "**There are only these Four Noble Truths. There are no more or no less. Also there is no one else other than Buddhas who can teach these Four Noble Truths.**" 'Who can teach' means who can discover and who can teach these Four Noble Truths to all beings. So these Four Noble Truths are important both to understand and to realize.

Now we come to the Four Noble Truths. We will follow the exposition given by the Buddha himself. You can find this exposition in the First Sermon and also in the discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Now the Buddha said that the **First Noble Truth was the Noble Truth of *Dukkha***. Birth is suffering; decay is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; association with beings and things that one dislikes is suffering; dissociation from beings and things that one likes is suffering; not to get what one desires is suffering; in brief the five aggregates of clinging are suffering. This is the exposition given by the Buddha.

Let us go through it one by one. The Buddha said that birth is suffering. 'Birth' here means conception for human beings, conception in the womb of the mother. Birth is suffering because it is the base, it is the basis for all sufferings we encounter in our lives. Since we have birth as a human being, we suffer old age, disease, death, sorrow, lamentation and so on. **So the Buddhas said birth is suffering.** Then decay or old age is suffering. We don't need much explanation about this. Getting old — we do not like to get old; we would like to be young or at least we would like to look young. However much we do not want to get old, however much we want to look young, we are getting old day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute by minute, second by second. So decay or old age is one which we do not like, but we have to endure it. **So decay or old age is suffering.**

Disease is suffering. To have any kind of disease is suffering. **Death is suffering.** We don't want to die. We are afraid of death, but we will have to face it one day. There is no escape from death. So this is also suffering.

Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair — these are suffering. We don't need much thought to understand this.

Then **association with beings and things that one dislikes is suffering.** This is also not difficult to understand. If we have to live with someone we don't like, we suffer. Or we have to have something we don't like — suppose you have a car you don't like and you have to drive that car. You are not in a good mood. You are suffering. It's plain. It is easy to understand.

Then there is dissociation from beings and things one likes. If you are **separated from your loved ones, you suffer.** If you are separated from something you like, something you cherish, let us say your new car or your house or whatever, then you suffer.

Then not to get what one desires — not to get what one desires is suffering. You want to get something and you don't get it. Then you suffer. Right? That is the superficial understanding of it.

A deeper understanding of it is: 'Not to get what one desires' means (for example) we don't want to get old, we don't want to get disease, we don't want to age, we don't want to face disease, we don't want to face death. That is suffering, that is, we don't like it, but we have to suffer.

With these words or explanations Buddha taught us the First Noble Truth, the Noble Truth of Suffering, which we can understand easily. Nobody will deny that these are suffering.

There is another aspect of suffering that is in the First Noble Truth which the Buddha stated at the end of the exposition of the First Noble Truth. That is: **In brief the Five Aggregates of clinging are suffering**. We have no difficulty in accepting birth as suffering, decay as suffering and so on. But with regard to the last statement, that is, 'In brief the Five Aggregates of Clinging are Suffering', we may have some difficulty.

Don't we sometimes enjoy ourselves? Sometimes we are happy. Or as young men you may enjoy some sensual pleasures and so on. Is that *sukha*? Is that happiness or isn't that happiness? According to the Buddha these are also *dukkha*. Right? The Five Aggregates of Clinging (I hope you are all familiar with the five aggregates) — the Buddha said that most beings are composed of five groups. They are called 'five aggregates' — **aggregate of matter, aggregate of feeling, aggregate of perception, aggregate of mental formations, aggregate of consciousness.** Or we can say we have the body, feelings, perception, other mental states and consciousness. These five aggregates, almost

all of these five aggregates are the object of clinging, the object of attachment. By this last sentence, 'In brief the five aggregates of clinging are suffering', the Buddha means to say everything in the world, everything in the world of sentient beings is suffering. What we think, what we consider to be happiness is on analysis of the Buddha suffering.

Why? Because Buddha said whatever is **impermanent is *dukkha***. So anything that is impermanent must be *dukkha*. Whether we translate it as suffering or not, everything that is impermanent is *dukkha*. Our bodies, are they permanent or impermanent? Our bodies will not last forever. Our thoughts, our mental states — they just come and go. So what we take to be happiness just comes and goes. You enjoy life. You enjoy sensual pleasures. They do not last long. They come and go. Since they are impermanent, because they have a beginning and an end, they are said to be *dukkha*. So in this sense everything in this sentient world is *dukkha*.

That is why we should understand *dukkha* with reference to the meaning given by the Commentary that *dukkha* means something that is despicable and empty. It is despicable because it is the haunt of or it is the home of many dangers. It is empty because there is no permanent entity, or no soul, or no self.

So we should understand the First Noble Truth at both these two levels, the ordinary level and the deeper philosophical level. Only when we understand in these two ways, can we say that we understand the First Noble Truth. Only when we understand in this way, can we accept that *dukkha* is everywhere.

It is not to make you depressed. Many people say that they do not like Buddhism because Buddhism talks about *dukkha* very much. It is like a physician telling a patient that he has a

disease. A physician examines a patient and he finds a disease in that man. Then the physician must say: "You have such and such disease." We cannot accuse the physician of being a pessimist or of having the desire to depress his patients. That is because it is the fact. He must declare this fact to the patient. In the same way we are like patients. The Buddha diagnoses us, and he found that we are suffering from this '*dukkha* disease'. So the Buddha said: "You have this *dukkha* disease." It is just stating the fact. It is not (stated) to make us sorry, to make us depressed.

If we understand the last explanation of the Buddha that the five aggregates of clinging are suffering, then we can understand that, we can accept that. The world is really *dukkha*. According to the last statement in the exposition of the First Noble Truth, we should understand that life itself is suffering or that life is equated with suffering. **When we say 'suffering', we mean life and when we say 'life', we mean suffering.**

Next the Buddha pointed out the cause or the origin of suffering or dukkha. Buddha said that it is craving. Here 'craving' means craving, or attachment, greed, lust, every mental state that arises in combination with desire or want. **So Buddha said that craving is the origin of suffering, the origin of *dukkha*.**

He explains that this craving gives rise to fresh rebirth. Rebirth is life. Right? Rebirth is the beginning of life. So rebirth is life. Life is rebirth. So this rebirth life is *dukkha*. Here Buddha said that craving gives rise to fresh rebirth. It is the same as saying that craving gives rise to or brings about *dukkha*.

Also he said that this craving is bound up with pleasure and lust. Actually pleasure and lust are themselves craving. So craving, lust, pleasure, attachment, greed — they mean the same thing.

Also the Buddha said: "It finds ever fresh delight here and there." 'Here and there' means in this life and in that life, or in lives. Now it is said that the first active thought moment in one life is accompanied by attachment to that life. Wherever a being is reborn, even if he is reborn in hell, the first active moment in that life is always bound up with attachment. So it takes delight in this 'here and there'.

There are three kinds of craving mentioned in the First Sermon and also mentioned in other places. **The origin of *dukkha* is craving**. Here where the Buddha says craving gives rise to fresh rebirth and so on — that means the present rebirth is the result of the past craving. And then the present craving will be the cause of future rebirth. In that way we should understand the Second Noble Truth.

Another way of understanding it is to consider situations in this life and we can see that craving causes suffering. We often hear news about a plane crash. Many people are killed in the crash. When we hear the news how much *dukkha* do we suffer? Maybe just a little bit, we may say, "Oh, poor people", something like that. We don't feel so deeply. If there was a friend of ours among those who perished, our suffering is greater. We suffer more. What if a relative of ours was in that crash? Or a very dear person was in that crash? We would suffer a lot. So our suffering actually is not caused by the death of a person, but the attachment we put on the person. The more attachment we have for that person, the more *dukkha* we suffer. So the real culprit here is attachment or craving for that person and not the death of or the loss of that person.

The same is true for things we put much value on. Sometimes the price of the thing may not be great. We put some sentimental

value on it. So we cherish it. If that thing is taken away from us, if that thing is stolen, or let us say, if it gets broken, we suffer a lot because we have put so much attachment, so much sentimental value on that thing. So our suffering is not caused actually by the loss of the thing. Actually it is caused by the degree of attachment we put on that thing.

If we understand that way, we can understand that attachment causes suffering. The Buddha's explanation goes deeper than that actually. The Buddha's explanation here is that **craving gives rise to fresh rebirth**. Now we are all attached to our lives. We don't want to die. We hold onto our lives until the last moment. So strong is that attachment to life that it has the potential, it has the energy to create another life. So even though we die here, the attachment we have creates, or brings about, or gives rise to another birth in the future. So the future rebirth is actually the result of the attachment we have in this life.

Actually Buddhas and those who have the supernormal power of remembering past lives and also the supernormal power of seeing beings dying in one existence and being reborn in another, such persons alone can see clearly. We also believe that craving gives rise to fresh rebirth because the Buddha taught it. And also we can infer this from craving causing suffering in this life. If it can cause suffering in this life, it can also cause suffering in future lives because it has the power, it has the potential to create life in the future.

The Buddha said that there are three kinds of craving. I want you to be familiar with the Pāḷi names of the three kinds of craving. The first is ***kāmataṇhā***. The second is ***bhavataṇhā***. The third is ***vibhavataṇhā***. I want you to be familiar with the Pāḷi words because there is much misunderstanding about these three.

The first one, *'kāmataṇhā'*, means craving for desirable objects. Now there are sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts which are desirable. Desire for these desirable objects, attachment to these desirable objects is called *'kāmataṇhā'*. So it is **craving for desirable objects**.

The second one is called *'bhavataṇhā'*. The word *'bhava'* means existence or becoming. Here, according to the Commentaries, it means not just existence or becoming, but it is the wrong view that beings are permanent, or that there is a soul and that soul is permanent. So *'bhava'* here means what is called 'the eternity view', that is, taking things to be eternal, taking things to be permanent. It is one of the wrong views. **Craving associated with this wrong view** is called *'bhavataṇhā'*.

So *'bhavataṇhā'* does not mean craving for existence. Craving for existence can be included in the first one, *kāmataṇhā*. That is because existence is also a desirable object. *'Bhavataṇhā'* here means craving which is accompanied by or which is associated with the eternity view. You may have the view that things are permanent, that things are eternal. Craving that is accompanied by that view, that arises together with that view is called *'bhavataṇhā'*. So it is not (merely) craving for existence. It is **craving associated with the eternity view.**

The third one is *'vibhavataṇhā'*. Now there is another view, which takes it that beings die and there is no more of them in the future. It is called 'the annihilation view'. A being is annihilated at death and there is no more of him in the future. **Craving associated with or accompanied by that wrong view** is called *'vibhavataṇhā'*.

Sometimes beings may have eternity view or some others may have annihilation view. Craving accompanying those views are (respectively) '*bhavataṇhā*' and '*vibhavataṇhā*'. So *vibhavataṇhā* is craving associated with annihilation view.

Some translated it as craving for self-annihilation. It is very misleading. Once I gave a book to a man. The next week he said: "Buddhism accepts suicide." Craving for annihilation is mentioned in the Sutta. *Vibhavataṇhā* is not craving for self-annihilation, but craving associated with this kind of wrong view. So these are the three kinds of craving described by the Buddha in his exposition of the Second Noble Truth.

Now a clever physician will not just stop at finding the disease. He will also find out what causes the disease. In the same way the Buddha first discovered that the world of sentient beings has this disease of suffering. He does not just stop there. He also discovers the origin of that suffering or what causes that suffering. After knowing the disease and the cause of the disease, the next question would be what? Can this disease be cured? In the same way after understanding that there is *dukkha* and there is the origin of *dukkha*, we want to know if there is the absence of *dukkha*. We want to know whether this disease of *dukkha* can be cured.

I am going to leave you today with the disease and the cause of the disease. You will have to wait one month to get the answer as to whether it can be cured. Thank You.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

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Last time we finished two Noble Truths, the Noble Truth of *Dukkha* and the Noble Truth of the Origin of *Dukkha*. Now we come to the Third Noble Truth, which is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of *Dukkha*.

Buddha is like a physician who diagnoses a patient and then finds a disease and then also knows what causes that disease. Buddha diagnoses the living world. Then he came up with the diagnosis that the living world or beings have this disease of *dukkha*. And this *dukkha* is caused by craving.

When the cause of disease is known the patient will want to know whether that disease can be cured. Fortunately here the disease can be cured. So in order to give consolation to beings who are wearied with *dukkha* and the origin of *dukkha*, Buddha said that there is cessation of *dukkha*. There is the cure of this disease. **This cessation of *dukkha*, or this absence of *dukkha*, or this absence of suffering is what is known as Nibbāna. Nibbāna is said to be the Third Noble Truth or the Noble Truth of the Cessation of *Dukkha*.**

When the Buddha explained this Third Noble Truth, he said: "**It is the complete fading away and cessation of this very craving.**" It's strange here. Buddha was explaining the cessation of suffering. But the Buddha said the cessation of suffering is the complete (That means without remainder), complete fading away and cessation of this very craving. That means this craving I have just pointed out to you as the cause of or the origin of *dukkha*. So here the Buddha equates the cessation of *dukkha* with the cessation of craving. That's because so long as craving is not destroyed, there can be no cessation of suffering.

So when the cause is eradicated, then the effect will be eradicated. That is why the Buddha said that the **Third Noble Truth, the Cessation of *Dukkha*, is actually the cessation of craving**. Once craving is destroyed, there will be no more rebirth for that person. That is because craving is the one that causes beings to be reborn again and again. You may remember in the original description of the origin of *dukkha*, the Buddha said that it is craving which gives rise to fresh rebirth. So long as there is craving, there is attachment, there will always be rebirth. When there is rebirth, there is old age. There is disease. There is death, and there is need to be associated with what one does not like and to be separated from what one likes. Also one does not get what one desires and so on. So long as there is this craving, this craving creates ever fresh rebirth.

Once craving is destroyed, it is like when the oil in the lamp is exhausted, there is no more flame. The Buddha described cessation of *dukkha* as the cessation of craving. Here Buddha said "complete fading away and cessation."

Craving can be abandoned momentarily or temporarily. Momentary and temporary abandonment cannot give us complete freedom from rebirth or complete freedom from *dukkha*. Here the Buddha said "complete or remainderless fading away." So when a person attains enlightenment, especially the fourth stage of enlightenment, he or she eradicates craving altogether. Once eradicated that craving will never arise in his mind. He will never experience craving, or attachment, or whatever any longer in his life. When craving, which is the origin of *dukkha* is destroyed, then *dukkha* itself is said to be destroyed. The cessation of *dukkha* or the cessation of craving is what we all understand as Nibbāna.

The Buddha continues: "**It is the forsaking, the abandonment of that craving and liberation and detachment from it.**" When a person is said to have eradicated craving, he is said to be free from craving. He is said to be liberated from craving. Actually he is not only liberated from craving, but he is liberated from the results of craving, which are rebirths in this *saṁsāra*. This is the Third Noble Truth, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of *Dukkha*.

In one discourse Buddha said: "**All the Four Noble Truths can be found in this fathom long body.**" That means the cessation of *dukkha* or the cessation of craving can be seen in one's own self. That is because craving is ours, our own property and when craving is destroyed or when craving is removed that means we remove the craving which is in us. So the Buddha said or he proclaimed that all Four Noble Truths can be found in this body.

Actually according to Abhidhamma, Nibbāna is an external state. That external state people who gain enlightenment take as object or they realize Nibbāna. So realization of Nibbāna is within beings, but Nibbāna itself is actually outside.

Nibbāna is just the cessation of suffering, cessation of all conditioned phenomena. When there is no more arising of conditioned phenomena, when there is no more rebirths, one is said to have achieved or realized Nibbāna.

There are many people who think that Nibbāna is something like a realm, or a place, or an existence that one will reach after death or something like that. Nibbāna is described as just the cessation of suffering. So the cessation of suffering, the extinction of suffering, the extinction of mental defilements, the extinction of the five aggregates of clinging is called Nibbāna.

As you may have heard, there are two kinds of Nibbāna — **Nibbāna which is experienced while one is living** and then there is another **Nibbāna which becomes evident at the death of a Buddha or an *Arahant*.** The first kind of Nibbāna is actually cessation of craving. When a person reaches the fourth stage of enlightenment and he realizes Nibbāna, he eradicates the mental defilements, including craving. The removal or the abandonment of mental defilements, or the cessation of these mental defilements is called, let us say, '**Nibbāna in this life**'. This can be realized in this life. This can be realized by those who attain enlightenment.

The other kind of Nibbāna is called 'Nibbāna at the death of an *Arahant*'. That means an *Arahant* who has eradicated all mental defilements still has this body, mind and body because this mind and body are the results of his *kamma* in the past. So these results still remain with him. When a Buddha or an *Arahant* dies, these resultant aggregates disappear.

You may remember the description in the Ratana Sutta: Just as the flame goes out, these *Arahants* disappear. At the moment of death the five aggregates that are called 'remaining' because they are the ones remaining (from past) mental defilements also disappear. That is called '**Nibbāna at the death of Buddhas and *Arahants***.' So there are two kinds of Nibbāna.

I am more interested in the first kind of Nibbāna. I am not interested in what will happen after the death of an *Arahant* or a Buddha. **We can realize Nibbāna in this life if we try, if we really have enough perfections or *pāramīs***, if we make effort to reach that stage.

It is I think more — what can I say? It is more attractive than the other Nibbāna. The other Nibbāna we don't know. This Nibbāna is freedom from mental defilements. You can see that is a good state. If you are really free from mental defilements, you have no mental defilements, you are not attached to anything, you do not get angry although there is provocation, you are not moved by the ups and downs of life, you are enjoying Nibbāna. So that is a state we should all try to reach if possible in this very life — and if not it may take two or three lives. This is more attractive than what will happen after the death of an *Arahant*. So towards this goal the extinction of mental defilements, we should direct our effort. This is the Third Noble Truth.

The Fourth Noble Truth, as you know, is the Practice that Leads to the Cessation of *Dukkha* or that Goes to the Cessation of *Dukkha*. When the patient knows that his disease is curable, the next question he wants to ask is: "What medicine shall I take?" Then the physician will concoct some medicine for him. If you are a native physician, you may collect roots and other herbs and then prepare the medicine for him. In the same way, the Buddha prepared the medicine for the cure of the disease of *dukkha*. There are eight ingredients in the medicine the Buddha gave to the world. You know these eight, these eight ingredients. **So the Fourth Noble Truth is the Way or the Practice that Leads to Cessation of *Dukkha*.**

The Pāḷi — I think I explained this in the last talk — the Pāḷi word says 'that goes to', not 'that leads to', 'that goes to the cessation of *dukkha*'. 'That goes to' means that takes cessation of *dukkha* as object. When our mind takes some object, we say our mind goes to that object. So the meaning explained in the

Commentaries is that it is the practice, it is the way that goes to the cessation of *dukkha*, that goes to Nibbāna.

This is the medicine the Buddha gave us for the cure of the disease of *dukkha*. Since it is like a medicine, we must make use of it. The doctor will give you medicine. If you do not take the medicine, then your disease will not be cured. So in the same way here the Buddha gave us this medicine, and if we do not take it, if we do not practice his way, then we will not get the benefit of getting rid of mental defilements.

Among the Four Noble Truths, the fourth one is the most important for us. We may not know about *dukkha*, or we may not know what causes *dukkha*, we may not know the cessation of *dukkha*, but if we know the Fourth Noble Truth, Right Understanding and so on, and practice it, then we will be able to see the First Noble Truth. We will be able to abandon the Second Noble Truth and we will be able to realize the Third Noble Truth. So for us the Fourth Noble Truth is the most important. It is like a medicine. We have to take it. We have to practice it to get the good results of this medicine.

This path or this practice consists of eight members, eight factors, eight ingredients. This practice is called '**The Middle Way**'. Buddha had two names for this practice. One is ***Majjhima Paṭipadā*** (**The Middle Way**). The other is *'**Ariya Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga**'* (**the Noble Eightfold Path**), the Noble Path which has eight limbs, eight members, or eight factors.

We have studied these eight factors one by one. If you don't remember, don't worry, later you will get these sheets (handouts). What are the eight factors? Right Understanding and so on. You all know. Right?

Before going to the individual factors, let us go to the similes by which we should understand the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths are the Noble Truth of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to Cessation of Suffering. These we understand more clearly when we understand them with reference to some similes. In the Visuddhimagga some similes are given.

It is said that the First Noble Truth is like a burden, let us say, like a big weight. You have to carry this very, very heavy weight. The second one is taking up that burden. That means when you take up that burden, you feel happiness. Right? You have *dukkha* there. You take up the burden and then the burden is on you. Putting down the burden is like Nibbāna. And the means to putting down the burden, some means or your effort to throw it away — that is the Fourth Noble Truth. The First Noble Truth is like **a burden**. The Second Noble Truth is like picking up, like **taking up the burden**. The Third Noble Truth is like **putting down the burden**. The Fourth Noble Truth is **the means to putting down the burden**.

Another simile is like the one I just told you. That is the First Noble Truth is like **a disease**. The Second Noble Truth is like **the cause of a disease**. The Third Noble Truth is like **the cure of the disease**. The Fourth Noble Truth is like **medicine**. If you remember this simile, you will never forget the Four Noble Truths.

There is another simile that is given. The First Noble Truth is like **a famine** (scarcity of food). The Second Noble Truth is like **bad rain**. That means either drought or too much rain. When the weather is too dry or it rains too much, you don't get crops and there could be famine. Bad rain is like the scourge of famine and

it is like the Second Noble Truth. The Third Noble Truth is like **having plenty**. Having plenty is like the Third Noble Truth. And **good rain, timely rain, just enough rain** is like the Fourth Noble Truth.

So we can understand the Four Noble Truths with any one of these similes. The middle one is the one I like the best — disease, cause of disease, cure of disease, and the means of curing the disease, that is, medicine.

We must understand what we must do about or what we must do with regard to these Four Noble Truths, or what are the functions we should do to these Four Noble Truths. These four functions are different. **The First Noble Truth is the Noble Truth of Suffering. The Noble Truth of Suffering is for thorough understanding, thorough comprehension**. That means we must see clearly the First Noble Truth. Through *Vipassanā* meditation we can see the First Noble Truth clearly. Through *Vipassanā* meditation you see mind and matter arising and disappearing, arising and disappearing, arising and disappearing. So you come to see the *dukkha* nature of mind and matter when you see arising and disappearing, arising and disappearing, for a long time.

One of the meanings of *dukkha* is to be oppressed by arising and disappearing. That is the main meaning of *dukkha*. So anything that has a beginning and an end, that has arising and disappearing, is said to be *dukkha*. You see *dukkha* clearly only when you practice *Vipassanā* meditation.

You may sit and think about *dukkha*. You may speculate about *dukkha* and you think that you understand *dukkha*. That understanding is not from your own experience. It is just thinking. But when you sit down and practice and see for yourself mind

and matter arising and disappearing, arising and disappearing — and later on just disappearing — then you come to know the true meaning of *dukkha*. So *dukkha* is the Noble Truth to be understood clearly.

The Second Noble Truth, craving, is to be abandoned. That is because so long as we do not abandon the Second Noble Truth, so long as we do not abandon craving, there will always be *dukkha*. The function to be done with regard to the **Second Noble Truth is abandoning, eradication**. Once we are able to eradicate craving, we will be able to get rid of *dukkha* altogether.

With regard to the **Third Noble Truth, which is Nibbāna, the function is realization, seeing it face to face**. This realization comes only at the moment of enlightenment. I have told you about enlightenment many times. Right? At the moment of enlightenment what happens is that a type of consciousness arises along with its concomitants; and it has the power to eradicate mental defilements; and at the same time it takes Nibbāna as object. That means it sees Nibbāna directly at that moment.

Before that we actually do not see Nibbāna directly. We may say: "May I attain Nibbāna or something like that." We may talk about Nibbāna. We may think about Nibbāna. But that is not direct seeing. At the moment of enlightenment a person really sees Nibbāna clearly, let's say face to face. So Nibbāna is to be realized, not to be eradicated like the Second Noble Truth, nor to be thoroughly understood like the First Noble Truth, but to be seen face to face by the meditator.

The Fourth Noble Truth — the function to be done with regard to the **Fourth Noble Truth is developing, making it grow**. Developing is said to be of two kinds. We will come to that later.

The Fourth Noble Truth, the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering actually or strictly speaking is at the moment of enlightenment. The moment of enlightenment is like the result of *Vipassanā*. In order to reach the moment of enlightenment we have to practice *Vipassanā*. When we are practicing *Vipassanā*, we are actually developing these eight mental factors, these eight factors of the Path. **So during the time we practice *Vipassanā* we are developing this Path, this Fourth Noble Truth.** Our developing during that stage belongs to the mundane sphere. But at the moment of enlightenment these eight factors arise again together and they do their individual functions, and they reach culmination. They reach their highest stage at the moment of enlightenment. Only at that stage are they called 'the Fourth Noble Truth'. We have to have what is called 'preliminary practice', that is, *Vipassanā*. So strictly speaking, the Fourth Noble Truth can be obtained only at the moment of enlightenment. In order to get that stage one has to go through the preliminary stage, which is *Vipassanā* meditation. So during the period we are practicing *Vipassanā* meditation, we are practicing that Fourth Noble Truth.

These are the four functions to be done to the Four Noble Truths. Towards the First Noble Truth the function is thorough comprehension. Towards the Second Noble Truth the function is eradication. With regard to the Third Noble Truth the function is realization. With regard to the Fourth Noble Truth the function is development. These are the functions to be done. It is said that at the moment of enlightenment these four functions are done simultaneously, not one after another. They are done simultaneously. These are the Four Noble Truths.

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Now we will go back to the Fourth Noble Truth and study the factors one by one. There are eight factors in the **Noble Eightfold Path**. That is why it is called 'Eightfold Path'. You all understand the eight factors. Can you tell me the eight factors? Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. These are the eight factors. We will go in this order.

1) RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

Right Understanding — what is Right Understanding? First we must understand that these eight factors are called 'the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering' at the moment of enlightenment at the moment of *Magga*. So 'Right Understanding' means understanding Suffering, understanding the Origin of Suffering, understanding the Cessation of Suffering, and understanding the Path that goes to the Cessation of Suffering. In other places Right Understanding may include understanding *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, and understanding the true nature of things, and so on. That is because Right Understanding can be both mundane and supramundane. Mundane Right Understanding consists of the understanding of the Law of *Kamma*, the understanding of the true nature of mind and matter through *Vipassanā* and so on. But here in the explanation given in the Mahā Satipaṭhāna Sutta, 'Right Understanding' means understanding the Four Noble Truths. That is Right Understanding.

In order to reach that Right Understanding we need other kinds of Right Understanding. First we need to have

the belief in or an understanding of the Law of *Kamma*. And then we need to have an understanding of the true nature of mind and matter, that there are only mind and matter. We must understand that mind and matter at every moment are arising and disappearing. So they are impermanent, they are unsatisfactory, and they are insubstantial. At the moment of enlightenment, at the moment of *Magga*, 'Right Understanding' means understanding the Four Noble Truths.

2) RIGHT THOUGHT

The second factor is Right Thought. It is important that we understand correctly this Right Thought. Right Thought is explained as thoughts free from lust, thoughts free from ill will and thoughts free from cruelty. Thoughts free from lust are thoughts not accompanied by, not associated with craving, lust, desire, attachment. It is thoughts about giving, thoughts about renunciation, thoughts about being good to others and so on. Thoughts free from ill will are *mettā*. Thoughts with ill will means thoughts accompanied by hate, desire to kill or desire that someone be killed. Thoughts free from such ill will here are called 'Right Thought'. The third one is thoughts free from cruelty. This is not injuring beings, not causing harm or injury to other beings. This is actually what is called *karuṇā* (compassion). So 'Right Thought' means thoughts free from attachment, craving, desire, lust, and thoughts free from ill will or thoughts of *mettā*, and thoughts free from cruelty or thoughts of compassion. These are called 'Right Thought' here.

How does it fit in with the practice or with the factors arising at the moment of enlightenment? Right Thought is

explained in the Commentaries as a factor which puts the mind on the object of Nibbāna, onto Nibbāna. If you have a knowledge of Abhidhamma, you know what I am aiming at. Right? Now Right Thought is in Abhidhamma the mental factor *vitakka* (initial application of mind). This *vitakka* or initial application of mind has the characteristic of taking the mind to the object. It is because of this *vitakka* that mind goes to the object, or that mind reaches the object, or that mind climbs onto the object. So here 'Right Thought' means the mental factor that takes the mind to the object. If this mental factor does not take the mind to the object, the mind will not experience the object and so it will not see the object. So it is essential that Right Thought take the mind to the object. Once the mind is on the object, then there is right Understanding. In order for Right Understanding to arise, to occur, Right Thought or this mental factor which takes the mind to the object is essential.

So 'Right Thought' does not actually mean thinking — thinking of renunciation, thinking of *mettā*, or thinking of *karuṇā*. Actually in the practice it is the mental factor which takes the mind to the object. Even during *Vipassanā* if it does not take the mind to the object, the mind will not be on the object, and it (the mind) will not know this is matter, this is mind, this is arising, this is disappearing. So it is very important factor in the Noble Eightfold Path or among the eight factors. So Right Thought is essential for Right Understanding to arise; therefore, these two are grouped together. We say that Right Thought belongs to the group of understanding. That is Right Thought.

3) RIGHT SPEECH

The third one is Right Speech. 'Right Speech' actually means abstaining from wrong speech. There are four kinds of wrong speech. The first one is lying. The second one is back-biting, tale bearing. The third one is harsh speech, abusive language. The fourth one is vain talk, talking nonsense. So these are called the four kinds of wrong speech. Abstention from them is called Right Speech. There is the meaning of abstention here. Although it is called Right Speech, we must understand that Right Speech only arises when we abstain from lying, tale bearing, harsh speech and vain talk. So it is called Right Speech.

When you abstain from lying, you are keeping the precept. When you abstain from tale bearing and so on, you are keeping the precept. 'Keeping the precept' means you are controlling your speech, your mouth. So there is the control or the restraint of your speech. That control or restraint is what we call *sīla*. *Sīla* is translated as morality. So Right Speech has the nature of *sīla*. That is because when you abstain from lying and so on, you are controlling, you are restraining your speech. Where there is restraint, there is *sīla*. So Right Speech belongs to *sīla* group.

4) RIGHT ACTION

The next one is Right Action. 'Right Action' again means abstention from killing living beings, abstention from stealing, and abstention from sexual misconduct. Here also when you abstain from killing living beings, you keep the precept. That means you control yourself. You control your bodily actions. When you abstain from taking what is not given (That means

you abstain from stealing), or when you abstain from sexual misconduct, you are controlling your bodily actions. You are restraining your bodily actions. So it also has the meaning of *sīla*. So when you abstain from these three wrong doings by bodily actions, you are having Right Action.

5) RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

Then Right Livelihood is the fifth one (fifth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path). Here also 'Right Livelihood' means avoiding a wrong way of livelihood and getting a livelihood in the right way. People follow some kind of livelihood because they have to support themselves and they have to support their family. So they have to work. Some livelihoods are said to be not right. For monks 'Right Livelihood' means to go out for alms, not to get requisites by unlawful means. For lay persons also there are some trades to be avoided in order to get Right Livelihood. Avoiding wrong livelihood and getting right livelihood is what is called Right Livelihood here.

According to Abhidhamma we must understand that Right Livelihood is abstention from the four wrong conducts by speech and the three wrong conducts by action, by body. What is the difference? If you abstain from these seven or any of these seven normally, then you are experiencing or you are practicing Right Speech or Right Action. But if you abstain from one of these actions which is your livelihood, then you are said to be practicing Right Livelihood.

For example, a fisherman, his livelihood is killing fish. If an ordinary person, a person who is not a fisherman, abstains from killing fish, then he practices Right Action. But if a fisherman abstains from killing fish, which is his livelihood,

then he is said to be practicing Right Livelihood. Both abstain from killing. Right? Both abstain from killing, but the abstention of one person is Right Action and the Abstention of the other person is Right Livelihood, depending upon whether the abstention is his livelihood or not.

In the discourse in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha preached or the Buddha taught that a disciple who has taken refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha should not have some kinds of trades, should not engage in actually five kinds of trades. They are trading in arms or weapons, trading in living beings, trading in flesh, trading in intoxicating drinks, and trading in poison. The Buddha said that these are to be avoided. There may be problems with this nowadays. I cannot go into details with this. These are the five (kinds of livelihood) to be avoided by lay disciples. When lay disciples avoid these five kinds of trade and engage in other kinds of trade, they are following or they are practicing Right Livelihood.

6) RIGHT EFFORT

The next one is Right Effort. There are four kinds of Right Effort, regarding unwholesome states and wholesome states. There are two kinds of unwholesome states. One type is those that have never arisen in our minds in this life and also that have not arisen with regard to a certain object. That kind of unwholesome state is called 'those that have not arisen'. Now we must make effort for the non-arising of such unwholesome states. This unwholesome state has never arisen in our mind, but we may see or we may know this arising in another person. Seeing that it arises in another person, we may think: "Oh, I will never let that mental state arise in my mind. I will

avoid having that mental state." When a person makes effort in this way, he is said to be practicing Right Effort for the non-arising of unwholesome states that have not arisen.

The second effort is to abandon the unwholesome states that have arisen. That means you may have done something unwholesome or you may have an unwholesome state. Then you make effort to abandon that unwholesome state. How? You have already done that. Should you repent that, regret that, think about it, feel sorry, be remorseful? No. If you feel sorry for that, if you feel remorseful, you acquire fresh *akusala*, fresh unwholesome states. So you are multiplying (*akusala*), you are making it worse. The Buddha said — not in these words — forget about it. That is because what is done is done and you cannot undo it. Dwelling on it and feeling sorry about it doesn't help you. So just don't think about it and try to do good. In that way you can overcome the unwholesome mental state which has arisen. So with regard to the unwholesome mental states which have arisen, the best thing is not to think about them. Instead you should do meritorious deeds or do wholesome deeds and make up your mind: I will not let that happen again. It is not mere forgetting. 'Forgetting' here means (vowing) I will not let that happen to me again; I will not let that happen in my mind again. I will refrain from doing that in the future, something like that. Then you try to avoid doing that kind of unwholesome act again and you try to do good. The Buddha said that in that way you can overcome or step out of that unwholesome mental state that has arisen.

With regard to wholesome mental states there are two kinds of effort. One is the effort for the wholesome states that

have not arisen. There may be some wholesome states that have not arisen in you. You may have not done some *dāna* (giving), or some kind of *sīla*, or you may have not practiced meditation, or you may have not got *jhānas* and so on. For attaining those states or for the arising of those wholesome states, you have to make effort. That is one kind of effort.

The other effort with regard to wholesome states is the effort for the growth of wholesome states that have already arisen. That means you do it again and again. So don't be satisfied with just practicing meditation, one day, or one hour, or taking one retreat. So you do it again and again because by doing it again and again it grows.

So there are four kinds of effort, two regarding unwholesome states and two regarding wholesome states. You must make real strong effort for the non-arising of unwholesome states that have not yet arisen and for abandoning the unwholesome states that have arisen. Also you have to make strong effort for the wholesome states that have not yet arisen and for the development of those that have arisen.

Making effort this way is not torturing yourself, not self-mortification. The Buddha always praised firm and strong effort. So this is Right Effort. We may have another occasion for talking about this Right Effort.

7) RIGHT MINDFULNESS

The seventh one is Right Mindfulness. I don't need to say anything about Right Mindfulness. You have been practicing Right Mindfulness for many years. Let me ask you, how many kinds of Right Mindfulness there are? Mindfulness of body, mindfulness of feelings, mindfulness of consciousness, and

mindfulness of *dhamma* objects. These are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Sometimes we call it contemplation — contemplation of the body, contemplation of feelings, contemplation of consciousness, contemplation of *dhamma* objects. These four kinds of Right Mindfulness you practice at random when you practice *Vipassanā* meditation. When you practice *Vipassanā* meditation, you do not practice one only, you practice all four, not at the same moment, but as they come. This is Right Mindfulness.

8) RIGHT CONCENTRATION

The last one, number eight, is Right Concentration. Here when explaining Right Concentration, the Buddha explained with the four *jhānas*. So 'Right Concentration' means the first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, third *jhāna*, fourth *jhāna*. Here when we hear the word *'jhāna'*, our mind always goes to the *rūpāvacara jhānas*. If you have studied Abhidhamma, you know there can be *'jhānas'* in Path consciousness also. There are First *Jhāna* Path Consciousness, Second *Jhāna* Path Consciousness and so on. Here the four *rūpāvacara jhānas* may be practiced before taking up *Vipassanā* meditation. Or even when you practice *Vipassanā* meditation, you may practice *jhāna*, and then practice *Vipassanā*, and then *jhāna*, then *Vipassanā* and so on, yoked together. At the moment of enlightenment the *jhāna* is the supramundane *jhāna*. The Path consciousness that arises at the moment of enlightenment can belong to the first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, third *jhāna*, fourth *jhāna* and so on. So Right Concentration is explained as the four *jhānas*. So it is the four mundane *jhānas* and also the supramundane *jhānas*.

Now we have all eight factors, the first two belong to which group? **Right Understanding and Right Thought belong to *Paññā* (understanding), the wisdom group.** And then **Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood — these three belong to *Sīla* group because they involve restraining.** Then **Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration belong to concentration (*Samādhi*) group.** That is because without effort you cannot have mindfulness. And without mindfulness you cannot have concentration. In order to get concentration you have to make effort and you have to practice mindfulness. So Right Effort and Right Mindfulness are grouped with Right Concentration. We get three groups or the eight or the eight factors are divided into three groups. The first two belong to the wisdom group. The second three, that is factors number 3, 4, and 5 belong to *sīla* group or morality group. Factors number 6, 7, and 8 belong to concentration group. In Pāḷi they are *paññā* group, *sīla* group, and *samādhi* group.

These eight factors, as I said before, can be mundane or supramundane. **At the moment of enlightenment with the Path consciousness they are supramundane. With the practice of *Vipassanā* they are mundane.** When you practice *Vipassanā* these eight factors are (This means when you have good concentration) working together harmoniously, doing their respective functions. Only when they are doing their respective functions properly, can you say: "My meditation is good." Sometimes Right Understanding may not be there. Sometimes Right Concentration may not be there. At every moment of good meditation, good concentration, good *Vipassanā* these eight factors are working together. Actually out of these factors number 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8, these five factors are called working factors or worker factors.

When you take precepts, you purify your moral conduct. So these three are there. These three are not actively working at the moments of *Vipassanā*, but since they are accomplished before *Vipassanā*, they are said to be working, maybe in the background. **The five factors (Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration) are called the 'worker factors', 'the working factors'.** They are the ones that should be working harmoniously so that you get good concentration, good meditation, and good understanding, and right knowledge of the true nature of mind and matter.

These are the Four Noble Truths and the eight factors of the Fourth Noble Truth in some detail. You may read books if you want to know more details about the Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths. This is a course on the fundamentals of Buddhism. So I think it should be enough with just this much exposition. So today we have finished our talk on the Four Noble Truths.

These are the Four Noble Truths discovered by the Buddha and revealed to the world. Among these Four Noble Truths we should be more concerned with the Fourth Noble Truth because it is the Fourth Noble Truth that will lead us to the cessation of suffering. May we all practice the Fourth Noble Truth and reach the highest goal in this very life!

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

FOUR JHĀNAS

I will talk to you in more detail. Now you know the eighth factor of Path which is Right Concentration. **When the Buddha explained Right Concentration he mentioned the four *jhānas*.** Now the Commentary explains that these four *jhānas* are not only mundane *jhānas*, but also we must take it (to mean) that they are supramundane *jhānas*. **So 'Right Concentration' does not mean just mundane *jhānas* as we might think at a first glance. We must understand that it includes also the supramundane *jhānas*.**

In order to understand this, first you should understand the *jhānas*. ***Jhānas* are the higher states of consciousness**. These are experienced by those who practice *samatha* meditation. So *jhānas* can be obtained through the practice of *samatha* meditation. There are many objects used in *samatha* meditation in order to reach *jhāna*. For example, a person practicing *samatha* meditation takes an earth disk as an object. So he looks at the earth disk and then he memorizes it. Let us say that he has memorized it so completely that he can take the image of the disk in his mind. Then he dwells on it again and again so that it becomes more refined. And then he dwells on it again and he gets *jhāna*. So the *jhāna*, when it arises, takes that object as an object, that is, the refined mental image of the earth disk. The earth disk is just an example. There are many objects. When *jhāna* arises, it takes that object, the mental image of that object. And it pushes the mental defilements away for some time. That means *jhāna* cannot eradicate, cannot destroy any of the mental defilements, but the *jhāna* can push away these mental defilements for some time so that they do not arise in the meditator for some time. That is the nature of mundane *jhānas*. Again the mundane *jhānas* take their respective objects as object. They push the mental defilements

away for some time. They cannot eradicate (That means destroy) once and for all any of the mental defilements.

When a person is in *jhāna*, he experiences happiness. He experiences peacefulness. The peacefulness he experiences during the time of *jhāna* is superior to the happiness he enjoyed when experiencing sensual pleasures. The happiness he experiences during the time of *jhāna* is much better than the happiness he enjoys when he experiences sensual pleasures. That is the nature of *jhāna*.

There are four *jhānas* in the mundane sphere. The name *'jhāna'* is given to some combination of mental states or mental factors. The first *jhāna* is a name given to a combination of five mental states that are called *'jhāna* factors'. **These five mental states are initial application, sustained application, and *pīti* or rapture, *sukha* or happiness, and unification of mind or concentration.** When we say first *jhāna* we mean these five as a group. The second *jhāna* consists of the last three. In the second *jhāna* the first two are missing. So the second *jhāna* is a name given to a combination of the last three *jhāna* factors, that is, *pīti* (rapture), *sukha* (happiness), and concentration. The third *jhāna* is a name given to the last two factors, happiness and concentration. The fourth *jhāna* is a name given to again two factors, but this time instead of happiness or happy feeling, it is neutral feeling. So the fourth *jhāna* consists of neutral feeling and concentration.

These five factors, these five mental states are called *'jhāna* factors'. Among these *jhāna* factors some are also factors of *Magga*. Initial application is Right Thinking or Right Thought among the eight factors of Path. You know there are eight factors of Path. The first one is what? Right Understanding. The second is Right Thought. Then there are Right Speech, Right Action, Right

Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. So the first *jhāna* factor which is *vitakka* (initial application) is Right Thought among the eight factors of Path. Then for the second *jhāna* factor there is no corresponding Path factor. For the third there is no corresponding factor. For the fourth there is no corresponding factor. The fifth, concentration or unification of mind is actually Right Concentration. So two of the *jhāna* factors can be found among the eight Path factors.

Now the Fourth Noble Truth is the combination of the Eight Factors of Path. Since they are called 'Eight Factors of Path', they are called 'Eight Factors of Path' only when they arise with Path consciousness. The problem is how to connect the five mundane *jhānas* with Path consciousness. If they are mundane *jhānas*, they are not Path consciousness. And if it is Path consciousness, it is not the mundane *jhānas*. How do we connect these two? When Buddha explained Right Concentration, he gave these four *jhānas*.

The Commentary says that we must understand here the supramundane *jhānas*. What are the supramundane *jhānas*? Actually by *jhāna* we normally mean the mundane *jhānas*. There can be *jhānas* in supramundane sphere also. How? At the moment of enlightenment, as you know, Path consciousness arises. Right? When Path consciousness arises, it arises together with 36 mental factors. Among the 36 (mental factors) there are initial application, sustained application, *pīti*, *sukha*, concentration, and other factors. So when Path consciousness arises all these five '*jhāna*' factors are with it. Since the Path consciousness has five '*jhāna*' factors with it, the Path consciousness is called 'First *Jhāna* Path Consciousness'. That means Path consciousness which resembles the first *jhāna*. That is because, as we know, if it is *jhāna*, it is not *Magga*; and if it

is *Magga*, it is not *jhāna*. Here the *Magga* consciousness is called 'first *jhāna*' because it resembles the first *jhāna* of the mundane sphere.

If a person practices *Vipassanā* meditation and gets enlightenment — I mean if a person practices pure *Vipassanā* meditation, *Vipassanā* only, not combined with *samatha* — so if a person practices pure *Vipassanā* meditation and he gets the Path consciousness, that Path consciousness is accompanied by all these five factors. So that Path consciousness is said to be First *Jhāna* Path Consciousness. That is Path consciousness resembling first *jhāna*.

Now there are persons who practice *samatha* meditation and who get *jhānas* before they practice *Vipassanā* meditation. When they practice *Vipassanā*, they may practice pure *Vipassanā* or they may practice *Vipassanā* and *samatha* (meditation) joined together or yoked together. That means they may enter into first *jhāna*. This is mundane *jhāna*. Then they get out of the *jhāna* and practice *Vipassanā* on that first *jhāna*. As a result of that *Vipassanā*, let us say Path consciousness arises. So when Path consciousness arises, that Path consciousness is accompanied by all five *jhāna* factors along with other mental states. So this Path consciousness is called 'First *Jhāna* Path Consciousness'. That means Path consciousness which resembles the first *jhāna*.

Let us say the person has all four *jhānas*. He may enter into the second *jhāna*. Getting out of second *jhāna*, he may practice *Vipassanā* on second *jhāna*. Then he gets *Magga*. So his *Magga* consciousness will be accompanied by only three *jhāna* factors. That is because he made the second *jhāna*, which has only three *jhāna* factors, the basis for his *Vipassanā*. So when *Magga citta* arises his *Magga citta* is accompanied by three *jhāna*

factors and other mental factors. So that *Magga* consciousness is called 'Second *Jhāna* Path Consciousness'. That means Path consciousness which resembles the second *jhāna*. The same is true for the third *jhāna* and the fourth *jhāna*.

So when we say 'First *Jhāna* Path Consciousness', we really mean that it is Path consciousness and not that it is *jhāna* consciousness, but it is Path consciousness that resembles *jhāna* consciousness. It is like *jhāna* consciousness. So they are called supramundane *jhānas*. Actually the supramundane *jhānas* do not take the mental image as object, but they take Nibbāna as object. So when these *jhāna* factors arise with Path consciousness, they take Nibbāna as object. When they arise with *jhāna* consciousness, when they arise as mundane *jhāna* (factors), they take the mental image and so on as object. So the object is different. When they are mundane *jhānas*, they take the mental image and others as object. But when they arise with Path consciousness, they take Nibbāna as object.

Path consciousness has the ability to destroy all mental defilements. It does not push them away for some time, but it destroys them altogether so that these mental defilements do not arise again. When a person is experiencing Path consciousness and later on Fruition consciousness, he is said to be in bliss. So his peacefulness, his happiness that he experiences at that time is much superior to the experience of *jhāna*, not to speak of the experience of sensual pleasures. That is the highest form of happiness, the highest form of peacefulness.

So mundane *jhānas* and *Maggas* differ in this way. Right? Mundane *jhānas* take the mental image and others as object and they can push away mental defilements temporarily, and they can give some kind of peacefulness, much superior to ordinary

peacefulness. *Maggas* — we can call them supramundane *jhānas*. **So supramundane *Jhānas* or *Maggas* take Nibbāna as object. They are able to eradicate, destroy once and for all the mental defilements.** The happiness experienced during the time of *Magga* and *Phala* is the best, the highest form of happiness or peacefulness. So they differ in this respect.

When you see the explanation given for Right Concentration as four *jhānas*, you must understand that these four *jhānas* are both mundane and supramundane. **When you take these four *jhānas* to be mundane, they belong to the preliminary stage. When you take them to be supramundane, they belong to the stage of *Magga*.** Since there are four *jhānas* both at the preliminary stage and at the stage of *Magga*, the Commentary said that there is a variety of *jhānas* both at the preliminary stage and at the moment of *Magga*. That is because there may be any one of these four in both cases, in both stages. So Right Concentration is not like the other factors of Path.

For example, Right Effort — do you remember how many Right Efforts there are? Four. Right? So there are four Right Efforts — to avoid *akusala* which has not yet arisen from arising, and then to abandon *akusala* which has arisen, and the effort (to develop) *kusala* which has not arisen, and the effort for development of *kusala* which has arisen already. Right? So there are four kinds of effort.

These four kinds of effort arise during the preliminary stage and also at the stage of *Magga*. During the preliminary stage these four come one at a time, and not in any particular order. There may be the first effort, the second effort, the third effort or the fourth effort. They take different objects. The first takes *akusala* as object. The third takes *kusala* as object. When Right

Effort arises with *Magga*, there is no variety, there is just Right Effort. It arises with *Magga* taking Nibbāna as object, doing the function of Path. So in the preliminary stage there is a variety of efforts (effort #1, effort #2, effort #3, effort #4), but at the stage of *Magga* there is only one, just one effort in general. We cannot say that the effort that arises with *Magga* is the first kind, the second kind, the third kind, or the fourth kind. It is just effort in general. The Commentary says that there is variety of effort in the preliminary stage, but at the stage of *Magga* there is only one effort.

Here with regard to concentration it is different. There is variety of *jhānas* both at the preliminary stage and at the stage of *Magga*.

Let me ask you some questions. Do *jhānas* eradicate mental defilements? Yes or no. Do *jhānas* eradicate or destroy mental defilements? 'Eradicate' means destroy altogether. No. What they do is temporary abandonment. They push these mental defilements away for some time. Right? They cannot eradicate or destroy altogether the mental defilements. That is one thing.

Is it essential for a person to get *jhānas* before he takes up *Vipassanā* meditation? Must he get *jhāna* before he practices *Vipassanā* meditation? No. He may or may not get *jhānas*. Right? These are two important things I want to make clear. I want you to understand clearly. ***Jhānas* cannot eradicate or destroy mental defilements, but they can push the mental defilements away from the person for some time. And it is not essential to get *jhānas* before you practice *Vipassanā* meditation**. You may get *jhānas* before or you may not. These are the two things I want to make clear.

Now the *jhānas* can push the mental defilements away for some time. How long? A few hours? A few weeks? A month? *Jhānas* can push away longer than that. Do you know how long? Sixty years.

There was a monk, a very renowned monk, in ancient Ceylon. He was a very famous teacher. He got all these *jhānas* and the magic powers. So he thought he was an *Arahant*. He taught many students and many of his students became *Arahants*. But he remained an ordinary person (*puthujjana*).

Now one of his pupils who had become an *Arahant* read his mind and found out that his teacher was still a *puthujjana*. So in order to help him, in order to shake him up, he went to the teacher. When he met the teacher, the teacher asked: "What do you come here for?" He answered: "I want to ask you some questions." Then the student asked the questions and the teacher gave answers right away. He doesn't have to search for the answers. Then the student said: "Oh, how great! How wonderful! You can answer my questions right away. When did you reach this stage?" He asked because the student knew that his teacher thought that he was an *Arahant*. "When did you reach this stage?" The teacher said: "Oh, it was about sixty years ago." During those sixty years he had not seen a mental defilement arise in his mind. That is why he thought he was an *Arahant*. He was able to push away these mental defilements for sixty years. Since it was not eradication by *Magga*, they can come back.

So the student asked: "*Bhante*, do you make use of magic powers?" He said: "Oh, it is easy for me." Then the student said: "*Bhante*, please create an elephant, put the trunk up, making noise and have it rushing at you, say to kill you." So the teacher created that image as the student had asked. When the image he

created went to him or came to him to crush him, he was afraid, and so he got up from his seat. (*Bhante* Sayādaw U Sīlānanda laughing). He was afraid of his own creation. So the student took hold of the robe and said: "*Bhante*, do *Arahants* have fear?" (*Bhante* Sayādaw U Sīlānanda laughing some more). Only then he realized that he was not an *Arahant* yet. Then he put up his hands (in supplication) and said: "Friend, please be my refuge." The student said: "I came here just for this purpose." Then he taught him a practice of meditation. He practiced the meditation and became an *Arahant*.

So even for sixty years they (the *jhānas*) can push the mental defilements away. Although for sixty years no mental defilements had arisen in his mind, when there is the condition, the elephant coming to crush him, he was afraid. So he wanted to run away. *Jhānas* cannot eradicate, cannot destroy mental defilements altogether. But they can push them away, maybe not just in the *jhāna* state, for many years. Since they are not eradicated completely, they can come back as in this story. Those eradicated by *Magga* never arise again. This may be an extreme case, that is, a monk being able to push away mental defilements for sixty years, although he was a *puthujjana*.

OK. I think I have explained fairly fully, not yet fully, but fairly fully the factor of Right Concentration. I think this shows you what I told you about the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path is just the tip of the iceberg. There is a lot more to know about the Four Noble Truths and the Eight Factors.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

4

KAMMA

The talk is based on the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta in Majjhima Nikāya. It is a discourse given by the Buddha to the Brahman youth, Subha.

And there are people who are sickly. That means there are people who always have one disease or another. And there are people who are healthy. There are people who are ugly and who are beautiful. There are people who are uninfluential and there are others who are influential. There are people who are poor and who are wealthy. There are people who are low born and others who are high born. And there are people who lack wisdom. That means those who are dull or stupid. There are people who are wise or intelligent. Altogether there are fourteen kinds of people. He (Subha) pointed out these people to the Buddha and asked the Buddha why some people lived long and some people lived short and so on.

Then the Buddha gave him the answer very briefly. The Buddha said: **"Young man, beings have *kamma* as their own property. Beings are heir of their *kamma*. They originate from their *kamma*. They are born to their *kamma* or they are relatives to their *kamma*. They have *kamma* as their refuge. It**

is *kamma* that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior. Or it is *kamma* that makes people, here human beings, different." So the Buddha gave him a very brief answer.

And he said that he did not understand well. So he said: "*Bhante*, I do not understand the meaning of your statement which is very brief, without exposition. It would be good if you would explain to me in detail." So the Buddha explained to him in detail.

The Buddha gave a very brief answer to him because Buddha knew that Subha was a proud man, conceited maybe. He thought he could understand anything the Buddha taught him. Buddha wanted to dress him down a little, so that he would drop his pride and be able to follow the teachings of the Buddha. When he requested for a detailed explanation, the Buddha gave the answer in some detail. These are all put on the page (the handout) and now it is easy to understand.

Although these questions were put by Subha, these are the questions we always want to ask. We want to know the answers to these questions. That is because we have met these problems in human beings. Even born of the same parents and brought up under the same circumstances brothers and sisters are different. One may be intelligent, while the other may be dull. One may live long and the other does not and so on. These are the questions we always want to ask and we always want to know the answers to these questions.

If you ask these questions of a person who believes in creation, who believes in a *Brahma*, or a God, you will end up with the answer: 'Because it was created by God or *Brahma* that way.' That is not satisfactory. There will be many questions following that.

The Buddha's answers are very convincing and very reasonable. So they are satisfactory.

Buddha gave answer to these one by one. Since the offspring of the same parents are brought up under the same circumstances or environment and are born of the same parents, we cannot point to the environment as the reason or as the cause for their inequality, nor can we point to heredity as the cause because they are born to the same parents under the same conditions. The reason must be somewhere beyond heredity, circumstances or environment. If we cannot find the reason or cause in this life, then we have to go beyond this life backward. So the Buddha found that it was something beings did in the past that makes them different in life.

The Buddha said that some people kill living beings, not just once, many times they kill living beings. As a result of that killing, they are reborn in the four woeful states. They are reborn in hell and so on. If they come up to the human existence (That means if they are reborn as human beings), then they will live a very short life. Because they indulged in killing living beings, their minds are intent upon shortening life. That intention of shortening life gives results back to him (that being) in being short-lived.

There are people who do not kill living beings, who refrain from killing living beings. These people, after they die, are reborn in the celestial world. And when they are reborn as human beings, they live long lives. So people who live short lives are those who practiced killing living beings in their past lives. And those who live long are those who refrained from killing living beings (in past lives). When you refrain from killing living beings, your mind is on lengthening the life. That desire to lengthen the lives causes your life to be long when you are reborn as a human being.

Now there are people who are sickly, who always have one kind of illness or another all the time and who lead unhealthy lives. These people are, according to the teachings of the Buddha, those who injure other beings. These people do not kill living beings, but they are cruel to living beings. They inflict pain on other beings. They torture other beings and so on. People who injure other beings when they die are reborn in the four woeful states and when they are born as human beings, they are not healthy. They are always in illness.

Those people who are healthy in this life — there are some people who have never been to a doctor. They have never been to a clinic; they may have never taken a pill or something. So they are very healthy. Why are they healthy in this life? Because in their past lives they refrained from injuring other people. They do not inflict pain on other people. Actually they are compassionate to other people. These people are those who when they are reborn as human beings, they have a healthy life.

Why are some ugly and some beautiful? The Buddha said: "Some people are of an angry or irritable character. Such people, even when criticized a little, they are offended. They become angry. Being of an angry nature, they will be reborn in the four woeful states. And when they are reborn as human beings, they will be ugly." So anger is the cause of ugliness. We can understand this very easily. Even when we are living now, when we are angry, we are really ugly. We do not look pleasant. So if we want to know how ugly we are, then when we are angry, we may look at ourselves in the mirror, and we will see how ugly we are at that time.

Those who are beautiful are not of angry nature. They are people who are kind to other people and who do not get angry

easily. So if you want to be beautiful even in this life, try not to get angry or try to practice *mettā*. So the cause of ugliness is anger and the cause of beauty is the absence of anger. So it teaches us that if we want to be beautiful, if we want to look pleasant, then we are not to get angry easily.

There are people who are uninfluential and there are others who are influential. Sometimes you see people who are powerful or who talk with authority, and everybody wants to follow that person. And there are people who are powerless, who have no authority and so on. The cause of this is what? Those who are uninfluential are those who are envious in their past lives, who envied the gain, the honor, the respect, the reverence, the veneration, the salutations other people receive. If we are envious of, if we are jealous of other people's gains, honors and so on, then we are sure to be uninfluential in our future lives. And those who are influential in this life are those who are not envious of the gains, the honors, the respect, the reverence, the salutations, the veneration other people get. To be envious is the cause of being uninfluential and not to be envious is the cause of being influential in this life.

Now there are people who are poor and also there are people who are wealthy. Those who are poor in this life are those who do not give food, clothing and other things to recluses, Brahmins, and to other people, or who do not practice *dāna*. Those who are wealthy in this life are those who practiced *dāna* in their past lives, who gave food, drink, clothing and other things to people. Practice of *dāna* is the cause of being wealthy and not practicing *dāna* or being stingy, so that we do not give anything to anybody, is the cause of poverty.

There are people who are born lowly and people who are born highly. Sometimes you may find people, you may meet people who are born as outcasts and also people who are born in high families. The cause of low birth is being obstinate and arrogant or proud. Such people do not pay homage to those who are worthy of homage, or do not rise up for one in whose presence he should rise up for, who does not offer a seat to one who deserves a seat, who does not make way for one for whom he should make way, and who does not honor, respect, revere, venerate one who should be honored, respected and so on. Not being respectful to others is the cause of low birth. The cause of a high birth is the opposite of that, that is, not being obstinate and not being arrogant. That is paying homage to those who deserve homage, paying respect to those who deserve respect, rising from the seat and so on. Being proud is the cause of being low born and the absence of pride, not being arrogant is the cause of being high born.

And there are those lacking in wisdom, who are not intelligent, who are dull, who are stupid. Also there are those who are wise, intelligent, quick-witted. The difference is caused by asking questions and not asking questions. Those who do not ask what is wholesome and what is unwholesome and so on, what is allowable and what is not allowable and so on, those who do not ask questions like these, when they are reborn as human beings, are unintelligent. They are dull or stupid people. Those who ask questions regarding wholesomeness of actions and others, when they are reborn as human beings, they are intelligent. They have wisdom. They are wise. So asking questions, regarding the Dhamma actually, is the cause of being wise, of being intelligent. Not asking questions is the cause of lacking wisdom.

Now you know which practice leads to which condition. The practice of killing living beings leads to a short life. The practice of refraining from killing living beings leads to a long life. So here we have a choice. If we want to live long, we need to refrain from killing living beings. If we don't mind, if we don't care to live long, then we may practice killing living beings. In the same way, if we want to be healthy in our future lives, we refrain from injuring people. If we want to be beautiful, then we are not to get angry. If we want to be influential, we should get rid of envy or jealousy. If we want to be wealthy, we should practice *dāna*. If we want to be high born persons, then we should be humble in this life, we should not be arrogant. If we want to be intelligent, then we must ask questions. These are the reasons why some people live long and some live short and so on.

The Buddha gave answers to the questions put by Subha. At the end of the discourse the Buddha again said that beings have *kamma* as their own property and so on. It is *kamma* that distinguishes human beings into superior and inferior. It is *kamma* that makes differences in human beings. So the Buddha's answer is that this is not the creation of any God, or deity, or whatever. It is because of one's own actions, one's own *kammas* in the past that one gets to live long or to live short in this life. It is *kamma* that makes people different in this life.

What is *kamma* that is the cause of difference in beings? *Kamma* is usually translated as an act, or an action, or a deed. Technically, *'kamma'* means a mental state called **'volition'** or in Pāḷi ***'cetanā'***. There is a mental state or a mental factor called 'volition' which wills, by which people will do something. Whenever we do something by body, or by speech, or by mind, there is volition in our minds. Prompted by this volition we do

actions by body, or by speech, or by mind. Since every action of body, or of speech, or of mind is always accompanied by this volition, *kamma* has come to be translated as action or deed. So we must understand when we are not seriously talking, we may say that '*kamma*' means action or a deed. **If we want to be precise and technical, we should say that *kamma* is volition.**

Now that volition is a mental state or a mental factor that arises in our minds. As a mental state it arises and disappears because everything in the world is impermanent. So everything arises and disappears. It is a mental state. So as a mental state it arises and disappears, but it is different from other kinds of mental states. Other mental states arise and disappear leaving nothing behind. But this volition when it disappears leaves something, some potential to give results in the mental continuum of beings. That is why when the conditions are favorable for a *kamma* to give results, the results appear.

Once King Milinda asked the Venerable Nāgasena whether the Venerable Nāgasena can point out where that *kamma* was stored. The Venerable Nāgasena said: "It is impossible to say exactly where the *kamma* is stored, but depending on continuity, depending on mind and body, and when the continuity, and when the conditions are favorable, then it gives results." Although we cannot say or it is impossible to say where exactly *kamma* is stored, but when conditions are favorable for good *kamma* to give results, then we get good results. And if the conditions are favorable for bad *kamma* to give results, we get bad results. So this *kamma*, this volition, when it disappears, it leaves something, some potential, in the continuity of beings. When the conditions are favorable, we get the results.

The Venerable Nāgasena gave the simile of the mango tree. Right? We do not know or it is impossible to say where mangoes are stored, whether in the roots, or in the trunk, or in the branches. When it is the season, when it gets the moisture, temperature and so on, when the conditions are favorable, then the fruits come up. Then the tree bears fruit. In the same way, although it is impossible to say where *kamma* is stored, when the conditions are favorable, we get the results of *kamma*.

After understanding what *kamma* is, we should understand what *kamma* is not. ***Kamma* is not fate or predestination**, if we take fate or predestination as something imposed on beings by some mysterious, unknown power, by a deity, by a God, or by a *Brahma*. Now whenever we suffer something or whenever we get something we want, we say, "this is the result of *kamma*" or we just say, "this is my *kamma*." But if fate or predestination is taken as something imposed upon us by others, then *kamma* is not fate or predestination. *Kamma* is something we did in past lives. Then we experience the results of this past *kamma* in this present life and in future lives.

The results of *kamma* are the natural outcome of *kamma*. The results, good or bad, are not created by any deity, or by a *Brahma*, or a God. So the good results we get or the bad results we get are not rewards or punishment. The good results we get are not the reward of a deity and the bad results we experience are not the punishment given out by a deity, or *Brahma*, or God. It is our own doing. We get something as a result of what we did. So *kamma* is not fate or predestination, if we take fate and predestination as something imposed upon us by an external power. However, it is like predestination or fate because we enjoy or suffer according to our own *kamma*. We enjoy or suffer the results of our own

kamma. The results, as I said, are not the creation of anybody. The results are the natural outcome of these *kammas*.

Sometimes people think that *kamma* is like defeatism. You accept what is given to you by *kamma* and you cannot do anything to improve yourself. That is not correct. By doing good *kamma* we can get good results even in this life. So we can improve ourselves by doing good *kamma*. So *kamma* is not defeatism. It is not accepting defeat without doing anything about it. We accept that what we enjoy or what we suffer is the result of *kamma*, but we try to improve our condition by doing good *kamma*, by doing good deeds. So *kamma* is not defeatism, as some people think it is.

The next question is: Can we modify the workings of *kamma* or can we interfere with the workings of *kamma*? Even the Buddha himself cannot interfere with the working of *kamma*. When Prince Viḍūdabha tried to kill the Buddha's relatives, Buddha could not do anything because their *kamma* was such that they had to perish at the hands of Prince Viḍūdabha. So Buddha could not deter the fate to be suffered by his relatives. That is because the **Law of *Kamma* is a natural law**. It is not made by any person. It is not created by any God or deity. It is a natural law. Since it is a natural law, nobody can interfere with the working of the Law of *Kamma*.

Although we cannot interfere with the workings of *kamma*, we can do something about the working of *kamma*. And that is we can create conditions that are unfavorable for bad *kamma* to give results. So we will be able to at least postpone the coming of the bad results of *akusala kamma*. That is because, as I said before, only when the conditions are favorable does *kamma* give results. If the conditions are not favorable, the *kamma* will lie and wait. If we create the unfavorable conditions for *akusala*

kamma (bad *kamma*) to give results, then we may not get the results of the bad *kamma*. Although we cannot interfere with the Law of *Kamma*, we cannot change the Law of *Kamma*, we can do something so that we do not get the bad results of *akusala kamma*, but that is to some extent only because nobody can wipe out the *kamma* or the results of *kamma* altogether.

Even the Buddha had to suffer the bad results of his bad *kamma* that he did in the past. You know the Buddha often suffered from headache, backache, and sometimes he suffered from fever. He suffered from a wound in his foot, when his foot was hit by a rock, a small rock, which came from the big rock that Devadatta pushed down on the Buddha. Even the Buddha was not immune from getting the results of his bad *kamma* in the past. There are many stories in our books that show that there is no escape from the results of bad *kamma*.

We cannot interfere with the workings of *kamma*. We cannot change the course of *kamma*, but we can do something to postpone the coming of bad results in some cases or to some extent. Nobody can wipe out the *kamma* altogether. Let us say, nobody can wipe out the past *kamma* altogether or the result of past *kamma* altogether. So everybody has to suffer or experience the result of his *kamma* in the past.

There is a saying that at the moment of the attainment of *Arahantship* all *kammas* are exhausted. The *Magga* consciousness at the moment of the attainment of the fourth stage of enlightenment is called 'one that performs the exhaustion of *kamma*'. So at the moment of the attainment of *Arahantship*, it is said that all *kammas* are exhausted. That does not mean that all past *kammas* are destroyed, and so one does not have to experience the results of these past *kammas*. What happens at

the moment of the attainment of *Arahantship* is that all mental defilements are eradicated at that moment. When there are no mental defilements in the mind, whatever that person does is just doing that does not constitute *kamma*. That is because that person has no attachment to any life or any existence, and that person has no ignorance. So whatever that person does is just doing and it does not constitute *kamma*. **In other words those who have attained Arahantship, the Buddhas and *Arahants*, do not accumulate fresh kammas.** They do not get new *kammas* although they continue to do good things.

Buddha taught many beings. Buddha helped many people to get free from suffering. *Arahants* also do good things for their fellow monks as well as for lay people. But they do not get *kusala* when they do these (good deeds). Their *kamma* or actions are called *'kiriya'*, just doing, just happening. The exhaustion of *kamma* accomplished by the fourth stage of enlightenment means that no *kamma* is accumulated after the attainment of the fourth stage of enlightenment. Since there is no *kamma*, there will not be the results of *kamma* in the future.

Then what about the old *kammas* they did in the past? They still have to experience the results of those old *kammas*, like the Buddha suffering from headache and so on. Also some of the *Arahants* suffered from illness. I think you know that Venerable Moggallāna was attacked by 500 robbers and he was killed. So even though they do not accumulate new *kammas*, they will have the store of old *kammas* and so they have to suffer or enjoy the consequences of their *kamma* in the past. But after their death there is no more rebirth. They are not reborn anymore. So the *kammas* they accumulated in the past cannot give results after their death.

You know the story of Angulimāla. Angulimāla killed how many people? A thousand people, maybe more than a thousand people. He killed many human beings. Then the Buddha went to him and taught him. Then he became first a monk and then later he became an *Arahant*. As an *Arahant* before he died, he had to suffer some consequences of his bad *kamma*. He did a lot of *akusala kamma*. Right? If he did not become an *Arahant*, these *akusala kammas* would have given him bad results for many, many lives. Since he was not reborn, those *akusala kammas* cannot give results. So for him these *akusala kammas* become defunct.

It is like a person who commits a crime and then he dies. The police cannot do anything to arrest him or punish him because he now is out of their reach. In the same way, when an *Arahant* dies, there is no more rebirth for him. Since there is no more rebirth, the past *kammas* cannot give any results to him after he is dead. So they become defunct.

When we say *Arahants* achieve exhaustion of *kamma*, we mean that they do not acquire fresh or new *kamma*. But they still experience the result of their *kamma* that they did in the past. Many *kammas* become defunct. That means they cannot give results when Buddhas and *Arahants* pass away or die. That is because *Arahants* and Buddhas are not reborn. They do not have any more rebirths.

Now we don't want to get the bad results of bad *kamma*, so if we don't want to get bad results, we must not do bad *kamma*. What if we have done bad *kamma*? What must we do, regarding the bad *kamma* we did? The Buddha said: "Even if we were to be remorseful about the bad *kamma* we did in the past, that bad *kamma* will not be undone." We have already done it and so we cannot undo it. What is done is already done. So being remorseful

makes our situation worse. We accumulate more *akusala*, more unwholesome *kamma* by being regretful about the bad *kamma* we did in the past. So Buddha meant to say: "Forget about it." Don't think about that bad *kamma* again and again and acquire more *akusala kamma*. Forgetting about it is called '**abandoning that bad *kamma***'. And then in the future one is to refrain from doing that bad *kamma*.

So with regard to bad *kamma* the first thing is not to think about it or not to be remorseful about that bad *kamma*. Then one must try to refrain from such bad *kamma* in the future. That is called 'abandoning evil *kamma*' or 'getting beyond that evil *kamma*'. So if we have done something bad, some bad *kamma* in the past, then we should not think about it again and again and be remorseful, and we should refrain from doing similar bad *kamma* in the future. That way we leave behind the bad *kamma*.

Now the Buddha talked about wrong views about *kamma*. We must understand these wrong views. One wrong view is: Whatever a person experiences, be it happiness, pain, or neutral feeling, all that he experiences is because of past action or past *kamma*. That is said to be a wrong view. Whatever a person experiences, happiness, or pain, or neutral feeling, that he experiences as a result of his past *kamma* and Buddha said that is a wrong view.

Do you agree with that? I will say it again. Whatever a person experiences, happiness, or pain, or neutral feeling, he experiences as the result of past *kamma*. Isn't it correct? (Sayādaw is laughing). This is one wrong view.

In order to understand this we must understand that feelings or whatever accompany resultant consciousness, they

accompany wholesome and unwholesome consciousness, and they accompany *kiriya* consciousness that arises in Buddhas and *Arahants*. With regard to feeling that accompanies resultant consciousness it is true. Right? Because suppose I have pain here. I experience that pain. The experience of that pain is the result of past *kamma*. Right? It is a resultant consciousness. That is true. But when I have *kusala* mind or *akusala* mind there is still *somanassa*, or *domanassa* or *upekkhā*. Right? That is not the result of any *kamma* because it is itself *kamma* that we are acquiring anew. Right? Also there is the consciousness that arises in Buddhas and *Arahants*. Buddhas and *Arahants* also experience *somanassa*, or *dukkha* (physical pain), and neutral feeling. These feelings or the experience of these feelings are not the result of any *kamma*. So if you say whatever a person experiences, whether it is happiness or pain, or neutral, it is because of past *kamma*, you are wrong. That is one wrong view about *kamma*.

Another wrong view is whatever a person experiences, whether it is happiness or pain or neutral feeling — all that he experiences because of the creation of Issara or by God. That means a person experiences happiness, or pain, or neutral feelings because those feelings were created by God. So God created happiness for him, neutral feeling for him. If you take it that way, it is another kind of wrong view about *kamma*. It is easy to understand.

Another wrong view is whatever a person experiences, whether it is happiness, or pain, or neutral feeling — all that he experiences is without a cause and without a condition. So there is no cause or condition for his being happy or for his happiness, or his pain, or his being neutral. That is also a wrong view about *kamma*. Now happiness, pain or neutral does not arise without

any condition. Any one of these is dependent upon some condition. Without conditions they cannot arise. When we say that a person experiences happiness, or pain, or neutral feelings without a cause or without a condition, that is wrong.

And when we say that happiness, or pain, or neutral feeling is created by a God or *Brahma*, we are also wrong. That is because they are dependent on conditions and it is not that they are created. So the second and third wrong views about *kamma* are easy to understand, but the first is a little difficult.

You have to understand Abhidhamma in order to understand this. There is one passage which is important but difficult to understand. That is number eight. The Buddha said: "I do not teach the extinction of *kammas* that are willed, performed and heaped up without their results having been experienced and these result in this life or in the next life, or in the lives after the next." I think that part is not so difficult. *Kammas* do not come to extinction without their having been experienced, that is, until they give results, they are not extinguished. After they give results they disappear, like that. That is not difficult.

The next sentence I think is difficult. "Never do I teach making an end of suffering without the results of *kammas* that are willed, performed and heaped up having been experienced." I do not teach making an end of suffering without the results of *kamma* having been experienced. That means you have to experience the results of *kamma* before you can make an end of suffering.

It gives me a lot of thinking, a lot of *dukkha* to me. I do not teach making an end of suffering without the results of *kammas* having been experienced. So if you do not have the experience of the results of *kammas*, you cannot make an end of suffering. So if you want to make an end of suffering, do you have to experience

all the results of your *kamma*? No? Then what is the meaning of this? I don't know. I want you to think about it, but not during the retreat. Please read it again and again and think about it. We will talk about it in our next class.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

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When I read this passage, I could not understand it. So I looked for an explanation in the Commentaries, but the Commentaries did not say anything about this sentence. I was dissatisfied with the Commentary because we always expect the Commentary to explain such points. At this place it is silent. With the Sub-Commentary it was the same. So it gave me a lot of *dukkha*. So I wanted to give *dukkha* to you too. You will have to think about it until the next class.

OK. Next question — do animals, trees, plants and rocks have *kamma*? Maybe to many of you it is a silly question. There may be some people, hopefully not among you, who may think that plants, trees and so on have *kamma*. This question is put here. According to Theravāda Buddhism, plants, trees and rocks are not living beings. They are not regarded as living beings although in some way plants may be said to have life. That is not life taught in Abhidhamma. So plants, trees and rocks are not living beings and as such they have no *kamma*. Although they have no *kamma*, nevertheless, they are dependent on other material conditions like moisture, temperature, nutrition and so on. Although they have no *kamma*, they depend on conditions to arise and to exist. So they are also dependent on some conditions although they

have no *kamma*. The causal relationship between inanimate things will be explained with reference to *Paṭṭhāna*.

Animals are living beings. They have all five aggregates as we human beings do. So they are living beings. As living beings they have *kamma*. Animals acquire or accumulate *kamma*. Animals are born as animals as a result of *akusala kamma* in the past. So animals have *kamma* and they do or perform *kamma*. But plants, trees, rocks and other inanimate things have no *kamma*.

There are some statements in the Visuddhimagga regarding *kamma* and results. They are noteworthy. We should note them. "While *kamma* and results thus causally making their round, as seed and tree succeed in turn no first beginning can be shown." *Kamma* and result follow each other. There is *kamma* and then there is the result of *kamma*. Now, say there is *kusala* or *akusala kamma* and as a result of *kusala* and *akusala kamma* there is rebirth in four woeful states, or as human beings, or as celestial beings. During those existences beings acquire new *kamma*. Then there is the result of that *kamma* in the future. So *kamma* and its results go on and on like that.

It is like a seed and a tree. There is a seed and then it grows into a tree. Then that tree has a seed, and then from the seed there is a tree, and so on. Or we can say the hen and the egg (go on in this way). They go on and on. There is no first beginning. No first beginning can be shown. We can go back, but however far we go back, we will never reach the beginning. So there is no first beginning of *kamma* and results, although there is the rolling on of *kamma* and results in this round of rebirth. Nor in the future round of rebirths can they be shown not to occur. In the future they will surely arise. That is because when there is *kamma* in the present, there will be the result of *kamma* in the future.

Now in Samkhya philosophy which is one of the six classical Hindu philosophies it is believed that the result already exists in the cause but in an unmanifest form. When it becomes manifest, it becomes the result. According to that philosophy the result is already in the cause. The cause becomes mature and when it reaches the highest stage of maturity, it becomes the result. In that philosophy *kamma* or cause and the result are the same.

Buddhism does not accept that. **In Buddhism it is taught that *kamma* is one thing and result is another.** So here the Visuddhimagga says: "There is no *kamma* in result, nor does result exist in *kamma*." So there is no *kamma* in result and no result in *kamma*. They are just two different things. Though they are void of one another, although they are different from one another, there is no fruit without *kamma*. There can be no result without *kamma*. So they are related as cause and effect, but cause is one thing and effect is another. They are not identical.

'As fire does not exist inside the sun, a gem, cow dung, nor yet outside them, but is brought to be by means of components or by means of conditions.' When there is sunshine, and there is cow dung, or small pieces of wood, or pieces of paper, and you put a magnifying glass between them, and concentrate the rays (of the sun) on the pieces of paper or cow dung, fire is produced. So here it says fire does not exist inside the sun, inside a gem, or inside cow dung. If fire existed in the rays of the sun, or the gem, or cow dung, they will be burning. They will always be burning. Fire is not in them. So they are not burning when they are put separately. But when they are put together, then there is fire. So fire does not exist in the rays of the sun, or in the gem, or in the cow dung. Then where does it exist? Outside them? We cannot say that fire exists somewhere apart from these three things. Fire

is brought to be, fire is produced by means of the components, by means of these conditions. 'Conditions' here means the sun, a gem or magnifying glass and cow dung. When these three are put together, there is fire. But fire does not exist in the rays of the sun, the gem, or the cow dung. And without these three things fire cannot be produced.

In the same way, there is no result in the *kamma* and there is no *kamma* in the result. '**No result can be found within the *kamma*, nor without; nor does the *kamma* still persist in the result it has produced**.' So there is no result found in the *kamma* or outside the *kamma*, or without the *kamma*. Nor does the *kamma* still persist in the result. So *kamma* does not persist in the result. That means *kamma* is not in the result it has produced. 'The *kamma* of its fruit is void.' So *kamma* is void of its fruit. *Kamma* is void of the result. 'No fruit exists yet in the *kamma* and there is no fruit in the *kamma*. And still the fruit is born from it. The result is born from *kamma* wholly depending on the *kamma*.' So wholly depending on the *kamma*, totally depending on the *kamma* the result is produced.

For here there is no God or *Brahma*, creator of the round of rebirth. '**So this round of rebirth is not the creation of a God or a Brahma, but they are the natural outcome of *kamma*.**' *Kamma* and its results, the phenomena alone flow on. They roll on and on and on. In this flowing on of mental and physical phenomena, which is called the round of rebirth, there is no God or no *Brahma* who creates this round of rebirths. There are just mental and physical phenomena dependent on the conditions flowing on and on.

There are some benefits of understanding the Law of *Kamma*. As Buddhists we understand the Law of *Kamma* following the

teachings of the Buddha. This understanding of the Law of *Kamma* has many benefits. Here are some of them. It satisfies our curiosity about the inequality among beings. We want to know why beings are different, why beings are not equal although they are equal as beings, as human beings, or animals as animals. This inequality among beings is satisfactorily explained by the Law of *Kamma*. **The understanding of the Law of *Kamma* satisfies our curiosity about inequality among beings.** It is no wonder that the understanding of the Law of *Kamma* has converted many people to Buddhism.

Understanding the Law of *Kamma* gives us hope. There is always hope that we can be better. We are not to be satisfied with what condition we are in. We can always improve our condition by doing good *kamma*. So the understanding of the Law of *Kamma* gives us hope. We are never hopeless.

The understanding of the Law of *Kamma* can give us consolation in times of misfortune. Now people meet with misfortune many times in their lives — loss of wealth, loss of business, loss of job, loss of friends, loss of loved ones. When they meet with such misfortunes, those who do not understand the Law of *Kamma* cannot be consoled. They might become dejected, totally dejected, and take their own lives. But those who understand the Law of *Kamma* can understand the misfortune because this misfortune comes as a result of what they did in the past. And so there is no other person to blame but themselves. So people can be consoled with the understanding of the Law of *Kamma*.

It gives us strength to accept the ups and downs of life without agitation. When we live a life, there are ups and downs in our lives. We cannot avoid meeting success and meeting failure

in our lives. Whether we meet with success or failure, we can stand firm, we can meet these situations without much agitation. It is important that we be without agitation when we meet with success or failure. When people meet with success, they are elated. When they meet with failure, they are dejected. And so their lives become miserable. If we understand the Law of *Kamma*, we can take them as they come without much agitation.

It teaches us to realize our own potential to create our own future. We get the results of our own *kamma*. So we can create our own future. **We have the potential to create our own future if we understand the Law of *Kamma*,** and not only realize this potential, but we can realize this potential to make our future lives. We have the potential to make our future lives better than the present ones. So it teaches us that we beings have this potential to create our own future. We need not look to other external powers or deities for our own future. Actually we alone create our future.

The understanding of the Law of *Kamma* teaches individual responsibility. Since the results we experience are caused by our own *kamma*, we alone are responsible for our enjoyment or our suffering. Since we are responsible for our own happiness or our own suffering, we are not to blame others for our conditions. So it teaches that we are responsible for ourselves. If we want to be better in the future, we must do or we must acquire good *kamma*. So we become responsible persons if we understand the Law of *Kamma*.

And it teaches us to avoid harming other beings and to be compassionate to other beings. If we harm other beings, we will suffer the painful consequences of our *kamma*. So if we do not want to suffer ourselves, then we do not inflict suffering on

others. So it helps us to avoid harming or injuring the other beings. It teaches us to be compassionate to other beings because by being compassionate to other beings we develop good *kamma* which will give good results in the future.

So understanding the Law of *Kamma* can help to make society more humane, more peaceful and more harmonious. There may be some more benefits of understanding the Law of *Kamma*. I want you to make additions to this list yourselves.

So we have now studied *kamma* in general — what *kamma* is, what we can do about *kamma* and so on. Next time we will study the different kinds of *kamma*.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

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Last month when I talked about the Law of *Kamma*, I gave you one important and difficult passage about *kamma*. I don't know whether you have the sheets still with you. That passage represented the Buddha as saying: "I do not teach the extinction of *kammas* that are willed, performed and heaped up without their results having been experienced and these result in this life, or in the next life, or in the lives after the next. Never do I teach making an end of suffering without the results of *kamma* that are willed, performed and heaped up having been experienced."

What the Buddha said was I do not teach the extinction of *kammas* that are willed, performed, heaped up without their results having been experienced. That means there is no extinction of *kamma* if its results are not experienced. And the

results can be experienced in this life, or in the next life, or in the lives after next. Buddha continued saying: **"I do not teach making an end of suffering without the results of *kammas* having been experienced."** That means there is no making an end of suffering if the results of *kammas* are not experienced.

At first reading this passage seems strange. The first sentence means *kammas* do no become extinct so long as their results are not experienced. They can be experienced in this life, or in the next life, or in the lives after next. But according to the Law of *Kamma*, *kammas* become defunct (It is called 'defunct') if they do not give results in their time of giving results. There are *kammas* that give results in this life. There is another (kind of *kamma*) that gives results in the next life, the immediate next life; and then there are *kammas* that give results in the lives after next until one becomes an *Arahant* and passes away.

Now if a *kamma* that must give results in this life does not give results in this life, does not give results because of lack of favorable conditions, then it becomes defunct. The *kamma* was done, but if that *kamma* does not give results in this life, then it becomes defunct. It will not give results in the next life or in future lives. Also the *kamma* which is to give results in the next life, if it does not give results in the next life, then it becomes defunct. It will not give results in the lives after next until the end of *saṁsāra*.

And then there are other *kammas* that give results beginning with the life after the next life until the end of *saṁsāra* for that person. Those *kammas* will not become defunct until that person becomes an *Arahant* and passes away or so long as there is *saṁsāra* for him.

Now the first *kamma* that gives results in this life, this *kamṃa* will not become extinct or defunct so long as it has not given results and so long as there is this life. But after this life if it does not give results, then it will become defunct. The second type of *kamma* gives results in the next life. So long as it has not given results in the next life and so long as the next life exists, then that *kamma* does not become defunct. When its time of giving results has passed (That means when a person is reborn in the third existence), then that second type of *kamma* also becomes defunct. The third type of *kamma* gives results from the third existence to the end of *saṁsāra*. It will not become defunct so long as there is *saṁsāra* for him. So the Commentary says it is to show that you cannot escape the results of *kamma* so long as you are in this *saṁsāra*.

The second sentence that there is no making an end of suffering without the results of *kammas* having been experienced — here are we to understand if we have not experienced the results of all *kammas*, we cannot make an end of suffering? We are not to take it that way. If we were to take it that way, then we cannot make an end of suffering until we have experienced all the results of *kamma*. Actually there would be no making an end of suffering because we have a lot, a big amount of *kamma* accumulated in the past. If we were to experience all the results of the good and bad *kammas* before we can make an end of suffering, there would be no making an end of suffering at all.

So here I think what we should understand is that we must have experienced the result of *kamma* which we did in the past before we can make and end of suffering, before we can become an *Arahant* and leave the *saṁsāra*. Now every being has experienced the results of *kamma*. There is no being who has not



Angulimāla was converted by the Buddha's power and received the "*ehi bhikkhu pabbajjā*" (Thag.868-70)

experienced the result of *kamma*, either good or bad. So what this sentence means in my opinion is that all of us experience the result of both good and bad *kamma* which we did in the past. If we have not experienced any of the results of the good and bad *kamma* we did in the past, there can be no making an end of suffering.

Let us take the example of Venerable Angulimāla. As you know, Venerable Angulimāla was first a robber and he killed thousands of people. He was feared by all people. It is said that no one could escape him. Later the Buddha went to him, met him, and preached to him. He became his disciple. He threw away his weapons and he followed the Buddha. Later he became a monk. And then he practiced meditation and became an *Arahant*.

During his life as a robber, as he had killed thousands of people, he had all kinds of *akusala kamma* — those that will give results in that life, those that will give results in the next life, and those that will give results in the lives after the next. Those that give results in the next life and those that gives results in the lives after the next could not do anything to him. But those that could give results in the present life — he suffered the ill consequences of those *kammas*.

Now he was feared, even when he became a monk, people were afraid of him. When people saw him, they went away and they closed their doors. So he had difficulty in getting food enough for him. Also it is said that sometimes a person may throw a stone not to him but at him, and that stone would hit him and so he had a broken head and so on. He suffered the ill consequences or the bad consequences of his *kamma* which gave results in that present life. But with regard to the results that would be experienced in the next life and in the lives after

the next, these results cannot come about because he got out of *saṁsāra* after he died as an *Arahant*. So in that case Angulimāla was able to make an end of suffering without experiencing all of the results of his *kamma*. But he did experience the painful results of his *kamma* that could give results in the present life.

After understanding the Law of *Kamma* in general, now we will study the divisions of *kamma*. You have the sheets (handouts). First *kamma* is divided into two, **wholesome *kamma*** and **unwholesome *kamma***. A further way of division is by way of function and so on. I cannot explain in much detail these different kinds of *kamma*. So if you want to understand these *kammas* in detail, please read 'A Comprehensive Guide to a Manual of Abhidhamma' by Bhikkhu Bodhi. That is a translation of the Abhidhammathasangaha or the Manual of Abhidhamma. Also some explanations are given.

Kamma is grouped into four groups. Each group consists of four *kammas*. The first group is by way of function, how these *kammas* function. So by way of function there are four kinds of *kamma*. The first one is called **productive *kamma***. That means *kamma* that produces results. The second one is **supportive *kamma***. This *kamma* does not produce any results itself, but it supports the productive *kamma*. The third one is **obstructive *kamma***. Also this *kamma* does not produce any results, but it interferes with or it obstructs the results of the productive *kamma*. The fourth kind of *kamma* is **destructive *kamma***. This *kamma* destroys the results of the productive *kamma*. So according to the way of their functions, according to functions, *kamma* is divided into these four.

For example, productive *kamma* makes a person born as a human being. So as a result of productive *kamma* a person is

born as a human being. During his life he enjoys good health, prosperity, long life and so on and that is the result of his supportive *kamma*. If he is not healthy, if he is poor, if he does not live long, then it may be obstructive *kamma* operating. If that person dies in an accident or dies abruptly of some disease, then it is said to be the destructive *kamma* operating. The productive *kamma* gives results at the moment of conception as well as during life. And then supportive *kamma* supports it. The obstructive *kamma* obstructs it. The destructive *kamma* destroys the result of that productive *kamma*.

Kamma is divided into four by way of giving results. That is these four types of *kamma* give results in the order given here (weighty *kamma*, proximate *kamma*, habitual *kamma*, reserve *kamma*). The first of them is **weighty *kamma***. 'Weighty *kamma*' means powerful *kamma* that has the priority in giving results. If it is a wholesome *kamma*, it is *jhāna* wholesome *kamma*. If it is unwholesome *kamma*, it is what are called 'the five grave sins', that is, killing one's own mother, killing one's own father, killing an *Arahant*, wounding the Buddha, and causing division in the Saṅgha. Also the fixed wrong view is included. That means taking the view that there is no cause, no effect and so on. They are called 'weighty *kamma*'.

The second kind of *kamma* is death **proximate *kamma***. That means *kamma* that a person does immediately before his death. Although that person may have done wholesome or unwholesome deeds habitually, if he does a wholesome or unwholesome *kamma* immediately before his death, then that wholesome or unwholesome *kamma* that he does immediately before his death has the priority to give results. That means it has priority over habitual *kamma* or reserve *kamma*.

Habitual *kamma* is *kamma* that you do everyday, that you do by habit. People do both wholesome *kamma* and unwholesome *kamma* everyday and so they become habitual *kamma*.

The last one is called '**reserve *kamma***'. That means *kamma* not included in the three given above. If there are no weighty *kamma*, or death proximate *kamma*, or habitual *kamma* , then the reserve *kamma* gets the chance to give results. So in the order of giving results these are the four kinds of *kamma*.

The third division of *kamma* is by time of giving results. There are also four of them. The first type is **immediately effective *kamma***. That means *kamma* that gives results in this life. The second one is **subsequently effective *kamma***. That means *kamma* that gives results in the next life. The third one is **indefinitely effective *kamma***. It is the *kamma* which gives results beginning with the life after next until the end of *saṁsāra*. The fourth one is called '**defunct *kamma***'. Defunct *kamma* actually is not a separate *kamma*. If immediately effective *kamma* cannot give results in this life, then it becomes defunct. If subsequently effective *kamma* cannot give results through lack of favorable conditions, if it cannot give results in the next life, then it becomes defunct. But the indefinitely effective *kamma* cannot become defunct until the end of *saṁsāra*. So when the first, the second and the third do not give results within the time of giving their results, they become defunct *kamma*.

Among these four, number three, **the indefinitely effective *kamma*, is the most important for us**. Immediately effective *kamma* may not give results in this life and subsequently effective *kamma* may not give results in the next life. Then they are gone. But indefinitely effective *kamma* follows us all through *saṁsāra*. It is this indefinitely effective *kamma* that helps beings who have

fallen into hell and other woeful states come up and be reborn as human beings and as *devas*. All of us, all beings, have this store of indefinitely effective *kamma*. When the circumstances are favorable, we get the results of this *kamma*.

The fourth division is by place of giving results. The first one is unwholesome *kamma* that gives results for beings in the four woeful states, and also in the sense sphere, the material sphere. The second is sense sphere wholesome *kamma*. It gives results in the sense sphere, the material sphere and the immaterial sphere. The third, the material sphere wholesome *kamma*, gives results only in the material sphere. The fourth, the immaterial sphere wholesome *kamma* only gives results in the immaterial sphere existences.

In order to understand this, first you have to understand the 31 planes of existence. And then you have to understand how each one of them gives results. You have to go to the Abhidhamma books in order to understand the details of the results given by these four kinds of *kamma*. So I gave you these divisions of *kamma* just for your information and also to arouse your curiosity so that you want to understand more. If you want to understand more, you pick up 'A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma', edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi, and read it.

Now we come to the division again which is of practical application. When we understand which are unwholesome *kamma* and which are wholesome *kamma*, then we can avoid that which is unwholesome and we can practice what is wholesome *kamma*.

The unwholesome *kamma* is divided into ten kinds — three done by body, four by speech, and three in mind only. So **unwholesome *kamma* done by body** or done through body is of

three kinds. The first one is killing, the second is stealing, and the third is sexual misconduct. 'Killing' means killing a living being. 'Killing a living being' means killing a human being, or an animal, or even the smallest insects. Anything which is called a living being is not to be killed or is not to be deprived of life. When a person kills any living being, then he is doing unwholesome *kamma*. The second one is stealing. 'Stealing' means taking anything that is not given by its owner. And 'sexual misconduct' means misconduct in sexual matters. So not only adultery but other misconduct is included here.

Unwholesome *kamma* done by speech is divided into four. The first one is lying, telling lies, telling what is not true. Here it becomes a real unwholesome *kamma* only when it is detrimental to the welfare of those to whom you tell a lie. The second one is slandering. That means back-biting with the intention of dividing two people. The third one is harsh speech, using strong language, abusive language and so on. Number four is frivolous talk. That means talking nonsense, talking what is not conducive to spiritual welfare. These are called 'unwholesome *kamma* by speech'.

Then there are three **unwholesome *kamma* done in mind** only. The first of them is covetousness. That means the desire to possess something that belongs to another person. If you see something in the possession of another person, and if you have the greed that you want to possess it yourself, then that is called covetousness. It is not just attachment to one's own property or others' (property), but it is the unfair desire to possess the property or whatever, which belongs to another person. The second one is ill will. That means hatred, or the desire for other people to come to harm, or to be injured, or to die. Number three is wrong view. That means taking it that there is no *kamma*, no

result of *kamma* and so on. These three are done not by body or by speech, but only in one's mind. So they are called 'the three that arise through mind only'.

These ten are unwholesome *kammas*. When we know that these are unwholesome *kammas*, we are to avoid them. Now there is no (mention of) drinking among these ten, that is, drinking of intoxicants and others. The Commentaries explain that it should be included in number three, in bodily misconduct. The Pāḷi words for number three are *kāmesu micchācārā*. *'Kāmesu'* means sensual things, not just sexual things. So drinking and taking intoxicants is a kind of misconduct concerning sensual things, that is, taste. So drinking and taking intoxicants is said to be included in number three done by body.

Now we come to wholesome *kamma*. There are ten kinds of sense sphere wholesome *kamma*. There are two sets of them. The first set is just the **opposite of the ten kinds of unwholesome *kamma***. So they are abstention from killing, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, abstention from lying, slandering, harsh speech and frivolous talk. The first one of the third group is non-covetousness or non-greed. That means not coveting other people's property. And then there is non-ill will or non-hatred. That means actually loving-kindness. The third one is right view or non-delusion. It is the view that there is cause, there is effect, and everything in the world is dependent upon some other thing and so on. These ten sense sphere wholesome *kamma* are the negative side of sense sphere unwholesome *kamma*.

There is another **set of ten sense sphere wholesome *kamma* that are on the positive side**. There are ten of them. The first one of them is **giving** (***dāna***). Making donations or charity is giving.

The second one is **virtue or moral purity.** That means keeping one's moral conduct pure by abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and so on.

The third one is **mental culture**, development of one's mind towards spiritual welfare or spiritual advancement.

The fourth is **reverence.** That means being respectful to the elders and to those who are worthy of our respect, or greeting those people, giving seats to those people, and so on.

Then number five is **service.** That means doing things for other people, doing chores and so on, and helping people is an act of meritorious deed. Those who donate labor to the monastery are those who are practicing this service.

Number six is **sharing of merit.** That means first you acquire merit yourself and then you share this merit with other beings. Sharing of merit is just letting them, other people, get chance to get merit themselves depending on your merit. So it is not giving away your merit. By sharing merit, your merit increases because sharing of merit is an act of merit or wholesome *kamma* itself.

So there is **rejoicing in other's merit.** That means when merit is shared and you say, *"Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!"*(Good! Good! Good!). That means you are happy or glad at the other people doing merit. When you rejoice at others' merit, you get merit yourself. That is because when you rejoice, your joy takes the other person's merit as an object. So it is a wholesome mental state. Here the Commentary says: Whether the other person shares merit with you or not, you can rejoice in the merit of others. So if the other person shares merit, you can say, *"Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu."* Or if he does not share merit with you but you

see or you learn that the other person does merit, then you can practice rejoicing in others' merit by being glad at merit.

Number eight is **hearing the Dhamma**, listening to the Dhamma talks. Here learning some kind of arts, or crafts, or learning some kind of knowledge, which does not conduce to harming or injuring others is also included here.

Teaching the Dhamma is number nine. Here also giving talks on Dhamma and also teaching some kind of knowledge which does not conduce to injuring others, which does not go against the teachings of the Buddha (is included).

Number ten is **straightening out of one's views.** That means having a correct view concerning cause and effect and so on. This straightening of one's view is actually the opposite of wrong view. Straightening of one's view is very important because if our views are not straight, if our views are incorrect, then whatever we do will not be *kusala* or a wholesome mental state. That is why straightening of one's view is said to be very important. We need to have the correct view or the right view about cause, about effect, and about things that are related as cause and effect.

The first three of them (*dāna*, *sīla*, and *bhāvanā*) are the three steps to be followed by the disciples of the Buddha. The first one is giving or *dāna*. Among the ten perfections practiced and fulfilled by *Bodhisattas*, *dāna* comes first. So *'dāna'* here means giving, helping people, making donations, and so on. ***Dāna*** is important because it makes our minds pliant or soft. Also it gives us the chance to practice getting rid of attachment. So whenever we give, we give not only that thing, but we also give up attachment to that thing. So by giving we are practicing getting rid of attachment to that thing.

The second one is ***sīla*** (**moral purity**) or it is called 'virtue'. It is control of our bodily actions and speech. So long as we keep *sīla*, we keep the precepts, we keep our moral purity, then we do not commit unwholesome actions by body and by speech. As lay persons you can keep five precepts, and sometimes eight precepts like you do here. And if you want to practice more you can take ten precepts.

The third one, **mental culture** (***bhāvanā***), is the practice of ***samatha*** and ***Vipassanā*** meditation. By the practice of *samatha* meditation you get strong concentration. If you are successful with any one of the forty subjects of *samatha* meditation, you get psychic powers and others. By the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation you ultimately realize Nibbāna or you achieve the eradication of all mental defilements.

Number four and five, reverence or being respectful to others and doing service for others, these two can be included in number two, moral purity, because when you practice *sīla*, you control your bodily actions and speech. Reverence and service is a kind of control of your bodily actions and verbal actions. So they can be included in *sīla*, number two.

Sharing of merit can be included in number one, *dāna*. Rejoicing in others' merit is also included in giving because it is connected with giving, not one's own giving but others' giving.

Then hearing the Dhamma, teaching the Dhamma, and straightening out one's view can be included in the third mental culture. So hearing the Dhamma is a kind of mental culture. Teaching the Dhamma is a kind of mental culture because you are developing your mind. And straightening out one's view is also mental culture. So we can reduce these ten to three if we

include four and five in two, six and seven in one, and eight and nine and ten in number three.

Now that we understand the unwholesome *kamma* and the wholesome *kamma* we can follow the teaching of the Buddha given in the Dhammapada. That is: '**Not doing all evil, accomplishing what is wholesome, and purifying one's mind; this is the teachings of the Buddha.**' I gave this translation very literally. It may be poor English — not doing all evil. The Pāḷi word is '*sabbapāpassa*'. '*Sabba*' is all and '*pāpa*' is evil, so all evil. People said: If you say 'not doing all evil', that means you can do a little evil. So in good English you would say 'not doing any evil'. 'Not doing any evil' means refraining from doing *akusala*, unwholesome *kammas*. Then 'accomplishing what is wholesome' means cultivating wholesome *kamma* or wholesome acts or purifying one's mind. There are defilements or impurities in our minds. So purifying one's mind is also the teaching of the Buddha. With this verse the Buddha admonishes us to avoid doing evil, to cultivate what is wholesome, and also to purify our minds.

The Dhammapada Commentary explains the first foot of this verse, *sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṁ*, as not doing all unwholesome deeds. That is not difficult to understand. The second one, *kusalassa upasampadā*, is generating wholesome deeds and the development of what is generated. So here 'accomplishing what is wholesome' or 'cultivating what is wholesome' means generating wholesome deeds and then doing these again and again. It is not just doing (what is) wholesome once but doing it again and again so that it is developed. Also the Commentary says it is to be done from renunciation to the *Arahatta Magga*; that means to the gaining of enlightenment. I think the Commentary connects this to the life of the Buddha. As a prince, the Buddha renounced

the world; and then for six years in the forest he practiced austerities; and then ultimately at the end of six years he reached enlightenment. From the moment of renunciation until he attained enlightenment the Buddha generated wholesome deeds and also developed them. The third one, *sacittapariyodapanaṁ*, means causing one's mind to be cleansed of the five mental hindrances. There are said to be five mental hindrances and you as meditators are all familiar with these five mental hindrances. To clear one's mind of these five mental hindrances is also an important act because so long as there are mental hindrances in our mind, we cannot hope to become enlightened.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

5

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

Last time I talked about the Law of *Kamma* as part of the Law of Cause and Effect. Today I will talk about another part of the Law of Cause and Effect and that is Dependent Origination.

With regard to Cause and Effect there are three views. The first is that everything, both animate and inanimate, is created by a God or a *Brahma*. The second view is that things or beings happen without cause. So there is no cause for their arising and disappearing. The third view is the Buddhist view. The third view is that beings and things are not created by anybody or any God or *Brahma*, and that they are not causeless, but there are causes or conditions for everything to arise.

The Law of Dependent Origination teaches us that there is nothing that is absolute. Everything is relative and everything depends upon some other thing for it to arise.

Dependent Origination is the Law of Cause and Effect for living beings, or the Round of Rebirths, or the Round of Existences. There is another teaching of the Law of Cause and Effect in Buddhism and that is *Paṭṭhāna* (Conditions) or Causal Relations. Now *Paṭṭhāna* Conditions cover all animate and inanimate things or both living beings and non-living things. Also in *Paṭṭhāna* not

only is it stated that something is conditioned by some other thing, but it also gives us how they are conditioned, in what way or by what force or condition they are conditioned. So the Law of Dependent Origination and the Law of *Paṭṭhāna* (Conditions) are a little different.

The teaching of Dependent Origination is very important in Buddha's teachings because it makes Buddhism unique among religions. When finding the origination of things most other religions end up with the creation of a higher being, or the creation of a God or a *Brahma*. But in Buddhism the origination of beings, especially with regard to Dependent Origination, the origination of beings is explained in a very reasonable way or in a way that is acceptable to all thinking persons.

The brief statement for the **Law of Dependent Origination** is: **"When this exists that comes to be. Because of this arising, that arises."** This is the brief statement of Dependent Origination. Something arises or it happens dependent upon some other thing.

Whether Buddhas appear in the world or not there is always this structure of causation or this Law of Dependent Origination. Buddhas appear and then they discover the Law of Dependent Origination and they reveal it or teach it to the world.

The Law of Dependent Origination was known to the Buddha even before his enlightenment. In a discourse in the Dīgha Nikāya as well as in the Saṁyutta Nikāya (it is taught) that every *Bodhisatta* on the eve of their enlightenment reflect upon the Law of Dependent Origination and practice *Vipassanā* on the twelve factors in the formula of Dependent Origination. As a result of that practice of *Vipassanā* on the factors of Dependent Origination, a *Bodhisatta* becomes a Buddha. So the Law of

Dependent Origination was known to the Buddhas even before their enlightenment.

Now the formula of Dependent Origination begins with ignorance, but the line of investigation made by the *Bodhisattas*, as mentioned in the discourses, is different. The *Bodhisattas* go backward from old age and death or they take what is an effect at the present time and then they trace its origin backward until they reach *avijjā* or ignorance.

Now as beings we always experience aging. We are getting old day by day, hour by hour, second by second. So getting old is a fact of life. It is with us all the time. One day this life will come to an end. The end of life, which is called 'death', is inevitable. So there is getting old and death. This is a fact and we cannot run away from these realities.

So *Bodhisattas* reflect in this way: Now there is **old age and death**. What is the condition for this old age and death, or because of what does old age and death arise? So they investigated and they found out that because there is birth, there is old age and then there is death. Because we were born as human beings we get old day by day and at the end we will die. The cause of old age and death in the ultimate analysis is **birth**. Because there is a beginning there is the continuation and there is the end. So birth or rebirth is the cause or the condition for old age and death.

The *Bodhisattas* did not stop at that. They went backward further. They reflected: why is there *jāti*? Why is there birth or rebirth? What is the condition for that? What is the cause of birth? When they tried to find out the cause of birth, they found that it was what is called '**becoming**'. Actually 'becoming' here means something that makes some other thing become. So in fact it

means *kamma*. They found that the cause of birth, the cause of rebirth, is ***kamma***.

You know that there are two kinds of *kamma*, wholesome *kamma* and unwholesome *kamma*. Wholesome *kamma* gives wholesome or pleasant results and unwholesome *kamma* gives painful results. To be reborn as a human being is a pleasant result. So we were born as human beings because we did some wholesome *kamma* in the past. There may be some beings who are born in hell. They are born in hell because they did some unwholesome *kamma* in the past. Wholesome or unwholesome *kamma* is the cause of or the condition for rebirth as a human being or rebirth as any other being.

Why do beings do both wholesome and unwholesome *kamma*? Or what is the cause of or the condition for the wholesome or unwholesome *kamma* to arise? Sometimes we do wholesome *kamma* and sometimes we do unwholesome *kamma* because we have strong desire, a desire that becomes clinging. That means it reaches the stage where it cannot let go. That strong desire is called '***upadāna***' or '**clinging**'. This clinging is a condition for a wholesome or unwholesome *kamma* to arise.

For example, we want to be reborn in a better existence. Let us say, we want to be reborn in a celestial world. So we hear from somebody that the celestial world is much better than the human world. So we have attachment to that celestial world. We want to be reborn there. So we have clinging for rebirth in the celestial world. In order to be reborn in the celestial world we do something. Sometimes we may get good advice or correct advice. And we may do meritorious deeds which are wholesome *kamma*. Sometimes we may get wrong instructions like sacrificing a lamb or some other kind of animal. If we do sacrifices with the

hope of getting rebirth in the world of celestial beings, we do unwholesome *kamma*. So sometimes we do wholesome *kamma* and sometimes we do unwholesome *kamma* because we have this strong desire to be reborn in a better existence. Whether we do wholesome *kamma* or unwholesome *kamma* there is always the result of that *kamma*. And as you know, the result of wholesome *kamma* is rebirth in the world of bliss. That means the human world or the world of *devas*. The result of *akusala* or unwholesome *kamma* is rebirth in the four woeful states. So because we have this strong desire to reach the better existences we do good or bad *kamma*. So the good or bad *kamma* is conditioned by desire or clinging.

The *Bodhisattas* went further with their investigation. What is the condition for clinging? What causes clinging to arise? They found out that ordinary desire is the condition for strong desire. That means first you have some ordinary desire for something. And then you are attached to it and you cannot give it up or you cannot let it go. So when it reaches that stage, it is called '**clinging**'. Before it reaches that stage, it is called 'craving', or 'attachment', or 'desire'. So not too strong craving is a condition for strong craving or clinging.

Suppose you see some beautiful thing at a store. First you like it. It is a beautiful thing. Then you cannot get away from it. And you think that you must buy it. So you buy it. At the first seeing when you like it, that is craving. But later when you cannot get away from it, and you must buy it, that is clinging. When it reaches the stage of clinging, it cannot let go.

Both craving and clinging are one and the same mental state, *lobha* or attachment. Their degree of attachment is different. At the stage of craving it is not so strong, but when it reaches

the stage of clinging, it is so strong that it cannot let go. So the condition for strong attachment or clinging is ordinary, not too strong attachment or craving.

Why is there desire or why do you like an object? You like the object because you feel good about that (object). There is a pleasant feeling in you with regard to that object. That is why you like that object. Sometimes the object is not beautiful. You don't like it. When you see an object and you don't like it, you have a longing for an object that you like. You have a longing for a beautiful object. Even when you see an ugly object, there can be desire or craving, not for the ugly object, but for a beautiful object.

So because there is this feeling (pleasant feeling, or unpleasant feeling, or even neutral feeling), there is this desire. The **feeling** in the mind — pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feeling — is the condition for craving or desire.

Why is there feeling? We feel good about something or we feel bad about something. What is the condition for that feeling? Because there is contact with the object there is feeling. If there were no contact with the object, there would be no feeling. So feeling is conditioned by what is called '**contact**'.

Contact is not just things meeting together, but something that arises as a result of the meeting together of some things. For example, when we see something, there is something to be seen, and there are the eyes. When that something to be seen comes into the avenue of the eyes, there is seeing or seeing consciousness. When these three arise (the eye, the object, and the mind or consciousness that sees), there also arises what is called 'contact', a mental state, a joint, something like a joint. Because of that joint, feeling follows and other mental states also follow. So the condition for feeling is contact with the object.

Why does contact arise? Contact arises, in the example of seeing, because the eyes and the visible object come together. So contact is conditioned by the eye or the sense organs and the corresponding objects. The sense organs and the corresponding objects are called in this formula '**bases**'. There are six internal and six external bases. The eye is called a base. The ear is called a base. Nose, tongue, body and mind are respectively called a base. Visible object and so on is called a base. When these bases come together, there is contact. So contact is conditioned by the bases or by the sense organs and their corresponding objects.

Now among these bases some are material properties and some are mental states. So *Bodhisattas* investigated why there were bases. They found that because there are mental states and material properties, there are bases. So the **mental states and material properties** are the condition for bases.

What is the condition for the mental states and the material properties to arise? Mental states or mental factors cannot arise if there is no consciousness. Only when there is consciousness, only when consciousness arises, can they arise. Consciousness and some mental states arise at the same time, but consciousness is said to be the chief or their leader because if there is no consciousness, no mental states can arise together with that consciousness. Also at the moment of conception some material properties arise. These material properties arise only when the consciousness arises. So the condition for mental states and material properties to arise is said to be **consciousness**. Here 'consciousness' means both consciousness at the moment of conception and consciousness during life.

What is the condition for consciousness to arise? Now here 'consciousness' means resultant consciousness. That means

consciousness that is the result of something, that arises as the result of something. For example, when we see something, something we like, there is seeing consciousness. That seeing consciousness arises as the result of some wholesome *kamma* in the past. When we see something we don't like, there is another type of seeing consciousness. That seeing consciousness is the result of some unwholesome *kamma* in the past. At the moment of conception the consciousness that arises is the direct result of *kamma* in the past. So when *Bodhisattas* investigated why there is consciousness, especially the resultant consciousness, they found out that because there was wholesome or unwholesome *kamma* in the past, consciousness arises. So the condition for, or the cause for consciousness to arise is *kamma*. Here *kamma* is called '***saṅkhāra***' (**formations**).

Why do wholesome and unwholesome *kamma* arise? Because there is **ignorance**. Because we are ignorant of the true nature of things, because we are ignorant of the impermanent, suffering and no soul nature of things, we tend to do good or bad or wholesome and unwholesome *kamma*. Not understanding the true nature of things and not understanding the Four Noble Truths is a condition for good or bad *kamma* to arise. So ignorance is said to be or is found to be a condition for wholesome or unwholesome *kamma*.

This line of investigation ends with the discovery of ignorance. So if we follow this line of investigation, we are understanding the Law of Dependent Origination backward. But the usual formula given in the discourses is from beginning to the end. When we go from the beginning to the end of this formula, we begin with ignorance. Because there is ignorance as a condition, there are formations or wholesome and unwholesome

kamma. Because there are wholesome and unwholesome *kamma* as condition, there is consciousness and so on. So in this way we can understand Dependent Origination in any direction, from the beginning to the end or from the end to the beginning. Or sometimes we may pick up something in the middle and then go forward or backward.

Although when we go backward, we end with ignorance, ignorance is not the first cause. Ignorance is not unconditioned. Ignorance is a conditioned phenomenon. It is conditioned by what are callled '**taints**' or '***āsavas***' in Pāḷi. When there is ignorance, then another ignorance follows, and then another ignorance follows. So the later ignorance is said to be conditioned by the former ignorance. So it goes on and on and on because ignorance is one of the *āsavas*, or taints, or cankers. Whenever the *āsavas* arise, ignorance also arises. So ignorance is said to be conditioned by the arising of cankers.

There are altogether twelve steps or twelve factors in this formula — **ignorance, formations, consciousness, mental states and material properties as one, bases, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, becoming, rebirth, and then old age and death as one**. When we look at these twelve factors, we see that some of these factors belong to the present time or present period, some belong to the past, and some belong to the future. It is in this way that Dependent Origination is explained in the Commentaries. Among the twelve factors ignorance and mental formations belong to the past. Rebirth, old age and death belong to the future. The factors in between, altogether eight factors, belong to the present period.

We must not misunderstand this statement. Although these twelve factors are distributed to three periods, we must not

understand that they appear only in their respective temporal period. Because in this life, in a single life, we all experience these twelve factors. In other words we are not to understand by this Commentarial explanation that we must go through three lives in order to complete the twelve factors mentioned in the formula. Because we can see that in this life, in our present life, we experience ignorance, we experience *saṅkhāras*, we experience other things. So we experience all these twelve factors in this life. But when these twelve factors are distributed among the three time periods, then some belong to the past, some belong to the present, (some belong to the future). So ignorance and *saṅkhāras* we experience here could be the past if we take the next life as the present. Rebirth, old age and death are said to belong to the future period, but that does not mean that we will experience rebirth, old age and death only in future lives. We will experience these in this life. Right? Looked at from this point of view of the past life, then rebirth, old age and death in this present life is the future. So although these twelve factors are distributed among three periods, we all experience these twelve factors in this very life. We don't have to go through three lives to complete, to experience all these factors.

About this we must be very careful because there are people who think that the Commentaries taught that we must go through three lives in order to complete the cycle of Dependent Origination. So they said the Commentary was wrong. Actually the Commentaries do not say that you have to go through three lives in order to complete the cycle of Dependent Origination. What they said was: These factors belong to the past, these to the present and these to the future. So in actual practice if we look at ourselves, **we know that we experience all these factors in this very life.** So we experience all these twelve factors in this

very life, but when we look at these factors from the point of view of this life or from the standpoint of the next life, then they become present, past and future.

In this formula a single condition is given as a condition for the other condition, but in fact, according to the teachings of the Buddha, according to the teachings of Buddhism, there is not one cause or one effect. **Buddhism accepts the multiplicity of causes and effects**. That means for mental formations to arise ignorance is not the only condition or cause for the following conditions or following factors. There are other conditions as well like craving and other mental factors. Here only the chief causes or the chief conditions are given. So we must understand that they are not the only conditions.

Dependent Origination is not easy to understand because you have to understand some Abhidhamma in order to understand Dependent Origination fully, I mean to some extent. Also you understand Dependent Origination more fully when you understand the Law of *Paṭṭhāna* (conditions).

As I said before Dependent Origination only explains that something is conditioned by some other thing. It does not teach us how they are conditioned, in what way they are conditioned. Sometimes if we do not know how they are conditioned, we may misunderstand their relations. Some links are not related by cause and effect. Sometimes two links arise together at the same time, but one factor is called a 'condition' and the other is called 'conditioned'. In that case we must understand it with reference to *Paṭṭhāna* Relations. So Dependent Origination can be understood more fully only with reference to *Paṭṭhāna* Conditions. Otherwise our understanding of Dependent Origination may not be complete.

Even to understand Dependent Origination without mixing it with *Paṭṭhāna* Relations is already difficult. It is difficult because there are involved Abhidhamma terms and also we have to understand what these terms represent.

The general meaning of Dependent Origination is that everything arises dependent on some other thing. There is nothing which arises without conditions and there is nothing which is created. Everything is relative. Everything depends on some other conditions to arise.

Next month we will study *Paṭṭhāna* Relations. The difference between Dependent Origination and *Paṭṭhāna* Relations is something like these two persons — Dependent Origination is like saying these two persons are related. *Paṭṭhāna* Conditions are like saying these two persons are related as father and son or as older brother and younger brother and so on.

The Law of Dependent Origination:
Dependent on ignorance arise kammic formations.
Dependent on kammic formations arises consciousness.
Dependent on consciousness arise mind-and-matter.
Dependent on mind-and-matter arise the six sense bases.
Dependent on the six sense bases arises contact.
Dependent on contact arises feeling.
Dependent on feeling arises craving.
Dependent on craving arises clinging.
Dependent n clinging arises existence.
Dependent on existence arises birth.
Dependent on birth arise decay-and-death, sorrow,
lamentation, pain, grief and despair.
Thus arises this whole mass of suffering.

This is the origination. Dissolution or disappearance is also included in the formula of Dependent Origination. Actually it is not Dependent Origination, but Dependent Disappearing or something like that. That goes similarly with the normal order of Dependent Origination. That means because of the disappearance of ignorance, there is the disappearance of formations. Because of the disappearance of formations there is the disappearance of consciousness and so on. That is called the reverse order. 'Reverse order' does not mean going backward. 'Reverse' here means disappearing. It is the reverse order of arising.

So when there is old age and death, those who are oppressed with old age and death have ignorance arisen in them. When suffering from old age and death, they suffer from what are called 'cankers'. Among the cankers there is ignorance. When there is ignorance, there are wholesome and unwholesome *kamma* and so on. So this Wheel of Life goes on and on, if we cannot eradicate the root causes, if we cannot eradicate the mental defilements altogether.

Even as we practice meditation, especially ***Vipassanā* meditation, we are cutting this Wheel at some place.** We are not letting this wheel go on and on when we practice *Vipassanā* meditation. As you know when you practice *Vipassanā* meditation, you can break the link between feeling and craving. Although you have feeling, you will not have craving if you practice *Vipassanā* meditation, if you practice mindfulness. By the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation we can cut or we can sever some links in this Law of Dependent Origination.

You have a pleasant feeling. If you are not mindful, if you do not make notes of this, 'pleasant feeling', then you will like it. So when you like it, you let this Dependent Origination or this Wheel

of Life roll on and on. If you have unpleasant feeling and you long for pleasant feeling, again you are letting this Wheel of Life go on and on. You may have a neutral feeling. Neutral feeling is very good. So you will like it. When you like it, again you are letting the Wheel of Life go on and on.

When you practice *Vipassanā* meditation and you make effort to be mindful whenever any feeling becomes prominent. When you do this, then you are cutting this Wheel. If we are successful, totally successful with our practice, and if we reach *Arahantship*, then we will be able to cut or we will be able to destroy this Wheel of Life altogether.

These factors of Dependent Origination are described as a **mass of suffering**. This mass of suffering goes on and on so long as we cannot get rid of mental defilements altogether.

If we want to get out of this Wheel of Life, if we want to break this Wheel of Life and get out of suffering, then we should do something to stop this Wheel from rolling on and on, and that is the application of mindfulness to the object at the present moment. When you practice *Vipassanā* meditation, you are trying to cut this Wheel. You are trying to stop this Wheel from rolling on and on. **At every moment of good mindfulness, at every moment of understanding the true nature of things, you are going towards destroying this Wheel of Life.** For that purpose we practice *Vipassanā* meditation. We hope that one day we will be able to achieve our goal and cut this Wheel of Existence or this Round of Rebirth. OK.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

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If we take Dependent Origination as just arising of something dependent upon some other thing, then we could say so. But if we take Dependent Origination as the whole formula, I think we cannot because at every moment we may not get all twelve factors.

We find the word *'saṅkhāra'* used as in the five aggregates (*saṅkhārakkhandha*). Right? In *saṅkhārakkhandha* and here as a factor of Dependent Origination. At least there are two meanings for this word *'saṅkhāra'*. The word is the same, but by explanation according to etymology, it means two things. One is something that makes or produces. This is the active meaning. It can also be understood in the passive sense which means something that is made or produced. So there are two meanings for the word *'saṅkhāra'*. There are not only two meanings. There are other meanings too. But what is important to understand here is these two meanings, that is, *'saṅkhāra'* means something that produces and it means something that is produced. The word *'saṅkhāra'* in Dependent Origination means *kamma*. *Kamma* is something that produces its results. So here we have to understand the word *'saṅkhāra'* in the active sense. But when we say, *"Sabbe saṅkhāra aniccā'ti"* (All *saṅkhāras* are impermanent), we are to understand in a passive sense. There *'saṅkhāra'* means all that are conditioned, that are made, that are produced, or that are conditioned. Whenever we see the word *'saṅkhāra'* in the discourses, we have to be very careful. We have to know whether it is to be understood in the active or passive sense.

In the *saṅkhārakkhandha* we should understand it in the active sense because *saṅkhārakkhandha* is headed by *cetanā*, which is called *'saṅkhāra'* or *'kamma'*. In the word *'saṅkhārakkhandha'* we must understand it in the active sense. Also here in Dependent

Origination we understand it in the active sense. In the verses in the Dhammapada, *Sabbe saṅkhāra aniccā'ti* and so on, we should understand it in the passive sense. So at least there are two meanings for the word '*saṅkhāra*'.

Whenever we see the word '*saṅkhāra*', we cannot translate it with just one English word, or one Burmese word, or one Vietnamese word. We have to understand according to the context whether it is to be understood in the active sense or the passive sense. Nowadays the word '*saṅkhāra*' is translated as formations. Venerable Ñāṇatiloka translated it also as formations or mental formations. I don't know if that is correct or not. Can 'formation' mean something that is formed and something that forms? 'Formations' seems to mean something that is formed. It is better to translate it as conditioned and conditioning.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

6

CONDITIONAL RELATIONS

Today we come to the third variety, the third aspect of the Law of Cause and Effect. There are three aspects of the Law of the Cause and Effect. The first two Laws have already studied. They are the Law of *Kamma* and Its Results and the Law of Dependent Origination. Today we come to the Law of *Paṭṭhāna* or Conditional Relations.

'*Paṭṭhāna*' means condition. '*Thāna*' means a place or literally standing, so something on which some other thing stands.

The Law of *Paṭṭhāna* or Conditional Relations is like the Law of *Kamma* and the Law of Dependent Origination in that it is a **natural law**. It was not created by anybody or not created by the Buddha. This law was hidden from beings when there were no Buddhas in the world. Then a Buddha appears in the world and discovers this law. Then he teaches or he reveals this law to the world.

There is a saying in the texts about the Law of Dependent Origination, and that is: "**Whether Buddhas arise or do not arise yet there remains that element, that relatedness of states, regularity of states, specific conditionality.**" That means the Law of Dependent Origination. So the Buddha discovered it,

penetrated it. Having discovered and penetrated it, he announces, he teaches it and so on to the world. Like the Law of Dependent Origination, the Law of *Paṭṭhāna* is also a natural law discovered by the Buddha and revealed to the world.

The Law of *Paṭṭhāna* is more comprehensive than the other two (the Law of *Kamma* and the Law of Dependent Origination). The Law of *Kamma* only explains the Law of Causality regarding living beings. The Law of Dependent Origination also deals with living beings and not with outside things, not with non-living things. *Paṭṭhāna* covers all, both living beings and non-living things. **So *Paṭṭhāna* can explain how one material property is related to another material property outside living beings.** Like the Law of *Kamma* and Dependent Origination, it explains how *nāma* and *rūpa* (mind and matter) are related in living beings.

Not only is it comprehensive with regard to subject matter, but it is comprehensive also in the method of treatment. In the Law of Dependent Origination we know only that some phenomenon is conditioned by another phenomenon. We are not given to know or it is not explained how these two things are related, in what way they are related, but in *Paṭṭhāna* the way that they are related is also explained.

I always compare this by saying: "In Dependent Origination it says these two persons are related, but according to *Paṭṭhāna* we would say these two people are related as father and son, or as brothers, or as friends." So in *Paṭṭhāna* in Pāḷi it is called '*paccaya satti*' (the force of conditionality). That just means how they are related. So *Paṭṭhāna* not only explains that two things are related, but it explains how they are related in such a way. So it is more comprehensive in the method of treatment also than the other two varieties of the Law of Cause and Effect.

The Law of *Paṭṭhāna* is the most profound of the teachings in Abhidhamma. It is also the most voluminous, the biggest of the books of Abhidhamma. As you know, there are seven books in Abhidhamma. In the Sixth Buddhist Council edition there are twelve books, twelve volumes. Five thick volumes belong to *Paṭṭhāna* while seven smaller volumes belong to the other six (remaining Abhidhamma) books. So *Paṭṭhāna* by volume is the biggest of the teachings of Abhidhamma. It is also the most difficult and the most profound of the Abhidhamma teachings.

Four weeks after his enlightenment, the Buddha contemplated on the teachings of Abhidhamma. As you know Buddha spent eight weeks after his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and near the Bodhi tree. He did not preach anything during these eight weeks. During the fourth week he contemplated on the teachings of Abhidhamma. There are seven books in Abhidhamma. So he went through these books one after another. When he was contemplating on the first six books nothing special, nothing unusual happened. **But when he got into the seventh book, that is, he got into the Law of *Paṭṭhāna*, rays of six colors came out of his body and spread to the end of the world.** That was because when he was contemplating the first six books of Abhidhamma, his supreme wisdom, his omniscience did not get sufficient room, say to move about. Now for us the first six books are also profound, and difficult, and deep, but for the mind of the Buddha they are not so deep. So his supreme wisdom did not get enough room to move about. But when he got into the seventh book, the *Paṭṭhāna* (*Paṭṭhāna* was deep; *Paṭṭhāna* was comprehensive), so his supreme wisdom got enough room to move about. When he was able to contemplate as much as he liked on *Paṭṭhāna*, he became very happy. When he became happy and his mind

became happy, then the physical body which is the base of the mind also became clear. And so as a result the rays came out of his body and they spread to the end of the world.

So when the Buddha was contemplating on the first six books, his mind was like a big whale put in a small tank. The whale is in the tank, but there is not enough room for him to play or to swim. But when the Buddha got into the seventh book it was like the whale being released into the ocean. So when the whale gets into the ocean, it can go anywhere it likes and so it becomes happy. In the same way, when the Buddha contemplated the seventh book of Abhidhamma, his supreme wisdom got enough room to move about. So he was happy and the rays of six colors came out of his body.

Now we know that *Paṭṭhāna* explains conditionality of mental and physical phenomena more comprehensively than the Law of Dependent Origination. In *Paṭṭhāna* there are 24 kinds of conditions or 24 modes of conditionality. Since this is just an introduction to Fundamentals of Buddhism, I will not go through all of them one by one. If you are interested, you can read some books, but it may not be so easy for the uninitiated in 'Abhidhamma' to understand.

There are 24 kinds of Conditional Relations*. We will divide these into some categories. In this teaching there is one

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* There are: **(1)** root condition, **(2)** object condition, **(3)** perdominance condition, **(4)** proximity condition, **(5)** contiguity condition, **(6)** conascence condition, **(7)** mutuality condition, **(8)** support condition, **(9)** decisive support condition, **(10)** prenascence condition, **(11)** postnascence condition, **(12)** repetition condition, **(13)** *kamma* condtion, **(14)** result condition, **(15)** nutriment condition, **(16)** faculty condition, **(17)** *jhāna* conditon, **(18)** path condition, **(19)** association condition, **(20)** dissociation conditon, **(21)** presence condition, **(22)** absence conditon, **(23)** disappearance condition, **(24)** non-disappearance condition.

phenomenon which conditions and there is another phenomenon which is conditioned. The first one we may call '**cause**' and the second one we may call '**effect**'. Sometimes the word 'cause' means something that produces some other thing, and so I want to avoid these words 'cause' and 'effect' when I explain the *Paṭṭhāna*. So I will use 'conditioning factor' and 'conditioned factor', that which conditions or which helps some other thing to arise, and that which is conditioned, so these two. In *Paṭṭhāna* it is explained that these two are related and that they are related in some way, like they are related as root, related by root cause, or they are related by way of object and so on.

The first category is **conditioning factor producing conditioned factor**. This is the relationship of real cause and effect. In this case *kamma* is an example, the Law of *Kamma*. Suppose you do a *kusala kamma*. When will you get the result of that *kusala kamma*? You will get the result of that *kusala kamma* in this life, or in the next life, or in the lives after next. So *kamma* is the conditioning factor or *kamma* is the cause and the results are the effects. *Kamma* belongs to one time and the results of *kamma* belong to a different time in this life or in future lives. So *kamma* and its results are related by way of *kamma* condition. Here the relationship is between the producer and the produced.

The second category is that between **conditioning factor arising prior to the conditioned factor and then they become related**. So here first the conditioning factor arises and then it exists for some time. And then the conditioned factor arises. So it is related to the conditioning factor or the conditioning factor is related to the conditioned factor by way of what is called '*purejāta*', that is, by way of prenascence.

Now let us say you see something. There is a visible object and then there is the seeing consciousness. First the visible object arises at least three moments before the seeing consciousness arises. It is very, very detailed in Abhidhamma. When you see something, seeing consciousness arises and before that seeing consciousness arises, that something (the visual object) arose. So the object which is seen arises about three moments before the seeing consciousness arises. When seeing consciousness arises, then the seeing consciousness is related to the visible object by way of prenascence. In that case the conditioning factor does not produce the conditioned factor, but it supports, it helps the conditioned factor to arise and to exist for some time.

When we see something, there arises seeing consciousness. That seeing consciousness is said to depend on the visible object, but seeing consciousness depends on another thing. Do you know what? The eye. If you have no eye, you do not see. So the eye is also a condition for the seeing consciousness to arise. Now the eye has been with you for a long time before the seeing consciousness arises. So in this case also the relationship between seeing consciousness and the eye, the physical eye, is by way of prenascence. That means the eye arises before the seeing consciousness and when the seeing consciousness arises the eye is still existing. So their relationship is said to be by way of prenascence.

If you understand this kind of relationship between seeing consciousness and visible object, you understand the relationship between hearing consciousness and sound, and so on. When you hear a sound, the moment you hear a sound, the sound has already existed three short moments. So you may think that you hear the sound as soon as it arises, but actually three moments

have passed when you really hear the sound. So the sound is related to the hearing consciousness by way of prenascence. And also the relationship between the ear and the hearing consciousness is by way of prenascence.

The next category is **one of the conditioned factor arising prior to the conditioning factor.** It is strange. In this relationship the conditioned factor arises before the conditioning factor arises. When the relationship occurs, it is at the moment when these two exist. It is not that the conditioned factor that arises prior to the conditioning factor is related before the conditioning factor arises. The relationship is only when it arises and exists for some time.

When you are happy, the expression of your face is one thing, and when you are sad, it changes and you have another expression. So depending on whether you are happy or sad, the expression or the material properties in your face change. That is actually conditioned by the mind which arises later. The material properties in the face have been existing for some time. Then your mind arises, and then your mind conditions your face into becoming a happy face or a sad face. So in this case the conditioned factor arises prior to the conditioning factor. Here the mind is said to be conditioning and the material property is said to be conditioned. It is not that they are conditioned before the mind arises, but when the mind arises, it conditions the existing material properties. This is the relationship of postnascence.

Sometimes the relationship is between those that arise at the same time. In this relationship both the conditioning factor and the conditioned factor arise simultaneously and one is said to be conditioning and the other is said to be conditioned. So that is conditioning at the same time.

Suppose you have *lobha* for something. You have desire for something. Along with desire there is what is called 'consciousness' and also other mental factors. Desire is one mental factor and along with that desire there are other mental factors and along with these mental factors there is consciousness. Also mind can produce material properties. So at that moment some material properties are also produced. So in this moment of desire, desiring something, there is desire, other mental factors, consciousness, and then material properties caused by mind. So here desire is related to the others by way of conascence, by way of arising at the same time. They arise at the same time, but one is said to be conditioning and the others are conditioned. So their relationship is by way of conascence, by way of arising at the same time. The same is true when some type of consciousness, some mental factors and material properties arise.

Now when *jhāna* arises, there is what is called '*jhāna*'. That means a group of mental factors, and then *jhāna* consciousness, and then other mental factors, and also material properties caused by *jhāna* consciousness. In that case also the factors of *jhāna* are said to be the conditioning factors and the other associated phenomena are conditioned factors. The *jhānas* are related to consciousness, other mental factors and material properties by way of conascence. In this kind of relationship both the conditioning factor and the conditioned factor must be existing at that moment. If one is not existing, there can be no such relationship.

Also at the moment of enlightenment there arises what is called 'Path Consciousness'. Along with Path Consciousness there are eight factors of Path, also other mental factors, and material properties caused by Path Consciousness. In that case too, the

eight Path factors are conditioning factors and the others are conditioned. They are related by way of arising at the same time or conascence.

The next category is that of again **the conditioning factor and the conditioned factor arising together and they condition each other.** So it is called '**reciprocal conditioning**'. They arise together and then they support each other. So again when desire arises, there are other mental factors, there is consciousness, and they are said to be conditioned by each other. So when you take one as conditioning, the others are conditioned. When you take another as conditioning, then the remaining ones are conditioned. So there can be reciprocal conditioning between consciousness and the mental factors.

In the fourth category of **relationship one is always the conditioning or one is always depended upon and the others always depend upon that.** But in the fifth kind of **relationship they are reciprocal, so everyone (each one of these factors) can be conditioning or be conditioned.** The reciprocal conditioning is compared to three sticks standing when put together in a tripod. They come together, and they support each other, and they stand.

In the sixth category (*ārammaṇa*) — here **the conditioning factor is the object of the conditioned factor.** When we see something, the thing we see is called 'an object'. We or the consciousness that sees is called 'the subject'. Here the relationship is as object and subject. When we see something, the object is related to our seeing consciousness by way of object. When we hear something, it is the same. The sound is related to hearing consciousness by way of object relationship.

The seventh one is **conditioning by disappearing.** Something disappears so that some other thing can take its place. That is also called conditioning. So in order for another monk to sit here in this place, I vacate this place. My vacation of this place is a condition for that monk's being here. Such giving of place is also called a condition. When something gives place to some other thing, that first thing disappears. That first thing is there no more. So it is by way of immediacy, or proximity, or by way of absence. When this giving place is of the same kind of phenomena, it is called 'repetition'. One type of consciousness arises and then it disappears. Then another consciousness of the same kind arises and disappears. And then another consciousness of the same kind arises and disappears. In that case it is called 'repetition condition'. It is proximity or disappearing condition and it is also repetition condition.

If you know Abhidhamma, you know that when you experience *kusala* or *akusala* (wholesome or unwholesome consciousness), it repeats seven times. Right? Let us say, the wholesome consciousness arises and disappears, arises and disappears. It repeats seven times. When it repeats seven times, the first one (*citta*) is said to be related to the second one (*citta*) by way of repetition. And the second one is related to the third one by way of repetition and so on.

Let us go back to the first category. In the first category the conditioning factor produces the conditioned factor. That is the real cause-effect relationship. The others are not producing and produced. Some arise before. Some arise after. Some arise at the same time and then they support each other. So here 'conditioning' just means supporting as a dependent. Then in the last it is just vacating its place. Just by disappearing a certain phenomenon gives chance for another phenomenon to arise.

In *Paṭṭhāna* different kinds or different types of relationship are taught. With the knowledge of *Paṭṭhāna* we can understand the Law of Cause and Effect more fully and also more correctly.

The last one, **the relationship of giving place or disappearing is very important to understand**. Many authors wrote that death consciousness conditions rebirth consciousness or that rebirth consciousness is conditioned by death consciousness. Is that right or wrong? Death consciousness conditions rebirth consciousness. We must be careful. Here 'conditions' means just vacating its place, just disappearing. It is not causing the rebirth consciousness to arise. So when we say rebirth consciousness is conditioned by death consciousness, we just mean that death consciousness disappears and rebirth consciousness arises. That rebirth consciousness is not caused by or is not produced by death consciousness. Rebirth consciousness is a resultant consciousness. It is the result of some *kamma* in the past. So here the relationship is just vacating its place or disappearing, not causing, not producing. So if we take that statement to mean causing or producing, we would be wrong. So it is very important that you understand these different kinds of relations and then understand the statements correctly with reference to these relationships.

What does the Law of *Paṭṭhāna* teach us? It teaches us that all beings and all inanimate things in the world arise dependent on conditions and not without conditions. Whatever arises, mind or matter, there must be a condition for its arising. In the teachings of the Buddha there is nothing which arises out of nothing, which arises without conditions, that is, in the world. But there is one thing taught by the Buddha which has no conditions and that is Nibbāna. **Nibbāna is said to be unconditioned.**

There are always these two things, the **conditioning factor** and the **conditioned factor**. Sometimes they belong to different times and sometimes they belong to the same time. There are only these two, the conditioning factor and the conditioned factor. Apart from these two there is no *attā*, or no agent, or no God, or no *Brahma*, to create them. The Buddhist teaching of the Law of Cause and Effect is that there is always a condition for something in the world to arise, whether it is a living being or a non-living thing. There is always a condition or a cause for something to arise. **Nothing arises without a cause**. That cause or condition is not the imaginary *attā* or soul, or God, or *Brahma*, or whatever, but there are conditions that are mind and matter. So Buddhism accepts that all things in the world are conditioned. That condition is not the imaginary agent, soul or *attā*, or God, or *Brahma*. **These conditioning and conditioned factors arise and disappear, arise and disappear, arise and disappear, all by their own effort. There is no way (to exercise) control over them. So in the end what *Paṭṭhāna* teaches is there is *no attā*. They (phenomena) just arise and disappear according to conditions. When there are no conditions, nothing arises.**

You see me because I am here. If I were not here, you do not see. Your seeing consciousness is conditioned by me. It is not created by some *Brahma* or some agent. Because there is a sound (I am making a sound), you hear my voice. So your hearing consciousness is conditioned by my voice. When I stop talking, you don't hear any sound.

Everything is conditioned. Only when there are conditions, can there be the things that are conditioned. There is always this relationship between conditioned things and conditioning things

in different modes. According to *Paṭṭhāna* there are 24 modes or relationships.

Now you understand that it is important to understand the different kinds of relationships as conditioning and conditioned. **Only when you understand the relationship according to the *Paṭṭhāna* Conditions do you understand the Law of Dependent Origination correctly and fully.** So it is important that when you study the Law of Dependent Origination, you should not forget about the Law of *Paṭṭhāna*. You always have to apply the Law of *Paṭṭhāna* to the Law of Dependent Origination.

These two cannot be separated actually. They should be understood together. For example, dependent upon consciousness, *nāma* and *rūpa* arise (*viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpaṁ*). That is one link in Dependent Origination. Dependent upon consciousness *nāma* and *rūpa* arise. There 'consciousness' means rebirth consciousness. '*Nāma*' means the mental factors arising along with it. And '*rūpa*' means *rūpa* born of *kamma*. They arise at the same time. Right? But the formula is: Dependent upon consciousness *nāma* and *rūpa* arise. If you do not apply the Law of *Paṭṭhāna* to that link, you may wrongly take it that *viññāṇa* (consciousness) produces *nāma* and *rūpa*, which is wrong. They arise at the same time. So they are related by way of conascence.

You can understand Dependent Origination correctly only when you understand the Law of *Paṭṭhāna*, the relations in the Law of *Paṭṭhāna*. Therefore, it is very important that when you study the Law of Dependent Origination that you also study the Law of *Paṭṭhāna* Relations. It may not be easy to study both at the same time because you need to understand some Abhidhamma,

but I think it is rewarding. If you are patient enough to go through the study of Abhidhamma and when you understand it, that is, you understand it very clearly, you do not make mistakes in understanding. So it is important that you study both the Law of Dependent Origination and the Law of *Paṭṭhāna*, and study these two together.

Let us look at one more example. There is a link which says: Dependent upon contact feeling arises (*phassa paccayā vedanā*). How do you understand it? Contact arises first and then *vedanā* arises? Contact and feeling arise at the same time, but one is said to be conditioning and the other is said to be conditioned. So contact is said to be conditioning and feeling is said to be conditioned. It is because they are related by way of arising together, conascence. So even between things arising together there is a relationship as conditioning and conditioned.

So only when you apply the Law of *Paṭṭhāna* Conditions to the Law of Dependent Origination do you understand correctly the Law of Dependent Origination. It is important that you study *Paṭṭhāna* Conditions and that you study the Law of Dependent Origination along with *Paṭṭhāna* Conditions.

I think by now that you understand the Law of Cause and Effect fairly comprehensively in its three aspects: the Law of *Kamma* and Its Results, the Law of Dependent Origination and the Law of *Patthāna* Relations.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

7

The OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS *of* BUDDHISM

We have been talking about things that are not so easy to understand — the Law of *Kamma*, the Law of Dependent Origination and the Law of *Paṭṭhāna*. Today we come to some things that are not difficult to understand and also that are interesting. Today I will talk about some outstanding characteristics of Buddhism, some important features of Buddhism.

THE BUDDHA — A HUMAN BEING

The first thing peculiar to Buddhism is that the founder of Buddhism was not God, or a god, or a prophet, or a messenger of God, or a savior. **The Buddha was a human being, but not an ordinary human being.** He was an extraordinary human being who was said to have no equal. Buddha never said that he was a God or something like that. He never said he was a creator. Also he never said that he was a human being, but we know that he was a human being because he was born of human beings. He was born as a human being, he lived as a human being, and he died or passed away as a human being.

Once he said to an ascetic he met on his way to Benares that he was an *Arahant*. That means he was a perfect being in the

world. And he said: "I am the teacher having no superior (That means I am the best of the teachers). I am the only one who has correctly known all there is to know all by myself. I have become cool (That means cool from passions or mental defilements) and I have exhausted all mental defilements." So Buddha had eradicated all mental defilements and so he was cool, he was passionless, and he knew everything there is to know, and he knew them all by himself without anybody to teach him.

NO CREATOR

Although Buddha was a human being, he was more advanced in compassion, in wisdom, in moral conduct than even the gods. Buddhism does not accept that there is a God or the creator. So there is no creation in Buddhism. In most religions there is creation of the universe by a creator, or a God, or a *Brahma*, or something similar known by another name. According to **Buddhism there is no creator and so there is no creation. The inanimate world came into being depending on the physical laws or the natural physical laws.** The animate beings came into being according to the Law of *Kamma*. The Law of *Kamma* is also a natural law. The coming into being of the inanimate world and the animate world both depend on natural law. So they don't need any agent or any creator.

NO SECRET DOCTRINES

The third feature is that there are **no secret doctrines in Buddhism**. Everything Buddha taught is open to the public for investigation or for understanding. So there is no teaching that is only for the inner circle of disciples.

Once two monks who came from a high *Brahmin* caste asked the Buddha to record the teachings in Vedic Sanskrit language. Vedic Sanskrit language is an older form of the Sanskrit language and it is very difficult. They requested this because they thought that the Buddha's teachings were being contaminated by or destroyed by common people. That is because Buddha's teachings were common both to high caste people and low caste people. They thought that when low caste people learned the teachings of the Buddha that they were destroying the teachings of the Buddha. So they wanted Buddha's teachings to be accessible only to high class Brahmins and educated people. The Buddha rejected their request and said that the words of the Buddha should not be recorded or rendered in Vedic Sanskrit language. Whoever should do so, if you do this, there is an offense of wrongdoing. So there is some kind of offense if you try to record the Buddha's teachings in Vedic Sanskrit which is not easily understood by all people.

Then the Buddha said: "I allow you to learn the words of the Buddha each in his own dialect." That means you can study the teachings of the Buddha in your own language. That is what we are doing now. I learned Buddha's teachings in Burmese; you learned in Vietnamese; many people learned them in English. Therefore, Buddha's teachings are for all people and not for a few selected elite.

In his last year one day Buddha said to Ānanda: "**Ānanda, the teaching has been proclaimed by me without making any distinction between esoteric and exoteric.**" That means making any distinction between inside teachings and outside teachings, teachings for an inner circle of disciples and teachings for outside people. Buddha did not make any such distinctions. Therefore,

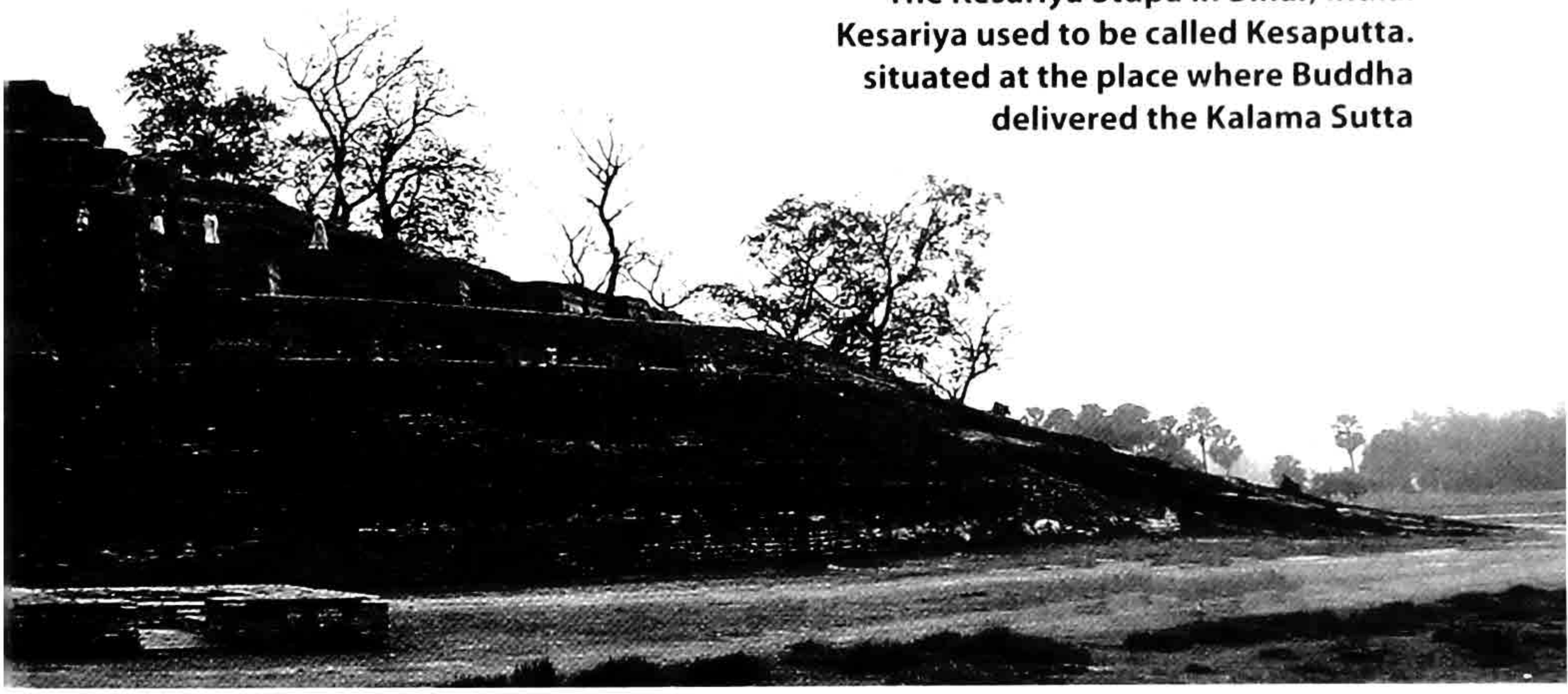


the Buddha's teachings are for both those who are close to him and for those who are outside.

The Buddha said: "**The Perfect One has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher (in regard to his teachings)**." What is called 'a closed fist'? That means some teachers have some secret teachings and they will not give these teachings to just anybody. They would give them to their pupils who are close to them, who are very intimate with them, who are beneficial to them. That is called 'a closed fist'. The Buddha said there is no such thing as a closed fist regarding his teachings. One time the Buddha said: "The teachings are good when they are open. There is no secrecy in the teachings of the Buddha."

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND INQUIRY

The next feature is freedom of thought and freedom of inquiry. I think Buddhism is unique among religions because Buddha allowed **freedom of thought, freedom of inquiry**. We can investigate even his teachings. We have the right to doubt his teachings. We must get rid of this doubt by study and discussion.



The Kesariya Stupa in Bihar, India. Kesariya used to be called Kesaputta. situated at the place where Buddha delivered the Kalama Sutta

So Buddha allows freedom of thought. It is unheard of in the history of religions.

Once Buddha visited a place of people called Kalamas. When he was there those people came to him and said to him: "*Bhante*, many religious teachers came to our place. First one teacher would come. And then he said that only his teachings were true and the others were false. Then other teachers would come. And they also said that their teachings alone were correct and the teachings of others were wrong. So we are confused as to which is correct and which is wrong. What must we do?"

Then Buddha said: "Kalamas, it is proper that you have doubt about the teachings because many teachers have come and then told you that their teaching alone is correct and others are wrong." (This statement, this discourse is very important because it shows how open to freedom of thought the Buddha's teachings are) The Buddha said: "**Do not accept anything on mere hearsay**. Do not accept it as correct just because you hear it from somebody. Somebody tells you that this teaching is correct and you take it to be correct." Buddha said, "No, do not take it just by mere hearsay."

And Buddha said: "**Do not accept anything by mere tradition.** Do not accept something to be true simply because it has been carried down through tradition or it has been with us through tradition for a long time."

Then Buddha said: "**Do not accept anything on account of rumors.** Sometimes people say something is like this or it is like that. Rumors are mostly, not correct. So do not accept something to be true simply because it is rumored by people."

Then Buddha said: "**Do not accept anything to be true just because it occurred in your religious books.**" Now that is what we are doing. Right? We will only accept that which is in accordance with our religious books. Here the Buddha said, "Do not accept anything just because it occurs in your religious books." That means you are not to be blindly accepting anything even though it is in accordance with your religious books. You have to investigate about it.

The Buddha said: "**Do not accept anything by mere supposition.**" You think that it is this way or that way. You think about it and you think it must be true. So just by mere thinking about something, you are not to accept it to be true.

Do not accept anything by mere inference. Sometimes you use inference. You infer something from some other thing. Then you arrive at the conclusion that it is true. We always use this inference when we cannot get a direct knowledge of something. What is arrived at by inference may or may not be true. So do not accept it to be true just because it is according to inference.

Do not accept anything by merely considering the appearances. You look at something and it appears this way, and so it must be true. It is something like that. So you do not take it

to be true just by seeing the good appearance. Something may lie beneath that appearance. So don't take it to be true just by considering the appearances.

Do not accept anything to be true merely because it accords with your preconceived notions. You may have some notions about something. When something is said in accordance with your preconceived notions, you jump to the conclusion that it must be true. But the Buddha said that you are not to take it to be true merely because it accords with your preconceived notions.

Do not accept anything merely because it seems acceptable. Sometimes we think that something is acceptable and so we take it to be true. But Buddha said you are not to take it to be true merely because it seems acceptable. You have to investigate it. You have to know truly through your own observation whether it is true or not.

Do not accept anything by thinking that the ascetic is respected by us. That means I respect my teacher and so what he says must be true. Do not take it to be true simply because you think that your teacher is a respected teacher and so what he said must be true. You have to check with other teachings. You have to check with books. Only when you find it to be conducive to well-being and happiness are you to accept it.

So Buddha is saying do not accept anything on mere hearsay and so on. What are we to accept then? Buddha said: "**When you know for yourselves these things are immoral, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the wise, and these things when performed and undertaken conduce to ruin and sorrow, then indeed, do you reject them.**" That means you have to find out for yourself whether these things are immoral,

blameworthy, censured by the wise, and are conducive to ruin and sorrow when they are practiced. If you find it so, then you are not to accept them.

When you know for yourself that these things are moral, these things are blameless, these things are praised by the wise, these things when performed and undertaken conduce to well being and happiness, then do you live and act accordingly. So here Buddha did not say just accept it. You accept it and then you act upon it. You live it. So Buddha's advice is not just to accept it. When you know this to be moral, to be blameless, to be praised by the wise, and to be conducive to well being and happiness when practiced, you don't just accept it, but you practice it.

So **Buddha's emphasis is on acting and on practice once you know something to be conducive to well-being and happiness.** By this statement and by other statements not shown here Buddha allowed freedom of thought or freedom of inquiry to his disciples.

SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-RESPOSIBILITY

The next feature is self-reliance and self-responsibility. You know the Buddha taught the Law of *Kamma*. The Law of *Kamma* is good *kamma* brings good results and bad *kamma* brings bad results. That means if **you do good *kamma*, you will get good results and if you do bad *kamma*, you will get bad results.** So you have to rely on yourself to get good results. You alone are responsible for these good results or bad results. So you don't have to blame other people for the bad results you get or actually you don't have to thank anybody for getting good results. So in Buddhism self-reliance or self-responsibility is an important factor.

Buddha wanted us to rely on ourselves and not to rely on others. It is against what we all want to do. We don't want to make effort ourselves. We want to rely on some other person. We don't want to practice meditation if we can get the result from another person. Buddha's teachings are against that. Buddha declared that his teachings are going upstream, against the stream, and not going with the stream. So we have to make effort ourselves. **We have to rely on ourselves for our own salvation in the Buddhist sense.**

Not long before he passed away Buddha advised his disciples with these words: "**Live with yourself as an island. Live with yourself as refuge and have no other as refuge.**" Take yourself to be an island. Take yourself to be a refuge. Do not take any other person or any other thing as refuge.

Then He continued: "**Live with the Dhamma as your island. Live with the Dhamma as your refuge and have no other as refuge.**" First the Buddha said to live with your self as an island or refuge. 'To live with ourselves as an island or refuge' really means to live with Dhamma as island or as refuge. That means to practice Dhamma. When we practice Dhamma, we are living with ourselves as refuge. We are relying on ourselves and not on any other. So Buddha urged his disciples to rely on themselves and to have no other as refuge.

It might seem to be in conflict with us Buddhists taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. And we say that only those who take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha are Buddhists. Taking refuge in the Three Gems and taking oneself as refuge are two different things. '**Taking refuge in the Three Gems (Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha)' really means recognizing, regarding the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha as**

our spiritual guides, as our teachers. It is not to rely on them totally and do nothing.

Here 'live with yourself as refuge' means you rely on yourself, you make effort yourself so that you get the results of the practice. Nobody can give the results of the practice to you. You must do it yourself. You must make the effort yourself so that you get the results. So these two statements to take refuge in the Three Gems and to take refuge in one's self are two different things.

Buddha said in the Dhammapada: "**Oneself is one's savior. For whom other should be the savior?**" That means you alone can save yourself and nobody else can save you. It is very important. Our desire is to be saved by the Buddha, but what that Buddha was saying is that you alone are your savior. That means I am not your savior. I cannot save you. **You must save yourselves.**

Why did Buddha say this (You must save yourself and there is no other that can save you)? Because 'saving oneself' means getting rid of mental defilements. To get rid of your mental defilements you must practice. Nobody can get into your mind and take those mental defilements away. If that could be done, it would be very good for us. We don't need to practice. We just go to a teacher and let him take the mental defilements out of our minds. That is impossible. So Buddha said in effect, I cannot save you. You must save yourselves. That is because only we can save ourselves. Only we can do something to rid our minds of mental defilements. And no other person can do it for us.

There are people who criticize Buddhism saying: "Why cannot Lord Buddha save you if he is compassionate, if he possesses great compassion?" Buddha was a person that possessed what is called 'great compassion'. That means Buddha had compassion

for all beings without exception. Buddha did not save beings simply because it was impossible to save other beings. If it were possible for Buddha to save beings, then Buddha would have saved all beings. The very purpose of making aspiration for Buddhahood and trying to become a Buddha is to save beings. But here **we must understand 'saving' in a Buddhist sense and that is helping beings to save themselves.**

Buddha said: "**With oneself well controlled one obtains a savior difficult to find.**" So if you want to get a savior who is difficult to find, you just control yourself. You control your senses. When your senses or your faculties are controlled, then you have found a savior who is difficult to find. That means you have become your own savior.

In another verse Buddha said: "**By oneself is evil done, by oneself is one defiled, by oneself is evil left undone, by oneself is one purified.**" So evil or *akusala* is done by oneself. And so oneself is defiled by oneself. We defile ourselves when we do evil. By oneself is evil left undone. When we abstain from doing evil, from doing *akusala*, then by oneself is one purified. We purify ourselves. So defiling and purifying depend on ourselves. We can defile ourselves or we can purify ourselves. So we cannot defile another person or purify another person. So Buddha said: "**Purity and impurity depend upon oneself. No one purifies another.**" This we must keep in mind. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. So we can make ourselves pure or impure. No one purifies another. So no one can purify another person. That means no one can purify another person's mind of mental defilements.

DID NOT ACCEPT CASTE SYSTEM

The next feature is that caste is not recognized in Buddhism. Buddha appeared in a society where human beings were divided into four castes. They are very rigidly defined. Intermarriage or inter-relation between castes is discouraged. This caste system has given a lot of suffering to people. The Buddha did not accept this caste system. Although we cannot say the Buddha abolished the caste system in India (That is because he could not) He wanted to abolish it (the caste system). We cannot say Buddha abolished the caste system in India, but he abolished the caste system among his own disciples. Anybody who joined the order of monks left his caste behind and began a new life as one above the caste system. That means anybody who becomes a monk is just a monk. He loses his caste. He is no longer of the warrior caste, or a *brahmin*, or a merchant, or a low caste person. He is just a monk. **So among his disciples, especially monks, the Buddha was able to abolish caste distinction. Anybody who joins the Order becomes equal with other monks.**

There is a story of Sakyan Princes and their barber who became monks. They wanted to go forth. They wanted to become monks. So they went to the Buddha. Then they asked the Buddha to ordain the barber first and to ordain them later. That is because in the Dispensation those who are ordained first are senior to those who are ordained later regardless of their age. So the Sakyan Princes said to the Buddha: "*Bhante*, (Buddha also belonged to the Sakyan race) we Sakyan people are very proud. In order to get rid of this pride in ourselves let our barber, hairdresser, become a monk first and let us pay respect to him." So Buddha ordained first the barber and later the Sakyan Princes. Do you know who that barber was? He was the Venerable Upāli

who was appointed the best among those who know Vinaya and he was the one who reported all the Vinaya Piṭaka to the assembly, to the First Buddhist Council. So Upāli became a very prominent person among the disciples of the Buddha. He was a barber. (The profession of) a barber was said to belong to a very low caste.

One of the wonderful things of the Buddha's Dispensation is that those who become monks in the Dhamma and Discipline of the Buddha become equal. They lose their names and clans. They lose their caste. They are just monks or recluses in the Dispensation of the Buddha.

In this respect the Buddha's Dispensation was compared to the great ocean. Many different rivers flow into the great ocean. Before they reach the great ocean they retain their own names like the Ganges, the Yamini and so on. But once they reach the great ocean they lose their names and they are just a body of water; they are just the great ocean. So Buddha said: "In the same way people before joining the Order may belong to warrior caste, or *brahmin* caste or merchant caste, or low caste, but once they join the Order they lose their own names and clans — that means they lose their own castes — and they are reckoned simply as recluses, as monks, as sons or disciples of the Buddha." This is said to be the fourth strange wonderful thing in the Dhamma and Discipline of the Buddha. There are eight wonderful things in the *Sāsana* and this is the fourth.

According to the Buddha, **one becomes an outcaste or a *brahmin* not by birth but by one's own *kamma*.** If one does wholesome *kamma*, then he is as good as a *brahmin*. And if one does *akusala*, then one is an outcaste whether he was born as *brahmin* or not. So what determines a person to be low or

high is not his birth but his deeds. So in the teachings of the Buddha deeds are *kamma*. The deeds are the important factor in determining a person to be a lowly person or a high person.

WOMAN EQUALITY IN ENLIGHTENMENT

The other feature in Buddhism is that women are not downtrodden. Women are not suppressed. Women are considered as capable of enlightenment as men are. In the teachings of the Buddha women have as much right to enlightenment as men. It is not because you are woman or a man that you can attain enlightenment or not. **Whether you are a man or woman, if you follow the teachings of the Buddha and practice, then you can become enlightened. So women are regarded as equally capable of enlightenment as men are.**

Also in the Dispensation of the Buddha women attained honored positions as the best among people in different capabilities. During the time of the Buddha among monks the Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna were foremost. Venerable Sāriputta was foremost in wisdom and Venerable Moggallāna was foremost among those who possess *iddhi* (psychic power). Also among nuns there were Khema and Uppalavaṇṇā who were respectively foremost among those who possess wisdom and who possess *iddhi*. So women were given an honorable place in the teachings of the Buddha.

Before the time of the Buddha in India women are in a very bad position, in a very low position. In the teachings of the Buddha, in the Dispensation of the Buddha, women are almost like men. People respect them. People sought advice from them. So they

have, I think the same opportunity as men to practice what the Buddha taught and to reach the perfect stage as *Arahants*.

When Mahā Pajāpati Gotamā, Buddha's foster mother, requested the Buddha to admit her and other women to the Saṅgha, to the Order, Buddha refused three times. Then Ānanda met Mahā Pajāpati. He knew about the refusal of the Buddha. So he pleaded to the Buddha for Mahā Pajāpati Gotamā and again the Buddha refused. So Ānanda put this question to the Buddha: "*Bhante*, are women having gone forth from home to homelessness in the Dhamma and Discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata (That means in this *Śāsana*) able to realize the fruit of Stream attainment, or the fruit of Once Returning, or the fruit of Non-Returning, or Perfection? That means if a woman renounces the world and becomes a nun, is she able to attain or become enlightened?" Then the answer the Buddha gave was in the affirmative. Buddha said: "Yes, women are capable to become enlightened as *Sotāpannas* and so on." So when Buddha said that Ānanda said: "Why not give permission to your foster mother? She was beneficial to you. She nursed you personally while she gave her own son to the other nurses and so on." In the end Buddha gave permission for women to enter the Order.

If you read the Vinaya Rules for both monks and nuns, you may want to say that there is some kind of discrimination. I think we must admit there is a kind of discrimination, but I do not want to say against women. It is discrimination for the disciples. That is because I think it was necessary to make some provisions for their safety as well as for the purity of the Dispensation, and also for the growth of the Dispensation. So in that case there have to be some rules restricting women from doing some things that are bad. In that case we may say that there is a kind of discrimination,

but in the field of practice and attainment there is no discrimination. Women are as capable as men in achieving the attainment of enlightenment. Even some women are better than men and some men may be better than women. So with regard to the practice and with regard to attainment there is no discrimination.

You have heard the story of the woman (Her name was Mātikamātā) who practiced meditation following the teaching given by some thirty monks. Then she became enlightened before those thirty monks. Right? So the monks who taught her how to meditate were left behind. She reached the third stage, not the first, not the second. She even reached third stage of enlightenment before the monks reached any attainment at all. There is no saying that because you are a woman there is no reaching of attainment or that because you are a man it is more favorable for you to get attainment. There is no such thing in Buddhism.

TOLERANCE

Then the next feature is tolerance. **Tolerance in Buddhism is not only for human beings but for animals as well**. Also tolerance taught in Buddhism is far superior to that in other teachings. Buddha once said to the monks: "Monks, even if bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handled saw, he who corrupts his mind with hate would be on that account not the one that carried out my teaching." So even if enemies are cutting you with a two-handled saw, if you are angry with them, you are not one who follows my advice. It is, I think, very difficult to follow this advice. Even though enemies are cutting you, you are not to have hate towards them. So in Buddhism tolerance is carried to the utmost.

Also in Buddhism tolerance is to be extended towards animals. The first precept for lay people is abstention from killing living beings. Here it is abstention from not only killing human beings but all living beings. So Buddhist tolerance is not for human beings only, but for all living beings.

The Buddha was not in favor of sacrifices where many human beings and animals were killed. Buddha actually prevented many such sacrifices during his time. So Buddhist tolerance or kindness is for both human beings and animals.

I hope you know the Emperor Asoka of ancient India. Before he became a Buddhist, he was a warlord. He conquered many countries. In one battle, the battle of Kalinga, it is stated that many thousands of people were killed. Later he became a Buddhist. After he became a Buddhist, he gave up war or conquest. From that time on his conquest was by Dhamma. He had many edicts to be written and put up in different places in the country. Even now many of them were found and read and understood. In one of his pillar edicts he said: "The gift of spiritual insight too has been bestowed by me upon men in various ways, and for two-footed and four-footed beings, for birds and denizens of the waters, I have ordained manifold kindness up to the boon of life." That means sparing the lives of two-footed animals, four-footed animals, birds, and then animals in the water. After he became a Buddhist, he gave up war and he tried himself to be kind to all beings. Also he set up these word edicts, pillar edicts, for his countrymen to follow his example.

NO RELIGIOUS PRESECUTION

Another feature I want you to be aware of is that there has been no religious persecution in the history of Buddhism. We do not find any Buddhist or any Buddhist nation persecuting fellow Buddhists or people of other religions. Buddhists are always taught to be tolerant. Actually it was the Buddhists who were persecuted in ancient India, persecuted by Hindus, and persecuted by Muslims. So it is also an important feature that there was **no religious persecution in the history of Buddhism**.

There are many more features of Buddhism that are worthy of note, but I think we've got enough features, enough outstanding features of Buddhism to understand. So I think we are lucky to be Buddhists or to be the followers of the Buddha. And as Buddhists we are free to inquire. We are free to doubt. We are free to investigate. As Buddhists we are masters of ourselves. We are the architects of our own future. And we are those who rely on ourselves for our own good. So Buddhists can become responsible and good citizens who will contribute to the welfare of human society, as well as doing whatever they can for their own benefit which is the avoidance of unwholesome *kamma* and getting rid of mental defilements.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

8

BEINGS *on* *The* SPIRITUAL PATH

his is a class on the fundamentals of Buddhism. You have learned about the Buddha, some important teachings, and then some characteristics of the Buddha himself. So today we will learn about beings on the spiritual path. When Buddha taught, he laid down a spiritual path for his disciples to follow. Those who go along this spiritual path will ultimately gain freedom from suffering.

Before we go to the spiritual path itself we need to know different beings or different individuals on this spiritual path. So we will begin with the one who is lowest on this spiritual path and then go up one by one. Those who are on the spiritual path can be broadly divided into two. The first are called ***'puthujjana'*** and the second are called ***'Ariya'***. *'Puthujjana'* means worldling. That means a person who is not yet enlightened, so an unenlightened person. *'Ariya'* means those who have gained stages of enlightenment. The Pāḷi word *'puthujjana'*, means people who are separate from those who are enlightened or those who are more in number. So ordinary worldlings or unenlightened persons are called *puthujjana*.

PUTHUJJANA (WORLDING)

There are two kinds of *puthujjana*. The first one is called ***'andha puthujjana'*** **(a blind worldling)** and the second is — actually there are three kinds of *puthujjana*, but two kinds of *puthujjanas* are mentioned in the Commentaries. The first one is *andha puthujjana* (a blind worldling) and the second one is ***kalyāṇa puthujjana*, a good *puthujjana*, a good worldling, or a well-informed worldling.** The third is a ***Bodhisatta***, but *Bodhisatta* is not included with the two kinds of *puthujjana*. Because a *Bodhisatta* is still a *Puthujjana*, I put him under the heading of a *puthujjana*.

1) ANDHA PUTHUJJANA

Who is a blind worldling? A blind worldling is a person who does not know the teachings of the Buddha, who has not heard the teachings of the Buddha, who has not questioned about the teachings of the Buddha. There are teachings of the Buddha such as the Aggregates, Elements, Bases, Dependent Origination, and then Foundations of Mindfulness and so on. These are the subjects taught by the Buddha. If a person does not know, does not understand these teachings he is called **a blind worldling**.

2) KALYĀṆA PUTHUJJANA

A *kalyāṇa puthujjana* or **a good worldling, or a well informed worldling is the opposite of a blind worldling.** So he is a person who knows about the aggregates and so on. He not only knows them, but he is able to discuss about them and sometimes may come to decisions about these teachings. Such a person is called *kalyāṇa puthujjana* or a well informed

worldling. To become a *kalyāṇa puthujjana* we must make a study of the teachings of the Buddha.

3) BODHISATTA

The third kind of *Puthujjana* is a *Bodhisatta*. '*Bodhisatta*' means **a Buddha-to-be**. That means a person who is destined to become a Buddha, but is still a *puthujjana* or an unenlightened person. According to the teachings of Theravāda, to become a *Bodhisatta* is not easy because it is said that a person must make the aspiration that he become a Buddha in the future and he must make that aspiration in the presence of a living Buddha. And then that living Buddha must give a declaration that this person will surely become a Buddha in the future, in the distant future. So only then is he recognized as a *Bodhisatta*. So to become a *Bodhisatta* is not an easy task in Theravāda Buddhism.

The aspiration thus made will succeed only if he possesses eight qualifications. If he does not possess these eight qualifications then his aspiration will not succeed, so he cannot become a *Bodhisatta*. What is the first qualification? The human state. That means he must be **a human being** in order to get the declaration from the Buddha that he will become a Buddha in the future. So if you make an aspiration as a *deva*, then you will not become a *Bodhisatta*. So the person who makes the aspiration for Buddhahood must be a human being. That is the first qualification.

The second qualification is that he must be **a man** in order for his aspiration to succeed. This is what is stated or taught in the books. So we cannot avoid that, although I am sorry for women devotees.

The third qualification is that he must have the capability to become **an *Arahant* in that life**. When Sumedha, the *Bodhisatta* of Gotama Buddha, made the aspiration for Buddhahood in the presence of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara he was endowed with what are called *abhiññās* (We will come to that later) and also he had the capability to become an *Arahant* if he wanted to at that time. He was endowed with the necessary supporting conditions to attain *Arahantship* in that life. Although he could become an *Arahant* easily in that life, the hermit Sumedha gave up that opportunity and undertook a very, very long journey of the *Bodhisatta* practice because he wanted to save or rather he wanted to help beings save themselves from suffering in the round of rebirth.

The fourth qualification is **seeing the Buddha**. That means he must make the aspiration in the presence of a Buddha.

The fifth qualification is that he must **be a monk** or a recluse when he makes the aspiration.

The sixth qualification is the achievement of **noble qualities such as *abhiññās*** etc. That means he must be endowed with *jhānas* and *abhiññās*. *Abhiññās* are supernormal powers gained through the practice of tranquility meditation.

The seventh qualification is **extreme dedication**. That means his devotion to Buddhahood must be very strong so that he is prepared to give up his life for Buddhahood.

The eighth qualification is **strong desire for accomplishment**. So he must have strong desire, strong effort, or strong exertion or endeavor searching for the qualities that make a Buddha.

How strong his desire was explained in the Commentaries with similes. The first one is (as follows): Let us say, it is believed that by the power of his own arms somebody is capable of crossing over the whole interior of the *cakkavāḷa* sphere (That means the whole world) that has become one mass of water and getting to the further shore, such a person achieves Buddhahood. If he believes in that, he does not deem it a difficult task for himself but he thinks: "I, having crossed over this, will get to the other shore." That means — suppose somebody says to him if you can cross by the power of your own arms, if you can swim from this end of the world to the other end of the world (The whole world is covered with water) so if you can swim and reach the other shore, you will become a Buddha, then he will do so. So strong was his desire for Buddhahood.

Or if someone says: "If with your bare feet you can cross the whole world system, the whole world filled with flameless, smokeless red hot coals and reach the other side, you will become a Buddha." If he heard somebody say that and he believed in it, he is ready, he is willing to walk over the red hot coals and reach the other side of the world system. This much his desire must be strong.

The other simile is: the whole world system is filled with sharp pointed swords uninterruptedly. If somebody were to say if you can walk on those swords and reach the other side of the world system, you will become a Buddha, he would do so.

Or if the world system were to become a jungle of thorny creepers, covered by a thicket of bamboo, and if somebody says if you were to cut through this world system and reach

the other side, you will become a Buddha, he would try to cut through this jungle of thorny creepers.

And last if he hears that Buddhahood can be attained after suffering in hell for four *asaṅkheyyas* and 100,000 eons then he would suffer in hell for that long period. So his desire to become a Buddha must be very, very strong and not just a weak wish.

So if he is endowed with these eight qualifications, then his aspiration will be successful. That means he will become a *Bodhisatta* or let us say an official *Bodhisatta*.

It is mentioned in our books that a person who has become **a *Bodhisatta* will not have 18 kinds of let us call them blemishes.** That means he will not be born blind, he will not be born deaf, he will not become insane in his lives, he is not dumb, he does not become a cripple, and he is not born in outlying districts. 'Outlying district' means outside India actually. India is said to be the Majjhima Desa (the middle country). 'Outlying district' means outside that area. Even some area in India along the border and the rest of the world could be called an outlying district. And then he does not take conception in the womb of a slave woman. That means he will not be reborn as a slave. He does not have one view with fixed destiny. That means he will always believe in the Law of *Kamma*, the Law of Cause and Effect. He will not suffer change of sex. He does not commit the five grievous *kammas*, killing one's own father and so on. He will not become a leper. Even when he is born in the animal kingdom or as an animal, he will not be reborn as an animal smaller in size than a quail, a small bird, and in some books it is said not greater than an elephant — no dinosaurs. (Sayādaw laughing) He is not born

as a hungry, thirsty, and burning ghost or as a certain kind of *asura*. So he will not be reborn as a ghost who is always hungry and so on. He will not be born in *Avīci* hell. '*Avīci* hell' means the biggest of the lowest of the hells. He will not be reborn in *Lokantarika* hell. '*Lokantarika* hell' means the hell that lies between three world systems. The world systems are described like round trays. When these three round trays meet together, there is a space. That space is called '*lokantara*', the space between worlds. Those that are reborn there are called '*lokantarikas*'. When he is born in *Kāmāvacara* world, he is never reborn as Māra, the Evil One. When born in the *Rūpāvacara* realm, he is not born as a mindless being. And he is not born in the *Suddhāvāsa* realms. '*Suddhāvāsa*' means pure abodes. Only *Anāgāmīs* are born there. He is not born in the *Arūpāvacara* Realm. That means (the realm) of those who have mind only and no physical form. The last is that he is not born in another world system. These are the 18 blemishes a *Bodhisatta* will not suffer along his journey to Buddhahood.

What must a *Bodhisatta* do? What must he practice? He must fulfill the ten *pāramīs* or ten qualifications. And he must fulfill these ten *pāramīs* to the highest level.

The word '*Bodhisatta*' we translate as Buddha-to-be or something like that. There are two words compounded here. '*Bodhi*' is one word and '*satta*' is another word. The Commentaries give three meanings to this word. The first one is a person who is attached to *bodhi*. Here '*bodhi*' means enlightenment as a Buddha. **He is one who is attached to, who is desirous of enlightenment as a Buddha**. Such a person is called '*Bodhisatta*'.

The second meaning given in the Commentaries is a wisdom person. Here *'satta'* means a being and *'bodhi'* means wisdom. So *'Bodhisatta'* means a wisdom person. That means a wise person. A *Bodhisatta* is always wise. Even when *Bodhisatta* was reborn as an animal, he was a wise being. So *Bodhisatta* according to this definition means **a person who is wise or who possesses wisdom.**

The third meaning is enlightenment person. That means **a person who is sure to get enlightenment as a Buddha**. So in order to become a *Bodhisatta* is not easy. Right?

We have finished the different kinds of *puthujjanas*. So in Theravāda Buddhism a *Bodhisatta* is still a person who has not eradicated any of the mental defilements, who is still an unenlightened person who is still a *puthujjana*. Since he is still a *puthujjana*, he is sometimes reborn as an animal, sometimes as a human being, or sometimes as a *deva*. If he were enlightened, he would not be reborn as an animal. That is why *Bodhisattas* in Theravāda Buddhism are still *puthujjanas*, but they are extraordinary *puthujjanas*. That is because they have given up their opportunity to get enlightenment and are willing to suffer a lot of suffering in *saṁsāra* for four incalculables and 100,000 eons.

Because *Bodhisattas* are *puthujjanas*, Theravāda Buddhists do not put *Bodhisattas* on the same level as Buddhas. In fact it is very, very rare that you see a statue of a *Bodhisatta* in Theravāda monasteries and Theravāda shrines. And they are not worshipped as they worship the Buddha. The *Bodhisattas* are not worshipped as the Buddhas are worshipped.

ARIYAS (ENLIGHTENED ONES)

Now we go to the enlightened ones. Enlightened ones are those who have reached the stages of enlightenment. That means those who have realized the Four Noble Truths and who have eradicated mental defilements.

There are four kinds of enlightened persons, excluding Buddhas and *Pacceka Buddhas*. If we take into account *Pacceka Buddhas* and Buddhas we can say that there are six kinds of *Ariya*, six kinds of enlightened persons.

1) SOTĀPANNA

The first of those enlightened ones is the *Sotāpanna*. "*Sotāpanna*" means **one who has entered the stream of the Noble Path, who has eradicated two mental defilements, wrong view and sceptical doubt**. They are the ones who have reached the first stage of enlightenment.

Normally we say, when a person becomes a *Sotāpanna*, he will have only seven more rebirths in *saṁsāra*. There are three kinds of *Sotāpannas* mentioned in the scriptures.

The first one is called "at most seven lives *Sotāpanna*". That means he will have at most seven rebirths in the future. In the seventh life he will definitely become an *Arahant* and make an end of suffering.

The second kind of *Sotāpanna* is one who has only one birth in the future. So he will be reborn only once. In that life he will become an *Arahant* and make an end of suffering.

The third kind of *Sotāpanna* is one who has from two to six rebirths in the future. So there are three kinds of *Sotāpannas*.

2) SAKADĀGĀMĪ

The next level of enlightenment is *Sakadāgāmī*. *'Sakadāgāmī'* means **Once-Returner**. That means one who comes back only once to this human realm or this human life. This person does not eradicate any more mental defilements, but **he makes these mental defilements thinner** or he makes them less.

In the commentary five kinds of Once-Returners are mentioned. The first one is a person who becomes a *Sakadāgāmī* in this life, in this human life and finally passes away here. That means first he become a *Sakadāgāmī* and then later he becomes an *Anāgāmī* and then *Arahant*. He makes his final passing away in this very life.

The second kind of *Sakadāgāmī* is one who becomes a *Sakadāgāmī* in this human life and then he is reborn in the celestial realms, and then he becomes an *Arahant* and passes away there.

The third kind is one who becomes a *Sakadāgāmī* in the celestial realms and then is reborn here in the human realm, becomes an *Arahant* and finally passes away. This *Sakadāgāmī* is one who becomes a *Sakadāgāmī* in the celestial realm and is reborn here and finally passes away here in human realm.

The four kind is one who becomes a *Sakadāgāmī* in a celestial realms, takes rebirth in celestial realms and becomes an *Arahant* there as well.

The true *Sakadāgāmī* (and the fifth kind), he becomes a *Sakadāgāmī* here, then he is reborn in celestial realm, and then again he comes back to the human realm becomes an *Arahant* and finally passes away. Right? First he becomes a *Sakadāgāmī* here in the human realm. After that he is reborn

as a *deva*. Then he dies as a *deva* and is reborn as a human being and in that life he becomes an *Arahant*.

3) ANĀGĀMĪ

The next enlightened person is an *Anāgāmī* (Non Returner) **a person who does not come back here.** 'Here' means the sense-sphere not just the human world, so both human and celestial realms. So an *Anāgāmī* is a person who does not come back to the sense-sphere realm. **That person has eradicated sensual lust and ill will.** These two he abandons altogether. That means he cuts them off so that they do not arise in him again. So *Anāgāmīs* are ones that do not come back to the *kāmāvacara* world. Where is he reborn? *Suddhāvāsa*. He is reborn in *Suddhāvāsa* realm, the *Brahma* realm.

There are five kinds of *Anāgāmīs*. Now let us see if you understand the first. One, who having been reborn spontaneously in a higher world, generates the final Path before he has reached the midpoint of the lifespan. Now, he is an *Anāgāmī* here. Then he is reborn in one of the Pure Abodes. Before reaching the midpoint of the lifespan he becomes an *Arahant*. That is the first one.

What is the second one? The second one is one who becomes an *Arahant* during the second half of his life. So the first one is one who becomes an *Arahant* during the first half of his life and the second one is one who becomes an *Arahant* during the second half of his life.

Number three is one who having been born spontaneously in a higher world attains the final Path without much exertion. So he doesn't have to practice much.

Number four is one who becomes an *Arahant* with much exertion. So he has to practice much.

Now, by the way, you see the word *'saṅkhāra'* there, in number three and number four, *asaṅkhāra* and *sasaṅkhāra*. If we strike out *'a'* and *'sa'*, we get *saṅkhāra*. The word *'saṅkhāra'* here means exertion, effort. I told you the word *'saṅkhāra'* has many meanings. *'Saṅkhāra'* means what is conditioned or what conditions and here *'saṅkhāra'* means exertion or effort. 'All *saṅkhāras* are impermanent.' How do you understand *saṅkhāra* there? There the *saṅkhāra* you understand is those that are conditioned. So you understand it in a passive sense. In the word, *'saṅkhārakkhandha'* that means those that condition, conditioning. So there you understand in the active sense. What about *'avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā'* in the Dependent Origination? Is it active or passive? Active because there *'saṅkhāra'* means *kamma*.

The fifth one (*Anāgāmī*) is one who having been reborn spontaneously in a higher world passes from one higher realm to another until he reaches the *Akaniṭṭha* realm. There are five *Suddhāvāsa* Realms. First he is reborn in the first realm, then in the second, the third, the fourth and the fifth. He goes up one realm after another until he reaches the highest realm, and then he becomes an *Arahant* during that life and makes an end of suffering.

4) ARAHANT

The fourth enlightened person is an *Arahant*. *'Arahant'* means **a person who is worthy to accept gifts.** He is called 'worthy to accept gifts' because gifts given to him bring abundant results. He is the one who has reached the highest stage of

enlightenment and **who has eradicated all the remaining mental defilements.** When one becomes an *Arahant* all mental defilements are gone. There are no more mental defilements in his mind and so he is the one who possesses total purity of mind.

The *Arahant* is one who has eradicated all mental defilements. Since he has eradicated all mental defilements, there is no more rebirth for him. **After the death of an *Arahant* there is no more rebirth.** The death of an *Arahant* is compared to a light going out, a lamp going out.

There are three kinds of *Arahants*. The first is the chief disciple. In order for a person to become a chief disciple, the person has to fulfill the *pāramīs* for one *asaṅkheyya* and 100,000 eons. Who were the chief disciples of Gotama Buddha? Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna. There are only two chief disciples for a Buddha.

The second kind of *Arahant* is the great disciple. In order to become a great disciple one needs to fulfill *pāramīs* for 100,000 eons. So not one *asaṅkheyya*, just 100,000 eons or *kappas*. During the time of the Buddha there were said to be 80 great disciples of the Buddha. Among those eighty the chief disciples are included. If we discount the two chief disciples, we can say that there are 78 great disciples. Can you tell me some great disciples of the Buddha? Ānanda, yes. Kaccayāna, Anuruddha, Mahā Kassapa. OK. There are many. They are called great disciples.

The third kind of *Arahants* are ordinary disciples. They need to fulfill *pāramīs* for less than 100,000 eons, maybe 100 lives, or a 1000 lives, or more. There are more ordinary disciples than chief disciples or great disciples.

5) PACCEKA BUDDHA

OK. We come to *Pacceka Buddha* or separate Buddha or an individual Buddha. Some call it a silent Buddha. It is not because they are totally silent, but because **they cannot teach as Buddhas do**. So they are called silent Buddhas, so separate Buddhas. A separate Buddha is a person **who gains enlightenment by himself without any help from any person**. They don't need to hear from another person. The other *Arahants* (chief disciples, great disciples and ordinary disciples) need to hear from another person in order to practice meditation and to become *Arahants*. *Pacceka Buddhas* are different from *Arahants*, because like Buddhas, they do not have any teachers. Without the help of any person they attain enlightenment all by themselves. But they are incapable of helping others attain enlightenment. They cannot teach others to become enlightened like Buddhas and the disciples do. People who get the opportunity to listen to them can be reborn in celestial worlds and so on, but they cannot become enlightened. This is the difference between disciples, *Pacceka Buddhas* and Buddhas. *Arahants* need instructions from others and they can help others attain enlightenment. *Pacceka Buddhas* do not need instructions from others and they cannot help others to become enlightened. Buddhas do not need instructions from others and they can help others to attain enlightenment.

So we must not understand that *Pacceka Buddhas* do not preach. Actually they preach, but it is only that they cannot make others attain enlightenment by their preaching. In the Jātakas and also in Sutta Nipāta we find *Pacceka Buddhas* preaching or at least saying a verse or two. They do teach,

but they cannot teach as well as the Buddhas do. So they gain enlightenment themselves. Maybe they cannot describe or put into words and preach to beings.

In order to become a *Pacceka Buddha*, one needs to fulfill the *pāramīs* for two *asaṅkheyyas* and 100,000 eons. So it is half the period of the Buddhas. And **a *Pacceka Buddha* appears only when there is no Buddha in the world**. When there is a Buddha, there are no *Pacceka Buddhas*. Right now there are no *Pacceka Buddhas* because there is still the dispensation of the Buddha. So they only appear in the interval between two Buddhas. Actually **they are higher than the *Arahants* and lower than the Buddhas**.

6) THE BUDDHA

Last we come to the Buddha, the best of all beings. **A Buddha is one who has eradicated all mental defilements without leaving any residue and who possesses omniscience, great compassion, and countless other qualities.**

Arahants also eradicate all mental defilements, but it is said that *Arahants* cannot eradicate, let us say, habits. Buddhas can eradicate all mental defilements along with these habits formed from these mental defilements. I think I have told you about this many times. You remember the *Arahant* who referred to the people as wicked people and so on. (This *Arahant* was a *Brahmin* who was uanable to give up his former speech patterns towards those of lower caste. Transcriber) Although *Arahants* and Buddhas both eradicate all mental defilements, the eradication of Buddhas is total, without leaving any residual, or any smell of mental defilements.

Buddhas possess **omniscience**, all-knowing wisdom. That means whatever they want to know, they know without hesitation, they know without interference. That is peculiar to Buddhas and it is not possessed by *Arahants*.

Then they possess **great compassion** (***Mahā karuṇā***). Now *Arahants* possess *karuṇā*, ordinary *karuṇā*. What the Buddhas possess is called 'great compassion' because Buddhas sacrificed many, many lives to be able to help beings help themselves or to help beings save themselves. Buddhas possess countless qualities.

There are three kinds of Buddhas. The first one is a Buddha whose **wisdom** is predominant. In order to become a Buddha whose wisdom is predominant, one needs to fulfill *pāramīs* for 4 *asaṅkheyyas* and 100,000 eons. The second kind of Buddha is one whose **faith** is predominant. He needs to fulfill *pāramīs* for 8 *asaṅkheyyas* and 100,000 eons, so twice the time for one whose wisdom is predominant. The third kind of Buddha is one whose **effort** or exertion is predominant. Such a person needs to fulfill *pāramīs* for 16 *asaṅkheyyas* and 100,000 eons. If you wanted to make an aspiration for Buddhahood, which Buddha would you choose? Wisdom predominant?

There was one Sayādaw in Burma. He was dull. He could not learn easily. So if he wanted to memorize one verse he repeated it for 108 times. So he had the verse and then he repeated it 108 times so that he got it by heart. Later he became a very learned Sayādaw and he wrote a book on Pāḷi grammar. At the end of that book he made an aspiration: May I become a Buddha whose effort is predominant. So he was willing to suffer for 16 *asaṅkheyyas*, not just 4 or 8, and 100,000 *kappas*.

These are the beings or individuals on the Buddhist spiritual path. From the top to the bottom, first is what? The Buddha, and then *Pacceka Buddha, Arahant.* How many kinds of *Arahant?* There are three kinds of *Arahant* — **chief disciple, great disciple and ordinary disciple**. What is below *Arahant*? *Anāgāmī* (Non-Returner). Below *Anāgāmī*? *Sakadāgāmī* (Once Returner). Below *Sakadāgāmī*? *Sotāpanna* (Stream Entrant). Below *Sotāpanna*? *Puthujjanas* (unenlightened worldlings). How many kinds of *Puthujjanas* are there? Two *kalyāṇa puthujjana*, a well informed *puthujjana* and *andha puthujjana*, blind *puthujjana*. And then we put the *Bodhisattas* among the *puthujjanas*.

There is one thing to notice about *Arahant*. Whenever we use the word *"Arahant"* we almost always mean disciples, but actually **Buddhas are *Arahants*. *Pacceka Buddhas* are also *Arahants***. You know the nine qualities of the Buddha: *Itipi so Bhagavā arahaṁ sammāsambuddho* and so on. There the word *'arahaṁ'* is used as an attribute of the Buddha. So basically the word *'Arahant'* means both disciples and the Buddhas and *Pacceka Buddhas*. Most of the time, we use the word *'Arahant'* to mean disciples only. That we must also keep in mind when we read the Buddhist books or texts.

Since this is a study course, I give you the different kinds of *Sotāpannas* and so on, but they are not essential. So if you don't understand all of them, don't be depressed. But for your information I give these different kinds of enlightened persons or noble persons. There is much, much more to say about them, but this course is just on the fundamentals. So we will not go into detail and also into the different statements about these individuals. So if you do not remember all of them, it's OK I want you to remember just the four Noble persons or four enlightened

persons — *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī*, and *Arahant*, and then *Pacceka Buddha* and Buddha.

I told you there are only four enlightened persons. Actually how many enlightened person are there? How many noble persons are there? How many have you found? I did not tell you today in the class. But how many do you know? Eight, yes. I left out four deliberately. Because 'the eight enlightened persons' means just four persons actually. Right? At the moment of *Magga* consciousness he is called a ***Magga* person.** Then from the moment of *Phala* consciousness onward he is called a ***Phala* person.** *Magga citta* only lasts for one moment, one brief moment, a billionth of a second. So for that brief moment he is one person and then the next moment he is another person. But in actual practice we just get *Sotāpanna Phala* persons and so on, not *Magga* persons. In order not to confuse you I said there were only 4 enlightened persons. You may have heard there are 8 enlightened persons. Both are correct. OK.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

9

The SPIRITUAL PATH

ast time I talked about beings on the spiritual path. This time I will talk about the spiritual path itself. Last time we learned about the different individuals going along the spiritual path. So this time we need to understand what the spiritual path is. **'Spiritual path' really means the practice**, so what we do when we claim ourselves to be the disciples of the Buddha. We are lucky that Buddha taught us the spiritual path or Buddha gave us the spiritual path in stages. The first thing we do as Buddhists, as followers of the Buddha, is taking refuge. We will begin the spiritual path with taking refuge.

TAKING REFUGE

When we were little and when we were afraid, we would run to our parents for refuge. Once we got into the lap of our parents, our fears disappeared. Also when there is some danger or something, we try to go to some place for shelter from that danger. When it is too hot outside, we get into a building. The building becomes a refuge for us from the heat outside. When it is very cold, the same thing, we get into the building and then we can protect ourselves from the cold. The building or the house is our refuge

from heat or cold, and also other natural disasters like storms and so on.

When we go along the journey of *saṁsāra*, sometimes we have fears. Sometimes there are dangers. When we are confronted with these fears or dangers, we need to have some kind of refuge. We need to have some persons or something that will help us to get free from such fears or dangers.

What is a refuge? In the ancient Commentaries refuge is explained as something or someone that crushes or destroys our fear, or terror, or suffering, or affliction in the woeful states and suffering in *saṁsāra*. In this sense all the **Three Gems** in Buddhism (the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha) are called 'refuge'.

Buddha is called 'a refuge' because he oppresses the fear in us or the fear in beings. That means he helps us to avoid danger by engaging us in what is beneficial or in what is wholesome by deterring us from what is unwholesome or what is not beneficial. Buddha was like a good teacher. Buddha always said: "Do merit and avoid demerit." When Buddha said, "Do merit", that means he is engaging us to do acts of merit which will be beneficial for us. When Buddha said, "Do not do demerit, do not do evil", then he is deterring us from what is not beneficial for us, the unwholesome states.

Dhamma is also called 'a refuge'. When Dhamma is realized, when a person becomes enlightened, then he will be able to cross over to the other shore from *saṁsāra*. Also even if he only reaches the lower stages of enlightenment, he gets consolation in *saṁsāra* or he gets a foothold in this *saṁsāra*. In this sense Dhamma is called 'a refuge' because it oppresses fear or danger for beings.

Saṅgha is also called 'a refuge'. When we make offerings to the Saṅgha, then we get abundant results from this offering. When we pay respects to the Saṅgha, we get abundant results from giving respect and so on. In one way the Saṅgha helps us to avoid not getting enough results. If we give to those who are not worthy of our gifts, we will not get as abundant results as when we give to the Saṅgha. Saṅgha is called 'a refuge' because it makes our offerings to them, it makes our acts of veneration to them, bring abundant results.

As Buddhists, the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha are our refuge. In order to affirm that we are followers of the Three Gems we take refuge. You all know how to take refuge. What is it that we call 'taking refuge'? According to Abhidhamma, **when you take refuge, a wholesome consciousness arises in your mind, a *kusala* consciousness arises in your mind**. That ***kusala* consciousness is free from defilements**. That means it is free from ignorance of the Three Gems, free from non-confidence in the Three Gems. When it arises, it takes the Three Gems as object. 'Taking refuge' really means the arising of that type of consciousness.

When we say, "I take the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha as my refuge", that means I regard the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha **as the supreme resort**. That means they are the ultimate resort, the ultimate refuge. 'Taking refuge' means the arising of that type of consciousness. When we say the formula, *Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi* and so on, that consciousness arises in our mind. It is free from mental defilements and it has reverence for the Three Gems. At the same time it takes the Three Gems and not other things as real refuge.

In the Commentary it is explained who it is that takes refuge. That means what kind of a person takes refuge. The answer is a person who is endowed with that type of consciousness or who has that type of consciousness is the one who takes refuge.

In order to take refuge we simply regard the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha as our guides or as our teachers. 'Taking refuge' does not mean that we have faith in the Buddha and then we don't do anything, relying on the Buddha to give us results. **Taking refuge is just regarding them as our spiritual guides.**

TWO KINDS OF TAKING REFUGE

There are two kinds of taking refuge. The first one is **supramundane** and the second one is **mundane.** The supramundane taking refuge occurs at the moment of the attainment of enlightenment or at the moment of the arising of Path consciousness. When Path consciousness arises, a person realizes the Four Noble Truths, taking Nibbāna as object at that time. At that moment the taking of refuge is said to be accomplished. It is firmly established in that person. That is supramundane taking refuge.

1) MUNDANE TAKING REFUGE

Mundane taking refuge is for *puthujjana*s. When they take refuge, they suppress the defilements or the obstacles to taking refuge. That means non-confidence in the Three Gems, ignorance of the Three Gems and so on. When they take refuge, they understand the Three Gems properly. They have faith or confidence in the Three Gems. Also when they take refuge, they take the excellent qualities of them as object. That means when we take refuge, we think of the

qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. For Buddhists the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha are objects of faith or confidence. When we take refuge, we gain **faith** in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha.

That faith helps us to attain right view. That is because through faith we learn the teachings of the Buddha and we gain right understanding. At the moment of taking refuge there is this faith and right understanding occurring in our minds. There are ten kinds of meritorious deeds. The last of them is called 'straightening of view'. 'Straightening of view' means having right view. This right view is rooted in faith or confidence in the Three Gems.

Mundane taking of refuge is said to be of four kinds. That means how we take refuge. There are four kinds of taking refuge. The first is by **surrendering oneself** to the Buddha, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha. Instead of saying, "I take refuge in the Buddha", we may say, "I surrender myself to the Buddha, to the Dhamma, to the Saṅgha; I relinquish myself to the Buddha, to the Dhamma, to the Saṅgha." Surrendering oneself to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha is a kind of taking refuge in the Three Gems. When we surrender ourselves we say: "Making this day the beginning, I surrender myself to the Buddha" and so on. 'Making this day the beginning' I have translated literally from the Pāḷi. That means from this day onwards I surrender myself to the Buddha and so on.

The second mundane way of taking refuge is by taking the Triple Gem as **one's supreme resort**. That means one regards them as one's best resort. When we use that method of taking refuge, then we may say: "Making this day the beginning, I am the one who has the Buddha as my supreme

Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi
Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi
Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi

To the Buddha I go for refuge.
To the Dhamma I go for refuge.
To the Sangha I go for refuge.

resort, who has the Dhamma as my supreme resort, who has the Saṅgha as my supreme resort. Thus regard me." This is how they express their taking refuge.

Sometimes we may not say, "I surrender myself to the Buddha" or "I am the one who has the Buddha as my supreme resort". We may say, "I am the pupil of the Buddha, pupil of the Dhamma, pupil of the Saṅgha". When we say this, we are virtually taking refuge in the Buddha, in the Dhamma, and in the Saṅgha. The third mundane way of taking refuge is by becoming a pupil of the Triple Gem or by admitting that **one is a disciple** of the Three Gems.

The fourth mundane way of taking refuge is by **paying homage**, etc. by bowing down to the Buddha and so on, or by rising up from the seat when the Buddha and others come, or by showing reverence to them with folded hands and also other acts of respect. All of these are called 'paying respect' or something like that. We may not say words like "I surrender myself to the Buddha", but when we bow down to the Buddha, we are virtually taking refuge in the Buddha. When we show respect to the Buddha, we are virtually taking refuge in the Buddha and so on.

This fourth one is described as prostration in some translations, but it is not necessarily prostration. Prostration is one act of paying respect. It is not necessarily prostration, but it is just paying homage or paying respect. So if you do not bow down to him but show respect to the Buddha and others in some other ways, then you are virtually taking refuge in the Three Gems. It is not prostration only, but any form of paying homage.

When we take refuge, we say the formula *'Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi'* and so on. What is this? Is it number one, self surrendering? We do not say, "I surrender myself to the Buddha." Then is it number three? We do not say, "I am the pupil of the Buddha." Is it number four? Maybe we pay homage to the Buddha. When we say, "I take Buddha as my refuge", I think we are following the second one. **That means taking the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha as our supreme resort, as our refuge.**

In the formulas given for these four kinds of taking refuge there is the phrase 'making this day the beginning' or 'from this day onward'. I think it is proper to say these words only when we first take refuge. Now we take refuge every day. Actually we took refuge when we were young. And then we take refuge every day. When we take refuge for the second time, the third time and so on, I don't think we need to say, "from this day on". Suppose we say today: "From this day on I take the Buddha as my refuge." That may mean we did not take refuge in the Buddha yesterday and in the days long past. These formulas are for those who take refuge for the first time in the Buddha, in the Dhamma, and in the Saṅgha. **As Buddhists who have been taking refuge in the Three Gems almost every day**, we don't need to say, "from today onwards".

The last one is taking refuge by **paying homage** and others. The last one is of four kinds. That means homage and others shown towards relatives, or homage and others motivated by fear (Because we are afraid, we pay respect and so on), respect shown towards a teacher, or paying homage based on esteem for spiritual worthiness. That means homage

paid to a person, who is worthy of accepting our reverence, and who is worthy of accepting offerings.

'If a member of the Sakya clan or the Koliya clan pays homage to the Buddha, thinking he is our relative, he has not thereby taken refuge.' **If you pay homage to the Buddha because Buddha is your relative, then you do not take refuge.** You pay homage just because Buddha is your relative.

If you pay homage because you are afraid or because you are motivated by fear, then you do not take refuge. It is explained in the Commentaries: "If one pays homage to the Buddha out of fear thinking, the recluse Gotama is honored by kings and has great power, if I do not pay homage to him, he may harm me." **If he pays homage to the Buddha because of this fear, then he is not taking refuge.**

In Eastern cultures teachers are very much respected. People or pupils pay homage to the teachers simply because they are their teachers. **If a person pays homage to a person, bows down to a person, because that person is his teacher, then he is not taking refuge.**

The Buddha, before he became the Buddha, as a *Bodhisatta*, may have taught something to somebody. **If that somebody pays homage to the Buddha, thinking of that advice he got when Buddha was a *Bodhisatta*, then he is not taking refuge.** Not only that, even after he became the Buddha, he may give some advice to some lay people for their worldly prosperity. Sometimes Buddha gave instructions to people on how to spend their money.

Do you want to know? (Sayādaw laughing). One portion of their income they must use for their living and for their

enjoyment. With two portions of their income they are to do business. The last or the fourth portion they must put aside for emergencies. So you divide your income into four parts. With one part you spend at home for your enjoyment and for your family's enjoyment. With 50% of your income you do business. The last 25% you put in the bank so that when emergencies come, you can solve this problem.

Sometimes Buddha gave such advice. Suppose a person hears that advice and then he pays homage to the Buddha as a teacher because Buddha taught this. Then he is not taking refuge in the Buddha. That is because he pays homage to the Buddha because he learns that thing from the Buddha, that way on how to spend his money, not for the attainment of enlightenment. In such a case a person bowing down to the Buddha is not taking refuge in the Buddha.

Even though you pay homage to a person, if you pay homage because he is your relative, or you are afraid if you do not pay homage he may do harm to you, or because he is your teacher, then you are not taking refuge. **The real taking refuge only happens when you pay homage and others based on respect for his spiritual worthiness.** That means you pay homage to the Buddha because you believe or you understand that Buddha was the best of the persons that are worthy of accepting reverence and accepting offerings. Only in such a case is refuge said to be taken.

Now we go the other way round. Suppose you have taken refuge — not suppose — you have taken refuge in the Triple Gem. Then you have a relative who belongs to another religion. Let us say (that relative) is a Catholic priest. You pay homage to that Catholic priest who is your relative.

Is your taking refuge broken? You have taken refuge in the Three Gems. Now you are paying respect or you are paying homage to a priest of another religion, but he is your relative. Is your taking refuge broken or breached that way? No.

During the time of kings people had to pay homage to the kings. People had to bow down to the kings. You bow down to the king because if you do not bow down, he may do harm to you. Out of fear you bow down to the king. In that case too your taking refuge is not broken.

You have a teacher. That teacher happens to be a priest of another religion. You bow down to that teacher because he is your teacher. Is your taking refuge in the Three Gems broken? No.

You meet a priest. He is not your relative. He is not your teacher. And you are not afraid of him. You think that since he is a priest although he belongs to another religion, it is good to pay homage to him and you pay homage to him. What about your taking refuge in the Three Gems? Is it broken or not? It is not explained in the Commentaries. Therefore, we have to decide for ourselves. I think so long as you do not take that person to be your teacher in getting out of *saṁsāra*, your teacher in the practice of meditation, your teacher in getting rid of mental defilements, I think your taking refuge in the Three Gems is still intact.

Suppose there is a woman who is pregnant. Then she says: "My child in the womb takes refuge in the Buddha and so on; for the child in my womb I take refuge in the Buddha and so on." Has the child in the womb taken refuge?

During the time of the Buddha there was a prince called Bodhi. He invited the Buddha to his house and offered a meal to the Buddha. Then he asked about Buddha's practice, Buddha's striving to become the Buddha. Buddha related to him in detail what he practiced during the six years in the forest. Then at the end a friend of his said: "Friend, you are praising the Buddha, but you did not take refuge in the Buddha." Then Prince Bodhi said: "Although I do not take refuge in the Buddha when I am grown up, when I was in the womb of my mother, my mother took refuge for me." Therefore, he considered himself to be one who had taken refuge in the Three Gems.

The Commentary explains that there is no taking refuge without knowing, without mind. That means although his mother took refuge for him when he was in her womb, actually he did not take refuge because he did not know. After his birth his mother told him she had taken refuge for him when he was in her womb. He knows at that time that his mother had taken refuge for him. So he takes refuge at that time.

Taking refuge is to be done with full awareness or understanding. When we take refuge or when we say, *"Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi"* and so on, we must have the understanding that we are taking refuge in the Buddha and so on.

In countries like Burma people are so used to saying these formulas that they just say the formula. They will not even know the meaning or what the formula is. I have asked many people: "What are you saying? What is the meaning of that?" They didn't know. So I told them in order to take

refuge seriously you have to understand what you are saying when you say, *"Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi"*. At least, even if you do not know the meaning of the individual words, please understand that when you are saying this formula, you are taking refuge in the Buddha. This much you must understand. This is what I tell them always.

Taking refuge is a serious undertaking, a serious act of confidence in the Triple Gem. So we must do it with full conviction, not as an act that we do routinely, not doing it slightly. We must understand the meaning of the formula and also we must know at the time that we say, *"Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi"*, that we are taking refuge in the Buddha or that we are regarding the Buddha as our spiritual guide.

Buddhists take refuge many times in their lives. Almost every day they take refuge. Must one take refuge every day? Or what if a person is not able to take refuge because of business, can we say on that day he is without refuge? A refuge once taken will stay with you how long? Three years? Four years? (Taking refuge will stay with you) as long as you keep it, that is, until you give it up or until you die. Actually it is not necessary to take refuge every day. **We take refuge every day or almost every day because we want to affirm our confidence in the Triple Gem.** We want to affirm our faith in the Triple Gem. We want to affirm that we are always the disciples of the Three Gems. By taking refuge we get *saddhā*. Taking refuge is a good act. Even though it is not absolutely necessary, I think we should do it every day.

The Commentaries tell us about what is called 'defilement of the refuge'. That means defilement in having refuge or impurities in having refuge.

2) SUPRAMUNDANE TAKING REFUGE

As for the **supramundane refuge there are no defilements because supramundane refuge is taken by those who are enlightened.** But in mundane refuge there can be defilements. When we are ignorant of the Three Gems, or when we have doubts about the Three Gems, or when we have misunderstanding about the Three Gems, then our refuge or our having refuge is said to be impure. It is said to be contaminated.

When is a refuge broken or when is it breached? There can be breach of mundane refuge only. There is no breach of supramundane refuge. There are two kinds of breach of mundane refuge, that which is blameworthy and that which is blameless. '**Blameworthy**' means bringing painful results. '**Blameless**' means bringing no results.

The **blameworthy breach of refuge** occurs when one does surrendering of oneself etc. to other teachers etc. That means one goes to another teacher, another religion and takes up that religion. That means one gives up one's confidence in the Triple Gem. That kind of breach is called 'blameworthy breach'. That is because from the Buddhist point of view it is blameworthy. It is said that it brings undesirable results.

The **blameless breach of refuge** comes when a person dies. When that blameless breach occurs, there are no results because death itself is a result of *kamma* in the past. Since it is a result, it has no ability to give results or bring any undesirable results or desirable results also.

At Buddhist funeral services the monks conduct the services. Then what lay people do first at these services is take

refuge and precepts. Then they may make some offerings. And then they share merits with the one who has passed away.

In Burma that service is called something like 'giving refuge' or 'having someone take refuge'. Many people think it is making that dead body take refuge. Actually dead body is dead body. It is like a log, so it does not know anything at all. But I think the idea behind it is that a person dies and he is reborn in another existence. When he is reborn in another existence, he has no refuge in that new life. Those who are left behind want him to take refuge or to have refuge in his new existence. Therefore, they invite him to take refuge along with them, to take refuge in the Triple Gem following the lead of the monk. These services, Buddhist funeral services, are to help those who have departed. In one sense, especially in Burma, it is having them take refuge in their next life so that they are persons who have refuge in the Three Gems. The Burmese call this '**putting him on refuge**' or something like that.

There is **no breach of supramundane refuge** because that is the refuge of the enlightened ones. It is explained in the Commentaries that even in another life a Noble Disciple does not point to some other teacher. Suppose a *Sotāpanna* dies here and he is reborn as a human being in another place. Even though he may be reborn of parents of another religion, he will not lose his refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. That means he will be a Buddhist even though he is born to non-Buddhist parents. There is no breach of supramundane refuge even in other lives. But the refuge of a *puthujjana* can be broken even when he is living and surely at the time of his death.

In the beginning I said taking refuge is the first act we do as Buddhists. If a person wants to become a Buddhist, what

must he do? Just take refuge in the Three Gems. By taking refuge in the Three Gems he declares himself to be a disciple of the Buddha or in modern times he declares himself to be a Buddhist.

As Buddhists we take refuge every day and it is a good act. But before he passed away, Buddha advised his disciples: "**Be like islands unto yourselves. Be a refuge to yourself. Do not have any other as refuge.**" We have two statements. It is good to take refuge in the Three Gems and the Buddha said: "Do not take any other as refuge; take yourself as your own refuge."

When we take refuge in the Three Gems, we regard them as our guides, as our spiritual teachers. That does not mean that we rely on them totally for our deliverance from suffering. When the Buddha said, "Do not have any other as refuge", that means rely on your own self for your deliverance. Do not rely on any other person for your own deliverance because that is an impossible thing. Therefore, it is right to say that we take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha and also it is right to say we do not take any other for refuge, we just take ourselves for refuge.

The Buddha continued his explanation that 'taking oneself as refuge' means actually what? It means Taking Dhamma as refuge. '**Taking Dhamma as refuge' means the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness**. When Buddha says to take yourself as refuge, that means the practice of mindfulness, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. These two statements are not in contradiction with each other.

To express our confidence in the Triple Gem we will take refuge every day. And to follow the advice of the Buddha

that we have ourselves as refuge, we will practice the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. **When you are practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, when you are practicing *Vipassanā* meditation, then you are following the advice of the Buddha and you are taking yourself as refuge.** We take refuge in the Three Gems. We regard the Three Gems as our infallible spiritual guides and we practice the Four Foundations of Mindfulness to follow the advice that we should have ourselves as refuge.

By taking refuge in the Three Gems and by taking refuge in ourselves, we hope to be able to reach the final goal of all Buddhists. That (goal) is total purification of mind and realization of Nibbāna.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

* * *

Today is the second part of the spiritual path. The first thing a follower of the Buddha does is to take precepts. When one takes precepts, he becomes a follower of the Buddha or he becomes a Buddhist. A person who follows the Buddha simply takes refuge in the Buddha, in the Dhamma, in the Saṅgha. When a person takes refuge in the Three Gems, he becomes an *upāsaka*. If he is a man, he becomes an *upāsaka* and if she is a woman, she is called *upāsikā*. An *upāsaka* or an *upāsikā* has something to follow or to practice. As a follower of the Buddha, a person who takes refuge in the Three Gems is expected to practice the teachings of the Buddha.

Buddha gave his followers a way of practice based on three stages — **morality or *sīla*, concentration or *samādhi*, and wisdom or *paññā*.** These three steps are to be taken one by one and they cannot be skipped. One must take the first step first and then second step, and third step.

The first step in this spiritual path to the eradication of mental defilements is *sīla* (moral conduct or virtue). So an *upāsaka* or an *upāsikā* is expected to possess pure *sīla* or pure moral conduct. Once the Buddha said: "By how much is an *upāsaka* virtuous? Or by how much does an *upāsaka* become morally disciplined?" Buddha said: "When an *upāsaka* abstains from destruction of life, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech and from taking intoxicants, by this much is an *upāsaka* virtuous or an *upāsaka* becomes a morally clean person." So an *upāsaka* or an *upāsikā* is expected to keep these five precepts.

Before we understand the **Five Precepts** first we must understand what *sīla* means. ***Sīla*** is translated as moral conduct or virtue. We should understand how the word is defined in the ancient commentaries. *Sīla* is defined as non-diffusion of bodily actions etc. When people break these rules, when people kill, steal and so on, the bodily actions and the verbal actions are said to be scattered. *Sīla* keeps these actions, bodily actions and verbal actions, together or coordinated. So they are not scattered when a person keeps *sīla* and abstains from killing living beings and others. So *sīla* is defined as non-diffusion or non-scattering of bodily actions, etc.

Sīla is also defined as a basis or a receptacle. (It is) a basis for what? (It is) a receptacle for what? It is a basis or a receptacle for wholesome states (*kusala dhamma*). So long as we keep *sīla*, we are holding the wholesome states in our minds. *Sīla* is like a

receptacle of wholesome states. The moment we break our *sīla*, we lose our wholesome states. So *sīla* is defined as a basis or receptacle for wholesome states.

What is the function of *sīla*? The function of *sīla* is described as to destroy unvirtuousness or to destroy misconduct. When a person keeps *sīla*, he is destroying, or actually avoiding unvirtuousness, or avoiding misconduct. So 'to destroy' means to avoid, not to let unvirtuousness or misconduct happen. So the function of *sīla* is to destroy or to do away with misconduct or unvirtuousness.

We can describe it in another way. The function of *sīla* is to restrain or to control bodily and verbal action. So long as we keep *sīla*, our bodily actions are controlled and our verbal actions are controlled, our speech is controlled. 'Controlled' means we do not do what is wrong by bodily actions or by speech.

It is important to note here that *sīla* is **the control of bodily and verbal actions, and not of mind**. Mind is involved in the control of bodily actions and verbal actions because without mind you can not control. But what is meant here is that *sīla* is only involved with bodily actions and verbal actions. That means even though you may kill in your mind some living being, so long as you do not kill by your bodily action or by asking someone to kill, your *sīla* is intact. You do not break the precept. By thinking only you are not breaking any precepts.

I hope you remember the three levels of mental defilements. They are the **latent level**, the coming up or coming to the **surface level**, and the **transgression level**. Among the three levels the target of *sīla* is defilements at the transgression level. ***Sīla* is for avoiding, or for destroying, or for getting rid of defilements, mental defilements at the transgression level.**

This *sīla* is described in many ways. For lay people there are different kinds of *sīla* to keep. There are **five precepts**, or **eight *Uposatha* precepts**, or **eight precepts with livelihood as the eighth**, and **ten precepts**.

FIVE PRECEPTS

The first of them are the **five precepts**. You all know the five precepts. Actually you have been keeping these five precepts for many years. These five precepts are intended to be kept by lay people all the time.

These precepts are called the precepts of the people of Kuru country or the weighty or revered practice. In the Jātaka stories there is one Jātaka, Jātaka #276, where eleven people kept the five precepts to the utmost. It is very inspiring to read that story. I am sorry that I can not tell you that story tonight. If you are interested, you may read the Jātaka #276. It is said that in India there is a place called Kuru. It is somewhere around New Delhi in modern India. People of that country kept these five precepts. So the five precepts were known as the precepts of Kuru country. Also since they practiced them with reverence, they practiced them seriously, the five precepts are also called weighty or revered practice.

These five precepts are described as **permanent** *sīla*. That is they are to be kept permanently. Also they are called **natural** *sīla*. They come naturally to all beings.

It is said in Buddhist cosmology that there are four great continents east, south, west and north continents. The inhabitants of the north continent keep these precepts by nature. They do not have to make effort to keep the five precepts. These five

precepts come to them naturally. So the five precepts are called naturally established *sīla* for them. In Burma (Myanmar) there is a saying that you must keep the five precepts like you keep the lower garment always on your body.

These five precepts are never broken by those who have gained enlightenment. **Those who have gained enlightenment (*Sotāpannas, Sakadāgāmīs, Anāgāmīs, Arahants*) never break these five moral precepts even in another life.** Suppose a person becomes a *Sotāpanna* in this life. Then he dies and is reborn as a human being in another existence. Even in that existence, even if he does not know about his being a *Sotāpanna*, he just naturally keeps these five precepts. He will never break any of these precepts. The five precepts are always kept by those who have gained enlightenment. So we can understand that if one is capable of breaking any one of these rules, one is not an enlightened person.

You all know the precepts — **abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying** and **taking intoxicants**. With each precept there are factors, or constituents, or components. That means there are some conditions which the fulfillment of makes one break the precept. That means if you fulfill these conditions then you break this precept. If any one of the factors is missing, then you do not break the precept. They are called factors or constituents, or components. We should understand these factors.

1) ABSTENTION FROM KILLING

The factors of the first precept, abstention from killing, are number one — **a living being**. That means the one that is killed must be a living being. Number two is **one must know**

that it is a living being. If you do not know that it is a living being and you happen to kill it, then you do not break this rule. You must know that this is a living being. The third is the thought of killing. That means the **intention** to kill. Sometimes unintentionally you may kill an insect. Sometimes you may step on an insect without knowing it. In that case you do not break the precept. So 'the thought of killing' means the intention to kill. Then the fourth one is effort. You make an **effort** to kill. So it is the act of killing. The fifth one is the death of that being by that effort. The being must die. If these five conditions are fulfilled, then you break that precept.

In the Commentaries regarding killing and also stealing the means of doing these acts are mentioned. You can kill a living being in how many ways? There are many means to kill a living being. The first one is killing by yourself. In Pāḷi it is called killing with your own hands. That means killing by yourself. The second is killing by command. You give a command to another person to kill. Also there is killing by something you can hold. That means killing by missiles, or arrows, bullets, or guns. That is also killing. There is also killing by stationary things. That means setting traps and others. Then there is killing by magical means, and there is killing by psychic power. There are many ways of killing. All these killings are included in this precept. **If you kill yourself, you break this rule. If you ask someone to kill and that person kills it, then you break the precept and so on.**

2) ABSTENTION FROM TAKING WHAT IS NOT GIVEN

For the second precept, abstention from taking what is not freely given by the owner, there are five conditions or five

factors. The first one is **another's property**. The thing must be the property of another person. The second factor is **knowledge** that it is another's property. When a person steals, let us say, when you steal, you must know that it is the property of that person. That means it belongs to another person. The third is the **thought** of stealing. You want to steal. You have the intention to steal. The fourth is that you make the **effort**. The fifth is **taking** the property by that effort. That means the removing of that property or something like that. When these five conditions are fulfilled, then the second precept is broken. Here also there is stealing by oneself and giving command to another to steal. Both are also involved here.

3) ABSTENTION FROM SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

The third precept is abstention from sexual misconduct. There are four factors. The first is the **forbidden object**. That means the inviolable person. 'Inviolable person' means the person with whom you must not have sex. Such a person is called the forbidden object. Then the second factor is the **thought** of enjoying it. You want to enjoy this relation. The third is the **effort** to enjoy. You make the effort. The fourth is tolerating the engaging of one organ with another, **tolerance of sexual union**. These are the four factors. If anybody fulfills these four conditions, then he is said to break this third precept.

4) ABSTENTION FROM LYING

The factors for the fourth precept, abstention from lying, are four. The first one is **untrue situation**. That means that something which you lie about must be untrue. Then next is the **thought** of deceiving. You want other people to

understand wrongly. You have the **intention** to deceive. And then the **effort** caused by that thought. That means accordingly you make an effort. Fourth is the **others understanding of the meaning** and the person understands the meaning immediately after you say the words. When you fulfill these four conditions, you break the fourth precept. Here what is really bad is when the welfare of another person is destroyed.

Sometimes there is what is called **'a white lie'**. Sometimes you have to lie to make other persons feel comfortable. Or sometimes you don't want another person to feel sorry and so on. Then you have to say something that is not true. Although that is a lie, it may not be too bad. Sometimes people use exaggeration, like when a monk gets something in the village. Then he might come back to the monastery and tell other monks: "Oh, there is a river of alms in the village". He might say something like that. **Although it is saying what is not true, it is not bad.**

5) ABSTENTION FROM TAKING INTOXICANTS

The factors of the fifth precept, which is abstention from taking intoxicants, are four. First it is **being one** of the intoxicating drinks such as liquor. That means what you drink must be a kind of alcohol, a kind of liquor. The second one is the **desire** to drink the intoxicating drink. You want to drink. The third is the **effort** caused by that desire. That means following the desire you make an effort to drink. That means you drink. The fourth is the drink **enters one's throat** when drinking. So you drink and the drink goes down your throat.

When these four conditions are fulfilled, then you are said to break the fifth precept.

So we can check our actions with these factors or conditions when we do something that might involve breaking these rules. For example, the fifth one, there are some people who say: "I just drink. I don't do anything. I just go to bed. Do I break that rule? It may not be a big *akusala*." Right? You drink. You may feel a little dizzy. You don't do anything bad. But still you break the rule. Look at the four conditions. It must be liquor. You want to drink, and you drink, and the liquor goes down your throat. When these four things are there, then you break the rule. So although it may not be too bad, still there is the breaking of the precept if you drink.

EIGHT UPOSATHA PRECEPTS

The second kind of *sīla* for lay people is the eight *Uposatha* precepts. These eight *Uposatha* precepts are generally kept on *Uposatha* days. In our countries (I don't know whether it is true in Vietnam) the month is divided into two halves, the bright half and the dark half. On the eighth of the bright half and dark half and on the full moon day and the new moon day people keep eight *Uposatha* precepts. Generally speaking, *Uposatha* precepts are kept four times a month.

You are very familiar with these eight precepts. You are going to take them tomorrow. Among the eight precepts the first is the same as that in five precepts. The second is also the same as that in five precepts. But the third is different. In five precepts the third is the abstention from sexual misconduct. Here the third is

abstention from sex altogether. That is the difference here. The fourth is the same as the fourth in five precepts. And the fifth also is the same as in five precepts. The sixth is abstention from eating at the wrong time. The wrong time is after mid-day. During the time of the Buddha it is supposed to be wrong for recluses to eat in the afternoon. So the afternoon for recluses, for monks is the wrong time for eating. Then number seven is abstention from dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, witnessing shows that are like spikes. When you watch shows, you get *akusala*. They are described as (being) similar to spikes, or spears, or something. Then 'wearing garlands' means not just garlands, but using flowers, embellishing oneself with scents. Actually you have a place something like a hole. (I think Sayādaw was referring to the hole in the ears for earrings, which are an adornment and unacceptable with eight precepts) Then there is making up, beautifying oneself with unguents, using perfumes and using all those things. You are to abstain from all these things. The eighth is abstention from high and luxurious seats and beds. 'High' means more than one and a half cubits high. That means about two feet. 'Luxurious' means very luxurious, those used by people who enjoy sensual pleasures. These eight precepts are kept only occasionally and not always. That is because as lay people having a family, people can not keep these eight precepts always. So they are kept only on *Uposatha* days.

Now as a lay person if he or she keeps five precepts, then his or her moral conduct is said to be pure. Such a person is praiseworthy. Let me say 'he'. If he can keep eight precepts, it is much better, but you know eight precepts cannot be kept always. When you take eight precepts and keep them, you get less *akusala*. That is because when you eat there is *akusala* involved.

When you dance or sing, when you use flowers and so on, there is *akusala* involved. When you abstain from these things, you get less *akusala* also. You have more time to devote to the practice. It is better to keep eight precepts than to keep five precepts, but as lay persons if you can keep eight precepts, so much the better.

There is another kind of eight precepts which can be an alternative to the eight *Uposatha* precepts. **As you may know, these precepts do not involve abstention from eating after mid-day. These precepts are called eight precepts with livelihood as the eighth.** So abstention from wrong livelihood is the eighth precept. Then there must be seven above the eighth precept. These eight precepts are called precepts having livelihood as the eighth precept.

These precepts are mentioned in the Commentaries, but they do not give how to take these eight precepts, the formula for taking these precepts. In Burma, the teachers of old have the formula based on the formula for taking five precepts and eight precepts. The first four are the same as the first four of the five precepts. Number five is abstention from slander. That means trying to make people divided, trying to break friendship among people by telling one thing to one person and telling another thing to another person. That is called 'slander' here, so abstention from slander. Then the sixth one is abstention from harsh speech, like using abusive words and so on. Then number seven is abstention from frivolous talk, nonsense talk, talk that does not conduce to wholesome states. Number eight is the abstention from wrong livelihood. Here abstention from wrong livelihood is number eight. That is why this set of *sīla* is called eight precepts with livelihood as the eighth member.

There is an easier way to remember these eight precepts. May I ask you, how many misdeeds are done by bodily action? Three, right. How many misdeeds by speech? Four. So you refrain from these three and these four and that is seven. The eighth is abstention from wrong livelihood. So you get the eight precepts.

There is another set. This time there are nine precepts. They are called '**the nine *Uposatha* precepts**' and these precepts are also kept on *Uposatha* days. The nine are the eight *Uposatha* precepts plus **living with mind associated with *mettā* pervaded on all beings**. It is called **nine-limbed *sīla***. Here the first eight are the real precepts. But the ninth, 'living with mind associated with *mettā* pervaded on all beings' means living with the practice of loving-kindness on all beings.

This is actually not a precept because the practice of loving-kindness belongs to *bhāvana* (development of mind) and not to *sīla*. But in order to embellish the eight *Uposatha* precepts people try to put one more thing here, *mettā*, as one more limb for that set of *sīla*. So it is called nine *Uposatha* precepts. When you take these nine *Uposatha* precepts, you should be very careful because you have to say I will live with my mind associated with *mettā* pervaded on all beings. That means you have to **practice loving-kindness all the time**. If you get angry, then you may lose this one factor, this one limb. So there is a kind of dialogue (perhaps debate?) whether nine precepts should be kept or not. These nine precepts are mentioned in the texts themselves, in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, and so they can be kept. Some people say the precept not as, "I will live with my mind associated with *mettā* pervaded on all beings", but instead they say, "I will live with my mind associated with *mettā* pervaded on all beings as much as I can." (Sayādaw laughing) 'or to the best of my ability'.

The last set of precepts that can be kept by lay people is the **ten precepts**. These precepts are very rarely kept because it is very difficult for lay people to live **without handling money** and so on. But some lay people may keep these ten precepts. The first six are the same as the six *Uposatha* precepts. Up through not eating after mid-day the precepts are the same. The seventh in the eight *Uposatha* precepts is divided into two here. So the seventh in the eight *Uposatha* precepts becomes number seven and number eight here in the ten precepts. (Then not using high and luxurious beds, the eighth *Uposatha* precept, becomes number nine here) The last one is the abstention from accepting gold and silver, or handling gold, silver, money and others. These are the ten precepts. Ten precepts can be kept by lay people also, but as I said before, it is rarely kept.

TEN PRECEPTS

These ten precepts are kept by ***sāmaṇeras*** or **novices**. For novices it is a must, compulsory that this set of ten precepts (be kept). But these are not the only precepts they keep. There are many more for them. Many people when they talk about or when they write about novices, they say or write that novices take ten precepts. That is not complete. Novices have to keep 95 precepts or 95 rules. There are these **ten precepts**, and then the **other ten**, and then **75 rules that are in common with monks**. So novices keep 95 precepts and not just ten precepts. You must clearly understand this.

Sometimes they even write that monks keep ten precepts. The precepts monks keep are how many? 227. The ten precepts may be among these 227. But you are not to say monks keep ten precepts. I wish that was true. I would only have to keep ten precepts instead of 227 (Sayādaw laughing).

Now we come to an important point regarding the precepts. That is that we cannot change or modify the precepts. These precepts were taught by the Buddha. If Buddha were alive now, we might be able to argue with him. Since Buddha is no more we cannot change them or we cannot modify them. Or we have no right to change or modify them. So it is very important. You keep them as they are taught in the texts, or you may break them or you may not keep them at all. That's OK. But you cannot change them or you cannot modify them. That is I think is important because nowadays there are people who want to change them. They say: These are laid down 2500 years ago. So these are out of date now and we must change this and that.

People are now talking about the fifth precept, use is not abuse. So use of alcohol may be permissible (they say). Only abuse is to be avoided. But there is no such saying in the texts or in the Commentaries. **If you drink and it goes down the throat, you are breaking the precept whether you use it for the purpose of health or you drink because you want to drink.** The moment you drink and it goes down your throat, you break the rule.

So with these precepts we cannot argue with anybody. We cannot make changes to them. We cannot modify them. If we do not want to, we may not keep them.

When I went to Canada this time, I met a Burmese lady. She told me that when she took precepts she said: "I refrain from killing living beings to the best of my ability." So I told her: "No, this is not a precept. You have already made a provision for breaking it. I will keep it only as much as I can. If I cannot keep it, I will break it. Precepts should not be like that. Whether you can keep it intact or not is one thing. I will keep it as much as I can is another. It shows a weakness of determination, a weakness of

spirit. I don't think the precept is taken when you say 'to the best of my ability'."

OK. We come to livelihood. An *Upāsaka* must follow Right Livelihood. That means he must abstain from wrong livelihood. Buddha taught in the Aṅguttara Nikāya that there are five trades that should not be engaged in by an *Upāsaka*. If you are a lay follower of the Buddha, you should avoid these five kinds of trade. They are trading in **weapons**, trading in **beings**, trading in **meat**, trading in **intoxicants**, trading in **poisons**.

'**Trading in weapons**' means making weapons and selling them. That is the explanation given in the commentary. In the Sub-Commentary a little more is added. Selling weapons after making them oneself (You make them and sell them) or after having others make them (You ask others to make them and you sell them), or obtaining them already made (You get weapons already made and then you sell them), this is trading in weapons.

'**Trading in beings**' means selling human beings. It is selling human beings for slavery and other (things).

'**Trading in meat**' means raising animals and selling them. Here also the Sub-Commentaries said selling them after raising them and having their meat ready. So it is prohibited the Sub-Commentary explains because it involves taking life.

'**Trading intoxicants**' means making intoxicants and selling them. And '**trading in poisons**' means making poisons and selling them. These five kinds of trade are described as wrong livelihood by the Buddha. So they should be avoided. Should we say 'as much as possible'? (Sayādaw laughing).

So a person who takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha is expected to keep five precepts always. Such

a person is expected to keep eight, nine or ten precepts when he or she can. Also they are expected to abstain from livelihood which are described as wrong, here the five kinds of trades. This is *sīla*. **Keeping moral conduct pure is the first step in the spiritual journey.**

Since it is the first step, it is the base, it is the firm foundation on which we will build the structure of concentration and wisdom. Without purity of *sīla*, we cannot hope to get concentration. And without concentration wisdom or the penetration into the nature of things cannot arise. So *sīla* is to be kept pure especially when you practice meditation. When you practice meditation you expect to get concentration. If your moral conduct is not pure, if your *sīla* is not pure you cannot get concentration. That is because when your *sīla* is not pure, you suffer from remorseful feelings. When there is remorse, there can be no peace of mind and so no tranquility. When there is no tranquility, there is no comfort of mind. When there is no comfort of mind, there can be no concentration. *Sīla* or keeping moral conduct pure is an important practice actually for all people, especially for those who follow the teachings of the Buddha and who want to reach the stage where all mental defilements are eradicated. OK.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

10

SAMATHA MEDITATION
The Spiritual Path
(Part II)

e finished the first step in the spiritual path of a follower of the Buddha. The first step in the spiritual path is purity of moral conduct or *sīla*. By keeping *sīla*, by keeping precepts, one is able to control his or her bodily actions and verbal actions. If a person can control his actions, if a person can keep himself from killing living beings and so on, it is a great achievement. But on the spiritual path just to keep precepts is not enough. That is because even though we keep the precepts, in our minds we can have impurities. Sometimes in the mind we may kill some living being or we may do something wrong in the mind. So in order to control our minds we need to go to the next step which is called *samādhi*.

Buddha said that when mind is developed, when mind is cultivated, then it brings happiness. He said: "**No other thing do I know that brings so much happiness as a mind that is developed and that is repeatedly cultivated. Monks, mind when developed and repeatedly cultivated brings happiness.**" This means that if we want to gain happiness, we have to control the mind. We have to develop the mind. We have to repeatedly cultivate the mind.

In order to develop our minds we need to practice *samādhi* or concentration. Now Buddha exhorted monks to develop concentration and he said a monk whose mind is with concentration or whose mind is concentrated knows according to reality, so he knows the things as they are.

How does he know according to reality? He knows that the eye is impermanent. He knows that the visible objects are impermanent. He knows that seeing consciousness is impermanent. He knows that the contact between the eye and the visible objects is impermanent. And he knows that the sensation that arises out of the contact of these is impermanent.

It is important if we want to understand things as they really are, if we want to penetrate into the nature of things, if we want to see things as impermanent and so on, we need to develop *samādhi*.

Before we develop *samādhi* we must first know what *samādhi* is and what its characteristic is and so on. The word *'samādhi'* is translated as concentration. It is defined as wholesome one-pointedness or wholesome unification of mind. The word *'samādhi'* can be divided into two parts, *'sam'* and *'adhi'*. *'Adhi'* means something that puts or that places and *'sam'* here has two meanings. The first meaning is evenly and the second meaning is rightly. So *'samādhi'* means something, some mental state that puts evenly and rightly.

Put what? That puts or that places the *citta* and the *cetasikas* (consciousness and mental factors). Places where? On a single object. So ***'samādhi'* means a mental factor that places or that keeps the consciousness and its concomitants on a single object.**

kinds of meditation we have to develop *samādhi*. In *samatha* meditation *samādhi* is more important. *Samādhi* is predominant.

There are two kind of *Samādhi* in *samatha* meditation, the neighborhood *samādhi* or **neighborhood concentration** and **absorption concentration**. 'Neighborhood concentration' means concentration which is in the neighborhood of *jhāna* concentration. So the neighborhood concentration precedes the *jhāna* concentration. *Jhāna* concentration is a concentration when one gets or when one attains the higher state of consciousness called *jhāna*. *Samādhi* in the *jhāna* state is stronger than *samādhi* in the neighborhood state. Both the neighborhood concentration and the *jhāna* concentration are able to subdue or suppress the five mental hindrances. ***Samatha* meditation can lead you to the attainment of neighborhood concentration and *jhāna* concentration**. After the attainment of *jhāna* you can further practice and attain what are called supernormal kinds of knowledge or *abhiññās*.

In Buddhism *samatha* meditation is taught not just for the sake of attaining neighborhood concentration and *jhāna* concentration. **It is taught in Buddhism so that the two kinds of concentration gained through the *samatha* meditation will be taken as a basis for *Vipassanā* meditation. So there is no such thing as *samatha* for *samatha*'s sake only.** In Buddhism *samatha* is taught as a preliminary or as a basis for *Vipassanā* meditation.

The aim of Buddha's teachings is to get free from mental defilements. In order to get free from mental defilements, one needs to see the true nature of things. One needs to see that things are impermanent and so on. But *samatha* by itself cannot lead you to discovering these characteristics of mind and matter. ***Samatha* by itself cannot lead you to understand the true**

nature of things and so it cannot lead you to the eradication of mental defilements. After you have developed strong *samādhi* by way of *samatha* meditation you can make that *samādhi* or that *jhāna* the object of *Vipassanā*. Then you can practice *Vipassanā* on these objects. You go from one stage of *Vipassanā* to another until you reach the final goal. So *samatha* by itself cannot lead you to the eradication of mental defilements, but it can be very helpful in the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation.

Samatha meditation can be practiced taking many subjects. Actually we say there are 40 subjects of *samatha* meditation. That means you can practice anyone of these 40 kinds of meditation. Please look at the handouts. The first (group of meditation subjects) are called '**ten *kasiṇas***.' The word '*kasiṇa*' is very difficult to translate. So it is best left untranslated and just called *kasiṇa*. '*Kasiṇa*' means orb or whole. That means you put the mind on the whole of the *kasiṇa* object. So it is called *kasiṇa*. There are ten kinds of *kasiṇa* subjects taught in Buddha's teachings. They are **earth *kasiṇa*, water *kasiṇa*, fire *kasiṇa*, air *kasiṇa*,** then **blue *kasiṇa*, yellow *kasiṇa*, red *kasiṇa*, white *kasiṇa*, space *kasiṇa*, and light *kasiṇa***. So the first four are the four elements taught in Buddhism (earth, water, fire and air).

When you practice earth *kasiṇa* and you are successful, then you will get first *upacāra samādhi* (neighborhood concentration). If you go on, then you can get all five *jhāna*s, the first through fifth *jhāna*s. All the ten *kasiṇa*s are the same. By practicing any one of these *kasiṇa*s you can get both kinds of concentration, that is, neighborhood concentration and *jhāna* concentration.

If you want to practice earth *kasiṇa*, you will have to make a *kasiṇa* disk. You use some clay, preferably the color of dawn. So you make a disk about ten inches in diameter. You make it

smooth and clean. Then you put it in front of you, neither too far away from you, nor too close to you. Then you put your mind on the whole of this *kasiṇa* disk. Then you say to yourself, 'earth, earth, earth', thousands and thousands of times. Actually you are memorizing that disk. Sometimes you open your eyes and look at it and say 'earth, earth, earth'. Sometimes you close your eyes. With practice a time will come when you can see the earth disk even when your eyes are closed, as clearly as when your eyes are open. When you have got that sign (we call it 'a sign'), then you may leave the real disk alone and try to let your mind dwell on the image of the *kasiṇa* you have memorized. If you go on contemplating on the mental image of that *kasiṇa*, that image becomes more and more refined.

Formerly, the mental image of the *kasiṇa* disk appeared as the exact replica of the earth disk. If there are some blemishes on the earth disk, then they will appear in the mental image. When you reach the next stage where it is refined, then these blemishes disappear and the mental image becomes as smooth and as clear as the disk of the moon and the sun, and so on.

Then you dwell on it again and again. Then a type of consciousness arises in you. That type of consciousness may have never arisen in you before. That is what we call *jhāna* consciousness. At the moment of *jhāna* consciousness and before reaching *jhāna* consciousness, your concentration is very good and your mind is able to be on the mental image of the *kasiṇa* for a long time. That is when you get *jhāna* through the practice of earth *kasiṇa*.

The other *kasiṇas* also you may want to practice. For water *kasiṇa* you may put some water in a pot. Then you may look at it. Or for fire, you may build a fire and look at the fire through a hole made in a wall or somewhere. For air *kasiṇa* you may look at

the branches of trees moving because of the air. Or you may feel the air that comes through the cracks in the wall or that comes through a window.

The blue *kasiṇa* is a color *kasiṇa*. So you can make a disk or you can paint a circle and fill it with blue color, or yellow color, or red color, or white color. In Burma number 5, *nīla*, is translated as brown, but in other countries it is translated as blue. So for Burmese maybe they will paint brown. I think both are correct. So you can make any color, blue, brown, red, yellow, white. If you want to practice space *kasiṇa*, then you have to look at a space made by a hole or somewhere where there is space. For the light *kasiṇa* you look at a light through holes in the wall and so on. You can take any one of them as the object of your meditation, and practice *samatha* on it, and get the *upcāra samādhi* or the *jhāna samādhi*.

The second group is called '**ten *asubhas***', ten (kinds) of foulness, foulness of the body. By this practice people develop the sense of foulness in the corpses and they also try to see the foulness in the living bodies. There are ten kinds of this foulness meditation depending on the ten stages of decay in a corpse.

This meditation is not possible nowadays simply because we do not see corpses nowadays. During the time of the Buddha the dead bodies were left at the cemetery to decay or to be eaten by dogs and birds. So it was possible to see corpses in different stages of decay. We can practice this kind of meditation by looking at pictures or by just imagining beings (in the various stages of decomposition) in those pictures. Then we must try to develop a sense of foulness in the images, as well as in our living bodies.

By practicing these (different kinds) of foulness of the body meditation one can attain *upacāra samādhi* and the first *jhāna* only. By the practice of this one cannot get second, third, fourth and fifth *jhānas*. One can get only first *jhāna*. That is because the object is so gross that it always needs *vitakka* (initial application of mind) to keep the mind on the object. Only the *jhāna* which is with *vitakka* (initial application of mind) can be obtained in the practice of the foulness meditation.

We can just imagine about the corpses because nowadays we cannot see the corpses. The first one is the **bloated corpse**. That means a corpse that has become swollen. The second one is the **livid corpse**. That means the corpse that has become black and blue. Number three is the **festering corpse**, that is, a corpse that is oozing pus. Number four is a **dismembered corpse**, dismembered by enemies, or whatever, or dismembered in execution and so on. So they are not to be seen nowadays. Number five is an **eaten corpse**, that is, eaten by dogs, jackals, birds, and so on. Number six is scattered in **pieces corpse**. So after being eaten, the parts may be scattered her and there. Number seven is a **mutilated and scattered in pieces corpse.** Again the body is mutilated and the parts and pieces are scattered here and there. Number eight is a **bloody corpse** with the blood oozing out. Number nine is the **worm (maggots) infested corpse**. And number ten is a **skeleton.** I think a skeleton is possible. Or you can at least buy a plastic skeleton and practice foulness meditation. Although it is not a real one, I think it can help. The ten kinds of foulness meditation are for getting rid of attachment to bodies.

The next group is called the '**ten *anussati***', ten kinds of recollection. Number one is recollection of the Buddha. '**Recollection of the Buddha**' means recollection of the qualities

of the Buddha. Traditionally there are nine qualities of the Buddha and you can take any one of them or all nine of them and dwell upon them again and again, developing *samādhi*.

'**Recollection of the Dhamma**' means recollection of the qualities of the Dhamma. And 'recollection of the *Saṅgha*' means the recollection of the qualities of the *Saṅgha*.

Number four is **recollection of morality**. That means recollection of one's own *sīla* which is pure. In order to practice this, first you have to be pure in your moral conduct. Then watching your purity of moral conduct, you say, 'My *sīla* or my moral conduct is pure; there are no breaks in the precepts and so on.'

Recollection of generosity — you do some act of generosity. Then you recollect or contemplate on the generosity you have practiced.

Next is **recollection of the *devas***. That does not mean thinking of the *devas*. That means the recollection of the good qualities in you, like faith, generosity, wisdom, and so on. When you recollect the good qualities in you, you make the *devas* your witnesses or the evidence. That means these *devas* possessed these good qualities, that is, before they became *devas* and these qualities are in me also. In that way first you think of the good qualities in the *devas*. Then you see those same good qualities in you. That is called recollection of the *devas*. It is not actually recollection of the *devas*, but it is the recollection of one's own good qualities, taking *devas* as evidence.

'**Recollection of peace**' means recollection of the peaceful qualities of Nibbāna. It is said that this meditation can be successful, totally successful, only for enlightened persons. But

unenlightened persons can also practice this meditation through hearsay.

Recollection of death, that you all know. That is about death, which is certain, and about life, which is uncertain.

Number nine is **mindfulness occupied with the body.** That means recollection of the 32 parts of the body and trying to see loathsomeness of these parts.

Number ten is **mindfulness of breathing**. That means mindfulness of breathing in and out. This mindfulness of breathing in and out can be *samatha* meditation or *Vipassanā* meditation, depending on how you practice it.

Nowadays when people practice recollection of the Buddha in Burma, they use a rosary (*mala*). There are nine attributes of the Buddha. They say the attributes again and again with the rosary (*mala*). So they may say *Arahaṁ*, putting down one bead, then *Sammāsambuddho*, another bead, *Vijjācaraṇasampanno*, another bead, and so on. The rosary (*mala*) has 108 beads. So to finish one round you say the nine attributes how many times: Twelve times. People use the rosary (*mala*) for that purpose. In the Commentaries there is no mention of the rosary (*mala*) when practicing recollection of the Buddha and so on. So you may or may not use the rosary (*mala*) when you practice recollection of the Buddha and so on.

When you contemplate on the qualities of the Buddha, there is no greed or attachment in your mind. There is no anger in your mind. There is no delusion in your mind. Your mind becomes calm, it calms down and you get what is called *upacāra samādhi* (neighborhood concentration). Although you get neighborhood *samādhi*, you will not get *jhāna* through that meditation. It is

because the qualities of the Buddhas are profound; and also there are so many qualities that mind cannot be concentrated strong enough to get into the state of *jhāna*. So by the recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma, *Saṅgha*, morality, generosity, *devas*, and peace you will get only neighborhood *samādhi* and not *jhāna samādhi*.

Here it is called neighborhood *samādhi* because it resembles the real neighborhood *samādhi*. Since there is no *jhāna* here, it is not the real neighborhood *samādhi*. When you practice number nine, mindfulness of the body, you get both neighborhood *samādhi* and first *jhāna* because it is like the foulness meditation. So you get first *jhāna* there. Mindfulness of breathing can lead to the attainment of both of neighborhood concentration and all (That means first through fifth) *jhāna* concentration.

The next group is the '**four *appanmaññas***' (**the four illimitables**). 'Illimitable' means without limit, limitless. These four are more popularly known as the **Four Brahma Vihāras** (four Divine Abidings). When you practice any one of these, you are living like *Brahmas*. So they are called 'living like *Brahmas*'.

The first one is **loving-kindness** (***mettā***). You all know what loving-kindness is, that is, the desire for the well-being of all beings. **Compassion** (***karuṇā***) is the next one. 'Compassion' here means the desire to remove the suffering of all beings. Number three is **appreciative joy** (***muditā***). That means when other people are in happiness, other people are prosperous, other people are successful, you are happy. The last one is **equanimity** (***upekkhā***). Number four is the most sublime of these four. So when you practice equanimity, you do not feel loving-kindness, compassion or appreciative joy. You become neutral. You are not moved by either pleasant or unpleasant objects, or by either suffering or happiness.

These four are called 'illimitables' or 'limitless ones' because the object of these four, that is, beings must be without limit. That means when you practice loving-kindness meditation, you have to pervade all beings with thoughts of loving-kindness. And with compassion also you have to wish all beings in distress to be free from suffering. And number three you have to be happy for all beings who are in prosperity and success. For equanimity also you are to be neutral toward all beings. So these four kinds of meditation take beings as the object and the beings they take must be all beings without limit. That is why they are called 'limitless ones'.

When we practice loving-kindness meditation, first we begin with ourselves. Then we send thoughts to our teachers, to our parents and so on. Until we reach all beings there is a limit. When we say, "May my teachers be well, happy and peaceful", we are limiting to teachers and so on. That is why we do not stop there, but we go on until we reach all beings. So when you practice loving-kindness meditation, your mind must go to all beings without exception. The same is true for compassion and so on.

The practice of loving-kindness can lead you to the attainment of neighborhood concentration and the first through fourth *jhānas*. Compassion is the same. Appreciative joy is the same. And equanimity will lead you to neighborhood concentration and fifth *jhāna* concentration.

When you practice loving-kindness meditation, you say to yourself: May all beings be well, happy and peaceful. Then what do you say when you practice compassion? The object of compassion is beings who are suffering. So when you practice compassion, you say: May all beings get free from this suffering, may all beings get free from suffering. Then what about number

three, appreciative joy or sympathetic joy? Sympathetic joy takes beings in prosperity or beings in success as object. So you take them as object and say: May they not fall away from this prosperity; may they not fall away from this happiness. The fourth one, equanimity — when you want to practice equanimity, what do you say? In Pāḷi you say: '*kammassaka*' (Beings have *kamma* as their own property). That means you may do what you can for beings, but if you cannot do any more, then you have to accept it. You say: "Oh, beings have *kamma* as their property and they suffer or they enjoy according to their own *kamma*." There is no way of interfering with *kamma*.

The next group is only one and that is the one perception, **perception of loathsomeness in food**. When Buddha thought of teaching beings, first he was dissuaded (inclined) not to teach because his teachings were described as going upstream. So here this practice is to develop the perception of loathsomeness in food. Nobody would like this meditation. So when you go to a restaurant, don't say: "Enjoy your food." (Sayādaw laughing). They want you to enjoy. One time I was at a retreat. And my attendant (He was an American) would say, "Enjoy the food." But here Buddha said: "Don't enjoy the food." You must develop (the perception) of loathsomeness in food. That is to get rid of attachment to food.

The (perception) of loathsomeness in food can be developed in many ways. For example, how you have to make effort to obtain or get the food. For lay people, may be you have to cook. In cooking you have to suffer. For monks, you have to go to the village and go round the village accepting a little food at different houses. You have to look here and there to avoid stray dogs, horses, oxen, and so on. Also when you eat, the food mixes

with saliva in your mouth it becomes — if you could take some food which you have chewed outside, you would not want to put it again into your mouth. (Sayādaw laughing). So there is loathsomeness at that time. But when you do not look at it in your mouth, it's OK. You can swallow it. Once you take it out, you will not want to even see it. So loathsomeness in food should be developed that way, but not so much, that you throw up. It is a kind of meditation that helps you not to be attached to your food.

What concentration can you get from this meditation? You can get only neighborhood concentration. You cannot get *jhāna* concentration. That is because concentration cannot become strong enough to reach the stage of *jhāna*. You have to be thinking of the different aspects of loathsomeness of food. So your mind cannot be strongly concentrated. So it cannot reach the stage of *jhāna*.

The next one is the one analysis. That means **analysis into the four elements**. In this meditation you can take the different part of the body like head hair, body hair and then define them as this is earth element, this is water element, and so on. There are 32 parts on the body. Twenty are said to belong to earth element and twelve belong to water element.

First you must understand the four elements. Then you try to understand that some characteristic is earth element and so on. For example, you feel the hardness somewhere here and there. Then you define that hardness as earth element. Then you feel the cohesiveness or wetness and you define it as water element and so on. So you try to see the elements everywhere, your body included. And so you lose the sense of compactness. It can help you to see the *anatta* nature of things also.

By this meditation also you can get neighborhood concentration and not *jhāna* concentration. That is because to understand the four elements is not easy. It is difficult. They are profound, so *samādhi* cannot become strong enough to reach the state of *jhāna*.

The last group is the **four immaterial states**. It is impossible to understand the immaterial states without the study of Abhidhamma. So you have to study Abhidhamma to understand the immaterial states. These are a kind of *jhāna*. This type of meditation leads to the attainment of what are called 'immaterial *jhānas*'. The yogis have to transcend the material states and concentrate on infinite space and so on. It is difficult to understand for those who are not initiated into Abhidhamma. I put them here because they are included in the forty subjects of *samatha* meditation.

These are the 40 subjects of *samatha* meditation. If you want to practice *samatha* meditation, you may practice any one of them or a number them.

From among the forty subjects Buddha recommended four, to the monks, to practice, and to regard them as protections. These are called protections for monks, protection. against mental defilements. **These four are recollection of the Buddha, recollection of death, loving kindness and the ten foulness meditations.**

According to the Commentaries these 40 subjects of *samatha* meditation were to be found in other teachings and at other times also. They are not like *Vipassanā* meditation, *Vipassanā* meditation is found only during the time of the Buddha or *Vipassanā*, meditation can only be taught by the Buddha.

Samatha meditation was taught by other teachers also. And so it is common to other teachings and to other religions as well.

Although our emphasis should be on *Vipassanā* meditation, we are not to say that *samatha* meditation is nothing. *Samatha* meditation has its own place on the spiritual path. Also it has its value. That is why Buddha taught *samatha* meditation also.

The only thing we have to keep in mind is that we are not to be satisfied with the practice of *samatha* meditation only. We must practice *samatha* meditation whenever we can, but we must go to *Vipassanā* so that we can get rid of mental defilements. The aim of all Buddhists is to get rid of mental defilements. Since it can be achieved only through *Vipassanā* meditation, *Vipassanā* meditation becomes the top priority among the practices. But it does not mean that we must exclude *samatha* meditation from our practice. So if you can, you should practice some *samatha* also.

You may want to know more about *samatha* meditation. If you want to know more about *samatha* meditation, I must refer you to the Visuddhimagga. Visuddhimagga is a book of about 800 pages. *Samatha* meditation may take more than half of the book. So if you are interested in understanding more about *samatha* meditation, you pick up the Visuddhimagga and read it. OK.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

11

VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION

The Spiritual Path

(Part III)

We have been talking about the spiritual path in Buddhism. The first is taking refuge, then the practice of *sīla* or moral purity, and then practice of *samādhi* or concentration, that is, the practice of *samatha* meditation. Today we come to the next stage or the next step in the spiritual path. **This is the path of wisdom.**

Samādhi or concentration is good to develop, but *samādhi* alone is not enough to gain enlightenment. In order to gain enlightenment, in order to make an end of suffering, we must practice what is called '*paññā*' or 'wisdom'. **In order to practice wisdom we practice *Vipassanā* meditation.**

You have been practicing *Vipassanā* meditation for many years. So you know how to practice, but tonight I will talk about theoretical *Vipassanā*, *Vipassanā* in theory. As it is a course on fundamentals of Buddhism, I have to include *Vipassanā* in this course. Actually since you have been practicing *Vipassanā*, you don't need to be told about *Vipassanā*.

First let us look at the meaning of the word '*Vipassanā*'. The word '*Vipassanā*' is translated in English as insight meditation. It is translated as insight meditation probably because *Vipassanā* meditation gives insight into the true nature of mind and matter.

But the literal meaning of *Vipassanā* is a little different. You should know the literal meaning also. The literal meaning of the word '*Vipassanā*' is seeing in many ways. The word '*Vipassanā*' is composed of '*vi*' and '*passana*', so two parts. '*Vi*' is a prefix with many meanings; here it means in many ways. '*Passana*' is a verbal noun meaning seeing. '*Vipassanā*' means seeing in many ways. Here 'in many ways' means seeing mind and matter, or seeing the five aggregates, or seeing the conditioned phenomena as impermanent, suffering and not soul. So as the name implies, when you practice *Vipassanā*, you must see the **impermanent**, **suffering** and **not soul nature of the object** you observe. Only when you see these three characteristics, can you say truly that you are practicing *Vipassanā* meditation.

Vipassanā meditation was discovered by the Buddha and taught by him to all beings. You know he was practicing austerities in the forest for almost six years. Towards the end of the six years he was still far away from his goal. So he reviewed his practice and he came to the conclusion that that practice was wrong. **Then he discovered the Middle Way, which is the practice of *Vipassanā*.** He practiced it and he got the best results of that practice, that is, he became the Buddha. For 45 years after his enlightenment as the Buddha, he taught many things and he taught *Vipassanā* or *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation many times.

So *Vipassanā* can be understood and can be practiced only when there is a Buddha in the world or when his teachings are still available in the world. Whether during the dispensation of the Buddha or not, people can practice *samatha* meditation, but only during the dispensation of the Buddha can people practiced *Vipassanā* meditation. ***Vipassanā* meditation only can lead to**

the penetration of the true nature of mind and matter and to the realization of the Four Noble Truths.

During the time of the Buddha and also about a thousand years after his death *Vipassanā* seemed to be practiced by many people. After about a thousand years after the death of the Buddha until recently (I mean until the turn of the 20th century.) *Vipassanā* seemed to have fallen into disuse. That is because in the Commentaries, which were written about a thousand years after the death of the Buddha, we find accounts of people practicing meditation and getting enlightenment. Later, after that, the instances of people practicing meditation and getting enlightenment became rare. So Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw said that the practice of *Vipassanā* fell into disuse or not many people practiced *Vipassanā* after about a thousand years after the death of the Buddha, until recently. It does not mean that there were no persons who practiced *Vipassanā* during that time, but it was very rare and very difficult to find a person who practiced *Vipassanā* meditation. *Vipassanā* meditation was thought to be only for monks and even only for monks who lived in the forest. So city monks usually did not practice *Vipassanā.*

In the ancient records we find occasional occurrences of those who are supposed to be *Arahants*. If they were truly *Arahants*, then they must have practiced *Vipassanā* meditation. So although there were very few who practiced *Vipassanā* meditation, it was not dead. Those who practiced *Vipassanā* meditation in those days just practiced for themselves and they did not teach *Vipassanā* to many people. They taught only to their close pupils or their close friends. So very few people got the opportunity to understand how to practice and then to practice *Vipassanā* meditation

About 100 years ago there were Sayādaws in Burma who tried to revive the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation. The systematic practice of *Vipassanā*, as we do now here, I think, began with a Sayādaw who was known as Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw. From his biography we learn that Sayādaw wanted to practice *Vipassanā* meditation, but he did not know how to. So he was searching for a teacher who could teach him *Vipassanā* meditation. Fortunately he met one Sayādaw in the place called Mingun. It is across the river from Mandalay. That Sayādaw who lived in Mingun was a student of another Sayādaw who was reputed or who was renowned as an *Arahant*. According to the verbal records, that first Sayādaw could be a Non-Returner because it is said there was a meeting of many Sayādaws at one time. The other Sayādaws asked that Sayādaw to give a Dhamma talk to them about the practice. And so he said: "I will give you a Dhamma talk as far as my practice goes, or something like this." Then he talked about the practice of meditation up until the third stage of enlightenment. If that record is to be relied upon then that Sayādaw was an *Anāgāmi* (a Non Returner). That Sayādaw did not have many pupils because he lived in the forest and not many monks could live there. That Sayādaw who lived in Mingun was the student of that first Sayādaw. So he knew how to practice, and he practiced, and maybe he was also an enlightened person. So Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw met that Sayādaw and requested that Sayādaw to teach him or to explain to him the practice of meditation. But that Sayādaw did not teach him in detail. He just said: There is a discourse the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, and there are Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries. You just go and study this discourse and the Commentaries.

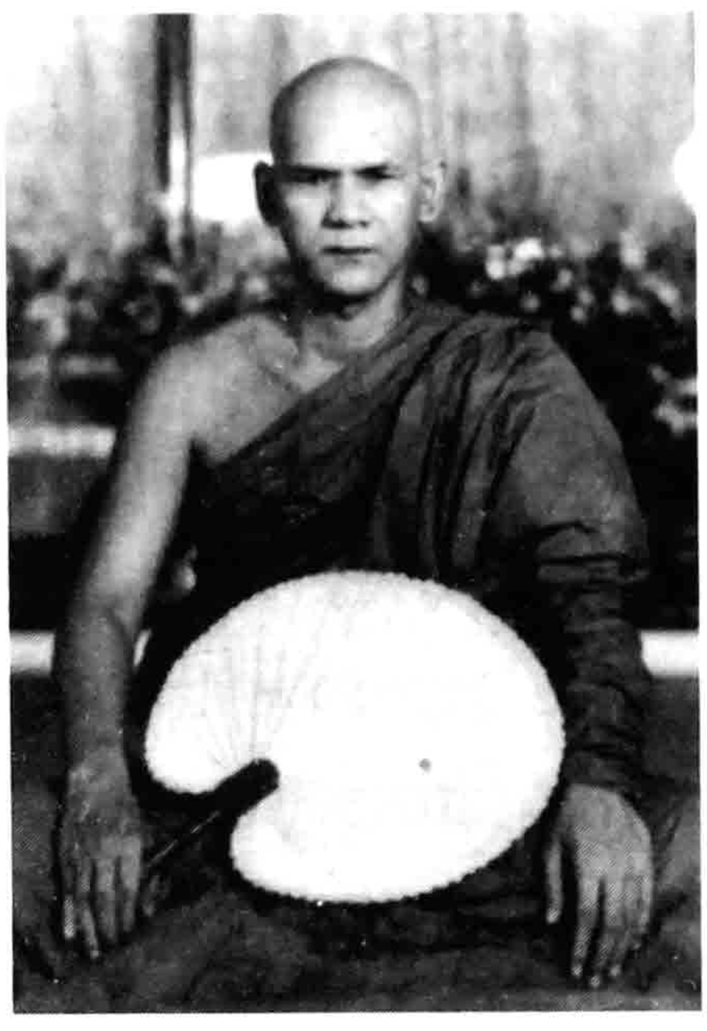
So Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw studied the discourse along with the Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries. It is said that he came to know how to practice. So he practiced. Maybe he got some instruction from that Sayādaw. We don't know. So he practiced and it is said that he was able to reach some kind of stage and that he was satisfied with his practice. That happened about 1908. So it was just at the turn of the 20th century.

After he got satisfaction with his practice, he wanted to teach other people how to practice meditation. So he began giving Dhamma talks at Mingun, but nobody wanted to listen to him. His talks were so strange in those days that people just criticized him and made fun of him. For example, he talked of knowing 'when I am going I know I am going' or 'when I am sitting, I know I am sitting'. They made fun of him (saying), we also know we are going when we are going. We also know, when I am killing a fish, I am killing a fish and so on. So nobody wanted to hear him. He went back to his native village because he thought that people in his native village, his relatives and others, would want to listen to him. So he went back to his native village and again gave Dhamma talks and nobody wanted to listen to him. The same ridicule he got.

After about 2 years he went back to Mingun. And again he was persevering. He again gave talks. At that time a couple from Mandalay listened to him. They were interested and they wanted to practice meditation under his guidance. So they practiced following his instructions and they also got satisfaction with their practice. So little by little the number of meditators increased. Later he was able to establish a meditation center in one town. That was in 1911. From that time on in many towns meditation centers were established.



Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw



Mahāsi Sayādaw



Mahāsi Yeiktha, Yangon (Rangoon)

Ultimately in 1914 he went to lower Burma to the city of Thaton and established a monastery, giving it the same name, Mingun Jetavan Monastery there. That is why he was known as Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw. Many people came to him to practice meditation. So his fame spread far and wide. He had students or pupils who practiced with him, and then who later on carried on his practice of *Vipassanā* meditation. Many people, both monks and laymen, went to him to practice meditation. Many of his students became meditation teachers in his tradition.

One of his pupils Sayādaw, U Visuddha by name, established a center in Rangoon and began teaching *Vipassanā* in Mingun tradition. That center is still in existence in Rangoon not far from Shwe Dagon Pagoda.

In 1932 another student monk went to Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw and practiced meditation under his guidance. That student monk practiced about four months with him and then he had to go back to his monastery. That student was the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw. So Mahāsi Sayādaw after practicing *Vipassanā* under the guidance of Jetavan Sayādaw began to teach *Vipassanā* in 1938. He went back to his native village and gave Dhamma talks. There were people who wanted to practice meditation, including his cousins. So he first taught *Vipassanā* in 1938. Then he went back and forth between the city of Thaton and his native place which is in upper Burma. In 1949 he was invited to Rangoon by Mahāsi Yeiktha, Rangoon Meditation Center, to teach *Vipassanā* meditation there. Ever since that time Mahāsi Sayādaw lived in the meditation center in Rangoon until his death in 1982.

Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw was very successful with spreading *Vipassanā* meditation. One reason why he was so successful was because he was supported by the then Prime Minister of Burma,

U Nu. When the Prime Minister went to the center to practice meditation, many people went along with him. So he was very successful in spreading *Vipassanā* meditation not only in Burma but also abroad. Mahāsi Sayādaw had among his students those that were conversant in English language. So his talks and some of his books were translated into English and distributed abroad. People in other countries also got to know about Mahāsi Sayādaw's teachings and his method of *Vipassanā* meditation. In Burma also there were put up many meditation centers. And thousands and thousands of people have practiced *Vipassanā* meditation in those centers. Also in Thailand and in Sri Lanka meditation centers were established and many people practiced meditation there too.

Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw was not the only meditation teacher in Burma. There were many other Sayādaws who taught *Vipassanā* meditation. Although all these Sayādaws taught *Vipassanā* meditation, their techniques differ from one another in some respects. Generally every Sayādaw who taught *Vipassanā* meditation based their practice on the teachings contained in the Discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw was invited to the United States to lead retreats, and to teach, and to give talks on *Vipassanā* meditation by Insight Meditation Society in 1979. So Sayādaw visited this country and led retreats in different places. When he left, he left me behind to carry on his *Vipassanā* propagation work. Later (now) you have other Sayādaws teaching *Vipassanā* meditation in the tradition of Mahāsi Sayādaw, such as Sayādaw U Paṇḍita, Sayādaw U Kuṇḍala and also Sayādaw U Dhammapiya here. Also in New York there is Sayādaw U Indaka. So these students of Mahāsi Sayādaw are now spreading the practice of *Vipassanā* in this country. OK.

Now we come to the real *Vipassanā*. Please look at the chart. The practice of *Vipassanā* is divided into **seven stages of purity.** In Pāḷi they are called '***visuddhi***'. A yogi has to go through these seven stages of purity one by one. There is no skipping of any (stage of) purity. You have to go from the beginning up to the top.

During those stages a *Vipassanā* practitioner experiences different kinds of knowledge or understanding. Different kinds of *Vipassanā* knowledge arise in the mind of the yogi as he or she goes along these seven stages pf purity.

The first stage is called '**Purity of Virtue**'. During this stage you do not yet practice *Vipassanā*. You try to purify your moral conduct. That is because purity of moral conduct is a firm basis on which we build the structure of concentration and wisdom. Without moral purity you cannot hope to get concentration. And if you cannot get concentration, you do not get the penetration into the nature of things. So the purity of virtue or the purity of moral conduct is an important step to achieve if you are to practice *Vipassanā* meditation.

In the middle column we see keeping *Pāṭimokkha* Precepts and so on. Number 1-4 are the kinds of *sīla* or virtue practiced by monks only. This chart is based on the Visuddhimagga, which was written by a monk for monks. So he did not included *sīla* for lay people. *Sīla* for lay people is not treated in that book. So number five (five, eight and ten precepts) are just put in by me. Lay people may keep five precepts, or eight precepts or ten precepts. So the minimum requirement is that you keep five precepts. But if you keep eight precepts, you get more *kusala* or more merit. You get more time to devote to the practice of meditation. So keeping eight precepts is better than keeping five precepts. And if you

can do away with handling money, you may take ten precepts. This may be very difficult nowadays. So you may take and keep five precepts, or eight precepts, or ten precepts to purify your moral conduct.

So the first stage is like making preparation for the practice of meditation. The second stage of purity is called '**Purity of Mind**'. 'Purity of Mind' really means concentration. So access concentration and absorption concentration are said to be Purity of Mind or Purity of Mind is said to consist of access concentration and absorption concentration.

A person gets access concentration and absorption concentration when he practices *samatha* meditation. He practices one of the (subjects of) *samatha* meditation and he gets access concentration and absorption concentration. So in the Commentaries Purity of Mind is described as access concentration and absorption concentration.

We are not into *Vipassanā* yet. **Access concentration is also called neighborhood concentration. And absorption concentration is called *jhāna* concentration.** The first is called neighborhood concentration because it is in the neighborhood of *jhāna* concentration. These two kinds of concentration are for those who practice *samatha* meditation first and then who will change over to *Vipassanā* meditation.

There are those who do not practice *samatha* meditation, who do not begin their meditation practice with *samatha* meditation, but who practice *Vipassanā* meditation right away. For those people 'Purity of Mind' means the third one, momentary concentration. **Momentary concentration is similar to access concentration.** When a person gets access concentration, he

can keep his mind on the meditation object firmly. There will be no mental hindrances in his mind. So access concentration can subdue or keep away the mental hindrances and it can keep the mind on the meditation object firmly. In the same way momentary concentration can keep the mind on the object, and also it can keep the mental hindrances away from the mind. Therefore, momentary concentration is actually a counterpart or is similar to access concentration. The only difference between access concentration and momentary concentration is that for access concentration there is only one kind of object, but for momentary concentration there can be many objects. **The objects may differ at different moments for momentary concentration, but for access concentration the object is the same kind all through.**

In the Commentaries and also in some sub-commentaries access concentration and absorption concentration only are said to be Purity of Mind, but in one sub-commentary to Majjhima Nikāya, the momentary concentration is explained as essential to *Vipassanā* meditation. That means if you do not get momentary concentration, your practice of *Vipassanā* will not be successful. So Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw explains that for those who practice pure *Vipassanā*, for those who do not practice *samatha* meditation but practice pure *Vipassanā*, 'Purity of Mind' means momentary concentration. **So when a person who practices *Vipassanā* gets momentary concentration, he is said to have achieved the second stage of purity, Purity of Mind.**

So during practice when your mind is on the meditation object only and it does not wander, then you are said to have obtained momentary concentration. When you get momentary concentration, you begin to see the objects clearly. You begin to see or to distinguish objects as this is mind, this is matter. Also

you begin to see the characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause of the objects. So when you see the objects clearly, when you can distinguish that this is *nāma*, this is *rūpa*. (This is mind, this is matter); and when you see the characteristics and others clearly, then you are said to have achieved **Purity of View**. 'Purity of View' means when you watch the objects, you just see that there is just the object and there is the mind that takes that object. So there are only just these two things arising and disappearing. And there is nothing in addition to these two things which you can call a self, or soul, or an *attā*.

When you reach this stage, you are able to **abandon the wrong view that there is an *attā***, or there is a self, or soul, and so on distinct from or in addiction to mind and matter. So at that stage you are said to gain the **Knowledge of defining mind and matter** (***nāma-rūpa***).

After seeing mind and matter clearly and distinctly, you see the causes of mind and matter. You see that something is the cause of mind or something is the cause of matter. At this stage you are able to overcome doubts — doubts about whether you have been before, or whether you will be in the future, and also doubts about Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, and the practice. At this stage you are said to gain the **Knowledge of Discerning Causes.** 'Causes' means sometimes the real causes and sometimes the conditions. So at this stage you see the conditionality of things. Because there is something to be seen there is the seeing consciousness. Because there is something to be noted there is noting consciousness and so on. You see this clearly at this stage.

When a yogi has reached this stage, **Purity of Overcoming Doubts**, he is called a ***Cūḷa-Sotāpanna***. He is a Lesser Stream

Entrant. That means he is not a real *Sotāpanna*, but he becomes like a *Sotāpanna*. A *Sotāpanna* will not be reborn in the four woeful states in his future births. This yogi, a *Cūḷa-Sotāpanna*, will not be reborn in four woeful states in his next rebirth if he does not fall away from this stage. If he falls away from this stage before his death, then his rebirth is not assured. He may be reborn in the four woeful states. If he does not fall away from this stage until his death, he will not be reborn in the four woeful states. So he is like a *Sotāpanna*. He is called a *Cūḷa-Sotāpanna*, a little *Sotāpanna* or lesser *Sotāpanna*.

After discerning the causes of mind and matter a yogi practices the comprehension of the three characteristics. At this stage he takes objects as a group and then contemplates on them as impermanent, suffering, and not soul. This stage is called '**Purity of Knowledge**' and '**Vision of Path and Not Path**'. At this stage he gains the **Knowledge of Comprehension**. At this stage he dwells on many objects and tries to see these objects as impermanent, suffering, and not soul. After comprehending these three characteristics of mind and matter, he comes to see the arising and disappearing of mind and matter or the arising and disappearing of objects. Here he sees the arising and disappearing of individual objects. He does not take a group objects, but he takes each individual object at the moment and he sees that the object arises and disappears. When he sees the arising and disappearing of mind and matter, his concentration becomes strong. When his concentration becomes strong or stronger, he begins to experience what are called impediments of *Vipassanā*. So he may experience light. He may experience joy or *pīti*. He experiences tranquility. He experiences a strong confidence or strong faith. His effort is strong. He experiences

sukha (happiness). His understanding is very sharp at this moment. His mindfulness is very firm. And he doesn't have to make much effort to be mindful of the objects. Last there is the attachment to these impediments. When these impediments arise, he is pleased with these impediments. He likes them and he wants to hold onto them. So there is attachment to these also.

These ten states are called **Impediments of *Vipassanā*** because when a yogi experiences these impediments, he thinks he has reached his goal. He thinks that it is the end of his practice. So he stops there and he does not go any further. When he does not go any further, and this is not the end of his journey and it is just some side effects he experiences during the practice, so when he stops there, his progress is blocked. That is why these are called 'Impediments of *Vipassanā*'. They are not the right path of *Vipassanā*. A person who has no prior knowledge of these may take them to be his goal. But a person who knows about these or who has prior knowledge of these knows that they are not the real goal, and he has to overcome these. Then he will practice further and be able to overcome or transcend these impediments of *Vipassanā*. This stage of knowledge is called 'Purity of Knowledge' and 'Vision of Path and Non-Path'. Simply put, it means understanding which is right and wrong, which is the right path and which is the wrong path.

When these ten impediments arise and a yogi is satisfied with them and attached to them, he is following the wrong path because he will not make any progress after that. So these ten impediments or actually the attachment to these ten impediments is called 'non-path'. And one must understand that these are just impediments, and they are to be transcended and that the practice of mindfulness on these impediments is the right path

is the right way to do. So understanding that which is the right path and that which is not the right path is what is meant by Purity of Knowledge and Vision of Path and Non-Path. So during this stage a yogi is confronted with this problem actually, that is, these ten impediments. If he does not go any further, then his progress will be arrested there. Understanding which (path) is the correct way and which (path) is not the correct way is the name of this stage of purity.

After transcending the impediments he again sees the arising and disappearing of mind and matter. At this stage his seeing is clearer. His understanding is stronger. Now you may have noticed first he sees the arising and disappearing of mind and matter. Then he encounters the ten impediments. Then he makes effort to transcend the ten impediments. So he again sees the arising and disappearing of mind and matter. This time his understanding is clearer. So there are two stages of the **Knowledge of Arising and Falling**, weak stage and strong stage. The first stage is the weak stage. At that stage his understanding is not so strong and so the impediments come. And then he transcends the impediments and his understanding becomes stronger. So when his understanding becomes stronger, he sees more clearly the arising and disappearing of objects.

After that knowledge another (kind of) knowledge arises. By that **knowledge he sees the falling or disappearing only**. He does not try to see the arising. So his seeing or understanding is of falling or disappearing only. So at this stage of knowledge whatever objects he observes he sees as disappearing. When he sees just the disappearing of whatever object he keeps his mind on, that object disappears. So when he sees the disappearance of objects he comes to the **knowledge that the objects are fearful.**

They are dangerous because they do not last and they disappear as he observes them.

So after that he comes to a stage where **he finds fault with mind and matter**. When he sees that mind and matter are fearful, then he finds some fault with them. After seeing the fault with them, **he becomes disenchanted**. That means he turns away from mind and matter. He is dispassionate with mind and matter or he becomes wearied with mind and matter. Now he is just seeing the disappearing. So he knows that they are fearful and dangerous, and he finds fault with them. So now he becomes wearied with them.

When he becomes wearied with them, he wants to get free from them. He wants to get free from mind and matter because whatever mind and matter he observes, he sees them disappearing. So he wants to get free from mind and matter. That means he wants to get free from suffering.

The ninth knowledge is called ***Muccitukamyatā-ñāṇa*** in Pāḷi. There are two spellings for this word. One is with two '*c*'s and the other is with *ṇ* and *c*. [Sayādaw then gave the pronunciation of the two words]. When it is *muccitukamyatā*, it is the desire to get free, desire to escape. When it is *muñcitukamyatā*, it means desire to let go. They mean the same thing actually. When you became disenchanted with something, you want to throw it away. You want to let go. So desire to get free or desire to let go — both are correct.

When the yogi wants to get free from *nāma* and *rūpa* or when he wants to let go of *nāma* and *rūpa*, he contemplates on them again as impermanent, suffering and not soul. So at this stage he tries to see *nāma* and *rūpa* as impermanent, suffering and not

soul again and again. Then as a result of this comprehension, he reaches into another stage of knowledge which is called 'Equanimity towards *Nāma* and *Rūpa*', that is, 'Equanimity about Formations'. That means when a yogi reaches this stage, he doesn't have to make effort to be mindful of the object. His mind is always on the object and so his mindfulness, as it were, comes to him automatically. So he is not concerned about mindfulness because he doesn't have to make effort. Mindfulness comes to him by itself. That is called '**Equanimity towards Mind and Matter**'. His Mind is very calm during this stage. His mind can stay in the middle. That means when he comes across fearful objects, he will not be afraid. When he comes across attractive objects, he will not be attracted to that object. So his mind will be in the middle. Also he does have to make effort. His mindfulness is always good and on the object. This is the stage called '**Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations**'.

When his knowledge of Equanimity about Formations becomes matured, he will get into another stage of knowledge called '**Knowledge of Conformity**'. At this stage he is about to get enlightenment. That knowledge is called conforming knowledge because it conforms both to previous (kinds of) knowledge and the (kinds of) knowledge which are to come.

After the knowledge of Conformity come what is called **Knowledge of Change of Lineage.** From the second part of knowledge of arising and falling up to this knowledge of conformity there are how many (kinds of) knowledge? Nine. These nine stages of knowledge are called Purity as the way which is Knowledge and Vision or we can just say **Purity of the Way, Purity of the Practice.**

After the Knowledge of Conformity come the **Knowledge of Change of Lineage.** At this moment, at this knowledge of Change of Lineage, a yogi is about to get enlightenment. So this moment is his last moment as a worldling, as an ordinary person. When he gets into the next stage, he gains enlightenment. So this stage is called the Change of Lineage. That means it overpowers the *puthujjana* lineage. It overpowers or transcends the lineage of a worldling and reaches into the lineage of a Noble Person. This knowledge, Knowledge of Change of Lineage takes Nibbāna as object, while the previous stages of knowledge take mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*) or conditioned phenomena (as object).

This Knowledge of Change of Lineage does not belong to the sixth stage of purity or the seventh stage of purity. So it is in the interim. But since it is in the flow of *Vipassanā*, it is called *Vipassanā*. So strictly speaking, the Knowledge of Change of Lineage is not *Vipassanā* because at this stage the mind does not take the aggregates as object; the mind takes Nibbāna as object. So strictly speaking, it is not *Vipassanā* and it does not belong to the previous stage of purity or the coming stage of purity. It is in between *Vipassanā* stages. Since it falls into the flow of *Vipassanā*, it is reckoned as *Vipassanā*.

The Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations, the Knowledge of Conformity and the Knowledge of Change of Lineage, these three are called 'Insight Leading to Emergence'. Here 'emergence' means Path because the next moment is the Path moment. These three are said to lead to the Path or to emergence. So they are called 'Insight Leading to Emergence'.

Next is the stage of **Knowledge of Path.** That means it is the moment of enlightenment. At this moment realization of the Four Noble Truths arises, taking Nibbāna as object. Immediately

following the Knowledge of Path is the Knowledge of Fruit. This is the Fruit of the Path, so it is called *Phala* in Pāḷi.

After the **Knowledge of Fruit**, after the intervention of some thought moments, there arises in the mind of the yogi the knowledge of Reviewing. That means he looks back at what he has attained and also he reviews his defilements, defilements which he has eradicated and defilements which are remaining. Normally a yogi after gaining enlightenment reviews the Path he has reached, the Fruit he has reached, and Nibbāna he has realized, defilements he has eradicated and defilements that are remaining. **So there are five kinds of reviewing knowledge — reviewing Path, reviewing Fruit, reviewing Nibbāna, reviewing defilements eradicated, and reviewing defilements remaining.**

The seventh stage of purity, **Purity as Knowledge and Vision,** is the name of the Knowledge of Path, *Ñāṇa*. So there are seven stages of purity to go through in order to gain enlightenment, and there are different kinds of knowledge.

If you look at the chart you will see

1. Knowledge of Defining *Nāma* and *Rūpa,*
2. Knowledge of Discerning Causes
3. Knowledge of Comprehension

4a. Knowledge of Rise and Fall

4b. Knowledge of Rising and Falling

5. Knowledge of Falling only
6. Knowledge of Fearfulness
7. Knowledge of Faultiness
8. Knowledge of Disenchantment
9. Knowledge of Desire for Freedom
10. Knowledge of Re-comprehension

11. Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations
12. Knowledge of Conformity
13. Knowledge of Change of Lineage
14. Knowledge of Path
15. Knowledge of Fruits
16. Knowledge of Reviewing.

So there are 16 kinds of knowledge connected with the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation.

Among them in the Abhidhammatthasangaha only ten are called *Vipassanā* knowledge. (Sayādaw explains that there are two sets of numbering on the chart.) So knowledge of Comprehension up to Knowledge of Conformity there are ten kinds of knowledge. These ten (kinds of) knowledge are called *Vipassanā* knowledges. Knowledge of Change of Lineage is not, strictly speaking, *Vipassanā* knowledge and so in that book it is excluded. In the Commentaries the first two, Knowledge of *Nāma* and *Rūpa* and Knowledge of Discerning Causes, are also called *Vipassaṅā* knowledge. So according to the Commentaries we can say there are 13 (kinds of) *Vipassanā* knowledge, from 1-13 to Change of Lineage.

Number 14, Knowledge of Path is not *Vipassanā* knowledge because it is above or beyond *Vipassanā*. Number 15 is also not *Vipassanā* knowledge.

So now we know in theory the stages of purity and the different kinds of knowledge that arise during the practice of *Vipassanā*. So it remains for us to experience these different kinds of knowledge through the real practice of *Vipassanā* meditation.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

12

ENLIGHTENMENT
The Goal of the Spiritual Path

Last month I talked about *Vipassanā* meditation. A person who practices *Vipassanā* meditation, if he is successful with the practice, reaches or gains enlightenment. So the subject for today's talk is enlightenment.

Nowadays people talk about enlightenment. Enlightenment is a popular subject. But I am not sure, whether they really understand what they are talking about. That is because enlightenment can mean different things for different persons or to people who belong to different religions. So enlightenment for a Christian may not be the same as enlightenment for a Buddhist or for a Hindu.

Before we talk about enlightenment it is good to understand what enlightenment is according to Theravāda Buddhism. First we must know what enlightenment is. **Enlightenment, according to Buddhism, is the realization of the Four Noble Truths and the eradication of mental defilements**. So at least there must be these two things with enlightenment. A person who gains enlightenment sees or penetrates the Four Noble Truths. That means he understands the Four Noble Truths through self

experience. And at the same time he is able to get rid of mental defilements.

At the moment of enlightenment there arises in a yogi a type of consciousness. That type of consciousness is called '***Magga*' consciousness** or '**Path consciousness**'. That consciousness or that type of consciousness is new to that yogi. He has never experienced that type of consciousness before. So such a type of consciousness arises and that consciousness takes Nibbāna as object. And at the same time it is able to eradicate mental defilements.

First a person practices *Vipassanā* meditation. At the successful end of *Vipassanā* meditation, he gains enlightenment. So following the moments of *Vipassanā* meditation that consciousness (*Magga citta*) arises, and it takes Nibbāna as object, and it eradicates mental defilements. From that time on a person is said to have gained enlightenment or a person is called an enlightened person.

So the moment of enlightenment is described in a book called 'Milinda Pañha' or 'Questions of King Milinda'. There the moment of enlightenment is described clearly by the Venerable Nāgasena. There he said: "**The mind of the yogi who is incessantly, that is, step by step, observing the object or observing mind and matter transcends the stream of mind and matter that is going on incessantly and plunges into the cessation of the stream of mind and matter that is incessantly going on.**"

So here 'who is incessantly, step by step observing the objects.' means who is practicing *Vipassanā* meditation. When you practice *Vipassanā* meditation, you take mind or matter as the object. And you have to be constantly observing. That means you have to be observing mind or matter at the present moment.

So during the moments of *Vipassanā*, the mind of a yogi is on mind and matter, or they are called the Five Aggregates of Clinging, or miscellaneous formations. Those are the moments of *Vipassanā* meditation.

When the *Vipassanā* meditation becomes mature and a yogi gains enlightenment, then his mind plunges into the cessation of the stream of mind and matter that is incessantly going on. That means at that moment, at the moment of enlightenment, his mind takes the cessation of the stream of mind and matter, or just cessation of mind and matter, or in other words Nibbāna as object. So his mind, as it were, falls onto that object. That moment is what we call '**the moment of enlightenment**'.

At the moment of enlightenment the stream of *Vipassanā* has ceased. The consciousness that arises at the moment of enlightenment is Path consciousness. At the moment of Path consciousness there is no *Vipassanā* consciousness. Since there is no *Vipassanā* consciousness, there are no objects of *Vipassanā* at that time for that yogi. So for the yogi both *Vipassanā* and its objects have disappeared. Instead there is Path consciousness and that Path consciousness takes Nibbāna as object.

'So a yogi who has practiced in a correct way and so by wisdom reaches into the cessation of mind and matter is called one who realizes Nibbāna.' Here it is said that a yogi who has practiced correctly (So you have to practice *Vipassanā* meditation in a correct way) and as a result of that correct way, the mind of the yogi reaches into the cessation of mind and matter by way of wisdom. That means he does not reach the cessation of mind and matter physically but through his understanding, or in his mind he reaches the cessation of mind and matter or he realizes the cessation of mind and matter or he takes the cessation of mind

and matter as object at that moment. **The cessation of mind and matter is another name for Nibbāna.**

Enlightenment follows *Vipassanā*. So enlightenment is actually the result or the outcome of *Vipassanā* practice. But enlightenment or Path (*Magga*) consciousness is not called the *vipāka* of *Vipassanā*. It is called by other names. So in one Commentary it is described as the outcome of *Vipassanā*, the profit of *Vipassanā*, and the accomplishment of *Vipassanā*. So actually it is the result of *Vipassanā*. **Enlightenment is the result of *Vipassanā*. Without *Vipassanā* there can be no enlightenment.**

If you know Abhidhamma, you will clearly understand that there can be no enlightenment or Path consciousness without *Vipassanā*. In the seventh book of Abhidhamma it is said that Path consciousness arises immediately after the consciousness called 'Change of Lineage'. And the Change of Lineage consciousness arises immediately after three or four moments of *Vipassanā* consciousness. So if there is no *Vipassanā* consciousness or there is no stream of *Vipassanā*, there can be no Path consciousness or there can be no enlightenment.

When we read the discourses and when we read the stories, especially in the Commentaries, we repeatedly come across descriptions of those who gained enlightenment immediately after the discourse or at the end of the discourse. Do you remember the first sermon? At the end of the first sermon Venerable Koṇdaññña became a *Sotāpanna*. That means he became enlightened. He didn't seem to have practiced anything at all. He listened to the Dhamma, the First Sermon, and then he is said to have gained enlightenment. There are many other discourses, especially in the Dhammapada, where it is mentioned that such and such people became *Sotāpannas* or *Arahants* at the end of

the discourse. So there seems to be instant enlightenment and I wish there was for me. So when we read the discourses and others we may think that those people who gained enlightenment did not have to practice *Vipasssanā* at all, but that is not true because every enlightenment must be preceded by *Vipassanā*, as I have explained.

So those people too went through the stages of *Vipassanā* one by one, maybe while listening to the Dhamma or maybe a little after the Dhamma discourse. They went through these stages so fast that they seemed to have obtained enlightenment instantly without the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation. But without *Vipassanā* meditation there can be no enlightenment. Those people, who were described as gaining enlightenment at the end of the discourse, were people who had accumulated *pāramīs* (perfections) in their previous lives. They were people who were mature enough to gain enlightenment when the Buddha taught them. So they were like the lotus flowers that were waiting for the sun to come up so that they can open up so that they can bloom. Such people who have the accumulated experience through previous lives were able to gain enlightenment almost instantly.

From the moment of Path consciousness onward a person is called 'a **Noble Person**' or in Pāḷi 'an ***Ariya***'. Since he has become a Noble Person, his moral conduct is very pure. So a person who has reached enlightenment, even the lowest stage of enlightenment, has very pure moral conduct. It is said in our books that he will keep the five precepts intact. That means he will never break any one of the five precepts. You know the five precepts — not to kill living beings, not to steal, no sexual misconduct, not telling lies, not taking intoxicants.

The Commentary said that even in the next life, a Noble Disciple never kills a living being, never steals, never commits sexual misconduct, never tells a lie, and never takes intoxicants. Suppose a person becomes enlightenment as a human being. Then he dies and is reborn again as another human being. When he is young or an infant, he may not know that he is a Noble Person. But after some time, when he grows up and he knows about his condition, or even when he does not know about his condition, he will not kill a living being and so on.

The Commentaries give the example of picking up a fish. If you give to that young child a live fish and a dead fish for him to eat, he will pick up the dead fish and not the live fish. So it is (I don't know how to describe it) built in him not to kill or not to break any of the five precepts.

Nowadays there are people who claim to be enlightened. Once I saw on television a man claiming that he was one of the twelve enlightened persons in the world. When somebody claims to be enlightened, we do not know whether he is truly enlightened or not. But we can judge from his moral conduct. If he keeps the five precepts intact, if he doesn't kill a living being and so on, then it is likely that he may be enlightened. But if he breaks anyone of these rules, we can say definitely that he is not. So this is one way we can judge a person who claims himself or herself to be enlightened, by watching him or her in the moral conduct.

Also there are persons who think they are enlightened. They may have practiced meditation and they may have experienced something they did not experience before. Then they may think honestly that they are enlightened. Such persons can also judge themselves by asking themselves: Do I break any of the precepts?

What do I do when there are insects in the home or mice in the house? Suppose you think you are an enlightened person. If you can still kill a living being, kill an ant or an insect, then you are not an enlightened person. **So an enlightened person keeps his or her moral conduct pure and he or she will never break any one of the five precepts.**

Is enlightenment for monks only or do monks only gain enlightenment? I think this is a silly question. This question is for those who do not know anything about Buddhism. The answer to this question is 'no'. There were many lay people during the time of the Buddha who gained enlightenment and who became Noble Persons.

There was a young man called Yasa that came to the Buddha after he gave his first sermon. He met the Buddha, and the Buddha talked to him, and he became enlightened. Also his father became enlightened. And there were people like King Bimbisāra, he was a king and he became enlightened. So he continued to be a king and ruled over a kingdom and he was a *Sotāpanna*. Also there was the banker Anāthapiṇḍika who had the Jetavana Monastery built and offered it to the *Saṅgha*. Also there was a male lay devotee called Visākha. He also became enlightened as a lay person. There were other people like Citta, Nakulapitā, Mahānāma (a Sakyan king), and also the physician Jīvaka. They were all lay people and they were all enlightened persons. They continued to be lay people after their enlightenment and they died as lay people. **Enlightenment is not for monks only, but actually for anybody who cares to practice *Vipassanā* meditation.**

Another question is: Is enlightenment for men only? This is another silly question. Can only men gain enlightenment? Now you may have heard of Buddha's foster mother whose name was

Gotamī. She wanted to become a nun and Buddha did not allow her to be a nun. So when she could not get permission from the Buddha when she asked him three times, she put on the robes of a nun with 500 Sakyan princesses and then they went to the Buddha to ask permission. But they dared not approach the Buddha. So they were outside the monastery. They were weary from the journey and so on. Then the Venerable Ānanda met them outside the monastery and asked why they had come. When Gotamī told him why they were there, he went to the Buddha and on their behalf asked permission from the Buddha. He said: Please allow them to become nuns. The Buddha refused three times. Then Ānanda asked, "*Bhante*, a woman having gone forth (That means after becoming a nun) can she gain enlightenment? Can she become a *Sotāpanna* (Stream Winner), or a Once Returner, or a Non-Returner, or can she become an *Arahant*?" That means if a woman enters the Order of the Buddha, after joining the Order of the Buddha, can she become enlightened? Then Buddha said: "Yes". Women are capable of gaining enlightenment after they join the Holy Order. So this answer given by the Buddha shows that enlightenment is for everybody, not for men only. Just as not all men are capable of gaining enlightenment not all women are capable of gaining enlightenment. But there are many, many women who are capable of gaining enlightenment. During the time of the Buddha there were many women who became enlightened. According to this answer given by the Buddha to Ānanda, we know that women are as capable as men are to gain enlightenment. **So being a woman is not a disadvantage as far as gaining enlightenment is concerned.**

So during the time of the Buddha there were many prominent ladies who gained enlightenment. Some ladies remained as lay

persons until the end of their lives. Many others joined the Order and became nuns. Among them the most well known was the lay devotee Visākhā. Visākhā became a *Sotāpanna* at the age of seven. Then she remained as a *Sotāpanna* until her death. She lived to be 120 years. Gotamī, Buddha's foster mother, became enlightened. Yasodhara — I will not say Buddha's wife, Prince Siddhattha's wife — became enlightened. Then Nandā (Buddha's cousin), Uppalavaṇṇā, Khemā, Paṭacāra, there are many prominent ladies who became enlightened, who became *Arahants*. Many of them joined the Order. You can read about them in the book called Therigāthā in Pāḷi. That book is translated into English may be two times. I don't know the name of the translation made recently. The old translation is called Psalms of the Sisters.

Does an enlightened person know that he is enlightened? **Enlightenment is a self experience.** That means it is to be experienced by oneself. So a person who has attained enlightenment really means that he has attained it. Also immediately after the enlightenment thought process there follow some thought processes by which an enlightened person reviews the Path, the Fruition, Nibbāna and the defilements that are eradicated, and the defilements that are remaining. It is said that every person who has gained enlightenment reviews at least the first three (the Path, the Fruition and Nibbāna). Regarding the defilements that are eradicated and the defilements that are still to be eradicated, the meditator may or may not review. So every enlightened person reviews the three (the Path, Fruition and Nibbāna). So a person who has gained enlightenment really knows that he has attained it. But if that person has no knowledge of the Dhamma, no knowledge of Buddha's teachings, then he may not know that what he has attained is called 'enlightenment'.

You come to this place. So you have a personal experience of this place, but you may not know this place is called Tathāgata Meditation Center. So a person who has attained enlightenment may not know this is enlightenment or it is called 'enlightenment', but he has experienced it himself. He has reached this stage himself and so he knows that it is something that he has attained.

Now Buddha was the first person who became enlightened. Then he taught other beings and the other beings also became enlightened. Those who gained enlightenment following the teachings of the Buddha are called '***sāvakas***' or 'disciples'.

Now the enlightenment of the Buddha and the enlightenment of the disciples are they the same or are they different? We must say they are different. Enlightenment of the Buddha is accompanied by some types of knowledge that are peculiar to Buddhas only. As soon as Buddha became enlightened he also gained omniscience. He also gained what is called 'the Great Compassion'. There are other kinds of wisdom or knowledge that he gained. Those are not shared by his disciples. So in that sense **the enlightenment of the Buddhas is different from the enlightenment of disciples.** A disciple may become enlightened, but he will not gain along with enlightenment omniscience and so on.

Also with regard to eradicating mental defilements there is a little difference. Buddhas eradicate mental defilements altogether and the *Arahants* or disciples eradicate mental defilements altogether. But there is a difference and I hope that you already know that difference. When the Buddhas eradicate mental defilements, their eradication is total without any *vāsanā*. I will explain it. However, when disciples or *Arahants* eradicate mental defilements, they are unable to get rid of that *vāsanā* although

they have eradicated all mental defilements. That is the difference between the eradication of mental defilements by the Buddhas and by the disciples.

The word *'vāsanā'* is a difficult word to translate. It is often translated as residue or trace. I don't know whether that is correct or not. *Vāsanā* is described as a certain power dependent upon mental defilements. So *vāsanā* is not a mental defilement, but some power of these mental defilements. Through that power a person, who has eradicated all mental defilements, may still have some behavior which is similar to the behavior of those who have not eradicated mental defilements. That is what we call *'vāsanā'*. That *vāsanā* the disciples are unable to get rid of.

There may be some behavior of some persons who have not yet gained enlightenment and a person who has gained enlightenment may still have that kind of behavior. It is similar to those who have not eradicated mental defilements. That power of mental defilements is called *vāsanā*. When Buddhas eradicate mental defilements, they eradicate *vāsanā* along with mental defilements. But when *Arahants* or disciples get rid of mental defilements, they are unable to get rid of *vāsanā*. So *vāsanā* remains with them although all mental defilements are gone from their minds.

I hope you have heard about the Venerable Pilinda Vaccha. I have talked about him many times here. The Venerable Pilinda Vaccha was an *Arahant* during the time of the Buddha. He came from a very high caste Brahmin family. So naturally he was very proud. In those days people of high caste addressed those people of low caste as wicked men, or wretched men, or something like that. So when they were addressed, they were addressed like that. He must have addressed people like this for many years or

many lives. So even after he became an *Arahant*, he still addressed people as wretched man or something like that. So he was unable to shake off this bad habit of calling people wretched person or wicked person.

A story tells us that once a man gathered some earth. I don't know how to call it — some roots or something which is used as medicine. He put them on a cart and went to the city. On his way he met the Venerable Pilinda Vaccha. So the Venerable asked him: "Wretched person, what are you carrying? What are these?" So the man was angry with the Venerable Pilinda Vaccha. So he said: "They are the dropping of rats." So he went into the city and when he was going to sell them, he found to his amazement that all his herbs had turned into the droppings of rats. When his friends saw this, they knew he must have met the Venerable Pilinda Vaccha. They advised him to go and fetch the Venerable and ask pardon from him. He went after him. When he met the Venerable, then the Venerable asked again: "Wretched person, what are these?" This time the man told the truth that they are herbs. So they turned back into the original herbs.

Although Pilinda Vaccha was an *Arahant*, although he had eradicated all mental defilements, although he had no ill will in his mind, still he was unable to get rid of this habit of calling people 'wretched person' or something like that. The *vāsanā* is that much difficult to get rid of. But **Buddhas when they eradicate mental defilements, they eradicate the *vāsanā* along with them. That is the difference between the eradication of mental defilements by Buddhas and by *Arahants*.**

Can there be enlightened persons outside the Buddha's dispensation? Can there be persons who are enlightened other than Buddhists? When Buddha was on his death bed, about to

pass away a few hours later, an ascetic came to him and asked a question; "Whether the teachers of the other sects or other religions were omniscient as they claimed themselves to be." Buddha put aside that question. Then he gave another answer.

Buddha's answer was: "In whatever Dhamma and discipline (That means in whatever dispensation) the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, then the ascetics of the first, the second, the third and the fourth grade are also not found, but in whatever Dhamma and discipline the Noble Eightfold Path is found, then there are also found the ascetics of the first, the second, the third and the fourth grade. That means in whatever religion there is the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path, where there is the practice of *Vipassanā*, then there can be those who become enlightened in those religions. **But if there is no practice of the Noble Eightfold Path, no practice of *Vipassanā*, there can be no persons who gain enlightenment.**

As you know, enlightenment is the outcome of *Vipassanā* meditation. The practice of *Vipassanā* meditation and the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path are the same. So in this case we cannot say arbitrarily that there can be no enlightened persons outside the Buddha's dispensation. But actually the practice of *Vipassanā* is found only in Buddhism. Only when people practice *Vipassanā* meditation, can they become enlightened. So practically speaking, **we say there can be no enlightened person outside the Buddha's dispensation.**

During the time of the Buddha I think it was true because Buddha said: The other schools are devoid of true ascetics. That means there are no ascetics or no monks who have eradicated mental defilements in those schools. So if you want to be magnanimous, you may say if there is the practice of *Vipassanā*

or the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path in a certain religion, then there can be enlightened persons in that religion.

As the realization of the Four Noble Truths, enlightenment is just one. Regarding the eradication of mental defilements, there are four kinds of enlightenment, four stages of enlightenment.

The first stage is called the stage of **Stream Entry.** 'Stream Entry' means entering into the stream of the Noble Path. Now when something gets into a stream, it is sure to reach a river or the ocean. Suppose somebody gets into the stream of a river. When one gets into the river, then one is sure to reach the ocean. In the same way, when a person has reached this stream of the Noble Path one is sure to reach Nibbāna. The first entering into the stream of the Noble Path is called the stage of Stream Entry or the stage of reaching the stream. In Pāḷi, it is called ***Sotāpatti.*** This is the first stage of enlightenment.

When a person reaches this stage, he is able to eradicate two of the mental defilements. These two are **wrong view** and **doubt**. So a person who has reached this stage, who is called a *Sotāpanna*, has no wrong view, has no wrong view regarding the self, regarding the soul, regarding the Law of Kamma and so on. Also he has no doubts — doubt about the Buddha, about the Dhamma, about the *Saṅgha*, about the practice, about the doctrine of Dependent Origination and so on. So a person who is at this stage is able to eradicate these two mental defilements. Once they are eradicated they will never arise in that person's mind. So they are totally destroyed.

Also such a person will be reborn at most **seven times** in the future. He will be reborn in the human realm or in the realm of *devas*. That means a person who has reached the first stage will not be reborn in the four woeful states.

After reaching the first stage, a person or an enlightened person, will continue his practice of *Vipassanā*. As the result of that *Vipassanā* practice, he will reach the second stage. The second stage of enlightenment is called the stage of '**Once-Returning**'. That means by way of rebirth he will come back to this human world only once. '**Come back' means he will come back to this human world only once.** That stage in Pāḷi is called '***Sakadāgāmi***' (Once-Returning).

At this stage a person does not eradicate any more mental defilements, but he makes the remaining mental defilements cleaner or weaker. There still remain mental defilements with him, but these mental defilements are very weak, so they cannot drag him to the four woeful states.

And he will have only two more rebirths in the world of the sensuous sphere or in the sense sphere. That means in the world of human beings and *devas*. So a person at the second stage — suppose a person reaches the second stage as a human being. Then after his death here, he will be reborn in the realm of *devas*. Then from that realm he will die and then he will be reborn as a human being again. That is why he is called Once Returner. He comes back to this human world one time. In order to come back here he has to be reborn in the realm of *devas* once and then come back to the human world and take rebirth. So he has **two more** rebirths in the realm of sense sphere.

If he carries on his practice of *Vipassanā*, he may as a result of *Vipassanā* reach the third stage. The third stage is called the stage of '**Non-Returning**'. That means not coming back to this realm of sense sphere. That means to the realm of human beings and to the realm of *devas*. At this stage he eradicates two more mental defilements. They are **sensual lust** and **ill will** or *dosa* or

hate or anger. So a person who has reached this stage, the third stage which is called '***Anāgāmi* stage'**, will have no attachment to the sense objects and he is incapable of getting angry. Since fear is a kind of anger or regarded as a kind of anger in Abhidhamma, he will not have any fear. This is the stage of Non-Returning. After that he will be **reborn in the pure abodes of *Brahmas*.** That means he will definitely get *jhānas* before he dies and then will be reborn in the world of *Brahma* that is called 'the Abodes of Pure Beings'.

The person who has reached the third stage of enlightenment or who is an *Anāgāmi* will have no attachment to his life as a human being, to his belongings, or to persons, and so on. So in this respect he is almost like an *Arahant*. Unlike an *Arahant* he still has attachment to the realms of *Brahmans*. That is why he is reborn in the world of *Brahmas*. That is why he is reborn in the world of *Brahmas*.

If he practices further he may reach the fourth stage of enlightenment. That stage is called the stage of ***Arahantship***. This word is difficult to translate into English. It is the stage of a Worthy One or the stage of a person who has eradicated all mental defilements. So it is better to keep the Pāḷi word.

This fourth stage is the **highest stage of enlightenment**. There is no higher stage than this. When a person reaches this stage, the stage of an *Arahant*, **he eradicates all the remaining mental defilements**. So there are no mental defilements remaining with him. All mental defilements are gone. As I said before, something **remains with him and that is the *vāsanā* (the power of mental defilement)**. So a person who becomes an *Arahant* gains purity of mind. His mind is totally purified from all mental defilements. That means he is incapable of being attached to anything at all either

in the world of senses or in the world of *Brahmas*. He is incapable of getting angry, incapable of fear, incapable of jealousy and so on. So in that respect his mind is totally pure.

Since his mind is pure, there are no mental defilements in his mind. Since there are no mental defilements, there is no rebirth for him. Among the mental defilements is attachment or craving which is the one that produces rebirth. The *Arahant* has eradicated all mental defilements including craving. There is no mental state that could create a new life. So an *Arahant* is like, maybe like a fire that has no more fuel. Since there is no fuel, there is no fire. Since there is no craving, especially craving for existence, there is no existence for him in the future. So an *Arahant* is described as one who is holding his last body. That means this life in which he becomes an *Arahant* is the last of his lives. **He has no more lives or no more rebirths in the future.**

When we say a *Sotāpanna* will be reborn seven more times, we mean that *Sotāpanna* remains a *Sotāpanna* until his death. And he will not reach the higher stages in the future lives until the seventh life. In the seventh life he will definitely reach the higher stages until the fourth stage. He will become an *Arahant* and leave the round of rebirths. When we say he will be reborn seven times only, that means if he does not reach the higher stages (before the seventh rebirth). If he reaches the higher stages in this life, he will become a *Sakadāgāmi* or he will become an *Anāgāmi*. In that case he will not be reborn seven times.

Now we have learned what enlightenment is or what enlightenment is according to Buddhism, and some things to understand about enlightenment, and some things about the stages of enlightenment. When we practice *Vipassanā* meditation, we aim at reaching these. We will reach theses stages only when

our practice of *Vipassanā* gets matured or when we are successful with our *Vipassanā* practice.

According to the advice of the Buddha even after reaching the first stage, yogis are not to be satisfied with that. They should strive to reach the second stage. After reaching the second stage, they are not to be satisfied. They are to try to reach the third stage. And at the third stage they must also try to reach the fourth stage. So the Buddha's advice is that you are not to be satisfied with just the practice of *sīla*, the practice of *samādhi*, and even reaching the first, second and third stages of enlightenment. You are to strive until you reach the fourth stage.

That is because **Buddha's aim is to get out of suffering**. So long as we are in this *saṁsāra*, even though we may be reborn as *Brahmas* who live a very long time, still according to the definition given by the Buddha, the life of a *Brahma* is also *dukkha* or suffering because the life of a *Brahma* is impermanent. It has a beginning and an end. So when we say we want to get out of *dukkha* or suffering, we must want to get out of anything that is suffering. So any life, any existence is suffering. **When we try to get out of suffering, actually we try to get out of this *saṁsāra* or the round of rebirths**.

May our practice of *Vipassanā* meditation lead us ultimately to reach the highest stage!

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

13

DIVISIONS *of* *The* BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS *and* BUDDHIST COUNCILS

Today's subject is not a Dhamma subject. It is about the books through which we understand the Dhamma in theory. Buddha taught for 45 years and whatever he taught during these 45 years the Venerable Ānanda and other Disciples learnt them and kept these teachings with them. Buddha passed away in **544BC**. Just abut 3 months after his passing away, the **First Buddhist Council** was held in the city of Rājagaha. The Venerable Mahā Kassapa acted as the president of that Council. At that Council all the teachings of the Buddha were collected. The Venerable Ānanda who was the personal attendant of the Buddha for 25 years presented the Dhamma. That means he presented the Discourses and the Abhidhamma to the assembly. And the Venerable Upāli, who was appointed the foremost among those who knew Vinaya or Disciplinary Rules, presented the Vinaya.

Whatever they presented the assembly scrutinized. Many questions were put to them regarding the authenticity of these teachings. Only when all the participants were satisfied that a certain piece of teaching was an authentic teaching of the Buddha did they accept them. Then they recorded them by word of mouth. So when they were satisfied about a teaching, about for

example a discourse, then they would recite that Sutta in unison. That is why that action of recording the Buddha's teachings was known as *Sangāyana*. '*Sangāyana*' means reciting together.

All the teachings of the Buddha recorded at the First Buddhist Council were classified into three divisions. These divisions are called Piṭakas. The Pāḷi word '*piṭaka*' means what is to be learned or just teaching. Also it means a receptacle, a basket. Nowadays people use the meaning of basket for *piṭaka* because I think it is easier to understand Three Baskets. Actually it is three divisions of his teachings which are to be learned.

The three divisions are:

1. **Vinaya**
2. **Sutta or Suttanta**
3. **Abhidhamma**

Vinaya Piṭaka contains rules and regulations for monks, nuns and novices. The second division, Sutta or Suttanta Piṭaka, contains the discourses given by the Buddha both to monks and non-monks. I use 'non-monks' because this group included *devas* or celestial beings also. The third division is called Abhidhamma Piṭaka. This consists of analytical expositions of many types of things that had been taught in the second division. In Abhidhamma you don't find new subjects. The subjects have been taught in Suttanta Piṭaka, but the treatment in Abhidhamma is very different. In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka the topics taught in the Sutta Piṭaka were analyzed in very great detail.

Among the three Piṭakas, the second one, Suttanta Piṭaka, is the most popular because it is both for monks and lay people. Also since it is taught in the conventional language, it is easier to understand.

Another division of the Buddha's teachings is the Nikāya division. In Nikāya division Buddha's teachings were divided into five groups or five collections. They are:

1. Collection of Long Discourses (**Dīgha Nikāya**)
2. Collection of Middle Length Discourses (**Majjhima Nikāya**)
3. Collection of Associated Discourses (**Saṁyutta Nikāya**)
4. Collection of Discourses where Topics Gradually Increase in Number in Succeeding Groups of Discourses. That means in book one only one topic or one subject is treated in each discourse. In the second book two topics were treated in each discourse. In book three, three topics are treated until the eleventh book. That is called **Aṅguttara Nikāya**.
5. Collection of Small Discourses (**Khuddaka Nikāya**)

I want you to understand these two kinds of divisions correctly and clearly. Buddha's teachings are divided into three Piṭakas or they are divided into five Nikāyas. So Nikāya division is not a sub-division of Sutta Piṭaka. That is important because most people think think Nikāya division is a sub-division of Sutta Piṭaka. That is not true according to the ancient commentaries.

Vinaya Piṭaka is included in the Khuddaka Nikāya, Suttanta Piṭaka is included in all five Nikāyas. Abhidhamma Piṭaka is again included in Khuddaka Nikāya. This is from the point of view of Piṭakas.

From the point of view of Nikāyas, then Dīgha Nikāya is included in Suttanta Piṭaka. Majjhima Nikāya, Saṁyutta Nikāya, Aṅguttara Nikāya are also included in Suttanta Piṭaka. Then all of Vinaya Piṭaka, all of Abhidhamma Piṭaka, and some portions of Suttanta Piṭaka are included in Khuddaka Nikāya.

So a book can have two names according to Piṭaka or Nikāya. There are five volumes in the Vinaya Piṭaka. The first book of Vinaya can be called Vinaya Piṭaka, according to Piṭaka division and it can be called Khuddaka Nikāya, according to Nikāya division. So in the same way every book belongs to Piṭaka or Nikāya.

I got this information from the ancient Commentary written by the Venerable Buddhaghosa. Especially in the Commentary to Vinaya, in the introductory chapter to Vinaya, the first three Buddhist Councils were described and also the division of the Buddha's teachings into one, two, three, five, nine, and 84000 units of Dhamma. Also in that portion of the Commentary to Vinaya the spread of Buddha's dispensation to Sri Lanka was also given. So we know much about the first three Buddhist councils and how the Buddha's teachings were carried to the island of Sri Lanka and how the king and the people were converted to Buddhism. So many details we learn from the commentary to Vinaya.

When describing the Khuddaka Nikāya there, the Venerable Buddhaghosa said: "What is the Khuddaka Nikāya? The rest of the words of the Buddha including the entire Vinaya Piṭaka, the Abhidhamma Piṭaka and the 15 divisions commencing with Khuddakapatha, enumerated earlier, leaving aside the four Nikāyas." So apart from four Nikāyas, the Khuddaka Nikāya consists of the whole Vinaya Piṭaka, the whole Abhidhamma Piṭaka and 15 books of Khuddaka Nikāya beginning with Khuddakapatha. Also he wrote it in a verse, saying: the rest of the word of the Buddha, excluding these four Nikāyas, such as Dīgha Nikāya, is Khuddaka Nikāya. So it is very clear that the Nikāya division is a separate division of the Buddha's teachings and not a subdivision of Suttanta Piṭaka.

There is one thing strange in the Nikāya division. That is the last one, the Khuddaka Nikāya. The meaning of *khuddaka* is small. So 'Khuddaka Nikāya' literally means collection of small discourses. But the whole of Vinaya Piṭaka (five volumes) and the whole of Abhidhamma Piṭaka (12 volumes) are included in Khuddaka Nikāya (Collection of Small Discourses). They are not small. Vinaya Piṭaka consists of five volumes about 500 pages each. So it is strange. And the Commentary did not explain why the Vinaya Piṭaka and Abhidhammma Piṭaka were included in the Khuddaka Nikāya (Small Collection).

But one Commentary, a new Sub-Commentary to Dīgha Nikāya, written by a Burmese Sayādaw in the ancient days, stated that when the commentators described the Dīgha Nikāya and so on, they used the phrase 'those of long measure' discourses of long measure, discourses of middle or medium measure and so on. But when they described the Khuddaka Nikāya, they did not use the phrase 'of small measure'. So that commentator thought that in the name 'Khuddaka Nikāya', we are not to take *Khuddaka*, literally. **It is just a name for the collection of teachings that are not included in the four Nikāyas**. That is why the whole of Vinaya Piṭaka and the whole of Abhidhamma Piṭaka are included in the Khuddaka Nikāya (Collection of Small Discourses).

The Buddha's teachings can be divided into other divisions as well. **The commentators explain that first Buddha's words or Buddha's teachings are just one. 'One' means it has only one taste, the taste of freedom.** Wherever in the ocean you pick up the water and taste it, you get the salty taste only. So there is only one taste of the ocean and that is salt, salty taste. In the same way you can read anywhere in the texts and you get the taste of freedom, the taste of freedom from mental defilements.

So in that sense the Buddha's words are just one. There are no divisions of the Buddha's teachings according to the taste they contain. There is only one kind of Buddha's teachings which have the taste of freedom.

But we can divide the Buddha's teachings into two divisions. They are **Dhamma** and **Vinaya**. Sometimes all the teachings of the Buddha or the dispensation of the Buddha are called Dhamma and Vinaya. So in that case 'Dhamma' means Suttanta Piṭaka and Abhidhamma Piṭaka and 'Vinaya' means Vinaya Piṭaka. So in that case Buddha's teachings are twofold, Dhamma and Vinaya.

Buddha's teachings can also be divided into three by way of utterances. That means the **first utterance**, the **middle utterances** and the **last utterance**. Now the first utterance is said to be the verses of joy the Buddha uttered immediately after his enlightenment. So those are said to be the first words of the Buddha. When on his deathbed at the age of 80, Buddha admonished his disciples. Then Buddha said: "I call upon you, monks; all conditioned things are subject to dissolution. Accomplish your training with mindfulness." These are the last words of the Buddha uttered just before his passing away. Those utterances, which he gave between these two moments, immediately after enlightenment and immediately before his passing away (That means during 45 years.), those utterances are called middle utterances. So by way of utterances Buddha's teachings can be divided into three.

Again Buddha's teachings are divided into three Piṭakas, or they are divided into 5 Nikāyas or Collections and also Buddha's teachings can be divided into 9 components. In Pāḷi they are called *'anga'*. So in that case there are 9 divisions of the Buddha's teachings. They are Sutta, Gaya and so on. It is difficult to explain all these 9 divisions and also it is involved. So I will skip the explanation.

Also the Buddha's teachings were divided into 84,000 by way of units of Dhamma. Here also it is not easy to explain how we decide a unit of Dhamma. For example, the whole of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is said to be just one unit because it is taught on one occasion only. But the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta (the Sutta on the passing away of the Buddha) consists of many units of the Dhamma because there it is like the accounts on different occasions are connected together. Although the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta is not very, very long, it contains many units of Dhamma, but the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is only one unit. Like that the units of Dhamma are ascertained. It is very difficult to really calculate how many units are in Vinaya Piṭaka, how many units are in Suttanta Piṭaka, and so on.

I hope you have heard about King Asoka. King Asoka became a Buddhist. He was so devoted to the dispensation of the Buddha that he asked how many units of Dhamma there were. The Arahant Elders answered that there were 84,000 units of Dhamma. Then he said: "I will honor each unit of Dhamma with one monastery." And so according to the account given in the Commentary to the Vinaya Piṭaka, he built 84,000 monasteries in India. And in Burma we say not only 84,000 monasteries but also 84,000 pagodas, 84,000 tanks, 84,000 wells and so on.

Now we will go back to the Three Piṭakas. Vinaya Piṭaka is also called '**Āṇādesanā**'. That means **Teaching of Authority**. That is because in the Vinaya Piṭaka the Buddha laid down rule after rule for monks. So Buddha had the authority to lay down these rules. So Vinaya Piṭaka is also known as Āṇādesanā (the Teaching of Authority).

Suttanta Piṭaka is also called '**Vohāra Desanā**'. '*Vohāra*' means conventional language. So Suttanta Piṭaka is a **Teaching**

by Conventional Language. In the Suttanta Piṭaka Buddha used conventional terms like a being, a person, an individual, a man, a woman, and so on.

Abhidhamma Piṭaka is also called '**Paramattha Desanā**' (**Teaching of Ultimate Truth**). In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka conventional language was not used. Here the terms used are of the ultimate truths, like five aggregates, twelve bases, eighteen elements, Four Noble Truths, and so on.

Vinaya Piṭaka is like a law book. Abhidhamma Piṭaka is like a textbook of physics for example. Suttanta Piṭaka is like a book on general subject. That is why Suttanta Piṭaka is popular with all people.

Again Vinaya Piṭaka is described as '*yatha aparādha sāsana*'. That means Teachings according to Offenses. If you do this thing, you come to this offense. And if you have this offense, you must try to get out of this offense by doing such and such things. It's like that. So it is called '**Teaching According to Offenses**'.

Suttanta Piṭaka is also called '*yatha anuloma sāsana*' (teaching according to dispositions and so on). That means when Buddha taught the discourses, he taught according to the dispositions or likes and dislikes of his listeners. That is why his teachings are varied in character. Sometimes he said there are only two things, mind and matter. Sometimes he taught that there are five aggregates. Again he taught that there are twelve bases, and so on. One and the same thing is taught as having different names. That was because some people are familiar with a particular kind of terminology. For that person he used the terminology that would easily be understood by that person. For another person he used another terminology in order to suit the understanding

of that person. So in the Suttanta Piṭaka the **teaching is according to the dispositions of or to the inner likes and dislikes of his listeners.**

Abhidhamma Piṭaka is also described as *'yathadhamma sāsana'*. *'Dhamma'* here means reality. So Abhidhamma Piṭaka is taught according to reality. When Buddha taught Abhidhamma, he taught it as it should be taught and he did not look for what the audience would like or would not like, and so on. So Abhidhamma Piṭaka is the **presentation according to reality.**

Vinaya Piṭaka is also called *'saṁvāra saṁvārakathā'*. That means **'Teaching of Different Restraints.'** There are small restraints and there are big restraints. Vinaya Piṭaka is just restraint. If you read the rules, you will understand this. You are not to do this, you are not to do that, and so on. Restraint is taught in Vinaya Piṭaka. So Vinaya Piṭaka is also called *'saṁvāra saṁvārakathā'*.

'Restraint' means restraint of bodily actions and speech. Restraint is to prevent breaking of the rules, to prevent transgression. The Vinaya Piṭaka is for *sīla, sīla* of monks. It involves restraint. Restraint is said to be the opposite of transgression or breaking the rules.

Suttanta Piṭaka is also called *'diṭṭhi viniveṭhanakathā'*. That means the Discourse of the Refutation of Wrong Views. In the very first book of Dīgha Nikāya Buddha mentioned 62 kinds of wrong views. Since they are wrong views, they are all to be refuted or they are all to be discarded. So Suttanta Piṭaka is called **'Discourse of Refuting Wrong Views'.**

Abhidhamma Piṭaka is also known as *'nāma-rūpa paricchedakathā'* (**Discourse of Defining Mind and Matter**). Defining mind and matter is an important thing in the practice of meditation.

Defining of mind and matter helps a meditator to get rid of defilements. So Abhidhamma Piṭaka is known as Discourse of Defining Mind and Matter. When you understand Abhidhamma, you know what is mind, what is matter, and that there are only two things (mind and matter), and there is no other thing like soul, or self, or being, or person, and so on.

In Vinaya Piṭaka the training of higher morality is taught. The precepts kept by monks are called 'higher morality' or 'higher *sīla*'. They are higher than the *sīla* practiced by lay people. Lay people keep five precepts, or eight precepts, or at most ten precepts. But monks have to keep 227 basic rules and there are many more rules to be kept. So the precepts or the rules kept by the monks are called the training of higher morality. So in the Vinaya Piṭaka the **training of higher morality** is taught.

In the Suttanta Piṭaka the training of higher consciousness or higher *samādhi* (concentration) is taught. 'Higher concentration' means the eight kinds of *jhānas*.

In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka the training of higher wisdom is taught. 'Higher wisdom' means *Vipassanā* knowledge, and Path knowledge, and Fruition knowledge.

Here when we say, in Vinaya Piṭaka the training of higher morality is taught, we must understand that the training of higher morality is taught predominantly. That means the other trainings are also taught, but the emphasis is on the training of higher morality. In the Suttanta Piṭaka again the training of higher consciousness is predominantly taught. In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka the training of higher wisdom is predominantly taught.

In Vinaya Piṭaka the avoidance of transgression is taught. Vinaya rules always prevent monks from transgression. **In the**

Suttanta Piṭaka the avoidance of the coming up of mental defilements is taught. In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka the avoidance of latent defilements is taught.

They are stated in this way because *sīla* can prevent transgression. And *samādhi* can prevent the arising or coming up of mental defilements. *Paññā* can eradicate the latent tendencies or the latent mental defilements.

In Vinaya Piṭaka momentary abandonment of mental defilements is taught. And in Suttanta Piṭaka the temporary abandonment of mental defilements is taught. And in Abhidhamma the total abandonment, like cutting (uprooting) of a tree, so total abandonment of mental defilements is taught. When we practice *sīla*, we can prevent mental defilements only when we are practicing *sīla*, we can prevent mental defilements only when we are practicing. The next moment they may come back. But when we get *jhānas* we can prevent mental defilements, from arising for some longer time. When we reach enlightenment, we are able to eradicate all mental defilements. That is why in Vinaya Piṭaka the momentary abandonment is taught, and in Suttanta Piṭaka the temporary abandonment is taught, and in Abhidhamma Piṭaka the total abandonment is taught.

In the Vinaya Piṭaka the abandonment of defilements of misdeeds is taught. That means when you keep precepts, you avoid misdeeds. You do not do any wrong doing. So in the Vinaya Piṭaka the avoidance of any wrong doing is taught.

In the Suttanta Piṭaka the avoidance of or the abandonment of craving is taught and in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka the avoidance of defilement of wrong view is taught. When you study Abhidhamma, you will come to realize there is only mind

and matter, or only five aggregates, and so on. Over and above mind and matter there is nothing that can be called a permanent entity, or an *attā*, and so on.

Because it is a course, like a study course, I wanted it to be complete. So I give all the information about the Piṭakas as we find in the commentaries. Do not worry if you do not remember all of them. Even monks have difficulty in remembering all of them.

Now we will go to the Buddhist Councils. Before we talk about Buddhist Councils, we should understand that besides the Tipiṭaka there are the Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries in Theravāda Buddhist literature. Commentaries are those that explain the Texts. That is sometimes the Texts themselves may not be quite understandable. We are far removed from the time of the Buddha and so we need the help of a teacher or an explanation like that. So there came to be Commentaries. Then as time went on even these Commentaries became difficult to understand. So Sub-Commentaries had to be written on these Commentaries. There are three levels of Buddhist books, **the Texts** or the teachings of the Buddha, **the Commentaries** (the explanations of the teachings), and then **the Sub-Commentaries** (The explanation of the Commentaries).

Many explanations contained in the Commentaries actually go back to the time of the Buddha. Buddha must have explained or must have given explanations when monks did not readily understand his teachings. Those explanations were preserved by individual monks. They were not collected at the First Buddhist Council, but they were handed down from teacher to pupil, from teacher to pupil. Later on they were compiled into books.

So there are three levels of books in Buddhist literature, especially Theravāda Buddhist literature. They are the Texts (teachings of the Buddha), the Commentaries explaining the texts, and the Sub-Commentaries explaining the Commentaries.

Until now there have been six Buddhist Councils. **The First Buddhist council was held at Rājagaha**, just three months after the death of the Buddha. You already know about that council.

The Second Buddhist Council was held at the city of Vesāli, one hundred years after the death of the Buddha. **The Third Buddhist Council was held at Pataliputta**, a city in India, 234 years after the death of the Buddha during time of King Asoka. Asoka was a supporter of that council.

These three councils were held in India during the time when there was not yet division of Buddhism into Theravāda and Mahāyāna. After that the division came into being. Then Theravāda Buddhists held their own councils and Mahāyāna Buddhists also held their own Mahāyāna councils.

Since we are talking about Theravāda principles here, I will tell you about Theravāda councils only. **The Fourth Buddhist Council was held at Aluvihāra**. That is in Sri Lanka 450 years after the death of the Buddha. From the First Buddhist Council until about 450 years after the death of the Buddha the Tipiṭaka was handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. So it was not yet written in books or on palm leaves. About 450 years after the death of the Buddha in Sri Lanka the elders at that time thought that the future generations might not be able to keep the Tipiṭaka intact. So they decided to write the Tipiṭaka down on palm leaves. That was done at a place called Aluvihāra near modern Kandy in Sri Lanka. So at the **Fourth Buddhist**



Marble Slab's Tipiṭaka



Kutadagou Pagoda (Kuthodaw Paya) in Mandalay

Council the Tipiṭaka was written down on palm leaves. It was not the time of paper books yet.

In the late 19th century during the time of King Mindon in Burma the Fifth Buddhist Council was held. Kings want to excel the previous kings. So King Mindon thought: If the former kings or previous kings had the Tipiṭaka written on palm leaves, I will have the Tipiṭaka written on marble slabs, which can last much, much longer than the palm leaves. The white ants can eat palm leaves very easily. So he decided to ask the Elders at that time to hold a Buddhist Council. So **the Fifth Buddhist Council was held at Mandalay in 1871**. It took a number of years. At that council the Tipiṭaka was first written down on palm leaves. And then it was written down on copper plates. Last it was **written down on marble slabs**. These marble slabs were put in a house, each one was put in a brick house. They were placed in the facings of a Pagoda called Kutadagou (Kuthodaw) in Mandalay at the foot of Mandalay Hill. So if you visit Burma and if you visit Mandalay; you can go and see these marble slabs. They are all intact. It was very lucky that not a single bomb (during Word War II) was dropped on that place. So they are still intact. These marble slabs are big slabs, about 5 feet tall, 3 feet across and about 5 or 6 inches thick. One Burmese author called it the world's biggest book. There are altogether 729 of those marble slabs. Each has two pages or two faces. So it is about 1458 pages of marble slabs. On them are written or inscribed the whole of the Tipiṭaka.

King Mindon was succeeded by his son King Thibo. During his time Burma fell to the British and became a British colony. Then, after the Second World War, Burma gained independence. So the government of Burma decided to hold another council. **In 1954 the Sixth Buddhist was held in Rangoon, Burma.**

In the meantime books came into being and Tipiṭaka books were printed in Burma. So there are book versions and marble slabs version of the Tipiṭaka. The government of Burma wanted there to be one re-edited version of Tipiṭaka in order to become the standard version for all Theravāda Buddhists. So to that Sixth Buddhist Council the Elders from the other Theravāda countries were invited to edit the Tipiṭaka again. So learned Elders from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos were invited to Burma. They sat together with Burmese monks and they re-edited the texts, comparing with the different versions. An edition of Tipiṭaka books was carried out at the Sixth Buddhist Council. Not only the texts but also the Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries were edited, and recited and printed, and published. So there are altogether 118 volumes printed and published by the Sixth Buddhist Council.

So King Mindon created the biggest book in the world. That was the time of scribes who had to do all with their hands. Later came the printing age. Now it is the computer age. So now we are trying to produce the smallest Tipiṭaka in the world, Tipiṭaka on CD-ROM. Now all 118 volumes are entered into the computer. Now I think they are correcting typographical errors. Pretty soon, may be the end of this year or next year I think we will be able to produce that smallest Tipiṭaka book on CD-ROM.

This is the account of the teachings of the Buddha. May the Tipiṭaka endure in the world as long as the world lasts and form the basis for correct understanding of the teachings of the Buddha and also the correct practice of his teachings, thus enabling beings to reach the final destination of the extinction of all suffering!

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

14

The DOCTRINE *of* ANATTA

Today we come to the very important teaching of the Buddha, the Doctrine of *Anatta*. The Doctrine of *Anatta* is only found in Buddhism. So this Doctrine of *Anatta* makes Buddhism unique among religions because almost all other major religions believe in the opposite of the Doctrine of *Anatta*. This Doctrine of *Anatta* is **a central doctrine** in the teachings of the Buddha. It is important that we understand *Anatta* first in theory and then we must understand it through the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation.

Buddha taught this Doctrine of *Anatta* to his five disciples for the first time. Two months after his enlightenment Buddha taught these five disciples his first sermon, the Sermon of the Wheel of the Dhamma. Five days later he taught to them the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta (The Characteristic of *Anatta*). All these five disciples became *Arahants* after listening to this teaching of *Anatta*.

In this Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta Buddha declared that the five aggregates are *Anatta*. Actually he took the five aggregates one by one and then said that *rūpa* or corporeality is *Anatta*, *vedanā* or feeling is *Anatta*, *saññā* or perception is *Anatta*, *saṅkhāra* or mental formations are *Anatta*, and *viññāṇa* or consciousness is *Anatta*. So he taught that all these **five aggregates are *Anatta***.

'Anatta' means not *attā*. The word *'attā'* is a compound word. It is compounded as *'na'* and *'attā'*. *'Na'* means not and *'attā'* means *attā*. The word *'attā'* in Pāḷi has at least two meanings. **One is like when we use oneself to refer to oneself, or yourself, or himself.** We use the word *'attā'*. It is a reflexive pronoun. The other meaning of *attā* is **a permanent entity conceived by most people in the ancient days to be the core of all beings and so on**. So the word *'attā'* has at least two meanings. One is just self with a small 's', so oneself, himself and so on. The other is a self or soul or permanent entity believed to be a truth by many people before the time of the Buddha, during the time of the Buddha, and even after the time of the Buddha.

This word *'attā'* is compounded with the word *'na'*. So first there is *na-attā*. That *na-attā* is changed into *Anatta* following the Pāḷi grammatical rules. So ***'Anatta'*** means **not *attā***. By the Doctrine of *Anatta,* Buddha negated the *attā*.

What was the *attā* that Buddha negated? As I said before, in those days people believed in a soul or a permanent entity. They thought that there is something that is permanent and that the permanent something lives in the body. Then when the physical body becomes old and decrepit and dies, it will take another body and so on. Also they believed that permanent entity is the real one that acts or does actions. And that entity is the real one that experiences happiness or suffering. Also that permanent entity is the lord. It has the power to administer the activities of the body and so on. That is what those people believed during that time.

Then the Buddha came and declared that the five aggregates are not *attā*. The five aggregates are not to be conceived as a permanent entity. In the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta Buddha said: "**Corporeality is not *attā* and so on.**"

The Buddha analyzed the whole world into the five aggregates. There is nothing in addition to the five aggregates that we can call a world. So when the Buddha said that these five aggregates are not *attā*, it amounts to saying that there is no *attā* at all in the world. Although the Buddha did not say that there is no *attā*, when he said these five aggregates are not *attā*, it amounts to saying that there is no *attā*.

What is it that is *Anatta*, what is it that is described as *Anatta*? I just told you that the Buddha declared the five aggregates to be not *attā*.

There are three statements which are well known among Buddhists. These statements are: "**All conditioned phenomena are impermanent; all conditioned phenomena are suffering; all things are *Anatta*.**" So in the first two statements Buddha said all conditioned phenomena are impermanent and suffering. In the third statement the Buddha did not use the word 'conditioned phenomena' but he used instead the word '*dhamma*'. So according to that statement all *dhammas* are not *attā*. 'All *dhammas*' mean the five aggregates and Nibbāna. **So we must understand that not only are the five aggregates *Anatta*, but also Nibbāna is *Anatta*.** Sometimes we might think that since Nibbāna is the object of the world, Nibbāna must be *attā*. But here Buddha said all *dhammas* are not *attā* and all *dhammas* include Nibbāna. So when we come to *Anatta*, we must understand that all five aggregates and also Nibbāna are not *attā*.

We must understand the third statement that all *dhammas* are *Anatta* correctly in different contexts. When it is put as a general statement, we must understand all *dhammas* to mean the five aggregates and Nibbāna. When it is in the context of *Vipassanā*, then 'all *dhammas*' means the five aggregates only

and not Nibbāna. That is because Nibbāna cannot be taken as an object for *Vipassanā* meditation.

In the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta Buddha did not say that Nibbāna was *Anatta*. Why didn't the Buddha mention that Nibbāna was *Anatta* in that Sutta? I think it was because Buddha wanted to direct the five disciples to the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation. So for those who practice *Vipassanā* meditation only the five aggregates can be the object of meditation. It is probably because of this that Buddha did not mention Nibbāna as *Anatta* in the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta.

The meaning of the word *Anatta* — we know that *Anatta* means not *attā*. In the Commentaries it is explained as meaning not being the core of anything, or not having a core, or not being susceptible to the exercise of power. At least we can say there are two meanings or two interpretations to understand here: '**Not *attā***' means **no core or having no core and it means also we cannot have power over this.**

So when the Buddha said *rūpa* or corporeality is *Anatta*, he meant that *rūpa* or corporeality is not a core or is not substantial. And also he meant that corporeality is the one over which we cannot have power.

Although both interpretations, that is, being no core or having no core, are accepted by our teachers, I think 'being no core' is more appropriate in my opinion. If we say, *rūpa* or corporeality is *Anatta* because it has no core, then we can argue: OK. *Rūpa* has no core, but there must be a core somewhere. Only *rūpa* does not possess that core. That kind of argument can come. According to the teachings of the Buddha, that argument is not correct.

What is it that we call 'a core' here, or a substance, or 'essence'? In the Commentaries it is stated that it is something wrongly conceived as a self, **a permanent entity.** That is what we call 'core' here. Also as I said before, it is (conceived as) some permanent entity that abides in the bodies of beings. And that permanent entity lives forever. When the person's body becomes old and dies, then it transfers itself to another new body and so on.

Also 'a core' means **a doer**, that is, someone who performs that actions. Although we think that we are doing the actions, according to that opinion, it is the *attā* that is doing the actions and not us. So *attā* performs the actions and we are just the instruments. Also whenever we experience happiness or suffering, it is not us that experience these, but the *attā* that experiences these, and we are just the instrument in *attā* experiencing happiness or suffering. Also that *attā* is its own master. One who is his own master is the most important part of the thing. And so it is called 'a core'.

Now '*rūpa* is not a core' means *rūpa* is not any one of these. *Rūpa* is not a self or a soul. *Rūpa* is not the abider or the one who lives in the body for all time. *Rūpa* is not a doer. *Rūpa* is not an experiencer. *Rūpa* is not one which is its own master.

When we understand in that way, we are said to understand the *Anatta* nature of things. How do we know that *rūpa* or corporeality is not self, not an abider, not a doer, not an experiencer, and not the one who is its own master? The explanation given in the Commentaries is that first we understand that corporeality is impermanent and so it is suffering. These two, let us say, we have understood. If corporeality is impermanent and it is suffering, then it must have no core, no substance in it because it cannot prevent itself from being impermanent and from being suffering. This is the argument taught in the Commentaries. What

is impermanent and what is suffering cannot even prevent its own impermanence and being suffering. So how could it have the state of a doer or an experiencer and so on? That means something that is impermanent cannot change itself into a permanent thing. Something that is suffering cannot change itself into happiness. If it cannot prevent itself from becoming impermanent and suffering, how can it be a master, or a doer, or an experiencer? So what is impermanent and what is suffering, actually is not *attā* or it is *Anatta* in the sense of having no core or in the sense of being insubstantial.

This takes us to another interpretation of the word *'Anatta'*, that is, being insusceptible to exercise of power. It simply means it does not follow our wishes. All these five aggregates are *Anatta* because of the words said by the Buddha: "**What is *dukkha* is *Anatta*.**" This is the criterion Buddha gave us to decide whether something is *Anatta* or not. If we want to know if something is *Anatta*, we must first know if it is *dukkha* or not. And what is the criterion for *dukkha*? Now Buddha gave us another criterion and that is: what is impermanent is *dukkha*. So we have two formulas here. **What is impermanent is suffering** and **what is suffering is not soul or *Anatta***. Then what is the criterion for being *anicca* or being impermanent? To put it plainly it is disappearing after arising. So disappearing after arising is the mark of being impermanent. Whatever arises and disappears is impermanent. And whatever is impermanent is *dukkha* or suffering. And whatever is *dukkha* is *Anatta*.

We know that *rūpa* or corporeality, or feeling, or perception, and so on arise and disappear or they disappear after arising. When we see for ourselves that these arise and disappear, we know that they are impermanent. When we know that they

are impermanent, we also know that they are *dukkha*, they are suffering. 'Suffering' (*dukkha*) here does not mean physically painful, but here 'suffering' means being oppressed by rise and fall. So the meaning of *dukkha* is being oppressed by rise and fall. That means if anything has arising and disappearing, if anything arises and disappears, it is called *dukkha* (suffering) because it is bombarded by or afflicted by arising and disappearing.

If you see something as impermanent, you know that you cannot turn it into a permanent thing. And if you see something as *dukkha*, you cannot turn it into *sukha*. So you cannot exercise any power over them. And so they are not self or they are *Anatta*, in the sense that they do not follow your wish. That means they arise and disappear according to their wish (nature) and not according to your wish.

So mind and matter arise and disappear depending on conditions. Whether we want them to arise or not when there are conditions, they will arise and they will disappear. So we have no control over their arising and disappearing. That is why having no control over them, having no exercise of power over them is said to be the mark of being *Anatta*. If you want to know whether something is *Anatta* or not, you have to find this mark or this sign, that is, not being susceptible to the exercise of power. In the Commentaries the characteristic or the mark of *Anatta* is given as insusceptibility to the exercise of power.

I think we should also understand that having no core is also a characteristic of *Anatta*. So when we want to know whether something is *Anatta*, we may look for one of these two marks: whether it has a core or it is substantial, and also whether it acts according to our wish or it is outside of control by us.

Most people are not able to see the *Anatta* nature of things because this *Anatta* nature is concealed by compactness. We take things to be compact. We take things to be substantial. And so we fail to see the *Anatta* nature of things.

'They are concealed by compactness' means they are concealed by the notion of compactness. We think that we are a compact thing, that matter is compact and that mind is also compact. So long as we think that we are compact, we cannot see the insubstantiality of ourselves.

The notion of compactness conceals the nature because we do not give attention to resolution into elements. So long as we see mind and matter as one compact thing, we will not see its *Anatta* nature. But when we break down the body and mind into elements, that is, the elements that compose them, then we will come to see the insubstantiality of things.

Now most people do not even see mind and matter as two separate things. Sometimes we think that we are just one, our mind and body are just one. So long as we do not see the separateness of mind and matter or the different elements that constitute mind and that constitute matter, so long as we cannot see them, we will not be able to break this notion of compactness. If we cannot break the notion of compactness, we will not see the *Anatta* nature of things.

When we pay attention to what is happening to us, or what is happening in us, or when we pay attention to the object at the present moment, we will not fail to see that what we thought to be one compact thing is actually composed of small elements.

If we do not practice meditation we think this one mind sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches and thinks. But when you

watch your mind, you know that you see with one mind, and you hear with one mind, and so on. So they are separate things. They are separate elements. Also you know in the body the four elements (earth, water, fire and air). When you are able to see these elements separately, you break the notion of compactness. When you can break the notion of compactness, you know that what you thought to be substantial is really insubstantial. And so you see that it is *Anatta*.

When you see the elements separately, one distinct from the other, and when you see that they arise and disappear depending on the conditions, you come to the realization that there is no exercise of power over them. For example, seeing mind or seeing consciousness — when there is something to be seen and when it is brought into the avenue of your eyes, there is the seeing consciousness. You cannot prevent this seeing consciousness from arising when there are these conditions. However much you want this seeing consciousness not to arise, it will arise because there are conditions for it to arise. So there is no exercising of power over the arising of that seeing consciousness. It arises depending on the conditions. So long as there are conditions, it will arise. So you have no power over them. Having no power over them is one aspect of their being *Anatta*.

So we can really see the *Anatta* nature of things, that is, they are insubstantial, they have no inner core, and also they are not susceptible to the exercise of power, only when we practice *Vipassanā* meditation, only when we pay attention to the objects. Without the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation we cannot see the *Anatta* nature clearly. We may read books. We may hear or listen to talks. And we think we understand the *Anatta* nature. That understanding is not our understanding. It is just a borrowed

understanding. Only when we practice *Vipassanā* meditation, only when we pay close attention to the objects at the present moment can we see the *Anatta* nature of things along with the impermanent nature and the suffering nature. So the nature of *Anatta* can only be understood through the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation.

Since when we practice *Vipassanā* meditation, we do not see anything that is substantial, anything that we can exercise power over, we come to the realization that there is just suffering and no person who suffers. That is because what we call a person is just a combination of mind and matter and there is no person over and above mind and matter. So through the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation we come to see that there is just suffering. There is just arising and disappearing and nothing that arises and disappears. Also when we look at activities, we see that there is just the activity and actually no person who performs these activities.

Also it is said that the cessation of suffering or Nibbāna is, but **there is no person who experiences Nibbāna.** There is just mind and matter and no person. Also it is said that **there is the Path, but nobody who walks on that Path. 'Path'** means **the eight components of the Path.** Apart from these eight components we do not see anything to call a Path. So there are just these eight mental states. That is because in the ultimate analysis there are just mind and body (*nāma* and *rūpa*). In addition to mind and matter there is nothing we can call a person or that we can call an individual.

Seeing the *Anatta* nature of mind and matter or the five aggregates is not the end of the practice of *Vipassanā*. Actually it is the beginning of *Vipassanā*, so people have to make more

effort to go through the higher stages of *Vipassanā* practice until they reach the stage of realizing the Four Noble Truths. **The realization of the Four Noble Truth cannot come about without the understanding of the *Anatta* nature of mind and matter,** actually not only the *Anatta* nature but also the impermanent nature and suffering nature of mind and matter or the five aggregates.

So it is very important when we practice *Vipassanā* meditation that we see for ourselves through our own experience the impermanent nature, the suffering nature, and the *Anatta* nature of mind and matter, so that we can go on this Path, going through the higher stages of *Vipassanā* meditation until we reach our goal.

So to recapitulate Buddha taught that the five aggregates are not *attā*. Since there are only five aggregates in the world, it amounts to saying there is no *attā*. The characteristic of *Anatta* is one of the three general characteristics of all conditioned phenomena. It is important that we see the characteristic of *Anatta* along with the characteristics of impermanence and suffering. This seeing of the characteristics of all conditioned phenomena will eventually lead yogis to the realization of the truth. OK.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

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to the alleviation of suffering
for all beings in woeful states.

We would also like to recall to mind our
departed relatives and friends.
Wherever they are, may they be free
from suffering and be happy.

May suffering ones be suffering free
And the fear-struck, fearless be;
May the grieving shed all grief
And may all beings find relief.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

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~ ***Venerable Ñāṇadassi***

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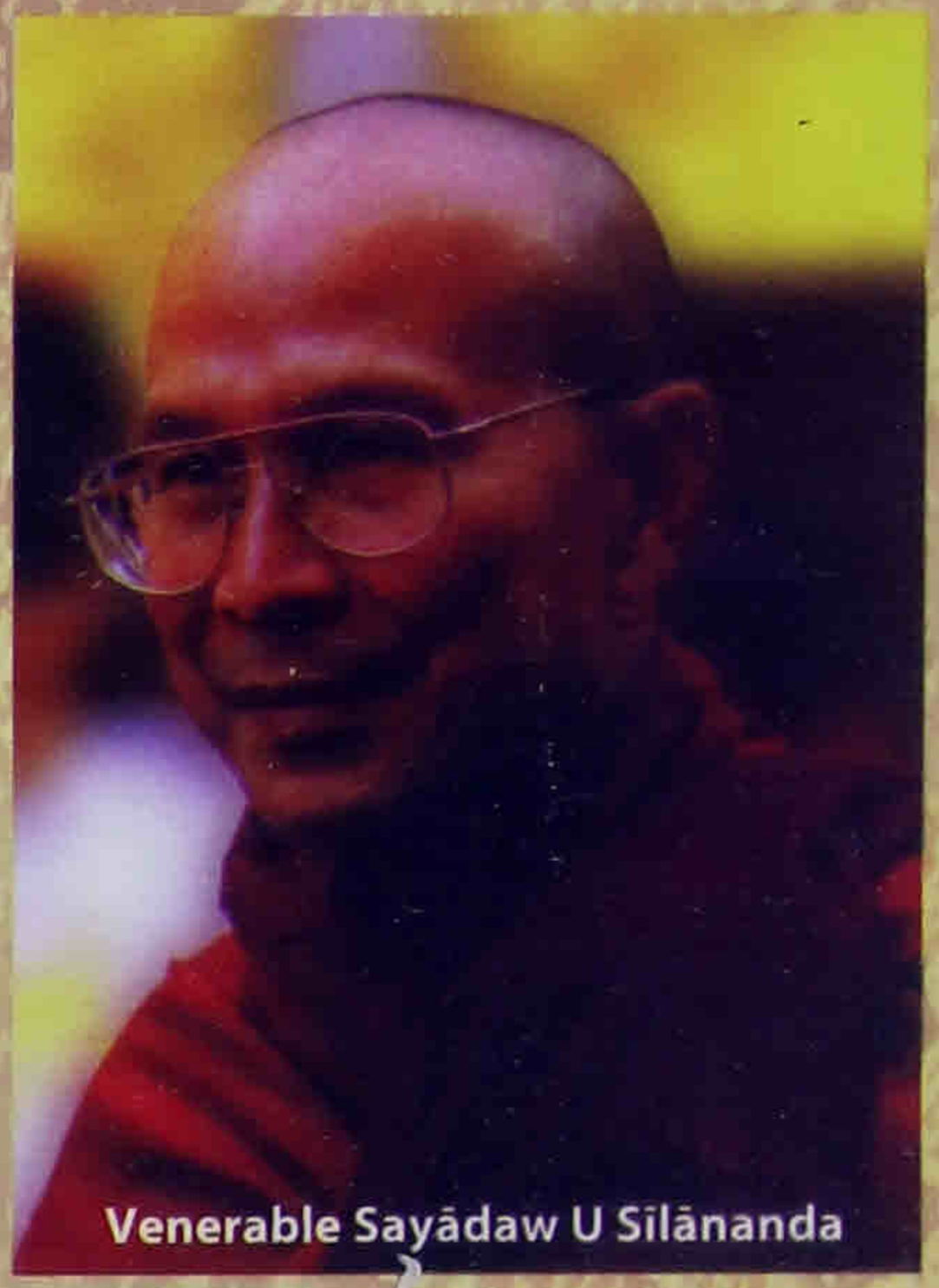
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Well-regarded as a compassionate Teacher with deep insight knowledge, the Venerable Sayādaw teaches Vipassanā meditation, Abhidhamma and other aspects of Theravādian Buddhism in English, Burmese, Pāḷi and Sanskrit. He has led meditation retreats throughout the USA, Japan, Europe and Asia.

In 1993, the Venerable Sayādaw was awarded the title of Agga Mahā Paṇḍita by the Burmese religious authorities and in 1999, the title of Agga Mahā Saddhamma Jotikadhaja. He was also appointed as Rector of International Theravāda Buddhist Missionary University of Yangon in Myanmar and was conferred Honorary Doctorate (D.Litt.) by the Yangon University in 2000.

Venerable Sayādaw U Sīlānanda passed away on 14 Aug 2005 at the age of 77.

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THE FUNDAMENTALS OF BUDDHISM.
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known to you and there also may be
some things which are new to you.
So if there are things you already know,
please be patient because hearing
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firmer and clearer.

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