



BASIC  
THEMES

# *Basic Themes*

FOUR TREATISES ON BUDDHIST PRACTICE

by

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*(Phra Suddhidhammaraṇsī  
Gambhīramedhācariya)*

Translated from the Thai by

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo was unique among the ajaans in the Thai Wilderness tradition in that he composed systematic treatises on the practice. These are valuable documents, giving a wilderness perspective on basic Dhamma topics, and in particular on topics taught in the standard textbooks that Thai monks have been studying since the early part of the last century. The style of these treatises is somewhat terse and formal, in that it adopts the pattern of the textbooks, presenting lists of dhammas – Pali terms and Thai definitions – followed by discussions. The lists and their definitions are all derived from the textbooks; Ajaan Lee's original contribution lies both in how he arranges the lists to amplify one another, and in how he explains them in the discussions, reflecting his own practical experience as a wilderness monk and what he had learned from his teachers. Among the highlights of these discussions are the passages where he departs from the formality of the textbook style with anecdotes and analogies that bring the teachings alive.

Four of these treatises, dating from the latter part of Ajaan Lee's life, are translated here. These were all composed after Ajaan Lee had formulated the method for breath meditation that has since become established with his name. The first three treatises form a set, in that *What is the Triple Gem?* shows that the practice of the noble eightfold path lies at the heart of the act of taking refuge in the Triple Gem; *The Path to Peace & Freedom for the Mind* shows that the practice of breath meditation lies at the heart of the noble eightfold path; and *Basic Themes* deals in detail with issues related to breath meditation itself.

All three of these treatises emphasize two points where the Wilderness tradition differed most sharply from the scholarly tradition in Bangkok in Ajaan Lee's time: in their assertion that the superior human attainments of *jhāna* and *nibbāna* are still possible, and in their interpretation of the not-self teaching.

Also, *The Path to Peace & Freedom for the Mind* makes the point – common to the entire Wilderness tradition – that virtue, concentration, and discernment are inseparable, mutually supporting practices: concentration and discernment bring virtue to perfection; discernment and virtue bring concentration to perfection; and discernment becomes liberating only when based on virtue and concentration.

As for *Basic Themes*, it was originally a smaller treatise. Ajaan Lee expanded it to its current form – adding the Prologue and Epilogue – when he was asked to provide a meditation text for an academy for monks and novices under

construction north of Bangkok. Plans to use the text in the academy never materialized, as Ajaan Lee died before the academy was built, but the added portions give an interesting perspective on the aspects of the Canon that he viewed as being most directly related to the meditation. Of particular interest is the inclusion of the fourteen duties or protocols (*vatta*) from the Vinaya, which stress the way in which training in meditation is a form of apprenticeship. This is a distinctive feature of the Wilderness tradition, in that these duties have been abandoned by many other Buddhist practice traditions.

*Duties of the Saṅgha* is somewhat different sort of treatise, in that it deals with the formal organization of the Thai Saṅgha. It was written at a time when this organization was being overhauled, and it offers a Wilderness perspective on what sort of organization – and attitude to organization – would be genuinely conducive to the aims of the Buddhist religion. The departments mentioned in the treatise were disbanded shortly after it appeared and were replaced by a very different system of organization, which is still in place. However, the lasting value of the treatise lies in the way in which Ajaan Lee shows that the work of the Saṅgha is primarily a matter of the inner development of skillful qualities in the heart and behavior of each monk. These points remain valid regardless of whatever form the external organization of the Saṅgha takes.

The translations in this book are based on the editions printed during Ajaan Lee's lifetime that seem most definitive and complete. At certain points, these editions differ from those more recently printed. Also, I was able to locate a copy of *Basic Themes* containing corrections in Ajaan Lee's own hand. These have been incorporated in the translation.

The Thai term for treatises of this sort is *lak wichaa*: principles of skill, or principles of knowledge. I hope that these translations will provide your practice with principles of knowledge and skill that will keep it firmly grounded.

*Thānissaro Bhikkhu*

METTA FOREST MONASTERY  
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*What is the Triple Gem?*

## INTRODUCTION

Parts of this analysis of the Triple Gem were originally used to teach new monks here at the temple and have been printed twice in book form. Now that a group of people who feel that the book would be beneficial to people interested in the Buddha's teachings have pooled their resources and asked permission to print it a third time, I have decided to expand it into a handbook for all Buddhist adherents – i.e., for all who have declared the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha to be their refuge. Once we have made such a declaration, we have to learn exactly what the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha are. Otherwise, we will follow our religion blindly, without realizing its aims or the benefits – called *puñña*, or merit – that come from its practice, inasmuch as Buddhism is a religion of self-help.

Furthermore, we as Thai people are known throughout the world as Buddhists, but I feel that there are very few of us who know the standards of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. Although many of us are 'Buddhist,' we are Buddhist mostly through custom, not through the principles of informed knowledge.

Altogether, there are two ways of adhering to the religion: rationally and irrationally. To adhere to the religion irrationally means to adhere to it blindly, following one's teachers or companions, holding to whatever they say is good without showing any interest as to whether it really is good or not. This is like a person of no discernment who uses whatever paper money comes his way: If it turns out to be counterfeit, he'll be punished and fined in a variety of ways. This is what it means to adhere to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha irrationally.

To adhere to the religion rationally means not to follow one's own prejudices or those of one's teachers or companions, but to follow the principles of informed knowledge; holding to the Dhamma-Vinaya as one's standard, like a law affixed with the king's seal, enforceable throughout the land, making exceptions for no one. Whoever then transgresses the law can't be regarded as a good citizen. So it is with those who practice the religion: If we want to know if a practice is good or bad, right or wrong, worthy of respect or not, we should check it against the standards established by the Buddha, which are eight in number: Any behavior that –

1. leads to passion,
2. leads to the compounding of suffering,
3. leads to the accumulation of defilement,
4. leads to overweening ambition,

5. leads to discontentment with what one has – i.e., having this, one wants that (greed that goes beyond moderation),
6. leads to socializing (of the wrong sort),
7. leads to laziness,
8. leads to being burdensome to others:

None of these eight forms of behavior qualify as the Dhamma or Vinaya of Buddhism. Once we know clearly that these forms of behavior are not what the Buddha intended, we should abandon them completely.

For this reason, all of us who respect the Buddha's teachings should – instead of working at cross-purposes – join our hearts to cleanse and correct the practice of the religion. Laymen, laywomen, monks and novices should make a point of helping one another in the area of reform. Whatever is already good, we should maintain with respect. Whatever isn't, we should exert pressure to improve. We'll then meet with what's truly good, like rice: If you cook good, clean, husked white rice, you'll eat with pleasure. If you cook unhusked rice or a pile of husks, they'll stick in your own throat. If we let any bad factions go uncorrected, they will burden the hearts of their supporters, who will become like people who cook rice husks to eat. Are we going to let one another be so stupid as to eat rice husks?

By and large, though, most laypeople don't see this as their duty. As for the monks and novices, they throw the responsibility on the laypeople, and so we do nothing but keep throwing it back and forth like this. When things have a bearing on all of us, we should by all means unite our hearts and accept joint responsibility. Only things that have no bearing on us should we leave to others. Unless we act in this way, what is good – the religion – will fall from our grasp. And when the religion falls from our grasp, laymen (*upāsaka*) will become obstacles (*upasak*), i.e., they'll keep creating obstacles in the way of finding merit. Laywomen (*upāsikā*) will become the color of crows (*sīkā*), i.e., dark and evil in their behavior. Novices will become sham novices, careless, spattered, and filthy; and monks (*phra*) will become goats (*phae*), missing out on the flavor of the Dhamma, like the nanny goat who has to go hungry because the milk under her stomach has been taken and drunk by people more intelligent than she. In India, for instance, there are hardly any monks left to make merit with.

Monks are the important faction, because they are the front-line troops, the standard-bearers in the fight with the enemy – evil. Ordinarily, soldiers have to adhere to the discipline of their army and to be sincere in performing their duties. As for the duties enjoined by the religion, they are two:

1. *Gantha-dhura*: studying the Dhamma of the texts. Once we know the texts, though, we can't stop there. We have to put them into practice, because the level of study is simply knowledge on the level of plans and blueprints. If we don't



follow the blueprints, we won't receive the benefits to be gained from our knowledge. And when we don't gain the benefits, we're apt to discard the texts, like a doctor who knows the formula for a medicine but doesn't use it to cure any patients. The medicine won't show any benefits, and this will cause him to go looking for a living in other ways, discarding any interest to pursue that formula further. Thus, putting the Dhamma texts into practice is one way of preserving them, for once we've put them into practice and seen the results arising within us – i.e., our own bad qualities begin to wane – we will appreciate the value of the texts and try to keep them intact. This is like a doctor who is able to use a medicine to cure a fever and so will preserve the formula because of its use in making a living. Thus, the Lord Buddha set out a further duty – the practice of the Dhamma – for those who are ordained:

2. *Vipassanā-dhura*: the practice of tranquility and insight meditation. These two practices are our primary duties as monks and novices. If we don't devote ourselves to these two lines of practice, we'll become a fifth column within the religion, enemies of the good standards of the Dhamma and Vinaya. Monks will become political monks, war-making monks, loudspeaker monks – loudspeaker monks are those who can teach others but can't teach themselves. They're good only at speaking Dhamma, but their hearts have no Dhamma, and so they become the enemies of those who practice the Dhamma and Vinaya rightly and well.

So I ask all Buddhists not to turn a deaf ear or a blind eye to these problems. If we hold that it's none of our business, the consequences could well flare up and spread to burn us. For this reason, I ask that we all help one another to look after the religion.

Actually, all human beings born need a set of customs and traditions – called religion – to which they give special respect. Otherwise, we will have no principles of good and evil or of moral virtue. Whatever religion this may be is up to the individual adherents. I ask only that they respect their religion sincerely and rightly, for the sake of true purity.

If we were to use only worldly knowledge to keep order, it would work only in public places. In private or secret places, order wouldn't last. But as for religion, once people have studied so that they really know good and evil, they wouldn't dare do evil, either in public or in private. Religion is thus one of the important mainstays of the world. If we human beings had no moral virtue imbedded in our hearts, even the greatest power on earth would be able to keep us in line only temporarily, and even then it wouldn't be able to influence our minds the way the moral virtue that comes from religion can. For this reason, the practice of moral virtue is one way of helping the religion and the world.

Now, I'm not claiming to be a heavenly being or anyone special. I'm simply a person who wishes the religion well. So if anything in this book is defective – in

terms of the expression or the Pali – I hope that knowledgeable people will forgive me, for it's not the case that I'm expert in a wide range of matters.

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## I. BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

I go to the Buddha for refuge

Ordinarily, for the world to experience happiness and harmony, there has to be a teaching or tradition generally respected as good. This being the case, bodhisattvas arise – people who develop goodness on the grand scale for the sake of attaining right self-awakening. Once they have reached this goal, they are termed ‘Buddhas,’ Awakened Ones. For bodhisattvas to succeed in this way, they have to give themselves over to perfecting ten qualities –

1. *Dāna-pāramī*: generosity.
2. *Sīla-pāramī*: virtue.
3. *Nekkhamma-pāramī*: renunciation of sensuality (and of the household life).
4. *Paññā-pāramī*: the search for discernment.
5. *Viriya-pāramī*: persistence.
6. *Khanti-pāramī*: endurance, patience.
7. *Sacca-pāramī*: truthfulness.
8. *Adhiṭṭhāna-pāramī*: determination.
9. *Mettā-pāramī*: goodwill.
10. *Upekkhā-pāramī*: equanimity (in proper cases, i.e., in areas that are beyond one’s control).

These ten perfections are the factors that enable a bodhisattva to succeed in becoming an arahant, a Pure One, in the world. Once he attains this state, three qualities – called actualized virtues – arise in his heart:

*Visuddhi-guṇa*: purity.

*Paññā-guṇa*: sharp discernment.

*Karuṇādhiguṇa*: compassion for living beings throughout the world.

These qualities enable the Buddha to teach the Dhamma in a beneficial way. His conduct in this area is of three sorts: Having achieved his own purposes (*attattha-cariyā*), he acts for the benefit of living beings throughout the world (*lokattha-cariyā*) and teaches the Dhamma to his own circle of relatives (*ñātattha-cariyā*).

There are three aspects to the Buddha:

1) The physical aspect – the body (properties [*dhātu*], aggregates [*khandha*], and sense media [*āyatana*]), which is the external aspect of the Buddha, called *Buddha-nimitta*, or the symbol of the Buddha. (This is like the bark of a tree.)

2) The good practices he followed – such as virtue, concentration, and discernment, which are aspects of his activity. These are called *dhamma-nimitta* of the Buddha, symbols of his inner quality. (These are the sapwood.)

3) *Vimutti* – release from ignorance, craving, clinging, and kamma; attaining nibbāna, the supreme quality, a quality that does not die (*amata-dhamma*). (This is the heartwood, or essence of the Buddha.)

A person of little intelligence will use bark to build himself a home; a person of medium intelligence will use sapwood; while a person of sharp intelligence will build his home of heartwood. So it is with those of us who take refuge in the Buddha: We're like the three types of people who take wood to build ourselves a home. But in any case we're better off than people without a home. Like rats or lizards who have to live in the hollows of trees and are in for trouble if people set the trees on fire: If we place our trust in our bodies, our worldly possessions, or our livelihood, we'll have no refuge when the fires of death reach us. Or as when a boat sinks in the middle of the ocean: A person without a life-vest is in serious danger. For this reason, we should educate ourselves so as to find a refuge that will benefit us both in this life and in lives to come.

Another comparison: The sages of the past used the term *Buddha-ratana*, comparing the Buddha to a jewel. Now, there are three sorts of jewels: artificial gems; gemstones, such as rubies or sapphires; and diamonds, which are held to be the highest. The aspects of the Buddha might be compared to these three sorts of jewels. To place confidence in the external aspect – the body of the Buddha or images made to represent him – is like dressing up with artificial gems. To show respect for the practices followed by the Buddha by giving rise to them within ourselves is like dressing up with rubies and sapphires. To reach the quality of deathlessness is like dressing in diamonds from head to toe.

But no matter what sort of jewels we use to dress up in, we're better off than savages who go around hanging animal bones or human bones from their necks, who look unkempt and – what's more – are bound to be haunted by the bones they wear. The bones, here, stand for our own bones, i.e., our attachment to the body as really being ours. Actually, our body comes for the most part from the bodies of other animals – the food we've eaten – so how can we seriously take it to be our own? Whoever insists on regarding the body as his or her own should be called a savage or a swindler – and, as a swindler, is bound to receive punishment

in proportion to the crime.

So we should regard the body as money borrowed for the span of a lifetime, to be used as capital. And we should search for profits so as to release ourselves from our debts, by searching for another, better form of goodness: the qualities of the Buddha that he left as teachings for all of his followers. These qualities, briefly put, are –

1. *Sati*: the continual mindfulness (wakefulness) found in the factors of *jhāna*.
2. *Paññā*: the intuitive discernment that comes from developing the mind in concentration.
3. *Vimutti*: release from defilement

These are qualities that all Buddhists should develop within themselves so as to gain awakening, following the example of the Buddha, becoming *Sāvaka* Buddhas (Disciple Buddhas), an opportunity open – without exception and with no restrictions of time or place – to all who follow his teachings.

Buddhists who revere the Buddha in the full sense of the word should have two sorts of symbols with them, to serve as reminders of their tradition –

1. *Buddha-nimitta*: representatives of the Buddha, such as Buddha images or *stūpas* in which relics of the Buddha are placed. This sort of reminder is like a nation's flag.
2. *Buddha-guṇa*: the qualities that form the inner symbol of the Buddha, i.e., the proper practice of his teachings. Whoever takes a stand in this manner is bound to be victorious both within and without, safe from such enemies as temptation and mortality.

Our nation's flag and the people of our nation are two different things. Just as our flag will have value only if the people of our nation are good and preserve the fullness of the nation's qualities; so too, we Buddhists have to respect both our flag – images of the Buddha – and the qualities of the Buddha if we are to turn ourselves into good Buddhists. Otherwise, we will suffer from not having fulfilled our responsibilities.

To take an example, we Thai people, in order to be Thai in the full sense, have to possess a number of qualifications: the ability to speak and to read Thai, acquaintance with Thai customs and traditions, the ability to benefit ourselves (*attattha-cariyā*) and to spread those benefits to help care for the needs of our parents, spouses, and children (*ñātattha-cariyā*). And not only that: If we have the ability and the energy – physical, mental, financial, or the energy of our virtues –

we should expand those benefits to help other groups in general, our companions in happiness and suffering, throughout the nation (*lokattha-cariyā*). This is what it means to be Thai in the full sense of the word. In the same way, we who revere images of the Buddha and the Buddha's good qualities should have them with us at all times if we are to receive the full benefits that come from respecting the Buddha's teachings and to maintain the peace and well-being of Buddhists at large.

## II. DHAMMAṂ SARAṆAṂ GACCHĀMI

I go to the Dhamma for refuge

There are three levels to the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha –

*A. Pariyatti-dhamma:* studying the words of the Buddha as recorded in the Canon – the Discipline, the Discourses, and the Abhidhamma.

*B. Paṭipatti-dhamma:* following the practice of virtue, concentration, and discernment as derived from one’s study of the Canon.

*C. Paṭivedha-dhamma:* Nibbāna.

A. The study of the Dhamma can be done in any of three ways –

1. *Alagaddūpama-pariyatti:* studying like a water viper.

2. *Nissaraṇ’attha-pariyatti:* studying for the sake of emancipation.

3. *Bhaṇḍāgārika-pariyatti:* studying to be a storehouse keeper.

*Studying like a water viper* means to study the words of the Buddha without then putting them into practice, having no sense of shame at doing evil, disobeying the training rules of the Vinaya, making oneself like a poisonous snake-head, full of the fires of greed, anger, and delusion.

*Studying for the sake of emancipation* means to study the Buddha’s teachings out of a desire for merit and wisdom, with a sense of conviction and high regard for their worth – and then, once we have reached an understanding, bringing our thoughts, words, and deeds into line with those teachings with a high sense of reverence and respect. Some people try to change themselves to be in line with the Buddha’s words. To try to change the Buddha’s teachings to be in line with ourselves is the wrong approach – because when we’re ordinary, run-of-the-mill people, we’re for the most part full of defilements, cravings, views, and conceits. If we act in this way we’re bound to be more at fault than those who try to bring themselves into line with the teachings: Such people are very hard to find fault with.

*Studying to be a storehouse keeper* refers to the education of people who no longer have to be trained, i.e., of arahants, the highest level of the Noble Ones. Some arahants, when they were still ordinary, run-of-the-mill people, heard the Dhamma directly from the Buddha once or twice and were able immediately to reach the highest attainment. This being the case, they lacked a wide-ranging knowledge of worldly conventions and traditions; and so, with an eye to the

benefit of other Buddhists, they were willing to undergo a certain amount of further education. This way of studying the Dhamma is called *sikkhā-gāravatā*: respect for the training.

B. The practice of the Dhamma means to conduct oneself in line with the words of the Buddha as gathered under three headings:

- Virtue: proper behavior, free from vice and harm, in terms of one’s words and deeds.
- Concentration: intentness of mind, centered on one of the themes of meditation, such as the breath.
- Discernment: insight and circumspection with regard to all fabrications, i.e., the properties, aggregates, and sense media.

To conduct oneself in this manner is termed practicing the Dhamma. By and large, though, Buddhists tend to practice the Dhamma in a variety of ways that aren’t in line with the true path of practice. If we were to classify them, there would be three types:

1. *Lokādhimateyya* – putting the world first.
2. *Attādhimateyya* – putting the self first.
3. *Dhammādhimateyya* – putting the Dhamma first.

*To put the world first* means to practice for the sake of such worldly rewards as status, material gains, honor, praise, and sensual pleasures. When we practice this way, we’re actually torturing ourselves because undesirable things are bound to occur: Having attained status, we can lose it. Having acquired material gains, we can lose them. Having received praise, we can receive censure. Having experienced pleasure, we can see it disintegrate. Far from the paths, fruitions, and nibbāna, we torture ourselves by clinging to these things as our own.

*To put the self first* means to practice in accordance with our own opinions, acting in line with whatever those opinions may be. Most of us tend to side with ourselves, getting stuck on our own views and conceits because our study of the Dhamma hasn’t reached the truth of the Dhamma, and so we take as our standard our own notions, composed of four forms of personal bias –

- a. *Chandāgati*: doing whatever we feel like doing.
- b. *Bhayāgati*: fearing certain forms of power or authority, and thus not daring to practice the Dhamma as we truly should. (We put certain individuals first.)
- c. *Dosāgati*: acting under the power of anger, defilement, craving, conceits, and views.



*d. Mohāgati:* practicing misguidedly, not studying or searching for what is truly good; assuming that we're already smart enough, or else that we're too stupid to learn; staying buried in our habits with no thought of extracting ourselves from our sensual pleasures.

All of these ways of practice are called 'putting the self first.'

*To put the Dhamma first* means to follow the noble eightfold path –

a. Right View: seeing that there really is good, there really is evil, there really is stress, that stress has a cause, that it disbands, and that there is a cause for its disbanding.

b. Right Resolve: always thinking of how to rid ourselves of whatever qualities we know to be wrong and immoral, i.e. seeing the harm in sensual desires in that they bring on suffering and stress.

c. Right Speech: speaking the truth; not saying anything divisive or inciting; not saying anything coarse or vulgar in places where such words would not be proper or to people to whom they would not be proper to say; not saying anything useless. Even though what we say may be worthwhile, if our listener isn't interested then our words would still count as useless.

d. Right Action: being true to our duties, not acting in ways that would be corrupt or bring harm to ourselves or others.

e. Right Livelihood: obtaining wealth in ways that are honest, searching for it in a moral way and using it in a moral way.

f. Right Effort: persisting in ridding ourselves of all that is wrong and harmful in our thoughts, words, and deeds; persisting in giving rise to what would be good and useful to ourselves and others in our thoughts, words, and deeds, without a thought for the difficulty or weariness involved; acting persistently so as to be a mainstay to others (except in cases that are beyond our control).

g. Right Mindfulness: being firmly mindful in the correct way; making sure, before we act or speak, not to act or speak through the power of inattention or forgetfulness, making sure to be constantly mindful in our thoughts (being mindful of the four frames of reference).

h. Right Concentration: keeping the mind firmly centered in the correct way. No matter what we do or say, no matter what moods may strike the heart, the heart keeps its poise, firm and unflinching in the four *jhānas*.

These eight factors can be reduced to three – virtue, concentration, and discernment – called the middle way, the heart of the Buddha's teachings. The middleness of virtue means to be pure in thought, word, and deed, acting out of

compassion, seeing that the life of others is like your own, that their possessions are like your own, feeling goodwill, loving others as much as yourself. When ‘you’ and ‘they’ are equal in this way, you are bound to be upright in your behavior, like a well-balanced burden that, when placed on your shoulders, doesn’t cause you to tip to one side or the other. But even then you’re still in a position of having to shoulder a burden. So you are taught to focus the mind on a single preoccupation: This can be called ‘holding in your hands’ – i.e., holding the mind in the middle – or concentration.

The middleness of concentration means focusing on the present, not sending your thoughts into the past or future, holding fast to a single preoccupation (*ānāpānaka-jhāna*, absorption in the breath).

As for the middleness of discernment: No matter what preoccupations may come passing by, you’re able to rid yourself of all feelings of liking or disliking, approval or rejection. You don’t cling, even to the one preoccupation that has arisen as a result of your own actions. You put down what you have been holding in your hands; you don’t fasten onto the past, present, or future. This is release.

When our virtue, concentration, and discernment are all in the middle this way, we’re safe. Just as a boat going down the middle of a channel, or a car that doesn’t run off the side of the road, can reach its destination without beaching or running into a stump; so too, people who practice in this way are bound to reach the qualities they aspire to, culminating in the paths and fruitions leading to nibbāna, which is the main point of the Buddha’s teachings.

So in short, *putting the Dhamma first* means to search solely for purity of heart.

C. The attainment of the Dhamma refers to the attainment of the highest quality, nibbāna. If we refer to the people who reach this attainment, there are four sorts –

1. *Sukkha-vipassako*: those who develop just enough tranquility and discernment to act as a basis for advancing to liberating insight and who thus attain nibbāna having mastered only *āsava-kkhaya-ñāṇa*, the knowledge that does away with the fermentation of defilement.
2. *Tevijjo*: those who attain the three skills.
3. *Chalābhiñño*: those who attain the six intuitive powers.
4. *Catuppaṭṭisambhidappatto*: those who attain the four forms of acumen.

To explain *sukkha-vipassako* (those who develop insight more than tranquility): *Vipassanā* (liberating insight) and *āsava-kkhaya-ñāṇa* (the awareness

that does away with the fermentation of defilement) differ only in name. In actuality they refer to the same thing, the only difference being that *vipassanā* refers to the beginning stage of insight, and *āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa* to the final stage: clear and true comprehension of the four noble truths.

To explain *tevijjo*: The three skills are –

*a. Pubbenivasanussati-ñāṇa*: the ability to remember past lives – one, two, three, four, five, ten, one hundred, one thousand, depending on one's powers of intuition. (This is a basis for proving whether death is followed by rebirth or annihilation.)

*b. Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*: knowledge of where living beings are reborn – on refined levels or base – after they die.

*c. Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: the awareness that enables one to do away with the fermentations in one's character (sensuality, states of becoming, and ignorance).

To explain *chaḷabhiñño*: The six intuitive powers are –

*a. Iddhividhī*: the ability to display miracles – becoming invisible, walking on a dry path through a body of water, levitating, going through rain without getting wet, going through fire without getting hot, making a crowd of people appear to be only a few, making a few to appear many, making oneself appear young or old as one likes, being able to use the power of the mind to influence events in various ways.

*b. Dibbasota*: clairaudience; the ability to hear far distant sounds, beyond ordinary human powers.

*c. Cetopariya-ñāṇa*: the ability to know the thoughts of others.

*d. Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*: the ability to remember previous lives.

*e. Dibba-cakkhu*: clairvoyance; the ability to see far distant objects, beyond ordinary human powers. Some people can even see other levels of being with their clairvoyant powers (one way of proving whether death is followed by rebirth or annihilation, and whether or not there really are other levels of being).

*f. Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: the awareness that does away with the fermentation of defilement.

To explain *catuppaṭṭisambhidappatto*: The four forms of acumen are –

*a. Attha-paṭṭisambhidā*: acumen with regard to the sense of the Dhamma and of matters in general, knowing how to explain various points in line with their proper meaning.

*b. Dhamma-paṭisambhidā*: acumen with regard to all mental qualities.  
*c. Nirutti-paṭisambhidā*: acumen with regard to linguistic conventions.  
(This can include the ability to know the languages of living beings in general.)

*d. Paṭibhāṇa-paṭisambhidā*: acumen in speaking on the spur of the moment, knowing how to answer any question so as to clear up the doubts of the person asking (like the Venerable Nagasena).

This ends the discussion of the virtues of the four classes of people – called arahants – who have reached the ultimate quality, nibbāna. As for the essence of what it means to be an arahant, though, there is only one point – freedom from defilement: This is what it means to attain the Dhamma, the other virtues being simply adornment.

The three levels of Dhamma we have discussed are, like the Buddha, compared to jewels: There are many kinds of jewels to choose from, depending on how much wealth – discernment – we have.

All of the qualities we have mentioned so far, to put them briefly so as to be of use, come down to this: Practice so as to give rise to virtue, concentration, and discernment within yourself. Otherwise, you won't have a refuge or shelter. A person without the qualities that provide refuge and shelter is like a person without a home – a delinquent or a vagrant – who is bound to wander shiftlessly about. Such people are hollow inside, like a clock without any workings: Even though it has a face and hands, it can't tell anyone where it is, what time it is, or whether it's morning, noon, or night (i.e., such people forget that they are going to die).

People who aren't acquainted with the Dhamma within themselves are like people blind from birth: Even though they are born in the world of human beings, they don't know the light of the sun and moon that give brightness to human beings. They get no benefit from the light of the sun and moon or the light of fire; and being blind, they then go about proclaiming to those who can see, that there is no sun, no moon, and no brightness to the world. As a result, they mislead those whose eyes are already a little bleary. In other words, some groups say that the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha don't exist, that they were invented to fool the gullible.

Now, the Dhamma is something subtle and fine, like the fire-potential (*tejas*) that exists in the air or in various elements and that, if we have enough common sense, can be drawn out and put to use. But if we're fools, we can sit staring at a bamboo tube [a device for starting fire that works on the same principle as the diesel engine] from dawn to dusk without ever seeing fire at all. Anyone who believes that there is no Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, no series of paths or

fruits leading to nibbāna, no consciousness that experiences death and rebirth, is like the fool sitting and staring at the bamboo tube.

Here I would like to tell a story as an allegory of those who aren't acquainted with the Dhamma. There once was a man living in the woods who, with his five sons, started growing crops in a clearing about a mile from their home village. He built a small shack at the clearing and would often take his sons to stay there. One morning he started a fire in the shack and told his sons to look after the fire, for he was going out to hunt for food in the forest. 'If the fire goes out,' he told them, 'get some fire from my bamboo tube and start it up again.' Then he set out to search for food to feed his sons.

After he had left, his sons got so wrapped up in enjoying their play that when they finally took a look at the fire, they found that it was completely out. So they had the first son go get some fire to start it up again. The first son walked over and tried knocking on the bamboo tube but didn't see any fire. So they had the second son get some fire from the tube: He opened it up but didn't see any fire inside. All he saw were two bamboo chips but he didn't know what to do with them. So the third son came over for a look and, since he didn't see any fire, he took a knife to cut the tube in half but still didn't see any fire. The fourth son went over and, seeing the two halves lying there, shaved them down into thin strips to find the fire in them but didn't see any fire at all.

Finally the fifth son went over to look for fire, but before he went he said to his brothers, 'What's the matter with you guys that you can't get any fire from the bamboo tube? What a bunch of fools you are! I'll go get it myself.' With that, he went to look at the bamboo tube and found it split into strips lying in pile. Realizing what his brothers had done, and thinking, 'What a bunch of hare-brains,' he reached for a mortar and pestle and ground up the bamboo strips to find the fire in them. By the time he ran out of strength, he had ground them into a powder, but he still hadn't found any fire. So he snuck off to play by himself.

Eventually, toward noon, the father returned from the forest and found that the fire had gone out. So he asked his sons about it, and they told him how they had looked for fire in the bamboo tube without finding any. 'Idiots,' he thought angrily to himself, 'they've taken my fire-starter and pounded it to bits. For that, I won't fix them any food. Let 'em starve!' As a result, the boys didn't get anything to eat the entire day.

Those of us who aren't acquainted with the brightness of the Dhamma – '*Dhammo padīpo*' – lying within us, who don't believe that the Dhamma has value for ourselves and others, are lacking in discernment, like the boys looking for fire in the bamboo tube. Thus we bring about our own ruin in various ways, wasting our lives: born in darkness, living in darkness, dying in darkness, and then reborn in more darkness all over again. Even though goodness lies within us, we can't get

any use from it and so we'll suffer for a long time to come, like the boys who ruined their father's fire-starter and so had to go without food.

The Dhamma lies within us, but we don't look for it. If we hope for goodness, whether on a low or a high level, we'll have to look here, inside, if we are to find what's truly good. But before we can know ourselves in this way, we first have to know – through study and practice – the principles taught by the Buddha.

Recorded Dhamma (*pariyatti dhamma*) is simply one of the symbols of the Buddha's teachings. The important point is to actualize the Dhamma through the complete practice of virtue, concentration, and discernment. This is an essential part of the religion, the part that forms the inner symbol of all those who practice rightly and well. Whether the religion will be good or bad, whether it will prosper or decline, depends on our practice, not on the recorded Dhamma, because the recorded Dhamma is merely a symbol. So if we aim at goodness, we should focus on developing our inner quality through the Dhamma of practice (*paṭipatti dhamma*). As for the main point of Buddhism, that's the Dhamma of attainment (*paṭivedha dhamma*), the transcendent quality: nibbāna.

### III. SAṄGHAM SARAṄAM GACCHĀMI

I go to the Saṅgha for refuge.

The word *Saṅgha*, if translated as a substantive, refers to those who have ordained and are wearing the yellow robe. Translated as a quality, it refers to all people in general who have practiced correctly in line with the Buddha's teachings. Members of the monastic order, however, are of all sorts, and so we have two groups –

A. *Sammuti-saṅgha*: the conventional Saṅgha.

B. *Ariya-saṅgha*: the Noble Saṅgha.

Membership in the conventional Saṅgha is attained through consent of the Order, in a formal ceremony with witnesses, following the procedures set out in the Vinaya. Membership in the Noble Saṅgha is attained when the quality of transcendence (*lokuttara dhamma*) appears in one's heart as a result of one's own behavior and practice, with no formalities of any sort whatsoever. All Buddhists – whether formally ordained or not, no matter what their gender, color, or social position – can become members of this Saṅgha. This is termed being ordained by the Dhamma, or being self-ordained in a way that cannot be faulted.

To speak in terms of qualities, the qualities of transcendence, stable and sure, that appear in the hearts of those who practice – leading them solely to good destinations and closing off the four states of destitution (*apāya*) – are, taken together, called the Noble Saṅgha.

A. Members of the conventional Saṅgha, with regard to the way they conduct themselves, fall into four groups –

1. *Upajīvikā*: those who become ordained simply because they're looking for ways to make a living, without searching for any higher virtues to develop within themselves. They use the yellow robe as a means of livelihood, without any thought of following the threefold training of virtue, concentration, and discernment.

2. *Upakīlikā*: those who become ordained without any respect for the training, looking simply for pastimes for their own enjoyment – collecting plants, playing chess, gambling, buying lottery tickets, betting on horses – looking for gain in ways forbidden by the Vinaya, disobeying the words of the Buddha, disregarding the virtues he promulgated, undermining the religion.

3. *Upamuyuhikā*: those who are close-minded and misguided, unwilling to train themselves in heightened virtue, concentration, or discernment. Even though they may have some education and knowledge, they still keep themselves closed-minded, making excuses based on their teachers, the time, the place, and their accustomed beliefs and practices. Stuck where they are, such people are unwilling to change their ways so as to accord with the principles of the Dhamma.

4. *Upanissaraṇikā*: those who desire what's meritorious and skillful; who search for the true principles of the Dhamma and Vinaya; who set their hearts on studying with reverence and respect, and conduct themselves in line with what they have learned; who aim for the merit and skillfulness offered by Buddhism, for the path leading to release from suffering; who rightly follow the Buddha's teachings, i.e. –

a. *Anūpavādo*: They don't berate others in inappropriate ways.

b. *Anūpaghāto*: They aren't vindictive or violent to others.

c. *Pāṭimokkhe ca saṁvaro*: They stay well within the precepts of the Pāṭimokkha and don't disobey the training rules of the Vinaya – like good citizens, desired by the nation, who stay within the bounds of the government's laws. (If people don't keep within the laws of the land, it will lead only to turmoil, because people who have no bounds are like farmers who have no boundary markers and who will thus infringe on one another's property, giving rise to needless disputes and ill-feeling, serving no purpose whatsoever.)

d. *Mattaññutā ca bhattasmim*: They have a sense of moderation in searching for and using the four necessities of life. They understand how to make the best use of things – knowing what's beneficial and what's harmful, what is and what isn't of use to the body, considering things carefully before making use of them (in line with the principles of morality and the Buddha's teachings).

e. *Pantañca sayanāsanam*: They favor quiet, secluded places to stay. To quote from the Canon, these include:

– *Araññagato vā*: going to a forest wilderness, far from human society, free from social interaction

– *Suññāgāragato vā*: or to uninhabited dwellings, in places far off the beaten track

– *Rukkhamūlagato vā*: or living under the shade of a tree, in a cave, or under an overhanging cliff face, so as to aid the heart in attaining concentration.



*f. Adhicitte ca āyogo:* They make a persistent effort, through the practice of concentration, to cleanse the heart, freeing it from such hindrances as sensual desire.

*Etam buddhāna-sāsanam:* All of these factors are the teachings of the Buddhas.

*Na hi pabbājito parūpaghāti  
Samaṇo hoti param viheṭṭhayanto.*

How can a person who harms himself and others be a good monk?

These, then are the attributes of the Saṅgha. In broad terms, they come down to two sorts:

1. *Saṅgha-nimitta:* the symbol of having been ordained (the mode of dress, etc.).

2. *Guṇa-sampatti:* the inner qualifications – virtue and truth – of those worthy meditators who are held to be the field of merit for the world.

Those with the necessary resources – i.e., discernment – will obtain a good field. Whatever seed they plant will give a yield well worth the effort involved, just as an intelligent person who puts his savings in a safe national bank will protect his capital from loss and even earn a profit.

Just as a good rice field has four characteristics – the ground is level and even, the dike has a water gate that is easy to open and close, the soil is rich in nutrients, the rainfall comes at the proper season – in the same way, members of the Saṅgha who are to be a field of merit for the world have to be endowed with the four following qualities:

1. The analogy of level, even ground refers to those monks who are free from the four forms of personal bias. Whatever they do in thought, word, and deed, they are free from:

*a. Chandāgati* – i.e., they don't act solely under the power of their own likes and inclinations;

*b. Dosāgati* – or under the power of ill will or anger towards others;

*c. Mohāgati* – or under the power of delusion;

*d. Bhayāgati* – or under the power of fear or apprehension of any sort whatsoever. They aim at what is right and true as their major concern, both in the presence of others and in private, keeping themselves always on a par with their principles.

2. As for the analogy of a water gate that is easy to open and close, ‘closing’ refers to exercising restraint so that evil doesn’t arise within us. Restraint has four aspects –

a. *Pātimokkha-saṁvara-sīla*: staying within the bounds of the Pātimokkha.

b. *Indrīya-saṁvara-sīla*: exercising restraint over our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, and ideation so as to keep the mind quiet, unagitated, and in good order.

c. *Ājīva-parisuddhi-sīla*: searching for the necessities of life – food, clothing, shelter, and medicine – only in ways that are proper.

d. *Paccaya-paccavekkhaṇa-parisuddhi-sīla*: considering the necessities of life before using them so as not to use them out of craving.

To exercise restraint in these ways is called ‘closing.’ ‘Closing,’ however, can be understood in another way, i.e., exercising restraint so that corruption doesn’t arise in the three areas of our thoughts, words, and deeds.

a. To close or control our deeds means, in broad terms, not to kill living beings or to oppress or torment them in any way; not to steal the belongings of others; and not to engage in sexual misconduct (or in the sexual act) or to give rein to any sensual defilements. Even though such defilements may arise in the heart, we keep them under control. This is what it means to close our deeds.

b. To close our words means not to tell lies, either to others people’s faces or behind their backs; not to speak divisively, i.e., in a way that would lead to a needless falling-out between people; not to speak coarsely or abusively, not cursing, swearing, or being vulgar; and not to engage in useless chatter, saying things that are of no real use to ourselves or our listeners. To be intent on restraining ourselves in this way is called closing off evil words so that they don’t have a chance to arise.

c. To close off evil thoughts means:

– *Anabhijjhā-visama-lobha*: refraining from the greed that goes above and beyond our sphere and powers to the point where dissatisfaction defiles the mind.

– *Abyāpāda*: not storing up feelings of ill will to the point where strong anger takes over and we let envy and jealousy show,

– *Sammā-ditṭhi*: keeping our views correct in line with right principles, eliminating wrong views that arise from the mind’s being clouded and untrained – i.e., overpowered by ignorance and delusion

– to the point of believing that there is no good or evil, and from there to deeply ingrained unskillful mental states. When we take care to ward off these unskillful mental qualities so that they can't arise in our hearts, they will give way to Right View: seeing that there really is good, there really is evil; that virtue, generosity, and meditation really give results; that the paths and fruitions leading to nibbāna really exist. When we see things in this way, we have in effect closed off evil, preventing it from penetrating our hearts, just as rice farmers close their dikes to prevent salt water from flowing into their fields.

As for 'opening,' it refers to practicing the five forms of unselfishness –

*a. Āvāsāmacchāriya:* not being possessive of the place over which we have control, such as our temple or monastery; not preventing good people from coming to stay. If people are pure in their behavior and able to impart what is good to us, we should give up our space to make room for them so that they can stay in comfort. Evil people, however, shouldn't be allowed to infiltrate our group; and bad people who are already in the group should be expelled. This is how to behave with discernment in this area.

*b. Kulāmacchāriya:* not being possessive of our families. On the external level, this refers to the families who support us. We don't prevent them from making offerings to other individuals and we don't prevent capable individuals from teaching and advising them. Some monks stand in the way of such interchanges, creating barriers with their thoughts, words, and deeds. Sometimes if their supporters make merit with other individuals, they even make reprisals, such as refusing to allow that family to make merit with their own groups or factions. These unskillful attitudes shouldn't be allowed to arise in our hearts.

This is on the external level.

On the internal level, being possessive of our 'family' refers to the heart's attachment to sensations and mental acts, which form the family line of unawakened people. We should abandon this attachment so that we can enter the lineage of the Noble Ones.

*c. Lābhāmacchāriya:* not being possessive of the material gains we have attained through proper means, not regarding them as being our own. Material gains, as classified by the Vinaya, are of four sorts: food, clothing, shelter (lodgings and the items used in them, such as furniture, matting, etc.), and medicine. We should see that when people present us with offerings of this sort, they have abandoned an enemy – their own stinginess and selfishness – and have gained in merit and skillfulness through the power of their sacrifice. Anyone who receives such an offering and clings to it as really being his own is like a person who

collects coconut pulp or sugar cane pulp from which others have already squeezed and drunk the juice. For this reason, people of wisdom and discernment aren't possessive of their belongings and don't really see them as their own.. They are always willing to relinquish and share their gains – in proportion to the amount they have received – so that others can make use of them.

This is external relinquishment. As for internal relinquishment: Whereas we once ate as we liked, many times a day, we now eat less, only one meal a day. We use only one set of robes. We relinquish our comfortable lodgings and undertake the ascetic practice of living in the forest or under the shade of a tree. If we become ill, we search for medicine and treat our disease with moderation, in a way that doesn't create burdens for others. In other words, we relinquish ourselves as an offering to the religion by putting it into practice. This is classed as the internal relinquishment of material gain through the power of our practice and conduct.

*d. Vaṇṇāmacchāriya:* not being possessive of our 'color' (*vaṇṇa*). 'Vaṇṇa,' here, has been interpreted in two senses. In one sense, it refers to social caste or class. For example, the ruling class, the religious elite, property owners, and laborers are held to be unequal in status, and the members of one group are unwilling to let other groups mix with theirs. If such mixing occurs, they regard it as something base and disgraceful and so they continually put up barriers to prevent it from happening. In this sense, we can infer that we shouldn't make distinctions based on faction, nationality, color, or race, because the Buddha taught that a person's worth comes not from his or her birth, but from the goodness of his or her own actions; or, as we say, 'Those who do good will meet with good, those who do evil will meet with evil.' For example, we at present worship and respect the Buddha even though he wasn't Thai as we are. We respect him through the power of his goodness. If we were to be close-minded and nationalistic, we Thai's wouldn't have any religion to worship at all aside from the religion of spirits and ghosts.

The second sense of 'vaṇṇa' refers to the complexion of our skin. This, too, we cling to, unwilling to sacrifice it for what is meritorious and skillful. We hesitate to observe the precepts, to meditate, or to undertake the ascetic practices for fear that we'll spoil our looks and complexion.

*e. Dhammāmacchāriya:* not being possessive of the Buddha's teachings we have learned. Possessiveness in this case can mean not wanting to teach unless we are reimbursed, not wanting to preach unless there is an offering, or complaining if the offering is small.

On another level, being possessive of the dhamma can refer to holding on to the unskillful qualities (*akusala-dhamma*) within us; being unwilling to rid ourselves of such evils as greed, anger, delusion, pride, conceit, or any of the other fermentations of defilement; clinging to these things without searching for the techniques, called the Path, for relinquishing them, i.e.:

- the precepts of the Pāṭimokkha that, if we observe them carefully, can eliminate the common defilements arising through our words and deeds;
- the practice of concentration that, when developed in our hearts, can eliminate intermediate defilements, i.e., such hindrances as sensual desire;
- the discernment that, when it arises within us, can eliminate such subtle defilements from our hearts as *avijjā* – mental darkness; *taṇhā* – craving; and *upādāna* – clinging to false assumptions that defile the mind.

When we develop these five forms of unselfishness, we can be classed as open – and our eyes will be open to perceiving the highest quality, the transcendent.

3. The analogy of soil rich in nutrients refers to our putting four qualities into practice –

*a. Mettā*: goodwill, friendliness, hoping for our own happiness and well-being, and for that of all other living beings.

*b. Karuṇā*: compassion for ourselves and others, which induces us to be helpful in various ways.

*c. Muditā*: appreciation for ourselves for having cultivated goodness; appreciation (not feeling jealousy) for the goodness cultivated by others.

*d. Upekkhā*: equanimity in cases beyond our control. For instance, when death has come to a person we know, we see that it's beyond our help and so we keep our hearts neutral, not allowing feelings of sadness or gladness to arise.

For these four qualities to arise in fully mature form, they have to appear in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Whatever we may do in thought, word, or deed should not be done through the power of anger. We should regard anger as an ogre – and when anger takes over, our body becomes an ogre's tool: his bludgeon. To see the drawbacks of anger in this way can give rise to goodwill in thought, word, and deed, extending without partiality to all people and living beings throughout the world.

Even with our enemies we should try to develop these same thoughts of goodwill, by looking for their good side, in one way or another, instead of looking just at their bad side, which can cause hatred to invade and consume our hearts. Anger is a fire that can't burn other people; it burns only ourselves. This is why we should develop goodwill within our hearts. The power of goodwill brings good to everyone – just as food that contains the nutrients needed by people brings health and contentment to all who eat it; or as fertilizer with the proper nutrients can cause plants and trees to grow, flower, give fruit, and so be of use to people and other living beings. Goodwill is thus a form of goodness that can be classed as a

nutrient. (Goodwill is what cools the fevers of the world.)

4. The analogy of seasonable rain refers to our establishing ourselves in the four bases of success (*iddhipāda*) –

*a. Chanda*: feeling a love and an affinity for goodness and virtue as much as for life, or more.

*b. Viriya*: being persistent, audacious, and persevering in cultivating goodness within ourselves.

*c. Citta*: being intent on whatever we set about to do.

*d. Vimāṃsā*: using appropriate attention, being discriminating and circumspect at all times in whatever we set about to do.

These four qualities can lead to two kinds of success: *iddhiriddhi* – success through the power of thought; and *puññariddhi* – success that comes on its own. Both of these forms of success, on the level of the world or the Dhamma, have to be based on the four qualities mentioned above. These four qualities are like preservatives: Whoever is saturated with them won't go sour or stale. And when we're free from going stale, our work is bound not to stagnate and so is sure to succeed.

Another comparison: These four qualities are *sacca-kamma* – actions that give rise to truth, achieving our purposes. Those who bring these qualities into themselves will become true people. Truth can be compared to salt: If we try to keep food, like vegetables or fish, without salting it, it soon turns rotten and wormy, making it unfit for human consumption. But if we salt it, it can keep for a long time. A good example of this is our Lord Buddha, whose actions gave rise to truth and who thus was able to establish the religion so as to benefit people at large. Even the body he left behind still serves a purpose for human and divine beings. For instance, his bones, which have become relics, are still with us even though he gained total nibbāna a long time ago. As for his teachings, they have lasted for more than 2,500 years. And he himself is deathless, i.e., he has entered total nibbāna. All of this was achieved by means of truth, i.e., the four bases of success.

Those of us who have no truth, though, are like unsalted fish or meat, and are bound to go wormy. The worms, here, refer to our various defilements and are of three main species: The first species is composed of passion, aversion, and delusion; these feed on us from our feet to our waists. The second species – sensual desire, ill-will, sloth & torpor, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty – latch on and bore into us from our waists to our necks. And the third species – the fermentations of sensuality, states of becoming, views, and ignorance (cloudy, unclear knowledge) – eats us up whole: ears, eyes, nose, mouth, body, and mind.

Whoever is all worm-eaten like this is classed as a person gone rotten and stale, who hasn't reached any qualities of substance. And for this reason, the bones of such a person after death are no match for the bones of chickens and pigs, for no one wants them. If the bones and meat of such a person were put up for sale, no one would buy. And furthermore, such a person will have to come back as an angry demon, lolling its tongue and rolling its eyes, to frighten its children and grandchildren.

So whoever develops the four qualities mentioned above will reach deathlessness – *amata-dhamma* – which is like a crystalline shower that comes from distilling away all impurities, just as rain water, which is distilled from the sea, rises into the air and falls back on the earth, nourishing the grasses, crops, and trees, giving refreshment to people and other living beings.

These, then, are some of the characteristics of those who form the field of merit for the world both on the mundane and on the transcendent levels, who conduct themselves rightly in keeping with the phrase in the chant of the virtues of the Saṅgha:

*Puññakkhettaṃ lokassāti*  
The field of merit for the world.

Now we will discuss the chant of the virtues of the Saṅgha further as a path to practice, because the virtues of the Saṅgha are open to all Buddhists in general, without excluding any individual, race, or social class at all. Whoever puts these principles into practice is capable of becoming a member of the Noble Saṅgha within the heart, without having to go through the formalities of the Vinaya. In other words, this is a community and a state of worthiness in the area of the Dhamma open to all who put the following principles into practice –

1. *Supaṭipanno*: being a person whose conduct is good. 'Good conduct' refers to seven principles –

a. We should gather frequently – for the daily chanting services, to hear the Dhamma explained, to seek out wise people, and to join wholeheartedly in the work of the group. This is external gathering. What is really important, though, is internal gathering, i.e., collecting the mind in concentration, which is the gathering point of all that is good and forms the basic skill for bringing the factors of the Path together (*magga-samaṅgī*).

b. When a meeting of the group disperses, we should all disperse at the same time and not act at variance with the group. On the internal level, we should all as a group disperse evil from our thoughts, words, and deeds.

c. We should neither establish new rules that were not established by the

Buddha nor abandon those that were. For example, don't make a practice of doing things the Buddha declared to be worthless, evil, or wrong; develop within yourself the things he taught to be good, right, and worthwhile.

- d. Be respectful of your elders, parents, teachers, etc.
- e. Whatever you do in thought, word, or deed, don't act under the influence of craving, anger, or delusion.
- f. Make a point of searching out virtuous people.
- g. Take pleasure in solitude.

This is what is meant by good conduct.

2. *Uju-paṭipanno*: being a person whose conduct is straightforward, firmly established in the threefold training – virtue, concentration, and discernment – which leads straight to nibbāna; being fair and just, unswayed by any of the four forms of personal bias. This is what is meant by straightforward conduct.

3. *Ñāya-paṭipanno*: being a person whose conduct leads to higher knowledge. This refers to following fifteen procedures (*carāṇa-dhamma*) –

a. *Pāṭimokkha-saṁvara*: keeping restrained within the precepts of the Pāṭimokkha, respecting the training rules of the Vinaya. (For laypeople, this means observing the five or eight precepts.)

b. *Indriya-saṁvara*: keeping watch over your senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, and ideation so as to keep the mind properly collected and at peace.

c. *Bhojane mattaññutā*: knowing moderation in the requisites of life, i.e., eating only just enough food.

d. *Jāgariyānuyoga*: being persistent in cleansing the mind so that it is pure and bright, not allowing lapses in mindfulness or alertness to occur.

e. *Saddhā*: conviction, i.e., being convinced of the truth of good and evil, of the paths and their fruitions; having conviction in people who merit it.

f. *Hiri*: feeling shame at the thought of doing evil, not doing evil either in public or in private.

g. *Ottappa*: having a sense of compunction at the thought of doing evil.

h. *Bahu-sacca*: being well-educated and always willing to listen and learn.

i. *Viriya*: being persistent, unflagging, and courageous in performing your duties.

j. *Sati*: being mindful before doing anything in thought, word, or deed.

k. *Paññā*: developing discernment as to what should and should not be



done, as to what is and isn't beneficial.

*l. Paṭhama-jhāna:* the first jhāna, composed of five factors – directed thought, evaluation, rapture, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation. (Jhāna means to be absorbed in or focused on a single object or preoccupation, as when we deal with the breath.)

*m. Duttiya-jhāna:* the second jhāna, composed of three factors – rapture, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation.

*n. Tatiya-jhāna:* the third jhāna, composed of two factors – pleasure and singleness of preoccupation.

*o. Catuttha-jhāna:* the fourth jhāna, composed of two factors – equanimity and pure mindfulness, which is the single preoccupation of your concentration.

This is what is meant by conduct leading to higher knowledge.

Here we will discuss how to give rise to the first jhāna.

Directed thought: Think of the breath until you can recognize it both as it comes in and as it goes out.

Singleness of preoccupation: Let the mind become one, at rest with the breath, not straying away to other objects. Watch over your thoughts so that they deal only with the breath until the breath becomes comfortable.

Evaluation: Focus exclusively on issues connected with the breath and acquaint yourself with how to let this comfortable breath-sensation spread and co-ordinate with the other breath-sensations in the body. Let these breath-sensations spread until they all merge. Once the body has benefited from the breath, feelings of pain will grow calm. The body will be filled with good breath energy.

For jhāna to arise, these three factors have to be brought to bear on the same breath sensation. This breath sensation can lead all the way to the fourth jhāna, the level of refinement depending on the act of focusing through the power of mindfulness: Sometimes the focus is broad, sometimes narrow, in accordance with the different factors in the different jhānas. But to be really beneficial, you should let the breath spread as broadly as possible, being constantly aware throughout the body of the various aspects of the breath. You will then get excellent results from your practice of jhāna. You might even gain liberating insight on this level, because the first jhāna is what constitutes threshold concentration (*upacāra samadhi*).

If you want to go on to fixed penetration (*appanā samadhi*), you should keep practicing this level until you are adept, i.e., adept at fixing the mind on a single object and keeping it there, adept at adjusting and expanding the object, and adept

at staying firmly in place. When you want your concentration to have energy, make the breath light and refined – but keep your mindfulness broad. Otherwise, the mind might go into *arūpa jhāna*, where it has no sense of the form of the body; or you might sit absolutely still, without any awareness of the body at all, while the mind pays attention to another area, such as simple awareness, completely disregarding the body or sitting unconscious, like a log. This is *bāhira-jhāna*, concentration outside of the Buddha’s teachings, incapable of giving rise to liberating insight.

So when you begin, you should develop the three above-mentioned factors as much as possible, and the mind will then be able to go on to the second jhāna. When you fix the mind on the breath repeatedly using these three beginning factors, they give rise to two more factors:

Rapture: a sense of fullness and refreshment of body and mind, going straight to the heart, independent of all else.

Pleasure: a sense of ease arising from the body’s being still and undisturbed (*kāya-passaddhi*), and from the mind’s being at rest on its own, placid, serene, and undistracted (*citta-passaddhi*).

The factors of the first jhāna, then, are of two sorts: cause and result. The causes are directed thought, evaluation, and singleness of preoccupation; the results, rapture and pleasure.

As for the second jhāna, with its three factors of rapture, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation: This refers to the state of mind that has tasted the results coming from the first jhāna. The sense of fullness becomes more powerful, as does the sense of pleasure, allowing the mind to abandon its thinking and evaluating, so that the singleness of the preoccupation takes the lead from here on in. Make the mind still in the refined sense of the breath. Body and mind are full and at ease; the mind is more firmly implanted in its object than before. After a while, as you keep focusing in, the sense of fullness and pleasure begins to expand and contract. Focus the mind down to a more refined level and you will enter the third jhāna.

The third jhāna has two factors – pleasure and singleness of preoccupation: The mind is solitary; the body, solitary and still. The breath is refined and broad, with a white glow like cotton-wool throughout the body, stilling all painful feelings in body and mind. Not a single hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*) arises to interfere. The four properties – earth, water, fire, and wind – are at peace with one another in every part. You could almost say that they’re pure throughout the entire body. The mind is completely still – steady, solid, and sure – reaching oneness in a solitary sense of ease. Body and mind are in solitude. Even if you’re with a group of people, you feel as if you were alone. The mind is strong, expansive, and large.

Mindfulness is expansive – spreading throughout the body, focused exclusively on the present, not affected by any perceptions of past or future. The breath gives rise to an energy that is pure white. The mind has power. The focus is strong, and the light brilliant. Energy is strong, so that you are no longer concerned with your sense of pleasure, which dilates somewhat. This causes the mind to focus on into the fourth jhāna.

The fourth jhāna has two factors – equanimity and singleness of preoccupation (or mindfulness). The breath energy is still, with no ripples or gaps. The properties of the body are undisturbed. As for the mind, it's undisturbed with regard to all three time periods: uninvolved with the past, uninvolved with the future, undisturbed by the present. When the mind stays with this undisturbed sense of equanimity, this is the true meaning of 'singleness of preoccupation.' The breath is at peace, the body at peace in every part. There is no need to use the in-and-out breath. The breath energy has reached saturation point.

The four properties (*dhātu*) are equal, all with the same characteristics. The mind is completely at peace, with a brilliance streaming in all directions. The brilliance of the breath at peace reaches full strength. The brilliance of the mind arises from the power of mindfulness focused on all four of the great frames of reference: body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities. The question of their being four doesn't arise, for in this mental moment they coalesce in perfect unity. The brilliance of the mind and of the body, which arises from the power of their solitary stillness, shines as *jāgariyānuyoga*, the purifying inner fire (*tapas*) that can dispel darkness thoroughly. The bright light of the mind reaches full strength. The purity of the different parts of the breath energy keeps the other properties in good order. The body is completely at peace, like a factory at rest. In other words, you don't have to use the in-and-out breath. The body develops potency; the mind, resilient power. When these reach saturation point, if you then want to give rise to knowledge, shift your awareness so that it dilates slightly, and the important skills that arise from the power of the mind – such as the Eight Skills – will appear, i.e.:

1. *Vipassanā-ñāṇa*: clear insight into the properties, aggregates, and sense media.
2. *Manomayiddhi*: the ability to achieve one's aims through the power of thought.
3. *Iddhividhī*: the ability to display a variety of supra-normal powers.
4. *Dibba-sota*: clairaudience, the ability to hear far distant sounds.
5. *Cetopariya-ñāṇa*: the ability to know the mental states of other people.
6. *Pubbe-nivāsānussati-ñāṇa*: the ability to remember past lives. (This is

a basis for proving whether death is followed by annihilation or rebirth, and whether or not there really are other levels of existence.)

7. *Dibba-cakkhu*: clairvoyance, the inner eye that arises from the power of the mind, relying to some extent on the optic nerves.

8. *Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: knowing how to eliminate the fermentations of defilement as they relate to your various forms of knowledge.

If you want to give rise to supernormal powers, formulate an intention at that point, and it will appear openly, so that ordinary people will be able to see it.

Both of these aspects – knowledge and power – can lead to mastery on the level of the world and of the Dhamma. The properties in the body acquire potency; the mind becomes a potent center of consciousness. This is the science of the mind on an advanced level, giving rise to an advanced form of Buddhist learning: *lokavidū*, wide-ranging knowledge of the cosmos.

To develop the factors discussed here is to warrant the name, *ñāya-paṭipanno*, one whose conduct leads to higher knowledge.

(The moment in which the enemies of the body – impure properties – disband and disappear is termed *saṅkhata-lakkhaṇa-nirodha*, conditioned disbanding. When the enemies of the mind – i.e., the five hindrances – disappear completely, leaving the mind radiant and clear, that is termed *bhujissaka-nirodha*, disbanding in a state of dependency.)

4. *Sāmīci-paṭipanno*: being a person whose conduct is masterful. This refers to our conduct in developing two qualities: tranquility and insight.

a. The practice of tranquility means stilling the mind in a single preoccupation, free from the five hindrances, so as to attain the four levels of *rūpa-jhāna*.

b. The practice of insight means seeing clearly and truly into the nature of all fabrications (*saṅkhāra*), e.g., seeing that they are inconstant, stressful, and not-self; gaining discernment that sees distinctly in terms of the four noble truths; seeing fabrications from both sides, i.e., the side that is inconstant, stressful, and not-self, and the side that is constant, pleasant, and self; giving rise to the purity of knowledge and vision termed *gotarabhū-ñāṇa*, escaping from the assumption that things are either constant or inconstant; knowing both the side that arises and disbands, as well as the side that doesn't arise and doesn't disband, without making assumptions about or being attached to either side. Theories, views, and conceits disappear. The mind doesn't fasten onto anything at all: past, present, or future. This is termed *asesa-virāga-nirodha*, utter disbanding and dispassion. This is the way of insight.

Insight, analyzed in detail in terms of the Dhamma in line with the conventions

of the sages of the past, means knowledge of the four noble truths:

– *Dukkha*: mental and physical stress, the result of being overcome by the power of birth, aging, illness, death, and defilement.

– *Samudaya*: the cause of stress – i.e., *taṇhā*, craving or thirst – which includes *kāma-taṇhā*, insatiable craving for sensual pleasures; *bhava-taṇhā*, the desire to be or have certain states of becoming; and *vibhava-taṇhā*, the desire not to be or have certain states of becoming.

– *Nirodha*: the disbanding of stress; the extinguishing of the fires of defilement.

– *Magga*: the path of practice that puts an end to craving, the cause of stress.

All four of these noble truths already exist in the world, but ordinarily are hard to perceive because they show us only their images or reflections. On this level, we can't yet see them for what they really are. But for the Buddha to know them, he had to start out with the reflections that appear, before he was able to trace them back to the real thing. This is why they are termed noble truths: They are the possessions of noble people; only those who search and explore can know them. Thus, the noble truths have two aspects: their first aspect, which is the way they are found in the experience of ordinary people in general; and their second aspect, which is more subtle and can be known only by people of wisdom who explore in the area of the heart and mind.

An example of the four Truths on the ordinary level, as experienced by ordinary people: Physical discomfort, such as illness or disease, can be called the truth of stress. Knowing enough to buy the right medicine, or being a doctor who knows the medicine for curing that particular kind of disease, is the truth of the path. As the symptoms of the disease disband and disappear, that is termed conditioned disbanding. When the disease is cured, that is the truth of disbanding. If, however, we suffer from a disease, such as a wound, but don't know how to treat it – simply wanting it to heal and using whatever medicine we can lay our hands on, without any knowledge (this is termed craving and ignorance) – the wound will only worsen, for the medicine we take isn't right for the disease. This is the truth of the cause of stress.

If we want to go deeper than the ordinary level, we have to practice correctly in line with the way of the Path, developing our virtue, concentration, and discernment, before we will be able to perceive the four Truths on the noble level.

The heartwood or essence of the Dhamma, by its nature, lies mixed with its outer bark. If we don't have the right knowledge and skill, we won't get very much use from the Dhamma. Whatever benefits we *do* get will be only on the mundane

level. We can make a comparison with diamond or gold ore buried in the ground: If a person doesn't have enough knowledge to extract the ore, he will get only the traces that come flowing out in spring water or that adhere to rocks along the surface of the ground. These will earn him only a meager profit, which won't be enough to insure his livelihood. A person with knowledge and skill, though, can use the gold to insure his livelihood without having to search for any other occupations, but he'll have to follow the traces down into the earth until he meets with the real thing, i.e. the genuine ore. Even just a single hunk – if it's large and of high quality, weighing a ton – will enable him to rest secure for the rest of his life. In the same way, those who are wise in Buddhism see stress as a noble treasure and so go digging down into stress; they see the cause of stress as a noble treasure and so dig down into it; they see the Path as a noble treasure; they see disbanding and nibbāna as noble treasures and so dig on down until they meet with the genuine ore. Only then can they be called noble sages.

Those of us who are dauntless enough to unearth our inner resources in this way will be able to use those resources to protect ourselves throughout time, gaining release from the cycle of rebirth, the jail for imprisoning foolish and ignorant people. We who like to explore in general should be glad that we've come across a good mine with genuine ore whose traces lie scattered about for us to see. If we don't disregard the things we see, we'll meet the four Truths mentioned above.

If we were to summarize the four noble truths briefly, we could do so as follows: The objects or preoccupations of the mind that arise and disappear are the truth of stress. The mental act that deludedly enters into and takes possession of those objects is the truth of the cause of stress. The mental act that focuses in on those objects and examines them as they arise and disappear is the truth of the Path; and the mental act that lets go of those objects as they arise and disappear is the truth of disbanding, or release – i.e., that which knows the reality that doesn't arise and doesn't disappear.

These, then, are the four noble truths. Those who see these four Truths directly for themselves will give rise to the noble path and fruition termed 'stream-entry.' Such people are a field of merit for the world: worthy of respect, worthy of welcome, worthy of offerings and veneration.

Whoever possesses the qualities mentioned here qualifies rightly as a member of the Saṅgha in line with the Dhamma and Vinaya taught by the Buddha, and may be called, *sāmicī-paṭipanno*, one whose conduct is masterful, reaching the apex of the mundane level and becoming transcendent.

B. Now we will discuss the second main heading, the Noble Saṅgha, the family of the Noble Ones, which may be joined by virtue of having developed one's inner

qualities, with no need to go through the formalities of the Vinaya. The Noble Saṅgha, like the conventional Saṅgha, is composed of four groups:

1. *Stream-enterers*: those who have reached the beginning stage of the current leading to nibbāna. At most they will have to be reborn only seven more times. They have developed enough tranquility and insight for the Path to converge in a single mental instant, enabling them to gain true insight into all phenomena – mundane and transcendent – as they really are. When they see in this way, they have cut three of the fetters (*saṅgyojana*) that keep living beings under the spell of the world. The fetters they have cut absolutely are –

a. *Sakkāya-ditṭhi*: the view that the body – together with its properties, aggregates, and sense media – belongs to the self. Stream-enterers, unlike ordinary run-of-the-mill people, don't hold that these things are the self or belong to the self. They see them simply as common property – that we didn't bring them when we came and won't take them when we go – and that they arise simply through kamma.

b. *Vicikicchā*: doubt and uncertainty about the practices one is following. Stream-enterers have no such doubts, because they have reached the quality attained by the Buddha.

c. *Sīlabbata-parāmāsa*: attachment to customs or traditions that are held to be good in this way or that. Stream-enterers are not attached to any external practices dealing with actions or manners.

These three fetters, stream-enterers have cut absolutely, once and for all. They have attained the noble quality of having closed off completely the four states of deprivation. In other words, they are destined never again to be born in hell, on the level of the angry demons, the level of the hungry ghosts, or the level of common animals. This is what it means to close off all four states of deprivation.

2. *Once-returners*: those who have gained the second level of Awakening, who will attain nibbāna after being born once more in the world. Once-returners have cut three fetters, like stream-enterers, but have also reduced the amount of desire, anger, and delusion in their hearts. (They know how to keep the mind within bounds.)

3. *Non-returners*: those who have awakened to the third level and who will never again return to the human world. After they die they will be born in the Brahmā worlds on the levels of the Pure Abodes, there to attain nibbāna. They have absolutely abandoned five of the fetters –

a. *Sakkāya-ditṭhi*.

b. *Vicikicchā*.

c. *Sīlabbata-parāmāsa*.

d. *Kāma-rāga*: passion and delight caused by the power of sensual desires and sensual objects.

e. *Paṭigha*: irritation and displeasure caused by the power of anger.

4. *Arahants*: those who have awakened to the ultimate level of the four noble truths and have reached the quality of deathlessness, free from all the fermentations of defilement; whose ignorance, craving, attachments, and kamma have ended. *Arahants* have abandoned their fetters by means of the factors of the highest of the noble paths. The fetters they have abandoned are ten:

a. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*.

b. *Vicikicchā*.

c. *Sīlabbata-parāmāsa*.

d. *Kāma-rāga*.

e. *Paṭigha*.

f. *Rūpa-rāga*: passion for the sense of form that can act as the object of *rūpa jhāna*.

g. *Arūpa-rāga*: passion for formless phenomena, such as the feeling of pleasure that comes from seclusion.

h. *Māna*: conceiving or construing oneself to be this or that.

i. *Uddhacca*: restlessness and distraction, being carried away with one's thoughts. The thoughts on this level deal with the activity of discernment, which is something good, but they go out of bounds.

j. *Avijjā*: ignorance, i.e., not recognizing stress, its cause, its disbanding, and the path to its disbanding – in short, not being acquainted with the fabricated phenomena (*saṅkhata dhamma*) that exist within each of us; not being acquainted with the unfabricated (*asaṅkhata dhamma*), which is a genuine property, existing naturally. This, briefly, is what *avijjā* means.

Another meaning for *avijjā* is not being acquainted with the way we are – e.g., not recognizing our perceptions of the past and thus becoming immersed in them; not recognizing our perceptions of the future; not recognizing the present, which is the important aspect of all physical and mental phenomena. Thus, delusion with regard to all three time periods is called *avijjā*: counterfeit knowledge, falling short of the four genuine Truths.

These ten fetters, *arahants* – both men and women – have cut absolutely, freeing themselves from every sort of bond or domination, so that their hearts are



brilliant and dazzling, like the full moon unobscured by clouds. This is *sāmīci-paṭipanno* – one whose conduct is masterful – on the transcendent level.

The four groups mentioned here are termed the Ariya Saṅgha, the Noble Community, which can be found only in Buddhism. Therefore, all Buddhists who daily pay homage to the Saṅgha should make themselves aware of what the Saṅgha is, of how genuine or counterfeit the members of the Saṅgha are. Otherwise, our respect will be blind and misguided, ignorant of what the Buddha is like, what the Dhamma is like, and what the Saṅgha is like. We should use our judgment and reason to be selective so that we can help one another look after the state of the religion, bringing it into proper line with the principles of the Buddha's teachings.

The Saṅgha can be compared to a tree: Some members are like the heartwood, others are like the sapwood, others are like the outer bark, and still others are like parasitic creepers. Another popular analogy is to compare the Saṅgha to a jewel. Now, there are many kinds of jewels, just as there are many parts to a tree: artificial gems, zircons, rubies, amethysts, sapphires, emeralds, and diamonds. Just as all of these are called jewels, and are all of differing value, so it is with the members of the Saṅgha. Whoever is rich in discernment will obtain a valuable jewel as an adornment. Whoever is poor in discernment will end up with nothing but artificial gems or bits of gravel: Some people believe that all who wear the yellow robe are alike. They 'make donations to the yellow robe,' or 'pay respect to the yellow robe,' or 'make donations to the virtuous'... Thus I ask that all Buddhists make a point of learning where the gems of the religion that we as a nation revere may be found.

A person who doesn't know what the Saṅgha is, is like a child who doesn't know his family and relatives – who doesn't know who his father is, who his mother is, who his elder brothers and sisters are. When this is the case, he has no one to rely on. If he tries to rely on others, he can do so only as long as he has money in his pockets. As soon as he runs out of money, he's in for trouble: His friends and companions are sure to act as if they don't recognize him; and he can't turn to his family and relatives because he doesn't know where they are. So in the end he'll meet with nothing but suffering.

This is why we're taught that, as long as we still have life, we shouldn't rest complacent. We should urgently make the virtues of the Saṅgha our guardians – because our friend, the body, can be relied on only as long as it doesn't die. And when the time comes, who will care for us aside from our guardians, the virtues of the Saṅgha?

We shouldn't waste our time engrossed simply with the life of the body for, as far as I can see, there's nothing to the life of the body but eating and then sleeping,

sleeping and then eating again. If we let ourselves get stuck simply on the level of sleeping and eating, we're eventually headed for trouble. This can be illustrated with a story:

Once in a village by the seaside, there came a time of unbalance in the natural elements, and large numbers of the livestock – the water buffaloes – died of the plague. The men of the village, fearing that the disease would spread, took the buffalo carcasses and threw them into the sea. As the carcasses floated away from shore, a flock of crows came to feed on them for many days. Each day, when the crows had eaten their fill, they would fly back to spend the night in the trees by the shore; and then would fly out the following dawn to continue eating. As days passed, and the carcasses floated further and further out to the deep sea, some of the crows – seeing the hardships in flying back to shore – decided to spend the night floating on the carcasses; others of the flock, though, didn't mind the hardships and continued flying back to shore every evening.

Finally, when the carcasses had floated so far out to sea that flying back and forth was no longer possible, the flock decided to abandon that source of food and to search for a new source of food on land. One of the crows, though, had stayed with the carcasses; when he saw that his fellows were no longer coming to claim a share of the food, he became overjoyed, thinking that the food he had would last him a long time. He became so engrossed in his eating that he never thought of looking back to shore. As the carcasses went floating further and further out, swarms of fish came from below to devour them until there was nothing left to eat. Finally, the remains of the carcasses sank deep into the sea; and at that point, the crow realized that the time had come to fly back to shore. With this in mind, he flew to the north, but didn't see land. He flew to the south, to the east and west, but didn't see land. Finally, he ran out of strength and could fly no further, and so lowered his wings and dropped into the sea, where he became food for the fishes.

This is human life. If we let ourselves become engrossed only with eating and sleeping and mundane pleasures, without searching for virtue – i.e., if we don't practice the virtues of the Saṅgha as we've been taught – we're sure to reap the rewards – suffering – just like the crow who had to fall to his death in the sea. This story is about us: The sea stands for the world, the flood of rebirth; the carcasses of the water buffaloes who had died of the plague stand for the body; the trees on the shore stand for monasteries and the Dhamma, and the crows stand for the heart – i.e., sometimes we feel like going to a monastery to practice the Dhamma and sometimes we don't.

The virtues of the Saṅgha are subtle, deep, and hard to perceive. If we don't have knowledge in ourselves, we won't be able to see them, just as a mute person doesn't know how to speak his native tongue.

Here I would like to tell another story to illustrate what it means not to know

the virtues of the Saṅgha. Once there was a mute person who made his living by playing a conch shell trumpet. Now, the way he played the conch shell was to make it sound like human voices or animal calls. When he had perfected his skill, he wandered about the cities and country towns, playing his conch. One day he went to play in a village deep in the countryside. As he was about to reach the village, he stopped to rest under the shade of a tree and picked up his conch to practice for a moment. Within minutes a swarm of people, hearing the sound of the conch, came bursting wide-eyed from the village to see what it was. They saw the mute man sitting under the tree and so asked him, ‘What was that beautiful sound we heard just now?’ The mute man pointed to the conch shell lying nearby. The people, thinking that they had heard the cry of the conch, ran over to tap on it to make it cry again, but it didn’t make a sound. Some of them picked it up and tried shaking it, but still no sound, so they put it back down. Others turned it over to see exactly where its cry came from, but no matter what they did, the sound of the conch wouldn’t come out. So they ran back to the mute person.

The mute person didn’t know what to say, but he could tell from their actions that they wanted to know what made the sound of the conch come out in such a variety of calls, so he pointed to his mouth. The villagers ran to take a look. They had him open his mouth and looked up and down inside, but didn’t see how it could be made to sound. So the mute man flickered his tongue for them to see. With this, they realized that the sound came from the mute man’s tongue; and so they tried flickering their own tongues, but no beautiful sounds came out. So they ran back to the mute man, who blew air out of his mouth, meaning that the sound came from the breath. They tried blowing air from their own mouths, but still no beautiful sounds. Finally, the mute man reached for the conch, put it to his lips – and out came the beautiful sounds: the sounds of people crying, people laughing, people wailing and mourning, the sounds of birds, mice, and forest beasts.

So it is with us: If we don’t know how to train ourselves so as to attain the virtues of the Saṅgha, we won’t know how beneficial to us the Saṅgha can be. We’ll become uncivilized savages, not knowing whether the Saṅgha is good or bad, and we’ll end up like the villagers who didn’t know where the sound of the conch came from.

This story doesn’t refer to anything distant: The mute man, producing various sounds from his conch shell, stands for preaching monks. For example, sometimes they try to be correct, proper, and principled in their preaching; sometimes they preach like animals, i.e., using a song-like voice or cracking jokes that go beyond the bounds of the Dhamma and Vinaya. In this way they are like the man blowing the conch. As for the villagers who came running wide-eyed to hear the sound of the conch, they stand for Buddhist laypeople who don’t understand the virtues of the Saṅgha and so are destined not to find the Saṅgha, just as the villagers couldn’t

find the sound of the conch. When this is the case, they will simply shell out money to hear the sound of conch trumpets, without any thought of the practices taught by the Buddha. Monks will be deluded into blowing conch shells for their living, without any thought of the qualities of the Saṅgha; and so our religion will degenerate day by day, becoming ultimately a theater or playhouse for the world.

This has been an extended discussion of the Triple Gem. If we were to put it briefly, there wouldn't be a great deal to say. We've kept the discussion drawn-out in this way so as to show the general usefulness of the Triple Gem for those who revere it. If you want to go for refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha in a way that will reach their genuine benefits, then you should gather their main points into yourself, *training yourself so as to give rise to the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha in your heart*. This is where the value of the Triple Gem lies.

## SUMMARY

The gist of our discussion of the Triple Gem comes down simply to this:

A. *'Buddha'* can be divided into a number of levels. The *'Buddha'* of his physical representatives refers to Buddha images, stūpas, and places worthy of veneration such as his birthplace, the place of his Awakening, the place where he delivered his first sermon, and the place where he entered total nibbāna, which at present lie within the boundaries of India and Nepal. All of these things qualify on the physical level as symbols of the Buddha for those who revere them, but they may be disqualified if the people who revere them lack the necessary inner qualifications.

Take Buddha images as an example: You should understand Buddha images as having three characteristic types –

1. those inhabited by angry demons;
2. those inhabited by devas;
3. those that people of virtue have invested with the potency of the mind – these can be termed, *'inhabited by the Dhamma.'*

In other words, Buddha images can be beneficial or harmful depending on how they are used by those who revere them. Even people who use them as charms in committing robbery, casting spells, or performing black magic may get results because of the power of their conviction. But if we can be selective and use these images in ways that are right, the potency they contain will benefit us, bringing us blessings and protecting us from danger. Thus, the symbols of the Buddha can function in various ways. There is much more to this topic, but if we were to discuss it here, it would draw things out even further. These images can either qualify or be disqualified as symbols of the Buddha, depending on the people who revere them, but the images in themselves are neutral.

The important point for people who hope for true welfare, though, is to invest themselves with the qualities that serve on the inner level as symbols of reverence for the Buddha. These qualities are three –

1. *Sati*: wakefulness.
2. *Paññā*: the intuitive discernment and cognitive skill that come from concentrating the mind.
3. *Vimutti*: purity and release from mental defilement: This is the

essence of *Buddha-ratanam*, the gem of the Buddha.

*B. Dhamma:* Good Dhamma is of three sorts –

1. *Pariyatti-dhamma:* This refers to studying and memorizing passages from the Discourses, the Vinaya, and the Abhidhamma, which qualify on the physical level as a symbol of the Dhamma or of the Buddhist religion. But this, too, can either qualify or be disqualified as a symbol. Some people, for example, use passages from the Dhamma in committing robbery or casting spells. For instance, they repeat the chant of the virtues of the Dhamma or the phrase, '*Namo buddhāya*,' three times or seven times, and then commit thievery or highway robbery, believing that they have made themselves invincible. Or when casting spells, they repeat the phrase, '*Na-mettā, mo-karuṇā, da-love me, I won't go, you come, omasavāha*' – they say that this makes a woman really fall for a man. *This sort of thing disqualifies the phrase, even though its original meaning may have been something good.*

But if we revere the Dhamma and make use of it through the power of our conviction, memorizing passages of Pali for the sake of what is good and pure, and then putting them into practice, they will give rise to merit and skillfulness. For example, if we repeat the phrase, '*Dhammam saraṇam gacchāmi* (I go to the Dhamma for refuge),' or '*Namo buddhāya* (Homage to the Buddha),' with heartfelt conviction, giving rise to a sense of joy, this mental state can then serve to protect us from certain kinds of accidents and harm. We may reap real benefits from the phrase we repeat. This is something that people who have respect for the Dhamma should investigate carefully.

These passages, then, can qualify as symbols of the Dhamma – or be disqualified, if we don't know their true purposes.

2. *Paṭipatti-dhamma:* This refers to behaving sincerely in line with the Buddha's teachings:

a. *Sīla:* putting our thoughts, words, and deeds in order.

b. *Samādhi:* keeping the mind firmly intent in the four jhānas, free from the mental hindrances.

3. *Paṭivedha-dhamma:* This refers to disbanding defilement completely, releasing the mind from all suffering and stress. This qualifies as the true treasure of the Dhamma.

All three of the levels mentioned here form the inner qualifications of those who truly revere and follow the Dhamma.

C. *Saṅgha*: If we translate this as a substantive, it refers to those who shave their heads and wear the yellow robe as a sign of having been ordained. These people can qualify on the external level as symbols of the Saṅgha or they may be disqualified. To qualify, they have to meet three criteria:

1. *Vatthu-sampatti*: The individual to be ordained as a monk has to possess the proper characteristics in line with the principles of the Vinaya.
2. *Saṅgha-sampatti*: The monks who gather to witness the ordination constitute a legitimate quorum in line with the Vinaya.
3. *Sīmā-sampatti*: The territory in which the ordination is held has had its boundaries properly defined.

When an individual ordains in line with these criteria, he qualifies as a symbol of the Saṅgha. But viewed from another angle, if the individual has met these criteria and becomes a monk but doesn't behave in line with the Dhamma and Vinaya – disobeying the training rules established by the Buddha, committing major and minor offenses with no sense of shame – he becomes disqualified on the personal level, just as a Buddha image that has been properly consecrated but is then put to improper uses by evil or low-minded people is bound to lead to harm. A monk with no sense of shame or compunction is like a Buddha image inhabited by an angry demon. Normally, when an angry demon takes possession of a person, it reveals itself by its behavior. For example, when some angry demons take possession, they like to run around naked, harassing other people. If a person has no sense of shame or compunction, it's as if he were possessed by an angry demon. In other words, if he doesn't have any moral restraint, it's as if he lacked the clothing needed to hide his nakedness. And when this is the case, he is disqualified as a symbol of the Saṅgha.

A person who meets the three external qualifications mentioned above has to behave in line with the inner virtues of the Saṅgha –

- 1.a. *Cāga*: relinquishing external and internal enemies (worries and concerns).
- b. *Sīla*: keeping one's words and deeds in proper order.  
To have these two qualities is to qualify as a human being (*supaṭipanno*).
- 2.a. *Hiri*: having a sense of shame at the thought of doing evil; not daring to do evil in public or private.
- b. *Ottappa*: having a sense of compunction at the thought of the results of doing evil.

If a monk has these qualities (termed *deva-dhamma*, the qualities of heavenly

beings), it's as if he were inhabited by a deva (*uju-paṭipanno*).

3. *Samādhi*: steadying the mind so as to reach the first jhāna and then developing it up to the fourth jhāna, making it radiant and free from the mental hindrances. If a monk does this, it's as if he were inhabited by a Brahmā, for he has the inner qualifications of a Brahmā (*ñāya-paṭipanno*).

4. *Paññā, vijjā, vimutti*: gaining release from the mundane level, abandoning the three fetters beginning with self-identification, reaching the Dhamma of the Buddha, attaining the state where we are guaranteed by the Buddha as being upright, certain, honest, and sincere toward the Dhamma and Vinaya; gaining Awakening following his example, becoming a reliable member of the Saṅgha. Such people are termed *ariya sotapanna* – Noble Ones who have reached the stream – and deserve to be called *visuddhi-deva*, devas through purity, whose virtues are higher than those of human beings, devas, Indras, or Brahmās. Even though such people are still subject to death and rebirth, they are not like other human beings. The pure aspect of their heart will never again become defiled. Thus they deserve to be called, in a partial sense, devas through purity (*sāmīci-paṭipanno*).

All four of these qualities form the inner qualifications of the Saṅgha.

Speaking in terms of these inner qualifications, every person can become a member of the Saṅgha. But if we don't develop these qualities within ourselves and then take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha only on the external level without practicing, how will we get the full benefits? We're taught that if we can't depend on ourselves, how can we hope to depend on others? For example, if an evil person breaks the law, commits robbery, and then asks the government to give him help, you can rest assured that the only help the government will give him will be to build a home for him to live in discomfort – a jail. In the same way, if we don't practice in line with the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, how can we go around taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha? The Buddha taught:

*Attāhi attano nātho, ko hi nātho paro siyā.*

“The self is its own refuge, for who else could be refuge?”

So we should develop the inner qualifications of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha within ourselves. Then we will belong to the company of the Buddha's followers. If we belong to the religion as laywomen, we're called *upāsikā*. If we belong as laymen, we're called *upāsaka*. If we observe the ten precepts and are endowed with the virtues of the Saṅgha, we're termed *sāmaṇera*. If we take a vow to join the community of those who fully observe the 227 precepts, we're termed



*bhikkhu*. When we join the company of the Buddha's followers (*Buddha-parisā*) in this way, all people in general who practice and revere the teachings will benefit – just as when we meet the qualifications of a good citizen as set out by the policies of the government: If we are trained and educated to be good, we are bound to help the nation progress and prosper. But if we don't view ourselves as part of the nation and don't think of making a living to support ourselves, and instead simply go around looking for pleasure or for help from others, the results are bound to be bad.

Therefore, we as Buddhists have to study and practice before we can be Buddhists of virtue and value. We will then reap rewards in the visible present. And even if we are no longer able to live in this world, then when our bodies die and we head for another world, we have a good destination awaiting us, as in the verse from the Mahāsamaya Sutta:

*Ye keci buddham saraṇam gatāse  
Na te gamissantī apāya-bhūmiṃ.  
Pahāya mānusaṃ dehaṃ  
Deva-kāyaṃ paripūressantīti.*

'Those who reach the refuge of the Buddha (in their own hearts, with purity) will close off all four of the lower realms (such as hell). When they leave this life they are bound for a good bourn (heaven), there to fill the ranks of the gods.'

*Buddham dhammaṃ saṅghaṃ jīvitam yāva-nibbānaṃ saraṇam gacchāmi.*  
'I go to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha as my life and refuge till reaching nibbāna.'

*The Path to  
Peace & Freedom  
for the Mind*

## INTRODUCTION

This analysis of the Path is intended as a guide to lead practicing Buddhists to peace and well-being in terms both of the world and of the Dhamma. Well-being in terms of the world includes such things as fortune, status, praise, and pleasure. These four things depend on our conducting ourselves properly along the right path. If we follow the wrong path, though, we are bound to meet with loss of fortune, loss of status, censure and criticism, suffering and pain. The fact that we experience these things may well be due to faults in our own conduct. So if our practice of the right path – the Noble Eightfold Path – is to lead us to peace in terms both of the world and of the Dhamma, we will first have to study it so that we understand it rightly and then conduct ourselves in line with its factors. Then, if we have aims in terms of the world, we'll get good results. Our fortune, status, good name, and pleasure will be solid and lasting. Even after we die, they will continue to appear in the world.

If, however, we see that fortune, status, praise, and pleasure are inconstant, undependable, and subject to change, we should immediately start trying to study and develop the qualities that will lead our hearts in the direction of peace. We are then sure to meet with results that parallel those of the world. For example, status – the paths of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship; fortune – the gaining of the fruition of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship: These forms of status and fortune don't deteriorate. They stay with us always. At the same time, we'll receive praise and pleasure in full measure, inasmuch as Buddhists chant in praise virtually every night and day that, 'The followers of the Blessed One conduct themselves well, conduct themselves uprightly, conduct themselves for the sake of knowledge, conduct themselves masterfully.' Similarly, our pleasure will be solid and lasting, steeping and refreshing the heart with the Dhamma, not subject to death or decay. This is called *nirāmisā sukha*, pleasure free from the baits of the world. Quiet and cool, genuine and unchanging, this is the pleasure for which people who practice the Buddha's teachings aspire. Like gold: No matter in what land or nation it may fall, it remains gold by its very nature and is bound to be desired by people at large. In the same way, the mental traits of people who follow the right path in terms of the Dhamma are bound to give rise to genuine pleasure and ease. Even when they die from this world, their fortune, status, good name, and pleasure in terms of the Dhamma will not leave them.

Thus, Buddhists who aim at progress and happiness should study, ponder, and

put into practice – as far as they can – all eight factors of the Noble Path set out here as a guide to practice. There may be some mistakes in what is written here because I have aimed more at the meaning and practice than at the letter of the scriptures. So wherever there may be mistakes or deficiencies, please forgive me. I feel certain, though, that whoever practices in line with the guidelines given here is sure to meet – to at least some extent – with ease of body and mind in terms both of the world and of the Dhamma, in accordance with his or her own practice and conduct.

May each and every one of you meet with progress and happiness.

*Phra Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo*

WAT BOROMNIVAS, BANGKOK  
AUGUST, 1955

## THE PATH

**All of the Buddha's teachings and their practice can be summed up in a mere eight factors –**

*I. Right View:* seeing in line with the truth.

*II. Right Resolve:* thinking in ways that will lead to well-being.

*III. Right Speech:* speaking in line with the truth.

*IV. Right Action:* being correct and upright in one's activities.

*V. Right Livelihood:* maintaining oneself in ways that are honest and proper.

*VI. Right Effort:* exerting oneself in line with all that is good.

*VII. Right Mindfulness:* always being mindful of the person or topic that forms one's point of reference.

*VIII. Right Concentration:* keeping the mind correctly centered in line with the principles of the truth, not letting it fall into the ways of Wrong Concentration.

### Discussion

I. RIGHT VIEW. 'Seeing in line with the truth' means seeing the four noble truths –

*A. Dukkha:* physical and mental stress and discomfort.

*B. Samudaya:* the origin of physical and mental stress, i.e., ignorance and such forms of craving as sensual desire. Right View sees that these are the causes of all stress.

*C. Nirodha:* the ending and disbanding of the causes of stress, causing stress to disband as well, leaving only the unequaled ease of *nibbāna*.

*D. Magga:* the practices that form a path leading to the end of the causes of stress, i.e., ignorance (*avijjā*) – false knowledge, partial and superficial; and craving (*taṇhā*) – struggling that goes out of proportion to the way things are. Both of these factors can be abandoned through the power of the Path, the practices we need to bring to maturity within ourselves through circumspect discernment. Discernment can be either mundane or transcendent, but only through the development of concentration can transcendent discernment or insight arise, seeing profoundly into the underlying truth of all things in the world.

In short, there are two sides to Right View:

- knowing that evil thoughts, words, and deeds lead to stress and suffering for ourselves and others;
  - and that good knowing, properly giving rise to good in our thoughts, words, and deeds, leads to ease of body and mind for ourselves and others.
- In other words, Right View sees that evil is something that good people don't like, and that evil people don't like it either. This is what is meant by seeing in line with the truth. For this reason, people of discernment should always act in ways that are good and true if they are to qualify as having Right View.

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II. RIGHT RESOLVE. There are three ways of thinking that will lead to well-being –

*A. Nekkhamma-saṅkappa:* resolving to shed the pleasures of the senses – which lie at the essence of the mental hindrances – from the heart and mind.

*B. Abyāpāda-saṅkappa:* resolving to weaken, dismantle, and destroy any evil in our thoughts. In other words, we try to shed from the heart and mind any thoughts of ill will we may have toward people who displease us.

*C. Avihimsa-saṅkappa:* resolving not to think in ways that aim at punishing or doing violence to others, or in ways that would lead to harm for other people or living beings. No matter how good or evil other people may be, we don't give rein to thoughts of envy, jealousy, or competitiveness. We can shed these things from the heart because they are harmful to us – and when we can do ourselves harm, there is nothing to keep us from harming others.

In short, there are two sides to Right Resolve:

- the intention at all times to abandon any evil or distressing traits that defile the mind and cause it to suffer; the intention to remove ourselves from this suffering, because traits of this sort are a form of self-punishment in which we do ourselves harm;
- the intention to develop within ourselves whatever will give rise to ease, comfort, and pleasure for the mind, until we reach the point where peace and ease are absolute: This is classed as having goodwill toward ourselves. Only then can we qualify as having Right Resolve.

III. RIGHT SPEECH. Speaking in line with the truth has four forms –

*A. Not lying.*

*B. Not speaking divisively*, e.g., talking about this person to that person so as to give rise to misunderstandings leading to a falling-out between the two.

*C. Not speaking harsh or vulgar words*, casting aspersions on a person's family, race, or occupation in ways that are considered base by the conventions of the world.

*D. Not speaking idly*, i.e., in ways that are of no benefit to the listener – for instance, criticizing or gossiping about the faults of other people in ways that don't serve to remind our listeners to correct their own faults;

or grumbling, i.e., complaining over and over about something until our listeners can't stand it any longer, the way a drunkard grumbles repeatedly without saying anything worthwhile;

or speaking extravagantly – even if what we say may be good, if it goes over our listeners' heads it serves no purpose;

or babbling, i.e., speaking excessively without any aim. Talking at great length without really saying anything serves no purpose at all and fits the phrase, 'A waste of words, a waste of breath, a waste of time.'

In short:

– Don't say anything bad or untrue.

– Say only things that are true and good, that will give knowledge to our listeners or bring them to their senses. Even then, though, we should have a sense of time, place, and situation for our words to qualify as Right Speech. Don't hope to get by on good words and good intentions alone. If what you say isn't right for the situation, it can cause harm. Suppose, for instance, that another person does something wrong. Even though you may mean well, if what you say strikes that person the wrong way, it can cause harm.

There's a story they tell about a monk who was walking across an open field and happened to meet a farmer carrying a plow over his shoulder and a hoe in his hand, wearing a palm-leaf hat and a waistcloth whose ends weren't tucked in. On seeing the monk, the farmer raised his hands in respect without first putting himself in order. The monk, meaning well, wanted to give the farmer a gentle reminder and so said, 'Now, that's not the way you pay respect to a monk, is it?' 'If it isn't,' the farmer replied, 'then to hell with it.' As a result, the gentle reminder ended up causing

harm.

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IV. RIGHT ACTION: being upright in our activities. With reference to our personal actions, this means adhering to the three principles of virtuous conduct

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A. *Not killing*, harming or harassing other people or living beings.

B. *Not stealing*, concealing, embezzling, or misappropriating the belongings of other people.

C. *Not engaging in immoral or illicit sex* with the children or spouses of other people.

With reference to our work in general, Right Action means this: Some of our activities are achieved through bodily action. Before engaging in them, we should first evaluate them to see just how beneficial they will be to ourselves and others, and to see whether or not they are clean and pure. If we see that they will cause suffering or harm, we should refrain from them and choose only those activities that will lead to ease, convenience, and comfort for ourselves and others.

‘Action’ here, includes every physical action we take: sitting, standing, walking, and lying down; the use of every part of the body, e.g., grasping or taking with our hands; as well as the use of our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and feeling. All of this counts as physical activity or action.

External action can be divided into five sorts:

a. Government: undertaking responsibility to aid and assist the citizens of the nation in ways that are honest and fair; giving them protection so that they can all live in happiness and security. For example: (1) protecting their lives and property so that they may live in safety, freedom, and peace; (2) giving them aid, e.g., making grants of movable or immovable property; giving support so that they can improve their financial standing, their knowledge, and their conduct, establishing standards that will lead the country as a whole to prosperity – ‘A civilized people living in a civilized land’ – under the rule of justice, termed ‘*dhammādhīpateyya*,’ making the Dhamma sovereign.

b. Agriculture: putting the land to use, e.g., growing crops, running farms and orchards so as to gain wealth and prosperity from what is termed the wealth in the soil.

c. Industry: extracting and transforming the resources that come from the earth but in their natural state can’t give their full measure of ease and



convenience, and thus need to be transformed: e.g., making rice into flour or sweets; turning fruits or tubers into liquid – for instance, making orange juice; making solids into liquids – e.g., smelting ore; or liquids into solids. All of these activities have to be conducted in honesty and fairness to qualify as Right Action.

d. Commerce: the buying, selling, and trading of various objects for the convenience of those who desire them, as a way of exchanging ease, convenience, and comfort with one another – on high and low levels, involving high and low-quality goods, between people of high, low, and middling intelligence. This should be conducted in honesty and fairness so that all receive their share of convenience and justice.

e. Labor: working for hire, searching for wealth in line with the level of our abilities, whether low, middling, or high. Our work should be up to the proper standards and worthy – in all honesty and fairness – of the wages we receive.

In short, Right Action means:

- being clean and honest, faithful to our duties at all times;
- improving the objects with which we deal so that they can become clean and honest, too. Clean things – whether many or few – are always good by their very nature. Other people may or may not know, but we can't help knowing each and every time.

So before we engage in any action so as to make it upright and honest, we first have to examine and weigh things carefully, being thoroughly circumspect in using our judgment and intelligence. Only then can our actions be in line with right moral principles.

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V. RIGHT LIVELIHOOD. In maintaining ourselves and supporting our families, expending our wealth for the various articles we use or consume, we must use our earnings – coming from our Right Actions – in ways that are in keeping with moral principles. Only then will they provide safety and security, fostering the freedom and peace in our life that will help lead to inner calm. For example, there are four ways of using our wealth rightly so as to foster our own livelihood and that of others, providing happiness for all –

A. Charity: expending our wealth so as to be of use to the poor, sick, needy, or helpless who merit the help of people who have wealth, both inner and outer, so that they may live in ease and comfort.

B. Support: expending what wealth we can afford to provide for the ease

and comfort of our family and close friends.

C. Aid: expending our wealth or our energies for the sake of the common good – for example, by helping the government either actively or passively. ‘Actively’ means donating a sum of money to a branch of the government, such as setting up a fund to foster any of its various activities. ‘Passively’ means being willing to pay our taxes for the sake of the nation, not trying to be evasive or uncooperative. Our wealth will then benefit both ourselves and others.

D. Offerings (*dānapūja*): This means making gifts of the four necessities of life to support Buddhism. This is a way of paying homage to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha that will serve the purposes of the religion. At the same time, it’s a way of earning inner wealth, termed *ariyadhana*. A person observing the principles of Right Livelihood who does this will reap benefits both in this life and in the next.

The wealth we have rightfully earned, though, if we don’t have a sense of how to use it properly, can cause us harm both in this life and in lives to come. Thus, in expending our wealth in the area of charity, we should do so honestly. In the area of support, we should use forethought and care. The same holds true in the areas of aid and offerings. Before making expenditures, we should consider the circumstances carefully, to see whether or not they’re appropriate. If they aren’t, then we shouldn’t provide assistance. Otherwise, our wealth may work to our harm. If we provide help to people who don’t deserve it – for instance, giving assistance to thieves – the returns may be detrimental to our own situation in life. The same holds true in making offerings to the religion. If a monk has no respect for the monastic discipline, doesn’t observe the principles of morality, neglects his proper duties – the threefold training – and instead behaves in ways that are deluded, misguided, and deceitful, then whoever makes offerings to such a monk will suffer for it in the end, as in the saying,

*Make friends with fools and they’ll lead you astray;  
Make friends with the wise and they’ll show you the way.  
Make friends with the evil and you’ll end up threadbare,  
And the fruit of your evil is: No one will care.*

Now, we may think that a monk’s evil is his own business, as long as we’re doing good. This line of thinking ought to be right, but it may turn out to be wrong. Suppose, for instance, that a group of people is playing cards in defiance of the law. You’re not playing with them, you’re just sitting at the table, watching. But if the authorities catch you, they’re sure to take you along with the group, no matter how much you may protest your innocence. In the same way, whoever

makes offerings without careful forethought may end up reaping harm, and such a person can't be classified as maintaining Right Livelihood.

In short, there are two sides to Right Livelihood:

– We should have a sense of how to use our wealth so as to maintain ourselves in line with our station in life, being neither too miserly nor too extravagant.

– We should give help to other people, as we are able, so as to provide them with comfort and well-being. This is what it means to maintain Right Livelihood.

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VI. RIGHT EFFORT. There are four ways of exerting ourselves in line with the Dhamma –

A. Make a persistent effort to abandon whatever evil there is in your conduct. For example, if you've given yourself over to drinking to the point where you've become alcoholic, spoiling your work, wasting your money and yourself, creating problems in your family, this is classed as a kind of evil. Or if you've given yourself over to gambling to the point where you've lost all sense of proportion, blindly gambling your money away, creating trouble for yourself and others, this too is classed as a kind of evil. Or if you've let yourself become promiscuous, going from partner to partner beyond the bounds of propriety, this can be damaging to your spouse and children, wasting your money, ruining your reputation, and so is classed as a kind of evil, too. Or if you've been associating with the wrong kind of people, troublemakers and debauched types who will pull you down to their level, this will cause you to lose your money, your reputation, and whatever virtue you may have. Thus, each of these activities is classed as an evil – a doorway to ruin and to the lower realms – so you should make a persistent effort to abandon them completely.

B. Make a persistent effort to prevent evil from arising, and use restraint to put a halt to whatever evil may be in the process of arising – as when greedy desires that go against the principles of fairness appear within you. For instance, suppose you have a ten-acre plot of land that you haven't utilized fully, and yet you go infringing on other people's property. This is classed as greedy desire, a path to trouble and suffering for yourself and others. Now, this doesn't mean that you aren't allowed to eat and live, or that you aren't allowed to work and search for wealth. Actually, those who have the enterprise to make whatever land or wealth they own bear fruit, or even increasing fruit, were praised by the Buddha as *utthāna-sampadā*, enterprising, industrious people who will gain a full measure of

welfare in this lifetime. Greedy desires, here, mean any desires that go beyond our proper limits and infringe on other people. This sort of desire is bound to cause harm and so is classed as a kind of evil. When such a desire arises in the heart, you should use restraint to put a halt to it. This is what is meant by preventing evil from arising.

Another example is anger, arising from either good or bad intentions that, when unfulfilled, lead to feelings of irritation and dissatisfaction. Such feelings should be stilled. Don't let them flare up and spread, for anger is something you don't like in other people, and they don't like it in you. Thus it's classed as a kind of evil. You should exert restraint and keep your mind on a steady and even keel. Your anger won't then have a chance to grow and will gradually fade away. This is what's meant by making a persistent effort to keep evil from taking root and sprouting branches.

Or take delusion – knowledge that doesn't fit the truth. You shouldn't jump to conclusions. Restrain yourself from making snap judgments so that you can first examine and consider things carefully. Sometimes, for instance, you understand right to be wrong, and wrong to be right: This is delusion. When right looks wrong to you, then your thoughts, words, and deeds are bound to be wrong, out of line with the truth, and so can cause you to slip into ways that are evil. When wrong looks right to you, your thoughts, words, and deeds are also bound to be wrong and out of line with the truth. Suppose that a black crow looks white to you; or an albino buffalo, black. When people who see the truth meet up with you, disputes can result. This is thus a form of evil. Or suppose that you have good intentions but act out of delusion. If you happen to do wrong – for example, giving food to monks at times when they aren't allowed to eat, all because of your own ignorance and delusion – you'll end up causing harm. So you should be careful to observe events and situations, searching for knowledge so as to keep your thoughts and opinions in line. Delusion then won't have a chance to arise. This is classed as making an effort to exercise restraint so that evil won't arise.

As for whatever evil you've already abandoned, don't let it return. Cut off the evil behind you and fend off the evil before you. Evil will thus have a chance to fade away.

C. Make a persistent effort to give rise to the good within yourself. For example

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1. *Saddhā-sampadā*: Be a person of consummate conviction – conviction in the principle of cause and effect; conviction that if we do good we'll have to meet with good, if we do evil we'll have to meet with evil. Whether or not other people are aware of our actions, the goodness we do is a form of wealth that will stay with us throughout time.

2. *Sīla-sampadā*: Be a person of consummate virtue, whose words and deeds are in proper order, whose behavior is in line with the principles of honesty leading to purity. These are truly human values that we should foster within ourselves.

3. *Cāga-sampadā*: Be magnanimous and generous in making donations and offerings to others, finding reward in the fruits of generosity. For example, we may give material objects to support the comfort and convenience of others in general: The fruits of our generosity are bound to find their way back to us. Or we may be magnanimous in ways that don't involve material objects. For instance, when other people mistreat or insult us through thoughtlessness or carelessness, we forgive them and don't let our thoughts dwell on their faults and errors. This is called the gift of forgiveness (*abhaya-dāna*) or the gift of justice (*dhamma-dāna*). It brings the highest rewards.

4. *Paññā-sampadā*: Be a person of consummate discernment, whose thinking is circumspect and whose sense of reason is in line with the truth.

All four of these qualities are classed as forms of goodness. If they haven't yet arisen within you, you should give rise to them. They will reward you with well-being in body and mind.

D. Make a persistent effort to maintain the good in both of its aspects: cause and effect. In other words, keep up whatever good you have been doing; and as for the results – mental comfort, ease, and light-heartedness – maintain that sense of ease so that it can develop and grow, just as a mother hen guards her eggs until they turn into baby chicks with feathers, tails, sharp beaks, and strong wings, able to fend for themselves.

The results of the good we have done, if we care for them well, are bound to develop until they take us to higher levels of attainment. For instance, when our hearts have had their full measure of mundane happiness, so that we develop a sense of enough, we're bound to search for other forms of happiness in the area of the Dhamma, developing our virtue, concentration, and discernment to full maturity so as to gain release from all suffering and stress, meeting with the peerless ease described in the phrase,

*Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ:*

Nibbāna is the ultimate ease, invariable and unchanging.

When we have done good in full measure and have maintained it well until it's firmly established within us, we should then make the effort to use that good with discretion so as to benefit people in general. In short: Do what's good, maintain

what's good, and have a sense of how to use what's good – in keeping with time, place, and situation – so as to give rise to the greatest benefits and happiness. Whoever can do all of this ranks as a person established in Right Effort.

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VII. RIGHT MINDFULNESS. There are four establishing of mindfulness or frames of reference for establishing the mind in concentration –

**A. *Contemplation of the body as a frame of reference:*** Focus on the body as your frame of reference. The word 'body' refers to what is produced from the balance of the elements or properties (*dhātu*): earth – the solid parts, such as hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin; water – the liquid parts, e.g., saliva, catarrh, blood; fire – warmth, e.g., the fires of digestion; wind (motion) – e.g., the breath; space – the empty places between the other elements that allow them to come together in proper proportion; consciousness – the awareness that permeates and brings the other elements together in a balanced way so that they form a body. There are four ways of looking at the body –

1. *Outer bodies:* This refers to the bodies of other people. When you see them, focus on the symptoms of the body that appear externally – as when you see a child suffering pain in the process of being born, or a person suffering a disease that impairs or cripples the body, or a person suffering the pains and inconveniences of old age, or a dead person, which is something disconcerting to people the world over. When you see these things, be mindful to hold your reactions in check and reflect on your own condition – that you, too, are subject to these things – so that you will feel motivated to start right in developing the virtues that will serve you as a solid mainstay beyond the reach of birth, aging, illness, and death. Then reflect again on your own body – the 'inner body' – as your next frame of reference.

2. *The inner body:* the meeting place of the six elements – earth, water, fire, wind, space, consciousness – the body itself forming the first four. Center your mindfulness in the body, considering it from four angles:

- a. Consider it as a group of elements.
- b. Separate it into its 32 parts (hair of the head, hair of the body, etc.).
- c. Consider how the mingling of the elements leads to such forms of filthiness as saliva, catarrh, blood, lymph, and pus, which permeate throughout the body.
- d. Consider it as inconstant – it's unstable, always altering and deteriorating; as stressful – it can't last – no matter what good or evil you

may do, it changes with every in-and-out breath; and as not-self – some of its aspects, no matter how you try to prevent them, can't help following their own inherent nature.

The body, viewed from any of these four aspects, can serve as a frame of reference. But although our frame of reference may be right, if we aren't circumspect and fully aware, or if we practice in a misguided way, we can come to see wrong as right to the point where our perceptions become skewed. For example, if we see an old person, a sick person, or a dead person, we may become so depressed and despondent that we don't want to do any work at all, on the level of either the world or the Dhamma, and instead want simply to die so as to get away from it all. Or in examining the elements – earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness – we may come to the conclusion that what's inside is nothing but elements, what's outside is nothing but elements, and we can't see anything above and beyond this, so that our perception of things becomes skewed, seeing that there's no 'man,' no 'woman.' This is what can lead monks to sleep with women and abandon their precepts, eating food in the evening and drinking alcohol, thinking that it's only elements eating elements so there shouldn't be any harm. Or we may consider the filthy and unattractive aspects of the body until we reach a point where things seem so foul and disgusting that we can't eat at all and simply want to escape. Some people, on reaching this point, want to jump off a cliff or into the river to drown. Or we may view things as inconstant, stressful, and not-self, but if we act deludedly, without being circumspect in our discernment, the mind can become a turmoil. If our foundation – our concentration – isn't strong enough for this sort of investigation, it can lead to a distressing sense of alienation, of being trapped in the body. This is called skewed perception, and it can lead to corruptions of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*), all because we aren't skilled in training the mind. We may feel that we already know, but knowledge is no match for experience, as in the old saying,

*To know is no match for having done.*

*A son is no match for his father.*

So in dealing with this frame of reference, if we want our path to be smooth and convenient, with no stumps or thorns, we should focus on the sensation of the body in and of itself, i.e., on one of the elements as experienced in the body, such as the breath.

3. *The body in and of itself*: Focus on a single aspect of the body, such as the in-and-out breath. Don't pay attention to any other aspects of the body. Keep track of just the breath sensations. For example, when the breath comes in long and goes out long, be aware of it. Focus on being aware at all times of whether your

breathing feels easy or difficult. If any part of the body feels uncomfortable, adjust your breathing so that all parts of the body feel comfortable with both the in-breath and the out, and so that the mind doesn't loosen its hold and run after any outside perceptions of past or future, which are the sources of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). Be intent on looking after the in-and-out breath, adjusting it and letting it spread so as to connect and coordinate with the other aspects of the breath in the body, just as the air stream in a Coleman lantern spreads kerosene throughout the threads of the mantle. One of the preliminary signs (*uggaha nimitta*) of the breath will then appear: a sense of relief-giving brightness filling the heart, or a lump or ball of white, like cotton-wool. The body will feel at peace – refreshed and full. The properties (*dhātu*) of the body will be balanced and won't interfere or conflict with one another. This is termed *kāya-passaddhi*, *kāya-viveka* – serenity and solitude of the body.

As for awareness, it's expanded and broad – *mahaggataṃ cittaṃ* – sensitive throughout to every part of the body. Mindfulness is also expanded, spreading throughout the body. This is called the great frame of reference, enabling you to know how cause and effect operate within the body. You'll see which kinds of breath create, which kinds maintain, and which kinds destroy. You'll see feelings of breath arising, remaining, and disbanding; liquid feelings arising, remaining, and disbanding; solid feelings arising, remaining, and disbanding; feelings of warmth arising, remaining, and disbanding; feelings of space arising, remaining, and disbanding; you'll see consciousness of these various aspects arising, remaining, and disbanding. All of this you will know without having to drag in any outside knowledge to smother the awareness that exists on its own, by its very nature, within you, and is always there to tell you the truth. This is termed mindful alertness in full measure. It appears as a result of self-training and is called *paccattaṃ*: something that exists on its own, knows on its own, and that each person can know only for him or her self.

4. *The body in the mind*: When the breath is in good order, clean and bright, and the heart is clear, internal visions may appear from the power of thought. Whatever you may think of, you can make appear as an image – near or far, subtle or gross, giving rise to knowledge or completely lacking in knowledge, true or false. If you're circumspect, mindful, and alert, these things can give rise to knowledge and cognitive skill. If you aren't, you may fall for the images you see. For example, you may think of going somewhere and then see an image of yourself floating in that direction. You center your awareness in the image and float along with your thoughts until you get carried away, losing track of where you originally were. This way you get engrossed in traveling through heaven or hell, meeting with good things and bad, being pleased or upset by what you see. As a result, your concentration degenerates because you aren't wise to the nature of the image of



the body in the mind.

If, though, you can think to restrain your train of thought and focus on the image as a phenomenon in the present, the image will return to join your primary sense of the body. You'll then see that they are equal in nature. Neither is superior to the other. The nature of each is to arise, remain, and then dissolve. Awareness is simply awareness, and sensations are simply sensations. Don't fasten onto either. Let go of them and be neutral. Be thoroughly mindful and alert with each mental moment. This level of sensation, if you're adept and knowledgeable, can lead to knowledge of previous lives (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*), knowledge of where living beings are reborn after death (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*), and knowledge that does away with the fermentations of defilement (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*). If you aren't wise to this level of sensation, though, it can lead to ignorance, craving, and attachment, causing the level of your practice to degenerate.

The image or sensation that arises through the power of the mind is sometimes called the rebirth body or the astral body. But even so, you shouldn't become attached to it. Only then can you be said to be keeping track of the body as a frame of reference on this level.

***B. Contemplation of feelings as a frame of reference:*** The mental act of 'tasting' or 'savoring' the objects of the mind – e.g., taking pleasure or displeasure in them – is termed *vedanā*, or feeling. If we class feelings according to flavor, there are three –

1. *Sukha-vedanā*: pleasure and ease for body and mind.
2. *Dukkha-vedanā*: stress and pain for body and mind.
3. *Upekkhā-vedanā*: neutrality, neither pleasure nor pain.

If we class them according to range or source, there are four:

1. *Outer feelings*: feelings that arise by way of the senses – as when the eye meets with a visual object, the ear with a sound, the nose with a smell, the tongue with a taste, the body with a tactile sensation – and a feeling arises in one's awareness: contented (*somanassa-vedanā*), discontented (*domanassa-vedanā*), or neutral (*upekkhā-vedanā*).

2. *Inner feelings*: feelings that arise within the body, as when any of the four properties – earth, water, fire, or wind – change either through our present intentions or through the results of past actions, giving rise to pleasure, pain, or neutral feelings.

3. *Feelings in and of themselves*: feelings regarded simply as part of the stream of feelings. For example, pleasure, pain, and equanimity occur in different mental moments; they don't all arise in the same moment. When

one of them, such as pain, arises, focus right on what is present. If pleasure arises, keep the mind focused in the pleasure. Don't let it stray to other objects that may be better or worse. Stay with the feeling until you know its truth: in other words, until you know whether it's physical pleasure or mental pleasure, whether it results from past actions or from what you are doing in the present. Only when your mindfulness is focused in this way can you be said to be viewing feelings in and of themselves.

4. *Feelings in the mind*: moods that arise in the mind, independent of any object. Simply by thinking we can give rise to pleasure or pain, good or bad, accomplished entirely through the heart.

Each of these four kinds of feelings can serve as an object for tranquility and insight meditation. Each can serve as a basis for knowledge.

**C. Contemplation of the mind as a frame of reference**: taking as our preoccupation states that arise in the mind. The term 'mind' (*citta*) refers to two conditions – awareness and thinking. Awareness of thinking can cause the mind to take on different states, good or bad. If we classify these states by their characteristics, there are three: good, bad, and neutral.

1. Good mental states (*kusala-citta*) are of three sorts –

a. *Vītarāga-citta*: the mind when it disentangles itself from its desire or fascination with objects it likes or finds pleasing.

b. *Vītadosa-citta*: the mind when it isn't incited or roused to irritation by its objects.

c. *Vītamoha-citta*: the mind when it isn't deluded, intoxicated, or outwitted by its objects.

2. Bad mental states (*akusala-citta*) are also of three sorts –

a. *Sarāga-citta*: the mind engrossed in its affections and desires.

b. *Sadosa-citta*: the mind irritated or aroused to anger.

c. *Samoha-citta*: the mind deluded and ignorant of the truth.

3. Neutral mental states, which arise from being neither pleased nor displeased, or when mental activity (*kiriya*) occurs without affecting the condition of awareness for good or bad – are called *avyākata*: indeterminate.

If we classify mental states according to their range or source, there are three –

1. *Outer mental states*: thoughts that run after perceptions of past or

future, and may be either contented (this is termed indulgence in pleasure, *kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) or discontented (this is termed indulgence in self-affliction, *attakilamathānuyoga*).

2. *Inner mental states*: thoughts that arise within us with reference to the present, either right or wrong, good or bad.

3. *Mental states in and of themselves*: mental fabrication (*citta-saṅkhāra*) – the act of thinking arising from awareness, the act of awareness arising from thinking, taking such forms as consciousness, intellect, mindfulness, alertness, discernment, knowledge. Whichever one of these mental states may be arising and remaining in the present moment, focus your attention exclusively on it. For example, knowledge of a certain sort may appear, either on its own or as the result of deliberation; it may or may not be intended. Whatever arises, focus your mindfulness and alertness on it until you know the stages in the workings of the mind; knowing, for instance, which mental state is the intentional act (*kamma*), which the result (*vipāka*), and which mere activity (*kiriya*). Keep focused exclusively on these states until you can see mental states simply as mental states, knowledge simply as knowledge, and intelligence as intelligence. Be thoroughly circumspect, mindful, and discerning at each mental moment until you are able to let go of all mental states without being caught up on what they are supposed to refer to, represent, or mean. Only then can you be said to be keeping track of mental states in and of themselves as a frame of reference.

**D. Contemplation of mental qualities as a frame of reference:** Mental qualities (*dhamma*) that can serve as bases for mindfulness leading to peace and respite for the mind are of three kinds –

1. *Outer mental qualities*, i.e., the hindrances, which are of five sorts –

(a) *Kāmachanda*: desire for the five types of sensual objects – visual objects, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations – which can cause the mind to become restless.

(b) *Byāpāda*: ill-will; stepping into a mood of discontent that arises from certain sorts of individuals or situations that, when we brood on them, cause the mind to focus on what we find displeasing until it becomes irritated and upset.

(c) *Thīna-middha*: drowsiness, torpor, dullness, giving rise to laziness, apathy, and discouragement.

(d) *Uddhacca-kukkucca*: restlessness and anxiety; thinking more than we want to or need; thoughts that go out of control, drifting further and

further away until we may even lose sense of our own body. Thinking that has no order or bounds is sure to cause harm.

(e) *Vicikicchā*: doubt, hesitancy, uncertainty about issues dealing with the world or the Dhamma: doubt about certain individuals, about their teachings, about our own conduct and practices. This comes from not having enough mindfulness or alertness to keep the mind in check and from not knowing where the hindrances come from. We should realize that – to put it briefly – the hindrances come from concepts that allude to either the past or the future. So when we want to ward them off, we should let go of these concepts and focus our attention in on the present, and the hindrances will weaken away.

2. *Inner mental qualities*: The skillful mental qualities we should foster within ourselves are five, counting their component factors, and four, counting their levels, in other words –

(a) The first jhāna, which has five factors:

– *Vitakka*: directed thought focused on the object of the mind’s concentration, such as the breath.

– *Vicāra*: evaluating and adjusting the breath so that it becomes comfortable to the point where it spreads throughout the entire body; coordinating and connecting the various breath-sensations existing within us.

– *Pīti*: rapture, refreshment, fullness of body and mind.

– *Sukha*: pleasure, ease of body and mind.

– *Ekaggatā*: The mind enters into a single object, such as the breath; i.e., all five of these factors deal with a single topic.

(b) The second jhāna has three factors:

– *Pīti*: The sense of refreshment and fullness for body and mind becomes stronger, so that the mind abandons its directed thought (*vitakka*).

– *Sukha*: The sense of ease for body and mind becomes greater, so that it can relieve mental discomfort. This leads the mind to abandon its evaluating and adjusting (*vicāra*).

– *Ekaggatā*: The mind enters into a subtle and gentle level of breath, with a feeling of spaciousness and relief throughout the body. This subtle breath bathes and pervades the entire body, so that the mind becomes absolutely snug with its one object.

(c) The third jhāna: The singleness of the mind's object becomes even more refined, leaving just a feeling of mental and physical ease, the result of steadying the mind in a single object. This is called *ekaggatā-sukha*: All that remains is singleness and ease.

(d) The fourth jhāna: *Upekkhā* – the breath sensations in the body are still, so that we can do without the in-and-out breath. The still breath fills all the various parts of the body. The four physical properties are all quiet and still. The mind is still, having abandoned past and future, entering into its object that forms the present. The mind is firmly focused on one object: This is *ekaggatā*, the second factor of the fourth jhāna. Mindfulness and alertness are present in full measure and thus give rise to mental brightness. When mindfulness is strong, it turns into cognitive skill (*vijjā*); when alertness is strong, it turns into intuitive insight (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), seeing the truth of physical sensations (*rūpa*) and mental acts (*nāma*), whether near or far, gross or subtle, our own or those of others. This knowledge appears exclusively within our own body and mind, and we can realize it on our own: This is what is meant by the word, '*paccattam*.'

3. *Mental qualities in and of themselves*. This refers to mental qualities of another level that appear after the above qualities have been developed. Intuitive knowledge arises, e.g. –

*'Dhamma-cakkhurū udapādi'*: The eye of the mind, which sees in terms of the Dhamma, arises within one.

*'Ñāṇam udapādi'*: deep intuitive sensitivity, thoroughly penetrating. This refers to the three forms of intuitive knowledge beginning with the ability to remember previous lives.

*'Paññā udapādi'*: Liberating discernment arises.

*'Vijjā udapādi'*: Cognitive skill – clear, open, deep, penetrating, and true – arises within one.

These forms of knowledge arise on their own – not for ordinary people, but for those who have developed concentration. Discernment, here, refers to the discernment that comes from mental training and development, not to the ordinary discernment coming from concepts we've remembered or thought out. This is discernment that arises right at the heart. Cognitive skill (*vijjā*), here, is a high level of knowledge, termed *pariññāya dhamma*: thorough comprehension that arises within from having explored the four noble truths, beginning with stress (*dukkha*), which is the result of such causes (*samudaya*) as ignorance and craving. Knowledge arises, enabling us to cut the taproot of stress by performing the task of abandoning the cause. When this is done, stress disbands and ceases;

the cause doesn't flare up again: This is *nirodha*. And the knowledge that steps in to eliminate the cause of stress is the Path (*magga*), the way leading to release from all stress and suffering, made possible by the eye of the mind composed of –

*ñāṇa-cakkhu*: intuition as a means of vision;

*paññā-cakkhu*: discernment as a means of vision;

*vijjā-cakkhu*: cognitive skill as a means of vision.

This is the eye of the mind.

In short, we have: *dukkha*, physical and mental stress; and *samudaya*, the cause of stress. These two are one pair of cause and effect functioning in the world. Another pair is: *nirodha*, the disbanding and cessation of all stress, and *magga-citta*, the mind following the right path, causing the causes of stress – ignorance and craving – to disband. In other words, when the physical and mental stress from which we suffer is ended through the power of the mind on the Path, the mind is freed from all disruptions and fermentations, and doesn't latch onto cause or effect, pleasure or pain, good or evil, the world or the Dhamma. It abandons all supposings, assumptions, wordings, and conventions. This is deathlessness (*amata dhamma*), a quality that doesn't arise, doesn't change, doesn't vanish or disband, and that doesn't fasten onto any quality at all. In other words, it can let go of conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhata dhamma*) and doesn't fasten onto unconditioned phenomena (*asaṅkhata dhamma*). It lets go of each phenomenon in line with that phenomenon's own true nature. Thus the saying: '*Sabbe dhammā anattā*' – No phenomenon is the self; the self isn't any phenomenon. All supposings and assumptions – all meanings – are abandoned. This is *nibbāna*.

All of this is called seeing mental qualities in and of themselves – i.e., seeing the higher aspect of mental qualities that arises from their more common side.

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VIII. RIGHT CONCENTRATION: the way to discernment, knowledge, and release. If we class concentration according to how it's practiced in general, there are two sorts: right and wrong.

A. *Wrong Concentration*: Why is it called wrong? Because it doesn't give rise to the liberating insight that leads to the transcendent qualities. For example, after attaining a certain amount of concentration, we may use it in the wrong way, as in magic – hypnotizing other people or spirits of the dead so as to have them in our power, or exerting magnetic attraction so as to seduce or dupe other people – all of which causes the heart to become deceitful and dishonest. Or we may use concentration to cast spells and practice sorcery, displaying powers in hopes of material reward. All of these things are based on nothing more than momentary

(*khaṇika*) concentration.

Another type of Wrong Concentration is that used to develop types of mental absorption falling outside of the Buddha's teachings and belonging to yogic doctrines and practices: for example, staring at an external object – such as the sun or the moon – or at certain kinds of internal objects. When the mind becomes steady for a moment, you lose your sense of the body and become fastened on the object to the point where your mindfulness and alertness lose their moorings. You then drift along in the wake of the object, in whatever direction your thoughts may take you: up to see heaven or down to see hell, seeing true things and false mixed together, liking or disliking what you see, losing your bearings, lacking the mindfulness and alertness that form the present.

Another instance of Wrong Concentration is when – after you've begun practicing to the point where you've attained threshold (*upacāra*) concentration – you then stare down on the present, focusing, say, on the properties of breath, fire, or earth, forbidding the mind to think; staring down, getting into a trance until the property becomes more and more refined, and the mind becomes more and more refined; using force to suppress the mind until awareness becomes so dim that you lose mindfulness and alertness and all sense of body and mind: Everything is absolutely snuffed out and still, with no self-awareness. This is called the plane of non-perception (*asaññī-bhava*), where you have no perception of anything at all. Your awareness isn't well-rounded, your mindfulness lacks circumspection, and as a result discernment has no chance to arise. This is called Wrong Concentration, Wrong Release, a mental blank – no awareness of past, present, or future.

Another instance of Wrong Concentration is when we can give rise to momentary concentration, threshold concentration, all the way to the four jhānas, but aren't adept at entering and leaving these levels, so that we focus in until only the property of consciousness is left, with no sense of the body: This is called *arūpa jhāna*. Bodily processes disappear, leaving only the four types of mental acts (*vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, and viññāṇa*), which form the four levels of *arūpa jhāna*, the first being when we focus on a feeling of space or emptiness. The mind attains such a relaxed sense of pleasure that we may take it to be a transcendent state or *nibbāna*, and so we search no further, becoming idle and lazy, making no further effort because we assume that we've finished our task.

In short, we simply think or focus, without having any finesse in what we're doing – entering, leaving, or staying in place – and as a result our concentration becomes wrong.

*B. Right Concentration:* This starts with threshold concentration, which acts as the basis for the four jhānas, beginning with the first: *vitakka*, thinking of whichever aspect of the body you choose to take as your object, such as the four

physical properties, starting with the in-and-out breath. And then *vicāra*: adjusting, expanding, letting the breath sensations flow throughout the body, and at the same time evaluating the results you obtain. For instance, if the body feels uncomfortable or constricted, adjust the breath until it feels right throughout the body. The mind then sticks to its single object: This is termed *ekaggatā*. When mindfulness enters into the body, keeping the breath in mind, and alertness is present in full measure, keeping track of the causes that produce results congenial to body and mind, then your sense of the body will benefit. Bathed with mindfulness and alertness, it feels light, malleable, and full – saturated with the power of mindfulness and alertness. The mind also feels full: This is termed *pīti*. When both body and mind are full, they grow quiet like a child who, having eaten his fill, rests quiet and content. This is the cause of pleasure on the level of the Dhamma, termed *sukha*. These factors, taken together, form one stage of Right Concentration.

As you continue practicing for a length of time, the sense of fullness and pleasure in the body becomes greater. *Ekaggatā* – interest and absorption in your one object – becomes more intense because you have seen the results it produces. The mind becomes steady and determined, focused with full mindfulness and alertness, thoroughly aware of both body and mind, and thus you can let go of your thinking and evaluating, entering the second jhāna.

The second jhāna has three factors. *Ekaggatā*: Keep the mind with its one object, the breath, which is now more subtle and refined than before, leaving simply a feeling of *pīti*, fullness of body and mind. The sensations of the body don't clash with one another. The four properties – earth, water, fire, and wind – are properly balanced. The mind and body don't interfere with each other, so both feel full and satisfied. The body feels pleasant (*sukha*) – solitary and quiet. The mind, too, feels pleasant and at ease – solitary and quiet. When you're mindful, alert, and adept at doing this – entering, staying in place, and withdrawing – side-benefits will result. For example, knowledge of certain matters will arise, either on its own or after you've posed a question in the mind. Doubts about certain issues will be put to rest. As the sense of bodily pleasure grows stronger, the sense of mental pleasure and ease grows stronger as well, and thus you can let go of the sense of fullness. Awareness at this point becomes refined and so can detect a subtle level of the breath that feels bright, open, soothing, and spacious. This enables you to go on to the third jhāna.

The third jhāna has two factors, pleasure and singleness of preoccupation. The pleasure you've been experiencing starts to waver in flashes as it reaches saturation point and begins to change. You thus become aware of another, subtler level of sensation, and so the mind shifts to a sense of openness and emptiness. The breath grows still, with no moving in or out, full in every part of the body.



This allows you to let go of the sense of pleasure. The mind enters this stage through the power of mindfulness and alertness. Awareness is tranquil and still, bright in the present, steady and independent. It lets go of the breath and is simply observant. The mind is still, with no shifting back and forth. Both breath and mind are independent. The mind can let down its burdens and cares. The heart is solitary and one, infused with mindfulness and alertness. When you reach this stage and stay with it properly, you're practicing the fourth jhāna.

The fourth jhāna has two factors. *Ekaggatā*: Your object becomes absolutely one. *Upekkhā*: You can let go of all thoughts of past and future; the five hindrances are completely cut away. The mind is solitary, clear, and radiant. The six properties – earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness – become radiant. The heart feels spacious and clear, thoroughly aware all around through the power of mindfulness and alertness. As mindfulness becomes tempered and strong, it turns into intuitive knowledge, enabling you to see the true nature of body and mind, sensations and mental acts, past, present, and future.

When this happens, if you aren't skilled, you can become excited or upset. In other words, you may develop *pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*, the ability to remember previous lives. If what you see is good, you may get pleased, which will cause your mindfulness and alertness to weaken. If what you see is bad or displeasing, you may get upset or distressed, so intent on what you remember that your sense of the present is weakened.

Or you may develop *cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*: The mind focuses on the affairs of other individuals, and you see them as they die and are reborn on differing levels. If you get carried away with what you see, your reference to the present will weaken. If you find this happening, you should take the mind in hand. If anything pleasing arises, hold back and stay firm in your sense of restraint. Don't let yourself fall into *kāmasukhallikānuyoga*, delight. If anything bad or displeasing arises, hold back – because it can lead to *attakilamathānuyoga*, distress. Draw the mind into the present and guard against all thoughts of delight and distress. Keep the mind neutral. This is the middle way, the mental attitude that forms the Path and gives rise to another level of awareness in which you realize, for instance, how inconstant it is to be a living being: When things go well, you're happy and pleased; when things go badly, you're pained and upset. This awareness enables you truly to know the physical sensations and mental acts you're experiencing and leads to a sense of disenchantment, termed *nibbidā-ñāṇa*. You see all fabrications as inconstant, harmful, stressful, and hard to bear, as lying beyond the control of the heart.

At this point, the mind disentangles itself: This is termed *virāga-dhamma*, dispassion. It feels no desire or attraction; it doesn't gulp down or lie fermenting in sensations or mental acts, past, present, or future. It develops a special level of

intuition that comes from within. What you never before knew, now you know; what you never before met with, now you see. This happens through the power of mindfulness and alertness gathering in at a single point and turning into *āsava-kkhaya-ñāṇa*, enabling you to disentangle and free yourself from mundane states of mind – in proportion to the extent of your practice – and so attain the transcendent qualities, beginning with stream entry.

All of this is termed Right Concentration: being skilled at entering, staying in place, and withdrawing, giving rise to –

*Right Intuition*: correct, profound, and penetrating;

*Right View*: correct views, in line with the truth;

*Right Practice*: in which you conduct yourself with full circumspection in all aspects of the triple training, with virtue, concentration, and discernment coming together in the heart.

This, then, is Right Concentration. For the most part, people who have attained true insight have done so in the four jhānas. Although there may be others who have gone wrong in the practice of jhāna, we'll achieve the proper results if we study so as to gain an understanding and adjust our practice so as to bring it into line.

This ends the discussion of Right Concentration.

\* \* \*

All that we have discussed so far can be summarized under three headings: Right View and Right Resolve come under the heading of discernment; Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood under the heading of virtue; and Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration under the heading of concentration. So altogether we have virtue, concentration, and discernment.

## VIRTUE

There are three levels of virtue –

**1. *Heṭṭhima-sīla*:** normalcy of word and deed, which consists of three kinds of bodily acts – not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct; and four kinds of speech – not lying, not speaking divisively, not saying anything coarse or abusive, not speaking idly. If we class virtue on this level according to the wording of the precepts and the groups of people who observe them, there are four – the five precepts, the eight, the ten, and the 227 precepts. All of these deal with aspects of behavior that should be abandoned, termed *pahāna-kicca*. At the same time, the Buddha directed us to develop good manners and proper conduct in the use of the four necessities of life – food, clothing, shelter, and medicine – so that our conduct in terms of thought, word, and deed will be orderly and becoming. This aspect is termed *bhāvanā-kicca*, behavior we should work at developing correctly.

Observance of these precepts or rules – dealing merely with words and deeds – forms the lower or preliminary level of virtue, which is what makes us into full-fledged human beings (*manussa-sampatti*).

**2. *Majjhima-sīla*:** the medium level of virtue, i.e., keeping watch over your words and deeds so that they cause no harm; and, in addition, keeping watch over your thoughts so as to keep your mental kamma upright in three ways –

*a. Anabhijjhā-visamalobha*: not coveting things that do not belong to you and that lie beyond your scope or powers; not focusing your thoughts on such things; not building what are called castles in the air. The Buddha taught us to tend to the wealth we already have so that it can grow on its own. The wealth we already have, if we use our intelligence and ingenuity, will draw more wealth our way without our having to waste energy by being covetous or greedy. For example, suppose we have a single banana tree: If we water it, give it fertilizer, loosen the soil around its roots, and protect it from dangers, our single banana tree will eventually give rise to an increase of other banana trees. In other words, if we're intelligent we can turn whatever wealth we have into a basis for a livelihood. But if we lack intelligence – if our hearts simply want to get, without wanting work – then even if we acquire a great deal of wealth, we won't be able to support ourselves. Thus, greed of this sort, in which we focus our desires above and beyond our capacities, is classed as a wrong kind of mental action.

*b. Abyāpāda*: abandoning thoughts of ill will, hatred, and vengeance, and developing thoughts of goodwill instead; thinking of the good aspects of the

people who have angered us. When people make us angry, it comes from the fact that our dealings with them – in which we associate with and assist one another – sometimes lead to disappointment. This gives rise to dislike and irritation, which in turn cause us to brood, so that we develop hurt feelings that grow into anger and thoughts of retaliation. Thus we should regard such people from many angles, for ordinarily as human beings they should have *some* good to them. If they don't act well toward us, they may at least speak well to us. Or if they don't act or speak well to us, perhaps their thoughts may be well-meaning to at least some extent. Thus, when you find your thoughts heading in the direction of anger or dislike, you should sit down and think in two ways –

(1) Try to think of whatever ways that person has been good to you. When these things come to mind, they'll give rise to feelings of affection, love, and goodwill. This is one way.

(2) Anger is something worthless, like the scum floating on the surface of a lake. If we're stupid, we won't get to drink the clean water lying underneath; or if we drink the scum, we may catch a disease. A person who is bad to you is like someone sunk in filth. If you're stupid enough to hate or be angry with such people, it's as if you wanted to go sit in the filth with them. Is that what you want? Think about this until any thoughts of ill will and anger disappear.

*c. Sammā-ditṭhi*: abandoning wrong views and mental darkness. If our minds lack the proper training and education, we may come to think that we and all other living beings are born simply as accidents of nature; that 'father' and 'mother' have no special meaning; that good and evil don't exist. Such views deviate from the truth. They can dissuade us from restraining the evil that lies within us and from searching for and fostering the good. To believe that there's no good or evil, that death is annihilation, is Wrong View – a product of short-sighted thinking and poor discernment, seeing things for what they aren't. So we should abandon such views and educate ourselves, searching for knowledge of the Dhamma and associating with people wiser than we, so that they can show us the bright path. We'll then be able to reform our views and make them Right, which is one form of mental uprightness.

Virtue on this level, when we can maintain it well, will qualify us to be heavenly beings. The qualities of heavenly beings, which grow out of human values, will turn us into human beings who are divine in our virtues, for to guard our thoughts, words, and deeds means that we qualify for heaven in this lifetime. This is one aspect of the merit developed by a person who observes the middle level of virtue.

**3. Uparima-sīla**: higher virtue, where virtue merges with the Dhamma in the area of mental activity. There are two sides to higher virtue –

a. PAHĀNA-KICCA: qualities to be abandoned, which are of five sorts –

(1) *Kāmachanda*: affection, desire, laxity, infatuation.

(2) *Byāpāda*: ill will and hatred.

(3) *Thīna-middha*: discouragement, drowsiness, sloth.

(4) *Uddhacca-kukkucca*: restlessness and anxiety.

(5) *Vicikicchā*: doubt, uncertainty, indecision.

### Discussion

(1) Ill will (*byāpāda*) lies at the essence of killing (*pāṇātipāta*), for it causes us to destroy our own goodness and that of others – and when our mind can kill off our own goodness, what’s to keep us from killing other people and animals as well?

(2) Restlessness (*uddhacca*) lies at the essence of taking what isn’t given (*adinnādāna*). The mind wanders about, taking hold of other people’s affairs, sometimes their good points, sometimes their bad. To fasten onto their good points isn’t too serious, for it can give us at least *some* nourishment. As long as we’re going to steal other people’s business and make it our own, we might as well take their silver and gold. Their bad points, though, are like trash they’ve thrown away – scraps and bones with nothing of any substance – and yet even so we let the mind feed on them. When we know that other people are possessive of their bad points and guard them well and yet we still take hold of these things to think about, it should be classed as a form of taking what isn’t given.

(3) Sensual desires (*kāmachanda*) lie at the essence of sensual misconduct. The mind feels an attraction for sensual objects – thoughts of past or future sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or tactile sensations – or for sensual defilements – passion, aversion, or delusion – to the point where we forget ourselves. Mental states such as these can be said to overstep the bounds of propriety in sensual matters.

(4) Doubt (*vicikicchā*) lies at the essence of lying. In other words, our minds are unsure, with nothing reliable or true to them. We have no firm principles and so drift along under the influence of all kinds of thoughts and preoccupations.

(5) Drowsiness (*thīna-middha*) is intoxication – discouragement, dullness, forgetfulness, with no mindfulness or restraint watching over the mind. This is what it means to be drugged or drunk.

All of these unskillful qualities are things we should eliminate by training the heart along the lines of:

b. BHĀVANĀ-KICCA: qualities to be developed –

(1) Mindfulness (*sati*): Start out by directing your thoughts to an object, such

as your in-and-out breathing. Use mindfulness to steady the mind in its object throughout both the in-breath and the out-. *Vitakka*, thinking in this way, is what kills off sensual desires, in that the discipline of mindfulness keeps the mind from slipping off into external objects.

(2) *Vicāra*: Evaluate and be observant. Make yourself aware of whether or not you've received a sense of comfort and relaxation from your in- and out-breathing. If not, tend to the breath and adjust it in a variety of ways: e.g., in long and out long, in long and out short, in short and out short, in short and out long, in slow and out slow, in fast and out fast, in gently and out gently, in strong and out strong, in throughout the body and out throughout the body. Adjust the breath until it gives good results to both body and mind, and you'll be able to kill off feelings of ill will and hatred.

(3) *Pīti*: When you get good results – for instance, when the subtle breath sensations in the body merge and flow together, permeating the entire sense of the body – the breath is like an electric wire; the various parts of the body, such as the bones, are like electricity poles; mindfulness and alertness are like a power source; and awareness is thus bright and radiant. Both body and mind feel satisfied and full. This is *pīti*, or rapture, which can kill off feelings of drowsiness.

(4) *Sukha*: Now that feelings of restlessness and anxiety have disappeared, a sense of pleasure and ease arises for both body and mind. This pleasure is what kills off restlessness.

(5) *Ekaggatā*: Doubts and uncertainty fade into the distance. The mind reaches singleness of preoccupation in a state of normalcy and equilibrium. This normalcy of mind, which is maintained through the power of the discipline of mindfulness (*sati-vinaya*), forms the essence of virtue: firmness, steadiness, stability. And the resulting flavor or nourishment of virtue is a solitary sense of calm for the mind. When freedom of this sort arises within us, this is called the development of *sīlānussati*, the mindfulness of virtue. This is virtue that attains excellence – leading to the paths, their fruitions, and *nibbāna* – and thus can be called *uparima-sīla*, higher virtue.

To summarize, there are three levels of virtue: external, intermediate, and internal. In ultimate terms, however, there are two –

**1. Mundane virtue:** virtue connected with the world, in which we maintain the principles of ordinary human morality but are as yet unable to reach the transcendent levels: stream entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship. We can't yet cut the fetters (*saṅyojana*) that tie the heart to the influences of all the worlds. This is thus called mundane virtue.

**2. Transcendent virtue:** virtue that's constant and sure, going straight to the

heart, bathing the heart with its nourishment. This arises from the practice of tranquility meditation and insight meditation. Tranquility meditation forms the cause, and insight meditation the result: discovering the true nature of the properties, aggregates (*khandhas*), and senses; seeing clearly the four noble truths, in proportion to our practice of the Path, and abandoning the first three of the fetters –

*a. Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (self-identity views): views that see the body or the aggregates as in the self or as belonging to the self. Ordinarily, we may be convinced that views of this sort are mistaken, yet we can't really abandon them. But when we clearly see that they're wrong for sure, this is called Right View – seeing things as they truly are – which can eliminate such wrong views as seeing the body as belonging to the self, or the self as the five aggregates, or the five aggregates as in the self.

*b. Vicikicchā*: doubt about what's genuine and true, and what's counterfeit and false. The power of Right View allows us to see that the quality to which we awaken exists at all times and that the true qualities enabling us to awaken also exist and are made effective through the power of the practices we're following. Our knowledge is definite and true. Our doubts about the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha are cleared up for good. This is called becoming a *niyata-puggala*, a person who is certain and sure.

*c. Sīlabata-parāmāsa*: When the heart abandons this fetter, it no longer fondles theories concerning moral virtue; it's no longer stuck merely on the level of manners and activities. *Good and evil are accomplished through the heart; activities are something separate.* Even though people who reach this level do good – taking the precepts, making gifts and offerings, or meditating in line with the good customs of the world – they're not caught up on any of these things, because their hearts have reached the nourishment of virtue. They aren't stuck on the particulars (*byañjana*), i.e., their activities; nor are they stuck on the purpose (*attha*), i.e., the meaning or intent of their various good manners. Their hearts dwell in the nourishment of virtue: tranquility, stability, normalcy of mind. Just as a person who has felt the nourishment that comes from food permeating his body isn't stuck on either the food or its flavor – because he's received the benefits of the nourishment it provides – in the same way, the hearts of people who have reached the essence of virtue are no longer stuck on activities or manners, particulars or purposes, because they've tasted virtue's nourishment.

This is thus classed as transcendent virtue, the first stage of *nibbāna*. Even though such people may be destined for further rebirth, they're special people, apart from the ordinary. Anyone whose practice reaches this level can be counted as fortunate, as having received dependable wealth, like ingots of gold. Just as gold can be used as currency all over the world because it has special value for all

human beings – unlike paper currency, whose use is limited to specific countries – in the same way, a heart that has truly attained virtue has a value in this life that will remain constant in lives to come. Thus, a person who has reached this level has received part of the Noble Wealth of those who practice the religion.



## CONCENTRATION

Concentration has three levels –

**1. *Kāmāvacara-khaṇika-samādhi***: (momentary concentration in the sensory realm): The mind keeps thinking, coming to rest, and running along after skillful preoccupations – either internal or external – on the sensory level (*kāmāvacara-kusala*): sights, sounds, smells, flavors, tactile sensations, or ideas. An example of this is when the mind becomes quiet and rested for a moment as we sit chanting or listening to a sermon. In other words, the mind grows still for momentary periods in the same way that a person walks: One foot takes a step while the other foot rests on the ground, providing the energy needed to reach one’s goal. This is thus called momentary concentration, something possessed by people all over the world. Whether or not we practice concentration, the mind is always behaving this way by its very nature. This is called the *bhavaṅga-citta* or *bhavaṅga-pāda*: The mind stops for a moment and then moves on. In developing higher levels of concentration, we have to start out with this ordinary level as our basis. Otherwise, the higher levels probably wouldn’t be possible. Still, this level of concentration can’t be used as a basis for discernment, which is why we have to go further in our practice.

**2. *Rūpāvacara-upacāra-samādhi*** (threshold concentration in the realm of form): This refers to the first jhāna, in which the mind comes inward to rest on a single preoccupation within the body, fixing its attention, for example, on the in-and-out breath. When the mind stays with its one object, this is called *ekaggatā*. At the same time, there’s mindfulness keeping the breath in mind: This is called *vitakka*. The mind then adjusts and expands the various aspects of the breath throughout the entire body, evaluating them mindfully with complete circumspection: This is called alertness (*sampajañña*) or *vicāra*, which is the factor aware of causes and results. Mindfulness, the cause, is what does the work. Thus *vitakka* and *vicāra* cooperate in focusing on the same topic. We are then aware of the results as they arise – feelings of fullness, pleasure, and ease (*pīti* and *sukha*) for body and mind. At this point, the mind lets down its burdens to rest for a while, like a person walking along who meets with something pleasing and attractive, and so stops to look: Both feet are standing still, stepping neither forward nor back.

If we aren’t skilled enough to go on any further, we’ll then retreat. If we see results – such as signs and visions – arising in the mind, we may get excited and so

cause our original preoccupation to waver or fade. Like a person sitting on a chair: If he sees something appealing in front of him, he may become so interested that he leans forward and reaches out his hand; he may even begin to budge a bit from his seat or stand up completely. In the same way, if we get engrossed in visions, thoughts, or views while we're engaged in threshold concentration, we can become excited and pleased – we may even think that we've reached the transcendent – and this can cause our concentration to degenerate. If we try to do it again and can't, we may then seize the opportunity to say that we've gone beyond the practice of concentration, so that we can now take the way of discernment – thinking, pondering, and letting go in line with nothing more than our own views and ideas. This, though, is not likely to succeed, because our knowledge has no firm basis or core, like a wheel with no axle or hub: How can it get anywhere? The power of threshold concentration, if we don't watch after it well, is bound to deteriorate, and we'll be left with nothing but old, left-over concepts.

**3. *Rūpāvacara-appanā-samādhi*** (fixed penetration in the realm of form): This refers to the practice of all four levels of rūpa jhāna. The first jhāna has five factors: directed thought, evaluation, fullness, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation. The second jhāna has three: fullness, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation. The third has two: pleasure and singleness of preoccupation; and the fourth has two: equanimity and singleness of preoccupation.

## Discussion

Fixed penetration in the realm of form means that the mind focuses on the internal sense of the body, remaining steadily with a single object – such as the in-and-out breath – until it reaches jhāna, beginning with the first level, which is composed of directed thought, evaluation, fullness, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation.

When you see results arising, focus in on those results and they will then turn into the second jhāna, which has three factors: fullness, pleasure and singleness of preoccupation.

As your focus becomes stronger, it causes the sense of fullness to waver, so you can now let go of that sense of fullness, and your concentration turns into the third jhāna, in which only two factors are left: pleasure and singleness of preoccupation. The mind has few burdens; its focus is strong and the sense of inner light is radiant.

This causes the feeling of pleasure to waver, so that you can let go of that sense of pleasure, and the mind attains oneness in a very subtle preoccupation. The

preoccupation doesn't waver and neither does the mind. It stands firm in its freedom. This is called equanimity and singleness of preoccupation, which form the fourth jhāna. Mindfulness is powerful; alertness, complete. Both are centered on a single preoccupation without getting snagged on any other allusions or perceptions. This mental state is called the fourth jhāna, which has two factors: Equanimity is the external attitude of the mind; as for the real factors, they're mindfulness and singleness, steady and firm.

The mind experiences a sense of brightness, the radiance that comes from its state of fixed penetration. Mindfulness and alertness are circumspect and all-round, and so give rise to skill and proficiency in practicing jhāna – in focusing, staying in place, stepping through the various levels, withdrawing, going back and forth. When the mind behaves as you want it to, no matter when you practice, only then does this truly qualify as fixed penetration, the basis for the arising of three qualities: intuitive knowledge (*ñāṇa*), discernment (*paññā*), and cognitive skill (*vijjā*).

*Intuitive knowledge* here refers to knowledge or sensitivity of an extraordinary sort. For example –

*Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*: the ability to remember previous lives.

*Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*: the ability to focus on the death and rebirth of other living beings – sometimes in good destinations, sometimes in bad – together with the causes that lead them to be reborn in such ways. This gives rise to a sense of weariness and disenchantment with sensations and mental acts, body and mind.

*Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: knowing how to put an end to the defilements of the heart in accordance with the knowledge – the clear vision of the four noble truths – that accompanies the particular transcendent path reached. And there are still other forms of extraordinary knowledge, such as *iddhividhī*, the ability to display supernormal powers, to make an image of oneself appear to other people; *dibbasota*, clairaudience; *dibbacakkhu*, clairvoyance – i.e., the ability to see objects at tremendous distances.

*Discernment* refers to discriminating knowledge, clear comprehension, knowledge in line with the truth. For example –

*Attha-paṭisambhidā*: acumen with regard to aims and results; thorough-going comprehension of cause and effect; knowing, for example, how stress is caused by ignorance and craving, and how the disbanding of stress is caused by the intuitive discernment that forms the Path; comprehending the meaning and aims of the Buddha's various teachings and knowing how to explain them so that other people will understand – being able, for

instance, to summarize a long passage without distorting its meaning.

*Dhamma-paṭisambhidā*: acumen with regard to mental qualities; knowing how to explain deep and subtle points so that other people will understand.

*Nirutti-paṭisambhidā*: acumen with regard to different languages. According to the texts, this includes knowing foreign languages and the languages of various other living beings by means of the eye of discernment (*paññā cakkhu*).

*Paṭibhāṇa-paṭisambhidā*: acumen with regard to expression; being fluent in making explanations and quick-witted in debate; knowing the most strategic way to express things.

All of these forms of discernment can arise from training the mind to attain fixed penetration. *Vijjā* – clear, open knowledge, free from any further concealments; and *āloka* – brilliance, radiance streaming out in all directions – enable us to see the true nature of sensations and mental acts, in accordance with our powers of intuitive discernment.

*Cognitive skill* refers to clear, uncanny knowledge that arises from the mind's being firmly fixed in jhāna. There are eight sorts –

(1) *Vipassanā-ñāṇa*: clear comprehension of physical sensations and mental acts (*rūpa, nāma*).

(2) *Manomayiddhi*: psychic powers, influencing events through the power of thought.

(3) *Iddhividhī*: the ability to display powers, making one's body appear in a variety of ways.

(4) *Dibba-cakkhu*: clairvoyance.

(5) *Dibba-sota*: clairaudience.

(6) *Cetopariya-ñāṇa*: the ability to know the mental states of other people.

(7) *Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*: the ability to remember previous lives.

(8) *Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: the ability to put an end to the fermentations that defile the heart.

Thus, jhāna on the level of fixed penetration is extremely important. It can give us support on all sides – on the level of the world and of the Dhamma – and can bring success in our various activities, both in our worldly affairs and in our Dhamma duties, leading us on to the transcendent.

To summarize, there are two kinds of concentration:

1. That which gives rise to mundane knowledge: This is termed mundane concentration.

2. That which helps us to fulfill our duties on the level of the Dhamma, leading to *vipassanā-ñāṇa* or *āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*, the knowledge that enables us – in accordance with the discernment and cognitive skills that arise – to abandon or cut off completely the mental currents tending in the direction of the fetters: This is termed transcendent concentration.

## DISCERNMENT

Discernment is of three kinds –

1. *Sutamaya-paññā*: discernment that comes from studying.
2. *Cintāmaya-paññā*: discernment that comes from reflecting.
3. *Bhāvanāmaya-paññā*: discernment that comes from developing the mind.

### Discussion

1. *Sutamaya-paññā* is the discernment that comes from having listened a great deal, like the Venerable Ānanda. Listening here, though, includes studying and taking interest in a variety of ways: paying attention, taking notes, asking questions, and taking part in discussions so as to become quick-witted and astute.

Education of all kinds comes down to two sorts: (a) learning the basic units, such as the letters of the alphabet, their sound and pronunciation, so as to understand their accepted usage; and (b) learning how to put them together – for instance, how to combine the letters so as to give rise to words and meanings – as when we complete our elementary education so that we won't be at a loss when we're called on to read and write in the course of making a living.

In the area of the religion, we have to study the letters of the Pali alphabet, their combinations, their meanings, and their pronunciation. If we don't understand clearly, we should take an interest in asking questions. If we have trouble memorizing, we should jot down notes as a way of aiding our memory and expanding our concepts. In addition, we have to study by means of our senses. For example, when we see a visual object, we should find out its truth. When we hear sounds or words, we should find out their truth. When we smell an aroma, we should consider it to see what it comes from. We should take an interest in flavors so that we know what they come from, and in tactile sensations – the heat and cold that touch the body – by studying such things as the way weather behaves.

All of these forms of education are ways of giving rise to astuteness – both in the area of the world and in the area of the Dhamma – because they constitute a basic level of knowledge, like the primary education offered in schools.

2. *Cintāmaya-paññā* refers to thinking and evaluating so as to learn the meaning and truth of one's beginning education. This level of education draws out the meaning of the knowledge we have gained through studying. When we gain

information, we should reflect on it until we understand it so that we will be led by our sense of reason and not by gullibility or ignorance. This is like a person who has used his knowledge of the alphabet to gain knowledge from books to complete his secondary education. Such a person has reached the level where he can think things through clearly.

In the area of the Dhamma, the same holds true. Once we have learned the basics, we should research and think through the content of the Teaching until we give rise to an understanding so that we can conduct ourselves correctly in line with the methods and aims taught by the sages of the past. This level of discernment is what prepares us to conduct ourselves properly in line with the truths of the Doctrine and Discipline. This is classed as an aspect of *pariyatti dhamma*, Dhamma on the level of theory. By learning the language and meaning of the Teaching, we can become astute as far as theory is concerned; but if we don't use that knowledge to train ourselves, it's as if we studied a profession – such as law – but then went out to become bandits, so that our knowledge wouldn't give its proper results. For this reason, we've been taught still another method, which is the well-spring of discernment or mastery – i.e., the mental activity termed *bhāvanāmayapaññā*.

**3. *Bhāvanāmayapaññā*:** discernment that arises exclusively from training the mind in concentration. In other words, this level of discernment isn't related to the old observations we've gained from the past, because our old observations are bound to obscure the new observations, endowed with the truth, that can arise only right at the mind. When you engage in this form of practice, focus exclusively on the present, taking note of a single thing, not getting involved with past or future. Steady the mind, bringing it into the present. Gather virtue, concentration, and discernment all into the present. Think of your meditation object and bring your powers of evaluation to bear on it – say, by immersing mindfulness in the body, focusing on such objects as the in-and-out breath. When you do this, knowledge will arise.

*Ñāṇaṃ udapādi*: Intuitive knowledge of things we have never before studied or known will appear. For example: *pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa* – the ability to remember our present life and past lives; *cutūpapāta-ñāṇa* – the ability to know living beings as they die and are reborn – well or poorly, happily or miserably – knowing the causes and results of how they fare; *āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa* – the ability to cleanse ourselves of the fermentations that defile the mind, thinning them out or eliminating them altogether, as we are able. These three forms of knowledge don't arise for people who simply study or think things through in ordinary ways. They form a mental skill that arises from the practice of concentration and are an aspect of Dhamma on the level of practice (*paṭipatti-dhamma*).

Another aspect – *‘paññā udapādi’*: Clear discernment of the true nature of the properties (*dhātu*), aggregates, and sense media arises. We can focus on these things by way of the mind and know them in terms of the four noble truths: stress (*dukkha*), which arises from a cause (*samudaya*), i.e., ignorance and craving; and then *nirodha*, the ceasing and disbanding of stress, which occurs as the result of a cause, i.e., the Path (*magga*), composed of practices for the mind. These things can be known by means of the discernment that arises exclusively and directly within us and is termed the eye of discernment or the eye of Dhamma: the eye of the mind, awakening from its slumbers.

*‘Vijjā udapādi’*: The eight forms of cognitive skill, which follow the laws of cause and effect – means of practice that bring us results – can arise in a quiet mind.

*‘Āloko udapādi’*: Brightness, clarity, relief, and emptiness arise in such a mind.

Thus, the discernment that results from developing the mind differs from the beginning stages of discernment that come from studying and reflecting. Study and reflection are classed as Dhamma on the level of theory, and can give only a preliminary level of knowledge. They’re like a person who has awakened but has yet to open his eyes. The discernment that comes from developing the mind, though, is like waking up and seeing the truth – past, present, and future – in all four directions. We can clearly see stress, its cause, its disbanding, and the Path to its disbanding, and so can absolutely abandon the first set of fetters. Our hearts will then flow to *nibbāna*, just as the water in a mountain cataract is sure to flow to the sea. They will flow to their natural truth: the mental fullness and completeness of a person who has practiced mental development until discernment arises within. We will meet with a special form of skill – transcendent skill – whose power will stay with us always, a quality that’s certain and sure, termed certain truth, certain wisdom, making us people certain for *nibbāna*.

So this level of discernment – termed the discernment of liberating insight – is especially important. It arises on its own, not from cogitating along the lines of old concepts we’ve learned, but from abandoning them. Old concepts are what obscure the new knowledge ready to arise.

The nature of liberating insight is like an electric light: Simply press the switch once, and things all around are made bright. In the same way, when the mind reaches a stage of readiness, insight will arise in a single mental instant, and everything will become clear: properties, aggregates, and the sense media. We’ll know, on the one hand, what’s inconstant (*aniccam*), stressful (*dukkham*), and not-self (*anattā*); and on the other hand, what’s uncommon, i.e., *niccam* – what’s constant and true; *sukham* – true happiness, termed *nirāmisa-sukha*; and *attā* – the self. The eye of the mind can know both sides and let go both ways. It’s



attached neither to what's inconstant, stressful, and not-self; nor to what's constant (*niccam*), good (*sukham*), and right (*attā*). It can let these things go, in line with their true nature.

The knowledge that comes from discernment, cognitive skill, and intuitive insight, it can let go as well. It isn't attached to views – for there's yet another, separate sort of reality that has no 'this' or 'that.' In other words, it doesn't have the view or conceit that 'I am.' It lets go of the assumptions that, 'That's the self,' 'That's not-self,' 'That's constant,' 'That's inconstant,' 'That arises,' 'That doesn't arise.' It can let go of these things completely. *That's* the Dhamma, and yet it doesn't hold onto the Dhamma, which is why we say that the Dhamma is not-self. It also doesn't hold on to the view that says, 'not-self.' It lets go of views, causes, and effects, and isn't attached to anything at all dealing with wordings or meanings, conventions or practices.

This, then, is discernment that arises from the development of the mind.

To summarize: The discernment that comes from studying and reflecting is classed as Dhamma on the level of theory. The discernment that comes from developing the mind is classed as Dhamma on the level of practice. The results that arise are two –

1. Mundane discernment: comprehension – of the world and the Dhamma – falling under mundane influences and subject to change.
2. Transcendent discernment: awareness that goes beyond the ordinary, giving rise to clear realization within. People who reach this level are said to have awakened and opened their eyes, which is what is meant by 'Buddho.'

\* \* \*

To summarize everything, there are three main points –

1. Virtue, which in terms of where its principles are found is the Vinaya Piṭaka.
2. Concentration, which in terms of where its principles are found is the Suttanta Piṭaka.
3. Discernment, which in terms of where its principles are found is the Abhidhamma Piṭaka.

Expressed in terms of their meaning, they refer to three modes of behavior to be developed –

1. Virtue: keeping our words and deeds honest and in good order. This is a means of killing off one of the causes of stress, i.e., *kāma-taṇhā* (sensual

craving), mental states that take pleasure in growing attached and involved in sights, sounds, smells, flavors, tactile sensations, and ideas, known through the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, and ideation.

2. Concentration: steadying the mind in a single preoccupation, holding fast to the present, not latching onto thoughts of past or future.

Concentration is a means of killing off *bhava-taṇhā* (craving to be what one isn't), i.e., mental states that stray off into thoughts of past and future. The act of straying is craving for becoming, looking for a new place to take birth. This is what is meant by '*sambhavesin.*' When concentration arises, the mind can let go of such craving.

3. Discernment: circumspect knowledge that guards over the mind to keep it from being influenced, involved, and attached. Discernment is what enables us to abandon *vibhava-taṇhā* (craving not to be what one is), in that the characteristic of this form of craving is the wavering that occurs in the mental moment arising in the present. This we can perceive through intuitive discernment. Discernment knows stress; intuitive knowledge cuts the root of stress; cognitive skill – clear knowledge of past, future, and present – distinguishes cause, result, and release, without being attached: This is what's meant by the skill of release.

And *that* is the heart of the Buddha's teachings.

*(Etaṃ buddhāna-sāsanam)*

# *Basic Themes*

## PROLOGUE

Beginning meditators should search for two things as external aids to their practice –

1. Suitable companions (*puggala-sappāya*): Be discriminating in choosing people to associate with. Search only for companions who have peace of mind. This can be any group at all, as long as the group as a whole is aiming for mental peace.

2. A suitable location (*senāsana-sappāya*): Choose a quiet place with an agreeable atmosphere, far from human society. Places of this sort, providing physical seclusion, are conducive to the practice of meditation. Examples listed in the Canon include caverns and caves, the shade of an over-hanging cliff-face, the forest wilderness, and empty houses or buildings where not too many people will come passing by. Places like this are an excellent aid and support for a beginning meditator.

When you go to stay in such a place, don't let your thoughts dwell on topics that will act as enemies to your peace of mind. For example, don't preoccupy yourself with magic spells or the black arts. Instead, call to mind and put into practice principles and qualities that will be to your benefit. For example –

*Appicchatā*: Be a person of few wants with regard to the necessities of life.

*Santutṭhi*: Be content with the possessions you already have.

*Viveka*: Aim solely for peace, quiet, and seclusion.

*Asaṅsagga*: Don't entangle yourself with human companionship.

*Viriyaṅambha*: Be single-minded and persistent in making the mind still and at peace.

*Sīlānussati*: Reflect on your own conduct to see if you've overstepped any of your precepts, and – if you have – immediately purify your behavior through your own intention.

*Samādhi-kathā*: Focus on calling to mind the meditation theme on which your mind can become firmly established.

*Paññā-kathā*: Focus exclusively on those topics that will give rise to discernment and clear insight.

*Vimutti*: Make the mind well-disposed toward the search for release from all defilements.

*Vimutti-ñāṇa-dassana*: Focus on contemplating how to come to the

realizations that will enable you to gain release from the fermentation of all defilements.

These principles are guidelines for meditators of every sort, and will direct the mind solely to the path leading beyond all suffering and stress.

What follows is a short-hand list of essential principles, selected to help prevent meditators from getting tied up in the course of their practice. These principles, though, should be viewed merely as incidental to the Dhamma. The reality of the Dhamma has to be brought into being within ourselves through our own energies: This is called practicing the Dhamma. If we go no further than the lists, we'll end up with only concepts of the Dhamma. Our ultimate aim should be to make the mind still until we reach the natural reality that exists on its own within us, that knows on its own and lets go on its own. This is the practice of the Dhamma that will lead us to the realization of the Dhamma – the true taste and nourishment of the Dhamma – so that we will no longer be caught up on the ropes.

In other words, conceptualized Dhamma is like a rope bridge for crossing over a river. If we take the bridge down and then carry it with us, it will serve no purpose other than to weigh us down and get us all tied up. So no matter how much conceptualized Dhamma you may have memorized, when you come to the point where you're practicing for real you have to take responsibility for yourself. Whether you are to win or lose, let go or cling, will depend on how much Dhamma you've built into your own mind. This is why we're taught not to cling to the scriptures and texts, to meanings and concepts. Only when we train ourselves to get beyond all this will we be heading for purity.

*Attāhi attano nātho:*

Nothing can help us unless we can rely on ourselves. Only when we realize this will we be on the right track. The Buddha attained all of the truths he taught before he put them into words. It wasn't the case that he came up with the words first and then put them into practice later. He was like the scientists who experiment and get results before writing textbooks. But people who simply read the textbooks know everything – for example, they may know every part in an airplane – but they can't produce one out of their own knowledge. To be a consumer and to be a producer are two different things. If we cling merely to the concepts of the Dhamma, simply memorizing them, we're no more than consumers. Only if we make ourselves into producers, so that others can consume, will we be acting properly.

To be successful producers, we have to accept responsibility for ourselves. If there's any area where we don't succeed, we should apply our own ingenuity until

we do. If we rely just on the ingenuity of others, then we can't depend on ourselves. And if we can't depend on ourselves, why should we let other people think that they can depend on us?

This is why I have compiled this list of principles merely as a brief beginning guide for meditators.

### The Thirteen Ascetic Observances

1. *Paṅsukūlikaṅga*: the practice of wearing robes made from thrown-away cloth.
2. *Tecīvarikaṅga*: the practice of using only one set of three robes.
3. *Piṇḍapātikaṅga*: the practice of going for alms.
4. *Sapadācārikaṅga*: the practice of not bypassing any donors on one's alms path.
5. *Ekāsanikaṅga*: the practice of eating no more than one meal a day.
6. *Pattapiṇḍikaṅga*: the practice of eating one's food only from one's bowl.
7. *Khalupacchābhattikaṅga*: the practice of not accepting any food presented after one has eaten one's fill.
8. *Ārañṇikaṅga*: the practice of living in the wilderness.
9. *Rukkhamūlikaṅga*: the practice of living under the shade of a tree.
10. *Abbhokāsikaṅga*: the practice of living out under the open sky.
11. *Sosānikaṅga*: the practice of living in a cemetery.
12. *Yathāsanthatikaṅga*: the practice of living in whatever place is assigned to one.
13. *Nesajjikaṅga*: the practice of not lying down.

### The Fourteen Duties

1. *Ākantuka-vatta*: duties of a monk newly arriving at a monastery.
2. *Āvāsika-vatta*: duties of a host-monk when a newcomer arrives.
3. *Gamika-vatta*: duties of a monk when leaving a monastery.
4. *Anumodanā-vatta*: duties connected with expressing appreciation for donations of food.
5. *Bhattaka-vatta*: duties to observe before and after one's meal.
6. *Piṇḍicārika-vatta*: duties to observe when going for alms.
7. *Ārañṇika-vatta*: duties to observe when living in the wilderness.
8. *Senāsana-vatta*: duties to observe in looking after one's dwelling place.
9. *Jantaghara-vatta*: duties to observe in using the fire-house.

10. *Vaccakuṭī-vatta*: duties to observe in using the toilet.
11. *Upajjhāya-vatta*: duties to observe in attending to one's preceptor.
12. *Ācariya-vatta*: duties to observe in attending to one's teacher.
13. *Saddhivihārika-vatta*: a preceptor's duties toward his pupil.
14. *Antevāsika-vatta*: a teacher's duties toward his pupil.

### Seven Important Sets of Principles (The Wings to Awakening)

1. The four establishings of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*): body, feelings, mind, mental qualities.
2. The four right exertions (*sammappadhāna*): making the effort to prevent evil from arising, to abandon whatever evil has arisen, to give rise to the good that hasn't yet arisen, and to maintain the good that has.
3. The four bases of power (*iddhipāda*):
  - Chanda* – an affinity for one's meditation theme.
  - Viriya* – persistence.
  - Citta* – intentness on one's goal.
  - Vimāṁsā* – circumspection in one's activities .
4. The five faculties (*indriya*): conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, discernment (factors that are pre-eminent in performing one's duties).
5. The five strengths (*bala*): conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, discernment (factors that give energy to the observance of one's duties).
6. The seven factors for Awakening (*bojjhaṅga*):
  - Sati-sambojjhaṅga* – mindfulness and recollection.
  - Dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga* – discrimination in choosing a meditation theme well-suited to oneself.
  - Viriya-sambojjhaṅga* – persistence.
  - Pīti-sambojjhaṅga* – rapture; fullness of body and mind.
  - Passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga* – physical stillness and mental serenity.
  - Samādhi-sambojjhaṅga* – concentration.
  - Upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga* – equanimity.
7. The eightfold path (*magga*):
  - Sammā-diṭṭhi* – Right View.

*Sammā-saṅkappa* – Right Resolve.  
*Sammā-vācā* – Right Speech.  
*Sammā-kammanta* – Right Action.  
*Sammā-ājīva* – Right Livelihood.  
*Sammā-vāyāma* – Right Effort.  
*Sammā-sati* – Right Mindfulness.  
*Sammā-samādhi* – Right Concentration.

### The Forty Meditation Themes

Ten recollections; ten foul objects; ten kasiṇas; four sublime abidings; four formless absorptions; one resolution into elements; and one perception of the filthiness of food.

#### **Ten recollections:**

1. *Buddhānussati*: recollection of the virtues of the Buddha.
2. *Dhammānussati*: recollection of the virtues of the Dhamma.
3. *Saṅghānussati*: recollection of the virtues of the Saṅgha.
4. *Sīlānussati*: recollection of one's own moral virtue.
5. *Cāgānussati*: recollection of one's own generosity.
6. *Devatānussati*: recollection of the qualities that lead to rebirth as a heavenly being.
7. *Kāyagatāsati*: mindfulness immersed in the body.
8. *Marāṇassati*: mindfulness of death.
9. *Ānāpānassati*: mindfulness of breathing.
10. *Upasamānussati*: recollection of the virtues of nibbāna – ultimate pleasure; unexcelled ease, free from birth, aging, illness and death.

#### **Ten foul objects:**

1. *Uddhumātaka*: a rotten, bloated corpse, its body all swollen and its features distended out of shape.
2. *Vinīlaka*: a livid corpse, with patchy discoloration – greenish, reddish, yellowish – from the decomposition of the blood.
3. *Vipubbaka*: a festering corpse, oozing lymph and pus from its various orifices.
4. *Vichiddaka*: a corpse falling apart, the pieces scattered about, radiating their stench.
5. *Vikkhāyittaka*: a corpse that various animals, such as dogs, are gnawing, or that vultures are picking at, or that crows are fighting over,



pulling it apart in different directions.

6. *Vikkhittaka*: corpses scattered about, i.e., unclaimed bodies that have been thrown together in a pile – face up, face down, old bones and new scattered all over the place.

7. *Hatavikkhittaka*: the corpse of a person violently murdered, slashed and stabbed with various weapons, covered with wounds – short, long, shallow, deep – some parts hacked so that they're almost detached.

8. *Lohitaka*: a corpse covered with blood, like the hands of a butcher, all red and raw-smelling.

9. *Puluvaka*: a corpse infested with worms: long worms, short worms, black, green, and yellow worms, squeezed into the ears, eyes, and mouth; squirming and squiggling about, filling the various parts of the body like a net full of fish that has fallen open.

10. *Aṭṭhika*: a skeleton, some of the joints already separated, others not yet, the bones – whitish, yellowish, discolored – scattered near and far all over the place.

#### **Ten kasiṇas:**

1. *Pathavī kasiṇa*: staring at earth.

2. *Āpo kasiṇa*: staring at water.

3. *Tejo kasiṇa*: staring at fire.

4. *Vāyo kasiṇa*: staring at wind.

5. *Odāta kasiṇa*: staring at white.

6. *Pīta kasiṇa*: staring at yellow.

7. *Lohita kasiṇa*: staring at red.

8. *Nīla kasiṇa*: staring at blue (or green).

9. *Ākāsa kasiṇa*: staring at the space in a hole or an opening.

10. *Āloka kasiṇa*: staring at bright light.

#### **Four sublime abidings:**

1. *Mettā*: goodwill, benevolence, friendliness, love in the true sense.

2. *Karuṇa*: compassion, sympathy, pity, aspiring to find a way to be truly helpful.

3. *Muditā*: appreciation for the goodness of other people and for our own when we are able to help them.

4. *Upekkhā*: When our efforts to be of help don't succeed, we should make the mind neutral – neither pleased nor upset by whatever it focuses on – so that it enters the emptiness of jhāna, centered and tranquil to the

point where it can disregard acts of thinking and evaluating as well as feelings of rapture and ease, leaving only oneness and equanimity with regard to all objects.

#### **Four formless absorptions:**

1. *Ākāsānañcāyatana*: being absorbed in a sense of boundless emptiness and space as one's preoccupation.

2. *Viññāṇañcāyatana*: being absorbed in boundless consciousness as one's preoccupation, with no form or figure acting as the sign or focal point of one's concentration.

3. *Ākiñcaññāyatana*: focusing exclusively on a fainter or more subtle sense of consciousness that has no limit and in which nothing appears or disappears, to the point where one almost understands it to be *nibbāna*.

4. *Nevaṣaṇṇā-nasaṇṇāyatana*: being absorbed in a feeling that occurs in the mind, that isn't knowledge exactly, but neither is it non-awareness; i.e., there is awareness, but with no thinking, no focusing of awareness on what it knows.

These four formless absorptions are merely resting places for the mind because they are states that the mind enters, stays in, and leaves. They are by nature unstable and inconstant, so we shouldn't rest content simply at this level. We have to go back and forth through the various levels many times so as to realize that they're only stages of enforced tranquility.

#### **One resolution into elements:**

i.e., regarding each part of the body simply in terms of physical properties or elements.

#### **One perception of the filthiness of food:**

i.e., viewing food as something repugnant and unclean – with regard to where it comes from, how it's prepared, how it's mixed together when it's chewed, and where it stays in the stomach and intestines.

\* \* \*

With one exception, all of the meditation themes mentioned here are simply *gocara-dhamma* – foraging places for the mind. They're not places for the mind to stay. If we try to go live in the things we see when we're out foraging, we'll end up in trouble. Thus, there is one theme that's termed *vihāra-dhamma* (a home for the mind) or *anāgocara* (a place of no wandering): Once you've developed it, you can use it as a place to stay. When you practice meditation, you don't have to go

foraging in other themes; you can stay in the single theme that's the apex of all meditation themes: *ānāpānassati*, keeping the breath in mind. This theme, unlike the others, has none of the features or various deceptions that can upset or disturb the heart. As for the others:

– Some of the recollections, when you've practiced them for a long time, can give rise to startling or unsettling visions.

– The ten foul objects can give rise after a while to visions and sometimes to sense of alienation and discontent that turns into restlessness and distress, your mind being unable to fabricate anything on which it can come to rest, to the point where you can't eat or drink.

– The ten kasiṇas, after you've stared at them a long while, can give rise to visions that tend to pull you out of your sense of the body, as you become enthralled by their color and features, to the point where you may become completely carried away.

– As for the resolution into elements, when you become more and more engrossed in contemplating the elements, everything in the world becomes nothing more than elements, which are everywhere the same. You come to believe that you no longer have to make distinctions: You're nothing more than elements, members of the opposite sex are nothing more than elements, food is nothing more than elements, and so you can end up overstepping the bounds of morality and the monastic discipline.

– As for the perception of the filthiness of food, as you become more and more caught up in it, everything becomes repulsive. You can't eat or sleep, your mind becomes restless and disturbed, and you inflict suffering on yourself.

– As for the four sublime abidings, if you don't have jhāna as a dwelling for the mind, feelings of goodwill, compassion, and appreciation can all cause you to suffer. Only if you have jhāna can these qualities truly become sublime abidings, that is, restful homes for the heart to stay (*vihāra dhamma*).

So only one of these themes – *ānāpānassati*, keeping the breath in mind – is truly safe. This is the supreme meditation theme. You don't have to send your awareness out to fix it on any outside objects at all. Even if you may go foraging through such objects, don't go living in them, because after a while they can waver and shift, just as when we cross the sea in a boat: When we first get into the boat we may feel all right, but as soon as the boat heads out into the open bay and we're buffeted by wind and waves, we can start feeling seasick. To practice keeping the breath in mind, though, is like sitting in an open shelter at dockside: We won't feel queasy or sick; we can see boats as they pass by on the water, and people as they pass by on land. Thus, keeping the breath in mind is classed:

– as an exercise agreeable to people of any and every temperament;

– as *anāgocara*, an exercise in which you focus exclusively on the breath while you sit in meditation, without having to compound things by sending your awareness out to grab this or get hold of that;

– and as *dhamma-thīti*, i.e., all you have to do is keep your mind established firm and in place.

The beginning stage is to think *buddho* – ‘*bud-*’ with the in-breath, and ‘*dho*’ with the out. Fixing your attention on just this much is enough to start seeing results. There’s only one aim, and that’s:

that you really do it.

If there is anything you’re unsure of, or if you encounter any problems, then consult the following pages.

## INTRODUCTION

This handbook on keeping the breath in mind has had a number of readers who have put it into practice and seen results appearing within themselves in accordance with the strength of their practice. Many people have come to me to discuss the results they've gained from practicing the principles in this book, but now it's out of print. For this reason I've decided to enlarge it and have it printed again as an aid for those who are interested in the practice.

Now, if you're not acquainted with this topic, have never attempted it, or aren't yet skilled – if you don't know the techniques of the practice – it's bound to be hard to understand, because the currents of the mind, when they're written down as a book, simply won't be a book. The issues involved in dealing with the mind are more than many. If your knowledge of them isn't truly comprehensive, you may misunderstand what you come to see and know, and this in turn can be destructive in many ways. (1) You may lose whatever respect you had for the practice, deciding that there's no truth to it. (2) You may gain only a partial grasp of things, leading you to decide that other people can't practice or are practicing wrongly, and in the end you're left with no way to practice yourself. So you decide to 'let go' simply through conjecture and speculation. But the truth is that this simply won't work. True and complete letting go can come only from the principles well-taught by the Buddha: virtue, concentration, and discernment, which are a synopsis of the eightfold path he taught in his first sermon.

So in our practice we should consider how virtue, concentration, discernment, and release can be brought into being. Virtue forms the basis for concentration; concentration, the basis for discernment (liberating insight or cognitive skill); and discernment, the basis for release from ignorance, craving, and attachment. Thus in this book, which is a guide to developing Right Concentration, I would like to recommend to other meditators a method that, in my experience, has proven safe and productive, so that they can test it for themselves by putting it into practice until they start seeing results.

The main concern of this book is with the way to mental peace. Now, the word 'peace' has many levels. A mind infused with virtue has one level of peace and happiness. A mind stilled through concentration has another level of peace and happiness. A mind at peace through the power of discernment has still another level of happiness. And the peace of a mind released is yet another level, with a happiness completely apart from the rest.

In these matters, though, meditators tend to prefer the results to the causes.

They aren't as interested in abandoning their own defilements through the principles of the practice as they are in standing out among society at large. They appropriate the ideas and observations of other people as being their own, but by and large their wisdom is composed of *bāhira paññā* – remembered 'outsights,' not true insight.

So when you want the reality of the principles taught by the Buddha, you should first lift your mind to this principle – Right Concentration – because it's an excellent gathering of the energies of your mind. All energy in the world comes from stopping and resting. Motion is something that destroys itself – as when our thinking goes all out of bounds. Take walking for instance: When we walk, energy comes from the foot at rest. Or when we speak, energy comes from stopping between phrases. If we were to talk without stopping, without resting between phrases, not only would it waste energy, but the language we'd speak wouldn't even be human. So it is with practicing the Dhamma: Release comes from concentration and discernment acting together. Release through the power of the mind (*ceto-vimutti*) requires more concentration and less discernment; release through discernment (*paññā-vimutti*), more discernment and less concentration – but there is no way that release can be attained without the stillness of concentration.

Thus, resting the mind provides the strength needed to support all the qualities developed in the practice, which is why it's such an essential part of Right Concentration. It forms a wellspring and a storage place for all knowledge, whether of the world or of the Dhamma. If you aren't acquainted with this basic principle, skilled awareness won't arise. And if you don't have skilled awareness, how will you be able to let go? You'll have to go groping around in unskilled awareness. As long as the mind is in the grips of unskilled awareness, it's bound to be deluded by its fabrications.

Unskilled awareness is a brine in which the mind lies soaking; a mind soaked in its juices is like wet, sappy wood that, when burned, gives off smoke as its signal, but no flame. As the smoke rises into the air, you imagine it to be something high and exalted. It's high, all right, but only like smoke or overcast clouds. If there's a lot of it, it can obscure your vision and that of others, so that you can't see the light of the sun and moon. This is why such people are said to be 'groping.' Those who train their own hearts, though, will give rise to skilled awareness. When skilled awareness penetrates the heart, you'll come to realize the harmful potency of mental fabrications. The arising of skilled awareness in the heart is like the burning of dry, sapless wood that gives off flame and light. Even though there may be some smoke, you don't pay it any mind, because the firelight is more outstanding.

The flame of skilled awareness gives rise to five sorts of results:

1. Rust (the defilements) won't take hold of the heart.
2. The heart becomes purified.
3. The heart becomes radiant in and of itself (*pabhassaram cittam*).
4. The heart develops majesty (*tejas*).
5. The three skills, the eight skills, and the four forms of acumen will arise.

All of these things arise through the power of the mind. The nature of the mind is that it already has a certain amount of instinctive intuition – the times when it knows on its own, as when you happen to think of a particular person, and then he or she actually shows up. All good qualities, from the mundane to the transcendent, are always present in each of us. These qualities – the Dhamma – aren't the exclusive possession of any particular group or person. We all have the right to develop them and put them into practice.

For these qualities to yield results, we have to develop them in conjunction with the following four principles –

1. *Chanda*: feeling an affinity for the practice.
2. *Viriya*: being persistent in the practice.
3. *Citta*: being intent on the practice.
4. *Vimamsā*: being circumspect in what we do, i.e., circumspect before we do it, circumspect (mindful and alert) while we're doing it, and circumspect with regard to the results that arise from what we've done.

These four principles form the foundation for success in all areas, whether in matters of the world or of the Dhamma. Once they're actualized within us and focused together on a single goal, we're bound to succeed in line with our aspirations. The results they yield, in short, are of two sorts –

1. *Iddhiriddhi*: certain mundane powers that accrue to meditators.
2. *Puññariddhi*: power in terms of the Dhamma that will accrue to meditators, providing means for settling issues that relate to the world and the heart, or for liberating the mind from all mundane influences. This is termed:

*vimutti* – release,  
*visuddhi* – purity,  
*santi* – peace,  
*nibbāna* – the disbanding of all stress.

Thus, I would like to invite all Buddhists – all who hope for peace and well-being – to reflect on the principles of practice dealing with Right Concentration presented here as a guide for those who are interested. If you have any questions dealing with this book, or any problems arising from the practice of training the mind, I will be glad to give whatever advice I can.

May you prosper and be well.

Whoever feels that this book is of use and would like to print it again for free distribution, may go ahead and do so without having to ask permission. Some parts may not be correct in terms of the Pali, so wherever there may be any mistakes, I ask your forgiveness.

*Phra Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo*

WAT ASOKARAM, SAMUT PRAKAAN  
SEPTEMBER, 1960



*‘Buddhānussati mettā ca asubhaṃ maraṇassati:  
Iccimā caturāraṅkhā...’*

(Recollection of the Buddha; goodwill;  
the foul; mindfulness of death:  
these four guardian protectors...)

– Rama IV, ‘Mokkhupāya Gāthā’

## I. RECOLLECTION OF THE BUDDHA

*Arahaṃ sammā-sambuddho bhagavā:  
Buddhaṃ bhagavantaṃ abhivādemī.*

The Blessed One is Worthy and Rightly Self-awakened.  
I bow down to the Awakened, Blessed One.

(Bow down)

*Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo:  
Dhammaṃ namassāmi.*

The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One.  
I pay homage to the Dhamma.

(Bow down)

*Supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho:  
Saṅghaṃ namāmi.*

The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples has practiced well.  
I pay respect to the Saṅgha.

(Bow down)

### A. Paying homage to objects worthy of respect:

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa.* (Repeat three times.)  
Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Rightly Self-awakened One.

*Ukāsa, dvāra-tayena kataṃ,  
sabbaṃ aparādhaṃ khamatha me bhante.*

Asking your leave, I request that you forgive me for whatever wrong I have done with the three doors (of body, speech, and mind).

*Vandāmi bhante cetiyaṃ sabbaṃ sabbattha ṭhāne, supatiṭṭhitam sāriraṅka-  
dhātuṃ, mahā-bodhiṃ buddha-rūpaṃ sakkārattham.*

I revere every stūpa established in every place, every relic of the Buddha's body, every Great Bodhi tree, every Buddha image that is an object of veneration.

*Ahaṃ vandāmi dhātuyo. Ahaṃ vandāmi sabbaso. Icetaṃ ratanattayaṃ,  
ahaṃ vandāmi sabbadā.*

I revere the relics. I revere them everywhere. I always revere the Triple Gem.

#### B. Paying homage to the Triple Gem:

*Buddha-pūjā mahātejavanto:* I ask to pay homage to the Buddha, whose majesty is greater than the powers of all beings human and divine. Thus, this homage to the Buddha is a means of developing great majesty.

*Buddhaṃ jīvitam yāva-nibbānaṃ saraṇam gacchāmi:* I take refuge in the Buddha from now until attaining nibbāna.

*Dhamma-pūjā mahappañño:* I ask to pay homage to the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha, which are a well-spring of discernment for beings human and divine. Thus, this worship of the Dhamma is a means of developing great discernment.

*Dhammaṃ jīvitam yāva-nibbānaṃ saraṇam gacchāmi:* I take refuge in the Dhamma from now until attaining nibbāna.

*Saṅgha-pūjā mahābhogāvaho:* I ask to pay homage to those followers of the Buddha who have practiced well in thought, word, and deed; and who possess all wealth, beginning with Noble Wealth. Thus, this homage to the Saṅgha is a means of developing great wealth.

*Saṅgham jīvitam yāva-nibbānaṃ saraṇam gacchāmi:* I take refuge in the Saṅgha from now until attaining nibbāna.

*N'atthi me saraṇam aññaṃ, Buddhō dhammo saṅgho me saraṇam varaṃ:  
Etena sacca-vajjena hotu me jaya-maṅgalaṃ.*

I have no other refuge: The Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha are my highest refuge. By means of this vow, may the blessing of victory be mine.

*Yaṅkiñci ratanaṃ loke vijjati vividhaṃ puthu,  
Ratanaṃ buddha-dhamma-saṅgha-samaṃ n'atthi,  
Tasmā sotthī bhavantu me.*

Of the many and varied treasures found in the world, none equal the Triple Gem. Therefore, may well-being be mine.

(If you repeat the translations of these passages, bow down once at this point.)

## II. GOODWILL

Declare your purity, taking the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha as witness once more, repeating this Pali passage:

*Parisuddho ahaṃ bhante. Parisuddhoti maṃ buddho dhammo saṅgho dhāretu.* (I now declare my purity to the Triple Gem. May the Triple Gem recognize me as pure at present.)

Now develop thoughts of goodwill, saying:

*Sabbe sattā* – May all living beings  
*Averā hontu* – be free from animosity,  
*Abyāpajjhā hontu* – free from oppression,  
*Anīghā hontu* – free from trouble.  
*Sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu* – May they look after themselves with ease.

*Sabbe sattā sadā hontu averā sukha-jīvino:* May all beings always live happily, free from animosity.

*Kataṃ puñña-phalaṃ mayhaṃ sabbe bhāgī bhavantu te:* May all share in the blessings springing from the good I have done.

(This is the abbreviated version. If your time is limited, simply say this much and then get into position to meditate.)

Spreading thoughts of goodwill to the six directions:

1. The eastern quarter: *‘Puratthimasmiṃ disā-bhāge sabbe sattā* (May all living beings in the eastern quarter...) *averā hontu, abyāpajjhā hontu, anīghā hontu, sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu. Sabbe sattā sadā hontu averā sukhajīvino. Kataṃ puññaphalaṃ mayhaṃ sabbe bhāgī bhavantu te.*

(For translations, see above.)

2. The western quarter: *‘Pacchimasmiṃ disā-bhāge...’*

3. The northern quarter: *‘Uttarasmiṃ disā-bhāge...’*

4. The southern quarter: *‘Dakkhiṇasmiṃ disā-bhāge...’*

5. The lower regions: *‘Hetthimasmiṃ disā-bhāge...’*

6. The upper regions: *‘Uparimasmiṃ disā-bhāge sabbe sattā averā hontu, abyāpajjhā hontu, anīghā hontu, sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu. Sabbe sattā sadā hontu averā sukhajīvino. Kataṃ puññaphalaṃ mayhaṃ sabbe bhāgī bhavantu te.*

(Bow down three times.)

When you have finished spreading thoughts of goodwill to all six directions, cleanse your heart of thoughts of animosity and apprehension. Make your heart completely clear and at ease. Goodwill acts as a support for purity of virtue and so is an appropriate way of preparing the heart for the practice of tranquility and insight meditation.

### III. THE FOUL: TRANQUILITY MEDITATION

In other words, remove all befouling mental states from the mind. The things that befoul and darken the mind are the five hindrances:

- *Kāma-chanda*: sensual desires, taking pleasure in sensual objects (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, ideas) and sensual moods (such as passion, aversion, and delusion).
- *Byāpāda*: ill will, malevolence, hatred.
- *Thīna-middha*: torpor, lethargy, drowsiness, listlessness.
- *Uddhacca-kukkucca*: restlessness and anxiety.
- *Vicikicchā*: doubt, uncertainty.

When any of these unskillful states occupy the heart, it's not flourishing, blooming, or bright. For the heart to bloom, it has to be free from all five of the hindrances; and for it to be free in this way, we have to develop concentration or absorption (*jhāna*), which is composed of directed thought, evaluation, rapture, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation (see below). The heart will then be clear, bright, and resplendent. In Pali, this is called *sobhaṇa-citta*. Thus, in this section we will discuss how to develop concentration as a means of eliminating the hindrances as follows:

#### A. 'Among the forty themes, breath is supreme.'

Sit in a half-lotus position, your right leg on top of your left; your hands palm-up in your lap, your right hand on top of your left. Keep your body comfortably erect and your mind on what you're doing. Don't let your thoughts go spinning forward or back. Be intent on keeping track of the present: the present of the body, or the in-and-out breath; and the present of the mind, or mindfulness and all-round alertness. The present of the body and the present of the mind should be brought together at a single point. In other words, make the object of the mind single and one. Focus your attention on the breath, keeping watch over it until you're clearly aware that, 'This is the in-breath,' and 'This is the out.' Once you can see clearly in this way, call to mind the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, gathering them into a single word, '*Buddho*.' Then divide '*Buddho*' into two syllables, thinking '*bud-*' with the in-breath, and '*dho*' with the out, at the same time counting your breaths: '*Bud-*' in, '*dho*' out, one; '*bud-*' in, '*dho*' out, two; '*bud-*' in '*dho*' out, three, and so on up to ten. Then start counting again from one

to nine; then one to eight, one to seven... six... five... four... three... two... one... zero. In other words:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
1 2 3 4 5 6  
1 2 3 4 5  
1 2 3 4  
1 2 3  
1 2  
1  
0

Keep three points – the breath, your mindfulness, and your awareness – together in a single stream. If when you’ve finished counting you find that your mind still won’t stay with the breath, start by counting again, from one to ten and so on to zero. Keep this up until you feel that your mind has settled down, and then stay with zero. In other words, you no longer have to count, you no longer have to think ‘*Buddho.*’ Simply keep careful watch over your breath and your awareness. Keep your awareness focused on a single point, mindful and watchful. Don’t send it in and out after the breath. When the breath comes in, you know. When it goes out, you know, but don’t make your awareness go in or out. Keep it neutral and still. Keep watch only on the present. When you can do this, the five hindrances won’t be able to find entry into the mind. This is called *parikamma bhāvanā*, repetition meditation.

At this point, the mind becomes light and can put aside its heavy burdens. When the mind is light, so is the body. In Pali this is called, *kāya-lahutā, citta-lahutā*. The mind is peaceful and solitary – free from agitation and unrest – clear and calm with the refined sense of the breath. When the mind reaches this state, it’s in the sphere of directed thought (*vitakka*), which is the first factor of jhāna.

Now survey and examine the characteristics of the breath. Try adjusting the breath in four different ways: Breathe in long and out long, and see whether your mind is at ease with that sort of breath. Then breathe in short and out short to see whether you feel comfortable and at ease that way. Then see whether you feel at ease breathing in long and out short, or in short and out long. Continue breathing in whichever of these four ways feels most comfortable and then let that comfortable breath spread throughout the different parts of the body. At the same time, expand your sense of mindful awareness along with the breath.

When the breath runs throughout the body, and the sensations of breath in the

various parts of the body are coordinated, they can be put to use, for example, to relieve feelings of pain. Your sense of mindfulness at this point is broad; your alertness, fully developed. When mindfulness is spread throughout the body, this is called *kāyagatāsati* – mindfulness immersed in the body. Your frame of reference is large and expansive, and so is called ‘*mahāsatipaṭṭhāna*.’ Your alertness is present throughout, aware both of the causes – i.e., what you’re doing – and of the results coming from what you’ve done. All of these characteristics are aspects of evaluation (*vicāra*), the second factor of jhāna.

Now that the body and mind have received nourishment – in other words, now that the breath has provided for the body and mindfulness has provided for the mind – both body and mind are bound to reap results, i.e., rapture. The body is full and refreshed, free from restlessness. The mind is full and refreshed, free from anxiety and distraction, broad and blooming. This is called rapture (*pīti*), which is the third factor of jhāna.

Once fullness arises in this way, body and mind settle down and are still. In Pali this is termed ‘*kāya-passaddhi, citta-passaddhi*.’ This feeling of stillness leads to a sense of relaxation and ease for both body and mind, termed pleasure (*sukha*).

These are the beginning steps in dealing with the mind. Once you are able to follow them, you should make a point of practicing them repeatedly, back and forth, until you’re skilled at entering concentration, staying in place, and withdrawing. Even just this much can form a path along which the mind can then progress, for it has to some extent already reached the level of *upacāra bhāvanā*, threshold concentration.

## B. Focal points for the mind

These include: (1) the tip of the nose; (2) the middle of the head; (3) the palate; (4) the base of the throat; (5) the tip of the breastbone; (6) the ‘center,’ two inches above the navel. In centering the breath at any of these points, people who tend to have headaches shouldn’t focus on any point above the base of the throat.

Coordinate the various aspects of breath in the body, such as the up-flowing breath, the down-flowing breath, the breath flowing in the stomach, the breath flowing in the intestines, the breath flowing along every part of the body, hot breath, cool breath, warm breath: Mesh these various sorts of breath so that they’re balanced, even, and just right, so as to give rise to a sense of ease and comfort throughout the body. The purpose of examining and coordinating the breath is to expand your sense of mindfulness and awareness so that they are sensitive throughout the entire body. This will then benefit both body and mind. The enlarged sense of the body is termed *mahābhūta-rūpa*; expanded awareness is termed *mahaggatari cittaṃ*. This sense of awareness will then go on to reap the



benefits of its beauty that will arise in various ways, leading it to the level of *appanā bhāvanā*, fixed penetration.

The characteristics of the in-and-out breath, as they interact with the properties of the body, can cause the properties of water and earth to be affected as follows:

There are three types of blood in the human body –

1. Clear, white – arising from cool breathing.
2. Light red, dark red – arising from warm breathing.
3. Black, bluish black – arising from hot breathing.

These different types of blood, as they nourish the nerves in the body, can cause people to have different tendencies:

1. Hot breathing can make a person tend heavily toward being affectionate, easily attracted, and infatuated – tendencies that are associated with delusion.
2. Warm breathing can cause a person to have moderate tendencies as far as affection is concerned, but strong tendencies toward a quick and violent temper – tendencies associated with anger.
3. Cool breathing causes weak tendencies toward affection but strong tendencies toward greed, craving material objects more than anything else.

If we know clearly which physical properties are aggravating greed, anger, or delusion, we can destroy the corresponding properties and these states of mind will weaken on their own.

‘Remove the fuel, and the fire won’t blaze.’

To adjust these properties skillfully gives rise to discernment, which lies at the essence of being skillful. Adjust the property of warmth so that the blood is clear and light red, and your discernment will be quick, your nerves healthy, your thinking perceptive, subtle, and deep. In other words, to make heavier use of the nerves in the physical heart is the way of the Dhamma. As for the nerves of the brain, to use them a great deal leads to restlessness, distraction, and heavy defilements.

These are just a few of the issues related to the breath. There are many, many more that people of discernment should discover on their own.

*Nānā-dhātu-vijjā*: knowledge of the subtleties of all 18 elements (*dhātu*), the 22 faculties (*indrīya*), the six sense media (*āyatana*); acute insight into the qualities of the mind; expertise in concentration. Concentration gives rise to

liberating insight, acquaintance with the process of fabrication;

*nibbidā* – disenchantment;

*virāga* – dispassion;

*nirodha* – utter disbanding;

*vimutti* – a mind released from the mundane;

*santi* – peace of heart;

*paramam sukham* – the ease that is ultimate bliss.

### C. Images

These are of two sorts –

1. *Uggaha nimitta*: images as they are first perceived.

2. *Paṭibhāga nimitta*: adjusted images.

Images of either sort can appear at certain mental moments or with certain people. When the mind becomes still, *uggaha nimittas* can appear in either of two ways:

- from mental notes made in the past;
- on their own, without our ever having thought of the matter.

*Uggaha nimittas* of both sorts can be either beneficial or harmful, true or false, so we shouldn't place complete trust in them. If we're circumspect in our mindfulness and alertness, they can be beneficial. But if our powers of reference are weak or if we lack strength of mind, we're likely to follow the drift of whatever images appear, sometimes losing our bearings to the point where we latch onto the images as being real.

*Uggaha nimittas* are of two sorts –

a. *Sensation-images*: e.g., seeing images of our own body, of other people, of animals, or of corpses; images of black, red, blue or white. Sometimes these images are true, sometimes not. Sometimes images arise by way of the ear – for example, we may hear the voice of a person talking. Sometimes they arise by way of the nose – we may smell fragrant scents or foul, like those of a corpse. Sometimes images are sensed by the body – the body may feel small or large, tall or short. All of these sensations are classed as *uggaha nimittas*. If the mind is strong and resilient, they can act as a means for the arising of liberating insight. If our powers of reference are weak, though, they can turn into corruptions of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*), in which we fall for the objects we experience, believing them to be true. Even when they're true, things that are false can mingle in with

them – like a man sitting under the open sky: When the sun shines, he’s bound to have a shadow. The man really exists, and the shadow is connected with him, but the shadow isn’t really the man. Thus, we’re taught to let go of what’s true and real; things that are untrue will then fall from our grasp as well.

*b. Thought-images:* When the breath is subtle and the mind is still and unoccupied, things can occur to it. Sometimes we may think of a question and then immediately know the answer. Sometimes we don’t even have to think: The knowledge pops into the mind on its own. Things of this sort are also classed as *uggaha nimittas*. Sometimes they may be true, sometimes false, sometimes mixed. You can’t trust them to be absolutely true. Sometimes they’re true, and that truth is what leads us to fall for them. For example, they may be true about three things and false about seven. Once we’ve placed our confidence in them, even the false things will appear true to us. This is one way of giving rise to the corruptions of insight.

So when sensation-images or thought-images arise in one way or another, you should then practice adjusting and analyzing them (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). In other words, when a visual image arises, if it’s large, make it small, far, near, large, small, appear, and disappear. Analyze it into its various parts and then let it go. Don’t let these images influence the mind. Instead, have the mind influence the images, as you will. If you aren’t able to do this, then don’t get involved with them. Disregard them and return to your original practice with the breath.

If a thought-image arises by way of the mind, stop, take your bearings, and consider exactly how much truth there is to the knowledge it gives. Even if it’s true, you shouldn’t latch onto what you know or see. If you latch onto your knowledge, it’ll become a corruption of insight. If you latch onto your views, they’ll become a form of attachment and conceit, in which you assume yourself to be this or that. Thus, you should let go of these things, in line with their true nature. If you aren’t wise to them, they can skew your practice so that you miss out on the highest good.

#### D. The Ten Corruptions of Insight

1. *Obhāsa:* a bright light that enables you to see places both far and near.

2. *Ñāṇa:* knowledge enabling you to know in an uncanny way things you never before knew, such as *pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*, the ability to remember previous lifetimes. Even knowledge of this sort, though, can mislead you. If you learn good things about your past, you may get pleased. If you learn bad or undesirable things about your past, you may get displeased. *Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa:* Sometimes you may learn how people and other living beings die and are reborn – knowing, for instance, where they are reborn when they have died from this world – which can

cause you to become engrossed in the various things you come to know and see. As you become more and more engrossed, false knowledge can step in, and yet you still assume it to be true.

3. *Pīti*: a sense of physical and mental fullness and satisfaction, full to the point of infatuation – physically satisfied to the point where you don't feel hunger or thirst, heat or cold; mentally satisfied to the point where you become engrossed and oblivious, lazy and lethargic, perhaps deciding that you've already achieved the goal. What's actually happened is that you've swallowed your mood down whole.

4. *Passaddhi*: The body is at peace and the mind serene, to the point where you don't want to encounter anything in the world. You see the world as being unpeaceful and you don't want to have anything to do with it. Actually, if the mind is really at peace, everything in the world will also be at peace. People who are addicted to a sense of peace won't want to do any physical work or even think about anything, because they're stuck on that sense of peace as a constant preoccupation.

5. *Sukha*: Once there's peace, there's a sense of physical and mental pleasure and ease; and once there's a great deal of pleasure, you come to hate pain, seeing pleasure as something good and pain as something bad. Your view of things falls into two parts. Actually, pleasure doesn't come from anywhere else but pain. Pain is the same thing as pleasure: When pleasure arises, pain is its shadow; when pain arises, pleasure is its shadow. As long as you don't understand this, you give rise to a kind of defilement – again, you swallow your mood down whole. When a deep and arresting sense of relaxation, stillness, ease, or freedom from disturbance arises, you get engrossed in that feeling. What has happened is that you're simply stuck on a pleasing mental state.

6. *Adhimokkha*: being disposed to believing that your knowledge and the things you know are true. Once 'true' takes a stance, 'false' is bound to enter the picture. True and false go together, i.e., they're one and the same thing. For example, suppose we ask, 'Is Nai Daeng at home?' and someone answers, 'No, he isn't.' If Nai Daeng really exists and he's really at home, then when that person says, 'He's not at home,' he's lying. But if Nai Daeng doesn't exist, that person can't lie. Thus, true and false are one and the same...

7. *Paggāha*: excessive persistence, leading to restlessness. You're simply fastened on your preoccupation and too strongly focused on your goal...

8. *Upaṭṭhāna*: being obsessed with a particular item you've come to know or see, refusing to let it go.

9. *Upekkhā*: indifference, not wanting to meet with anything, be aware of anything, think about anything, or figure anything out; assuming that you've let go

completely. Actually, this is a misunderstanding of that very mental moment.

10. *Nikanti*: being content with your various preoccupations, simply attached to the things you experience or see.

All of these things, if we aren't wise to them, can corrupt the heart. So, as meditators, we should attend to them and reflect on them until we understand them thoroughly. Only then will we be able to give rise to liberating insight, clear knowledge of the four truths:

1. Physical and mental stress, i.e., the things that burden the body or mind. Physical and mental pleasure and ease, though, are also classed as stress because they're subject to change.

2. The factors that enable these forms of stress to arise are three –

*a. Kāma-taṇhā*: craving for attractive and appealing sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, and ideas; fastening onto these things, grabbing hold of them as belonging to the self. This is one factor that enables stress to arise. (The mind flashes out.)

*b. Bhava-taṇhā*: desire for things to be this way or that at times when they can't be the way we want them; wanting things to be a certain way outside of the proper time or occasion. This is called 'being hungry' – like a person who hungers for food but has no food to eat and so acts in a way that shows, 'I'm a person who wants to eat.' *Bhava-taṇhā* is another factor that enables stress to arise. (The mind strays.)

*c. Vibhava-taṇhā*: not wanting things to be this way or that, e.g., having been born, not wanting to die; not wanting to be deprived of the worldly things we've acquired: for example, having status and wealth and yet not wanting our status and wealth to leave us. The truth of the matter is that there's no way this change can be avoided. As soon as it comes, we thus feel stress and pain. (The mind flinches.)

*Punappunam pilitattā  
saṁsarantā bhavābhavā:*

'Repeated oppression,  
wandering on  
from one state of becoming to another.'

Different states of becoming arise first in the mind, then giving rise to birth. Thus, people of discernment let go of these things, causing:

3. *Nirodha* – cessation or disbanding – to appear in the heart. In other words, the mind discovers the limits of craving and lets it go through the practice of insight meditation, letting go of all fabrications, both good and bad. To be able to

let go in this way, we have to develop:

4. *Magga* – the Path – so as to make it powerful. In other words, we have to give rise to pure discernment within our own minds so that we can know the truth. Stress is a truth; its cause is a truth; its cessation and the Path are truths: To know in this way is liberating insight. And then, when we let all four truths fall away from us so that we gain release from ‘true,’ that’s when we’ll reach deathlessness (*amata-dhamma*). Truths have their drawbacks in that untrue things are mixed in with them. Wherever real money exists, there’s bound to be counterfeit. Wherever there are rich people, there are bound to be thieves waiting to rob them. This is why release has to let go of truths before it can reach nibbāna.

Meditators, then, should acquaint themselves with the enemies of concentration, so as to keep their distance from all five of the hindrances, the two sorts of *uggaha nimittas*, and the ten corruptions of insight. The mind will then be able to gain release from all things defiling, dirty, and damp. What this means is that the mind doesn’t hold onto anything at all. It lets go of supposings, meanings, practice, and attainment. *Above cause and beyond effect*: That’s the aim of the Buddha’s teachings.

Those who want to get rid of *kāma-taṇhā* – desire and attraction for the six types of sensory objects – have to develop virtue that’s pure all the way to the heart: This is termed heightened virtue (*adhisīla*.) Those who are to get rid of *bhava-taṇhā* – thoughts that stray out, choosing objects to dwell on – first have to develop Right Concentration, pure and circumspect: This is termed heightened mind (*adhicitta*.) Those who are to get rid of *vibhava-taṇhā* – attachment to knowledge and viewpoints, attainments and states of becoming, theories and conceits – will first have to develop clear-seeing discernment, cognitive skill that’s pure and fully developed: This is heightened discernment (*adhipaññā*).

Thus, the threefold training – virtue, concentration, and discernment – is a group of truths that can let go of the causes of stress. Other than this, there’s no way to release.

## IV. MINDFULNESS OF DEATH: INSIGHT MEDITATION

In other words, keep death in mind. This is where the mind advances to the development of liberating insight, taking death as its theme. ‘Death’ here refers to the death occurring in the present – physical sensations arising and passing away, mental acts arising and passing away, all in a moment of awareness. Only when you’re aware on this level can you be classed as being mindful of death.

Now that we’ve brought up the topic of death, we have to reflect on birth, seeing how many ways sensations are born and how many ways mental acts are born. This is something a person with a quiet mind can know.

A. Sensations have up to five levels of refinement –

1. *Hīna-rūpa*: coarse sensations, sensations of discomfort, aches and pains. When these arise, focus on what causes them until they disappear.

2. *Pañīta-rūpa*: exquisite sensations that make the body feel pleasurable, light, and refined. Focus on what causes them until they disappear.

3. *Sukhumāla-rūpa*: delicate sensations, tender, yielding, and agile. When they arise, focus on what causes them until they disappear.

4. *Olārika-rūpa*: physical sensations that give a sense of grandeur, exuberance, brightness, and exultation: ‘*Mukhavaṇṇo vipassīdati.*’ When they arise, focus on finding out what causes them until they disappear.

All four of these sensations arise and disband by their very nature; and it’s possible to find out where they first appear.

5. ‘*Mano-bhāva*’: imagined circumstances that appear through the power of the mind. When they arise, focus on keeping track of them until they disappear. Once you’re able to know in this way, you enter the sphere of true mindfulness of death.

An explanation of this sort of sensation: When the mind is quiet and steadily concentrated, it has the power to create images in the imagination (inner sensations, or sensations within sensations). Whatever images it thinks of will then appear to it; and once they appear, the mind tends to enter into them and take up residence. (It can go great distances.) If the mind fastens onto these sensations, it is said to take birth – simply because it has no sense of death.

These sensations can appear in any of five ways –

a. arising from the posture of the body, disappearing when the posture

changes;

b. arising from thoughts imbued with greed, hatred, or delusion – arising, taking a stance, and then disbanding;

c. arising with an in-breath and disbanding with the following out-breath;

d. arising from the cleansing of the blood in the lungs – appearing and disbanding in a single instant;

e. arising from the heart's pumping blood into the various parts of the body, the pressure of the blood causing sensations to arise that correspond to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations. Sensations of this sort are arising and disbanding every moment.

Another class of sensation is termed *gocara-rūpa* – sensations that circle around the physical body. There are five sorts – light, sound, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations – each having five levels. For instance, common light travels slowly; in the flash of an eye it runs for a league and then dies away. The second level, subtle light, goes further; the third level goes further still. The fourth and fifth levels can travel the entire universe. The same holds true for sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations. The relationships between all the potentials in the universe are interacting at every moment, differing only as to whether they're fast or slow. This is the inequality that has been termed '*anicca-lakkhaṇa*' – the characteristic of inherent inconstancy. Whoever is ignorant is bound to think that all this is impossible, but actually this is the way things already are by their nature. We'll come to know this through *vijjā* – cognitive skill – not through ordinary labels and concepts. This is called true knowing, which meditators who develop the inner eye will realize for themselves: knowing the arising of these sensations, their persisting, and their disbanding, in terms of their primary qualities and basic regularity.

Knowing things for what they really are.

Release, purity, dispassion, disbanding;

*Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ:*

Nibbāna is the ultimate ease.

B. As for mental acts that arise and die, their time span is many thousands of times faster than that of sensations. To be able to keep track of their arising and dying away, our awareness has to be still. The four kinds of mental acts are:

– *Vedanā*: the mind's experience of feelings of pleasure, pain, and neither pleasure nor pain.

– *Saññā*: recognizing and labeling the objects of the mind.



- *Saṅkhāra*: mental fabrications of good and bad.
- *Viññāṇa*: distinct consciousness of objects.

One class of these mental acts stays in place, arising and disbanding with reference to the immediate present. Another class is termed *gocara vedanā*, *gocara saññā*, etc., which go out to refer to the world. Each of these has five levels, differing as to whether they're common, refined, or subtle, slow or fast. These five levels connect with one another, running out in stages, and then circling back to their starting point, disbanding and then arising again – all without end.

When we don't have the skill to discern the primary sensations and mental acts that stay in place, we can't see into the *gocara* sensations and mental acts that go flowing around. This is termed '*avijjā*,' the ignorance that opens the way for connecting consciousness (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*), giving rise to the act of fabrication (*saṅkhāra*), which is the essence of kamma. This gives fruit as sensations and feelings that are followed by craving, and then the act of labeling, which gives rise to another level of consciousness – of sensory objects – and then the cycle goes circling on. This is termed *khandha-vaṭṭa*, the cycle of the aggregates, circling and changing unevenly and inconsistently. To see this is called *aniccānupassanā-ñāṇa*, the knowledge that keeps track of inconstancy as it occurs. This is known through the inner eye, i.e., the skill of genuine discernment.

Thus, those who practice the exercises of insight meditation should use their sensitivities and circumspection to the full if they hope to gain release from ignorance. Fabrications, in this context, are like waves on the ocean. If we're out in a boat on the ocean when the waves are high, our vision is curtailed. Our senses of hearing, smell, taste, touch, and ideation are all curtailed. We won't be able to perceive far into the distance. What this means is that when our minds are immersed in the hindrances, we won't be able to perceive death at all. But once we've been able to suppress the hindrances, it's like taking a boat across the ocean when there are no waves. We'll be able to see objects far in the distance. Our eyes will be clear-seeing, our ears clear-hearing, our senses of smell, taste, touch and ideation will be broad and wide open. The water will be clear, and the light brilliant. We'll be able to know all around us.

In the same way, those who are to know death clearly have to begin by practicing concentration as a foundation for developing liberating insight. How do the five sorts of above-mentioned sensation arise? What are their causes? How do they disappear? How do physical and mental feelings arise? How do they disappear? What are their causes? How do labels and concepts arise? What are their causes? How do they disappear? How do mental fabrications arise? What are their causes? How do they disappear? How does consciousness arise by way of the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and ideation? What are its causes?

How does it disappear?

Altogether there are four levels to each of the five aggregates (*khandhas*): external and internal, staying in place and streaming outward. These can be known at all times, but only people who have the discernment that comes from training the mind in tranquility and insight meditation will be able to know death on this level.

The discernment that arises in this way has been termed *pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*, i.e., understanding past sensations, future sensations, and sensations in the present. These sensations differ in the way they arise and pass away. To know this is to have mastered one cognitive skill.

*Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*: With discernment of this sort, we're able to keep track of the states of our own mind as they arise and disappear, sometimes good as they arise and good as they disappear, sometimes bad as they arise and bad as they disappear, sometimes good as they arise and bad as they disappear, sometimes bad as they arise and good as they disappear. To be able to keep track in this way is to know states of being and birth.

*Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: When the discernment of this skill arises, it leads to disenchantment with the way sensations and mental acts arise and disappear and then arise again, simply circling about: coarser sensations going through the cycle slowly, more refined sensations going quickly; coarser mental acts going slowly, more refined mental acts going quickly. When you can keep track of this, you know one form of stress. Now focus attention back on your own mind to see whether or not it's neutral at that moment. If the mind approves of its knowledge or of the things it knows, that's *kāmasukhallikānuyoḡa* – indulgence in pleasure. If the mind disapproves of its knowledge or of the things it knows, that's *attakilamathānuyoḡa*, indulgence in self-infliction. Once you've seen this, make the mind neutral toward whatever it may know: That moment of awareness is the mental state forming the Path. When the Path arises, the causes of stress disband. Try your best to keep that mental state going. Follow that train of awareness as much as you can. The mind when it's in that state is said to be developing the Path – and at whatever moment the Path stands firm, disbanding and relinquishing occur.

When you can do this, you reach the level where you know death clearly. People who know death in this way are then able to reduce the number of their own deaths. Some of the Noble Ones have seven more deaths ahead of them, some have only one more, others go beyond death entirely. These Noble Ones are people who understand birth and death, and for this reason have only a few deaths left to them. Ordinary people who understand their own birth and death on this level are hard to find. Common, ordinary birth and death aren't especially necessary; but people who don't understand the Dhamma have to put up with

birth and death as a common thing.

So whoever is to know death on this level will have to develop the cognitive skill that comes from training the mind. The skill, here, is knowing which preoccupations of the mind are in the past, which are in the future, and which are in the present. This is cognitive skill (*vijjā*). Letting go of the past, letting go of the future, letting go of the present, not latching onto anything at all: This is purity and release.

As for ignorance, it's the exact opposite, i.e., not knowing what's past, not knowing what's future, not knowing what's present – that is, the arising and falling away of sensations and mental acts, or body and mind – or at most knowing only on the level of labels and concepts remembered from what other people have said, not knowing on the level of awareness that we've developed on our own. All of this is classed as *avijjā*, or ignorance.

No matter how much we may use words of wisdom and discernment, it still won't gain us release. For instance, we may know that things are inconstant, but we still fall for inconstant things. We may know about things that are stressful, but we still fall for them. We may know that things are not-self, but we still fall for things that are not-self. Our knowledge of inconstancy, stress, and not-self isn't true. Then how are these things truly known? Like this:

Knowing both sides,  
Letting go both ways,  
Shedding everything.

'Knowing both sides' means knowing what's constant and what's inconstant, what's stress and what's ease, what's not-self and what's self. 'Letting go both ways' means not latching onto things that are constant or inconstant, not latching onto stress or ease, not latching onto self or not-self. 'Shedding everything' means not holding onto past, present, or future: Awareness doesn't head forward or back, and yet you can't say that it's taking a stance.

*Yāvadeva ñāṇamattāya patissatimattāya anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci  
loke upādiyati.*

'Mindful and alert just to the extent of knowledge and remembrance, the mind is independent, not attached to anything in the world.'

## EPILOGUE

### I. There are three sets of results arising from the practice.

#### Set A

1. *Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*: the ability to remember previous lives.
2. *Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*: the ability to know how the living beings of the world die and are reborn.
3. *Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: understanding how to put an end to the defilements of the heart.

#### Set B

1. *Vipassanā-ñāṇa*: clear insight, through training the mind, into phenomena in and of themselves, in terms of the four noble truths.
2. *Manomayiddhi*: psychic power, making things appear in line with your thoughts – for example, thinking of a visual image that then appears to the physical eye. Those who are to develop this skill must first become expert at uggaha nimittas.
3. *Iddhividhī*: the ability to change such images as you like. Those who are to develop this skill must first become expert in paṭibhāga nimittas.
4. *Dibbacakkhu*: clairvoyance, the ability to see great distances. Only people with good optic nerves – and who understand how to adjust the physical properties in the body so as to keep the nerves charged and awake – will be able to develop this skill.
5. *Dibbasota*: clairaudience, the ability to hear sounds at great distances. Only people whose auditory nerves are good – and who understand how to adjust the properties in the body so that they act as a conducting medium – will be able to develop this skill.
6. *Cetopariya-ñāṇa*: knowing the thoughts and mental states of other people. To do this, you first have to adjust the fluids nourishing your heart muscles so that they're clean and pure.
7. *Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*: the ability to remember previous lives, knowing by means of mental images or intuitive verbal knowledge. To remember past lives, you first have to understand how to interchange the physical properties in the body.
8. *Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: knowing the causes for mental defilement; knowing the

means for putting an end to mental fermentations.

### Set C

1. *Attha-paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*: acumen in understanding the meaning of various teachings.

2. *Dhamma-paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*: acumen – acquired by means of your own heart – with regard to all fabricated properties and qualities.

3. *Nirutti-paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*: the ability to understand by means of the heart the issues and languages of people and other living beings in the world.

4. *Paṭibhāṇa-paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*: the intuitive ability to respond promptly and aptly in situations where you're called on to speak; the ability to respond to an opponent without having to think: Simply by focusing the mind heavily down, the right response will appear on its own, just as a flashlight gives off light immediately as we press the switch.

\* \* \*

Taken together, all of these skills arise exclusively from training the heart and are called *bhāvanāmaya-paññā* – discernment developed through training the mind. They can't be taught. You have to know them on your own. Thus, they can be called *paccatta-vijjā*, personal skills. If you're astute enough, they can all become transcendent. If not, they all become mundane. Thus, the principles of discernment are two:

1. *Mundane discernment*: studying and memorizing a great deal, thinking and evaluating a great deal, and then understanding on the common level of labels and concepts.

2. *Transcendent discernment*: knowledge that comes from practicing Right Concentration; intuitive understanding that arises naturally on its own within the heart, beyond the scope of the world; clear insight; release from all views, conceits, defilements, and fermentations of the mind.

## **II. *Upakāra dhamma*: three sets of qualities that are of help in giving rise to cognitive skill.**

### Set A

1. *Sīla-saṁvara*: taking good care of your virtue – your manners and conduct in thought, word, and deed – following such principles as the ten guidelines (*kammaṭṭhā*).

2. *Indrīya-saṁvara*: being constantly mindful of the six ‘gateways’ – the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and ideation – making sure they don’t give rise to anything that would disturb your own peace or that of others.

3. *Bhojane mattaññutā*: having a sense of moderation in the amount of food you eat – not too much, not too little, eating nothing but food compatible with your physical make-up. And make sure that it’s light food. Otherwise, you’ll have to eat only half-full or on the small side. As far as food is concerned, if you can get by on only one meal a day, you’ll find it much easier to train the mind.

There are three ways of eating –

a. Stuffing yourself full. This interferes with concentration and is termed ‘being greedy.’

b. Eating just enough to keep the body going. This is termed ‘being content with what you have.’

c. Eating no more than half full. This is termed ‘being a person of few wants,’ who has no worries associated with food and whose body weighs lightly. Just as a tree with light heartwood won’t sink when it falls in the water, so the meditation of such a person is not inclined to lead to anything low. The senses of such a person – the nerves of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body – tend toward peacefulness and are well suited for helping the mind attain peace.

4. *Jāgariyānuyoga*: awakening the physical properties of the body by developing the factor that fabricates the body (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), i.e., adjusting the in-and-out breath so that it’s thoroughly beneficial to the properties of earth, water, wind, and fire within the body. This is termed developing mindfulness immersed in the body (*kāyagātāsati-bhāvanā*), as in the verse:

*Suppabuddhaṁ pabujjhanti sadā gotamasāvakaṁ  
Yesam divā ca ratto ca niccaṁ kāyagātasati.*

‘The disciples of the Buddha Gotama are always wide awake, their mindfulness constantly, by day and by night, immersed in the body’... their mindfulness charging the body whether their eyes are open or closed.

At the same time, we have to understand how to keep the mind wide-awake through developing jhāna, starting with directed thought, evaluation, rapture, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation (see below). The mind will then awaken from its forgetfulness. With regard to forgetfulness, the Buddha taught that when the mind gets drawn in by its objects, it faints for a spell. If this happens often enough to become a habit, it gives rise to delusion, leaving us no way to give rise to

the discernment of liberating insight.

### Set B

1. *Saddhā*: conviction, i.e., being convinced of the causes of goodness and of the results that will come from acting in line with those causes.

2. *Hiri*: inner shame at the thought of doing evil, not daring to do evil either openly or secretly, because we realize that there are no secret places in the world. Even if other people don't see us doing evil, we ourselves are sure to see.

3. *Ottappa*: fear of evil, not being attracted to the idea of doing evil; viewing bad kamma as a poisonous cobra raising its head and spreading its hood, and thus not daring to go near it.

4. *Bahusacca*: studying and training yourself constantly, seeking advice from those who are knowledgeable and expert in the practice. Don't associate with people who have no knowledge of the matters in which you are interested.

5. *Viriya*: persistence in abandoning the defilements of the mind – i.e., the hindrances; perseverance in giving rise to good within the mind by developing such things as the first jhāna. Briefly put, there are three ways to do this: being persistent in giving rise to the good, in maintaining the good, and in constantly developing the good that has already arisen.

6. *Satipaṭṭhāna*: giving your powers of reference a frame and a focal point by developing mindfulness immersed in the body (*'kesā, lomā...'*) or mindfulness of breathing, etc.

7. *Paññā*: discernment; circumspection that's all-encompassing and fully reasonable in doing good, in maintaining the good, and in using the good so as to be of benefit at large – for low-level benefits, intermediate benefits, and ultimate benefits, with regard to this life, lives to come, and the ultimate benefit, nibbāna. This is what is meant by discernment.

### Set C

**1. The first jhāna. *Vitakka*:** Think of an object for the mind to focus on. *Vicāra*: Evaluate the object on which you have focused. For example, once you are focused on keeping track of the breath, take a good look at the various breath-sensations in the body. Learn how to adjust and change whichever part or aspect is uncomfortable. Learn how to use whichever part feels good so as to be of benefit to the body and mind. Keep this up continually, and results will appear: The body will feel light and full, permeated with a sense of rapture and refreshment (*pīti*). Awareness will be full and all-round, with no distracting restlessness. At this point, both mind and body are quiet, just as a child lying in a cradle with a doll to play with won't cry. The body is thus at ease, and the mind relaxed (*sukha*).

*Ekaggatam cittam*: The mind sticks steadily with a single preoccupation, without grasping after past or future, comfortably focused in the present. This much qualifies as jhāna.

**2. The second jhāna.** Directed thought and evaluation disappear; awareness settles in on its sense of ease and rapture. The body is relaxed, the mind quiet and serene. The body feels full, like the earth saturated with rain water to the point where puddles form. The mind feels brighter and clearer. As awareness focuses more heavily on its one object, it expands itself even further, letting go of the sense of rapture and entering the third jhāna.

**3. The third jhāna** has two factors –

*a. Sukha*, its taste: physical pleasure; cool mental pleasure and peace.

*b. Ekaggatārammaṇa*: Awareness is firm and fixed in a snug fit with its object. As it focuses strongly and forcibly expands itself, a bright sense of light appears. The mind seems much more open and blooming than before. As you focus in with complete mindfulness and alertness, the sense of pleasure begins to waver. As the mind adjusts its focus slightly, it enters the fourth jhāna.

**4. The fourth jhāna** has two factors –

*a. Upekkhā*: equanimity with regard to objects. Past, future, and the grosser sense of the body in the present disappear.

*b. Ekaggatārammaṇa*: The mind is solitary, its mindfulness full and bright – as if you were sitting in a brightly-lit, empty room with your work finished, free to relax as you like. The mind rests, its energy strong and expansive.

Now withdraw from this level back out to the first and then enter in again. As you do this repeatedly, liberating insight will arise on its own, like a light connected to a battery: When we press down on the switch, the light flashes out on its own. And then we can use whatever color of bulb we want and put it to use in whatever way we like, depending on our own skill and ingenuity. In other words, the skills mentioned above will appear.

People who develop jhāna fall into three classes:

1. Those who attain only the first level and then gain liberating insight right then and there are said to excel in discernment (*paññādhika*). They awaken quickly, and their release is termed *paññā-vimutti*, release through discernment.

2. Those who develop jhāna to the fourth level, there gaining liberating



insight into the noble truths, are said to excel in conviction (*saddhādhika*). They develop a moderate number of skills, and their Awakening occurs at a moderate rate. Their release is the first level of *ceto-vimutti*, release through concentration.

3. Those who become skilled at the four levels of jhāna – adept at entering, staying in place, and withdrawing – and then go all the way to the four levels of arūpa-jhāna, after which they withdraw back to the first jhāna, over and over again, until finally intuitive knowledge, the cognitive skills, and liberating discernment arise, giving release from mental fermentation and defilement: These people are said to excel in persistence (*viriyādhika*). People who practice jhāna a great deal, developing strong energy and bright inner light, can awaken suddenly in a single mental instant, as soon as discernment first arises. Their release is *cetopariyavimutti*, release through mastery of concentration.

These are the results to be gained by meditators. But there have to be causes – our own actions – before the results can come fully developed.

# *Duties of the Saṅgha*

## FOREWARD

This year a large number of monks and novices came to be ordained and to live together here at Wat Asokaram for the Rains – some of them planning eventually to leave the monkhood, some of them to stay. This being the case, I wrote down a piece explaining and analyzing our duties for their information, so that they would have something of religious value to keep and take with them for the progress of the community of monks and novices in the days to come.

After the piece was written and read aloud to the group, it seemed appropriate for use in the area of administering the Saṅgha at large, and so it has been printed for free distribution as a gift of Dhamma, in order that Buddhism may prosper and thrive for the well-being of us all.

*Phra Suddhidhammaraṅsī*  
*Gambhīramedhācariya*  
*(Ajaan Lee)*

WAT ASOKARAM  
SAMUT PRAKAAN  
OCTOBER 6, 1960

## INTRODUCTION

I would like to explain to the community spending the Rains at Wat Asokaram this year what our duties are, so that our sense of our responsibilities in our practice will be in line with the aims and directives of those who have been placed in charge.

The administration of the Saṅgha, as set out by the ecclesiastical authorities of Thailand, is divided into four departments:

- I. The Department of Internal Governance.*
- II. The Department of Education.*
- III. The Department of Building and Development.*
- IV. The Department of Spreading the Dhamma.*

Each of these departments, if its activities were in line with its aims, would cause the religion to prosper. But I have come to see that each of them is so deficient as to be destructive – bringing about, to a great extent, the corruption of monks and novices. This is why I would like to give the monks and novices here some sense of their duties and of the true aims of each of these departments. Otherwise, governance will turn into ‘covernance’ – covering up what we don’t want to be seen.

Each of these departments is divided into two sections: the central office and the offices in the out-lying regions. In the central office, the responsibility of the ecclesiastical authorities of both sects, Dhammayutika and Mahanikāya, is to cooperate in firmly carrying out the duties of each department in the area of central administration. As for the out-lying regions, the responsibility of the ecclesiastical authorities on the regional, provincial, district, and township levels, and of the abbots of all temples, is to train the officers of each department in their respective jurisdictions to be firm in carrying out their stated duties. Any individual who proves incompetent in a particular area should not be placed in charge of the corresponding department.

Thus I would now like to explain the duties of each department in a way that will bring about order, in line not only with the laws and regulations of the Saṅgha, but also with the Vinaya and the Dhamma – because all of these laws and regulations need to be both Dhamma and Vinaya if they are to lead to the well-being of the religion.

## I. THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL GOVERNANCE

Governance is of three sorts:

- A. Governing by regulations of the Saṅgha.
- B. Governing by Vinaya.
- C. Governing by Dhamma.

**A. Governing by regulations of the Saṅgha** is as follows: The ecclesiastical chief of each region has the right, the authority, and the responsibility to administer his jurisdiction in accordance with all of his stipulated duties, including the procedures to be followed in appointing officials on the regional, provincial, district, and township levels; in appointing the abbots of temples, preceptors, and minor officials; and in delegating responsibilities on each level. This being the case, each of these officials should use his powers strictly in accordance with the regulations and guidelines set down by the Saṅgha authorities. Anyone who sees that he is unqualified in a particular area should not accept appointment in that area. At the same time, those who make the appointments, if they see that a particular individual is unqualified, should not appoint him to a position of responsibility. If he is appointed, it will be damaging to that area and destructive to the religion.

**B. Governing by Vinaya:** One should explain to those who come under one's authority how many Vinaya transactions there are—and what they are—so that they will understand how to follow them.

1. Point out, for example, how an *āpalokana-kamma* is to be performed so as to be in line with the Vinaya. If there are discrepancies from the norm, point them out and correct them.
2. Point out how and in what sort of places a *ñatti-kamma* is to be performed.
3. Point out what sorts of transactions should be performed as *ñatti-dutiya-kamma*, how they are to be performed, where, when, and with how large a chapter of monks.
4. Point out what sorts of transactions should be performed as *ñatti-catuttha-kamma*, on what sorts of occasions, and with how large a chapter of monks so as to be correct according to procedure.

On the whole, there are still great discrepancies in following these procedures

even within the individual sects. When we compare the different sects, the differences are even greater. This being the case, whose responsibility is it to govern the Saṅgha so that there is uniformity throughout?

To have standards means to weld discipline to justice – or in other words, Dhamma and Vinaya. For example, we should have standards in the way we worship and chant – how the words are to be pronounced according to the Magadha and Sānyoga traditions, and which tradition to use on which occasions. There should be guidelines concerning this that are consistently followed everywhere, and similar guidelines concerning the way we dress and use the necessities of life, so that we will all be orderly and in proper line with one another. Otherwise, there will be discrepancies, high and low. If there is order, however, even the differences of high and low will present an acceptable appearance. Having standards is thus an important part of governance. If the authorities were really sincere about carrying out their duties, instead of simply letting things slide, it would help lead to the growth and prosperity of the religion. On the whole, though, there is a tendency in the area of governance not to look after things and simply to let them be. This has led to factions and splits within the monkhood, each group taking offense at the way other groups behave.

Thus close adherence to the Vinaya and to the standards of order would lead to concord with no need for force or compulsion: concord that would come of its own from the good and noble standards of the religion.

When the lotuses are gathered unbruised,  
the water stays clear:  
This is where the virtues  
of those who can govern appear.

Every official – and every monk and novice as well – should be strict in keeping his personal conduct within the bounds of the Vinaya, so as not to abolish any of the training rules by means of his behavior. In other words, whatever has been set down by the Buddha should not be abolished through not observing it; and at the same time, whatever was not set down by the Buddha should not be established as a new observance through the example of one's behavior.

There are many kinds of standards and procedures related to the Vinaya that must be studied, practiced, and observed. Taken together, they are called '*vinaya-kamma*.' Some *vinaya-kamma* are our own personal responsibility in training ourselves. For example –

1. *Kāya-kamma*: Act only in ways that are correct in light of the Vinaya and that are called *karaṇīya-kicca*, things to be done (such as observing the precepts of the Pāṭimokkha). Whatever goes against the Buddha's

ordinances should be discarded. Such things are termed *akaraṇīya-kicca*, things not to be done.

2. *Vacī-kamma*: Any words whose purpose would be incorrect in light of the Vinaya should not be spoken in any circumstances. Speak only those words that would be classed as Right Speech.

3. *Mano-kamma*: We are bound to have thoughts that tend toward the accumulation of defilement and lead to transgressions of the training rules, such as *abhijjhā*: greed focused on the four necessities of life (food, clothing, shelter, and medicine);

*byāpāda*: ill will;

*micchā-ditṭhi*: wrong views that would draw the mind into ways running counter to the standards of the Vinaya.

If we don't correct such mental states, we are bound to break the training rules. For this reason, we should establish ourselves in all four of the Principles of Purity (*parisuddhi-sīla*) –

a. *Pāṭimokkha-saṁvara-sīla*: Restraining our thoughts, words, and deeds so as to show respect for the Pāṭimokkha and all of the major and minor training rules.

b. *Indriya-saṁvara-sīla*: Keeping watch over our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, and ideation, so as to keep them quiet and restrained, and to do away with any defilements pertaining to the training rules.

c. *Ājīva-parisuddhi-sīla*: Maintaining our livelihood in an honest and above-board manner, not asking for anything, by word or deed, in circumstances ruled out by the Vinaya; training ourselves to have few wants; keeping our conduct in line with the standards of the Vinaya; searching for the necessities of life with the proper attitude in all three stages of the search –

(1) *Pubba-cetanā*: When the thought first occurs to the mind, keep it in line so as not to deviate from the Vinaya.

(2) *Muñcaya-cetanā*: When going through the actions of searching, maintain purity in thought and deed.

(3) *Aparāpara-cetanā*: Once the desired item has been obtained, use it in line with the regulations laid down in the Vinaya. This is called –

d. *Paccavekkhaṇa-sīla*: Reflecting carefully before using things. The act of reflection gives results on many levels:

- We should first reflect on our thoughts, words, and deeds while using the item to see if they are in line with the Vinaya.
- Then we should reflect further, in line with the standard formula for reflection, seeing that all things are made up of impersonal elements or properties, foul and repugnant; that they are inconstant, stressful, and not-self – not beings, not individuals, not ‘my self’ or anyone else’s.

*suñño sabbo:*

All things are empty, with no one in charge.

When we consider things correctly in accordance with the standards of the Vinaya, we are genuinely exercising good internal governance over ourselves. The ultimate standards for judging clearly whether or not we are governing ourselves well are as follows:

- (1) Whatever maxim or rule leads one to behave with a mind tinged by passion for material pleasures is neither Dhamma nor Vinaya.
- (2) Whatever behavior aims at the creation of suffering for oneself or for others is neither Dhamma nor Vinaya.
- (3) Whatever behavior leads to the accumulation of defilement is neither Dhamma nor Vinaya.
- (4) Whatever behavior leads to overweening ambition is neither Dhamma nor Vinaya.
- (5) Whatever behavior leads away from contentment with little is neither Dhamma nor Vinaya.
- (6) Whatever behavior aims at entanglement with others is neither Dhamma nor Vinaya.
- (7) Whatever behavior leads to laziness and carelessness is neither Dhamma nor Vinaya.
- (8) Whatever behavior makes one a burden to others is neither Dhamma nor Vinaya.

A person who behaves in any of the above ways has not truly taken the Buddha as his teacher, for as the Buddha said, the Dhamma and Vinaya are our teachers in his place. Any behavior that does not follow the Buddha’s teachings should be regarded as *akaraṇīya-kicca*, something not to be done. We should restrict our behavior to those things that should be done in our own areas of responsibility. For example, behave so as to extract yourself from passion for material pleasures; so as to gain release from suffering; so as not to accumulate defilements within yourself; so as to have few wants: If you happen to receive many possessions, share



them with others. Behave so as to be content with what you already have and know how to care for and repair what you have so that it will become better. Behave in a way that leads to physical and mental solitude. Be persistent and energetic in doing good in line with your duties. Behave so as not to be a burden to others – so as to be light in body and mind. To behave in these ways is to be properly established in the Dhamma and Vinaya.

To be able to conduct yourself in this manner means that you are able to govern yourself. And when a person can govern himself, he develops authority from within, in the area of the Vinaya, enabling him to govern others well.

This is what is meant by ‘governing by Vinaya.’

**C. Governing by Dhamma:** This means to govern with one’s own inner quality as a person, i.e., having rectitude constantly in the heart; keeping the mind firmly established in Right View by fostering discernment in the mind through the practice of meditation; developing Right Concentration so as to wipe out the fetters of lust (*methuna-sañyoga*) – which include, for example, sensual desire (*kāma-chanda*), a willingness to give in to sensual moods, which tends toward mental pain and stress. When a person’s mind falls under the power of such fetters, it means that there is no quality to him. For the mind to lack quality means that it has fallen in with the mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) –

1. *Kāma-chanda* (sensual desire) or sexual lust: indulging in sensual moods, taking pleasure in sensual desires that arise within and lead one to take pleasure in sensual objects – a sign that the heart isn’t trained in the proper way in Right Concentration. This then leads to *paṭigha*: The mind is ‘struck,’ sometimes to its satisfaction, sometimes not, which is the basis for –

2. *Byāpāda*: ill will.

3. *Thīna-middha*: discouragement, apathy, laziness; not making the effort to center the mind in the factors of *jhāna*; not developing a theme of meditation in the mind. The mind thus inclines toward lethargy and discouragement, abandoning its duties and responsibilities. This makes it restless and a prey to distraction, unable to put a halt to its train of thought and bringing mindfulness to stillness. This is called –

4. *Uddhacca-kukkucca*. When this is the case, then no matter how much Dhamma one may study, the heart is still dark and blinded. Whatever one knows or sees is unclear. One’s conduct is lax and lacking, unable to progress to the qualities of the higher attainments. For the heart to be caught on a snag like this is termed –

5. *Vicikicchā*: doubt, uncertainty, indecision, an inability to go forward

or turn back. When this is the case, the mind is classed as having no quality. In other words, it lacks the concentration that will give rise to discernment and the skill of release.

Those, however, who can escape from the hindrances and center the mind into *jhāna* or concentration will give rise to discernment: the power to keep their defilements within the bounds of rectitude and to unbind their goodness so that it can govern others effortlessly, achieving their own well-being and that of others through the power of their governance. They will awaken from the mundane world, and the supreme good – Dhamma – will appear within them. This is what it means for the heart to have quality.

Most of us, by and large, have no constant quality in our hearts. Instead, we go looking for quality in things outside and so can never succeed or find security. When this is the case, we're unfit to govern ourselves – and if we're unfit to govern ourselves, then to govern others for the sake of their betterment will be extremely difficult.

This concludes our discussion of the Department of Internal Governance and the duties of the contemplatives who accept responsibility in this area.

This is all there is to the Department of Internal Governance. Whoever has responsibilities in this area must constantly bear his duties in mind if he is to contribute to the true prosperity of the religion. Otherwise, the establishment of this department will be empty and in vain, yielding no full-fledged benefits.

The point to remember is that the governance of the Saṅgha in Thailand is of three sorts:

- A. Governance by regulation and law – the legislative act setting up the constitution of the Saṅgha; the Saṅgha directives and by-laws.
- B. Governance by Vinaya.
- C. Governance by Dhamma.

This is all it comes down to. If we were to discuss this point in detail, there would be much more to say.

Now, however, we will go on to discuss Part II for the edification of Buddhists at large.

## II. THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Education in Buddhism – of the kind that gives proper knowledge conducive to the prosperity of the religion – is of three sorts, as follows:

**A. *Sutamaya-paññā*:** Discernment acquired through study.

People who are learned (*bahusuta*) – who have studied and memorized a great deal – fall into two groups. The first group contains those who have studied in line with the curriculum of the Department, i.e., the official textbooks known as Nak Dhamma [literally, Dhamma expert] levels 1, 2, and 3; or the Pali courses, levels 3-9. Whether or not one passes the examinations is not important. What is important is the knowledge gained. This sort of education gives rise to one level of understanding, termed *sutamaya-paññā* – discernment acquired through study.

The second group contains those who study on their own – listening to sermons, reading textbooks, studying the Vinaya, Suttas, and Abhidhamma; discussing questions with one another (*dhamma-sākacchā*), which can lead to understanding on a higher level, so that one may apply one's knowledge to training oneself.

Both groups are classed as being on the elementary level of education in the study of memorized doctrine.

The study of memorized doctrine (*pariyatti dhamma*) is of three sorts –

1. Studying like a snake (*alagaddūpama-pariyatti*): This refers to a person who has studied and is thoroughly knowledgeable, but who makes himself venomous. The deadly venom of a monk is sensual defilement, which includes *rāga* – passion and delight in sensual objects; *dosa* – irritation, displeasure, a strong mental poison that makes the heart murky, annihilating whatever merit is there, destroying its own goodness. When this happens, the really deadly poisons appear: *kodha* – anger; and *moha* – delusion, confusion about one's own good and evil, seeing right as wrong and wrong as right, being unreasonable and misguided in one's views. All of this is classed as delusion, a poison buried deep in the heart.

Thus to gain an education without then conducting oneself in line with the Dhamma can be called studying like a snake. Such a person makes himself into a cobra's head, spreading his venom into anyone who comes near. To consort with such a person is to consort with a fool and can poison the mind, drawing it into evil and unskillful ways, such as searching for well-being with reference only to this lifetime, without looking for what is more worthwhile – one's well-being in

future lifetimes – or for highest well-being: the liberation of *nibbāna*.

2. Studying for the sake of emancipation (*nissaraṇ'attha-pariyatti*): When we have studied the Dhamma and Vinaya and learned what is good and evil, right and wrong, beneficial and unbeneficial, we see that we shouldn't do whatever is wrong or harmful to ourselves and others. Instead, we should develop whatever is gracious and good, benefiting ourselves and others in any of the following three ways: Having learned the factors that promote well-being in the present life, we should give rise to them for ourselves and others. Having learned what is necessary to bring about our well-being in future lifetimes – going to a good destination or the heavenly realms in the next life – we should conduct ourselves accordingly. As for the supreme well-being – *nibbāna* – when we have learned what sort of person it will appear in and how to behave so as to be worthy of it, we should foster the qualities within ourselves necessary to bring all these forms of well-being about.

The qualities leading to these forms of well-being are four –

*a. Chanda*: a willingness and readiness to abandon all unskillful mental qualities. Whether or not we can actually abandon them in line with our intentions, we should always show a willingness to abandon them, to follow the practice and to develop our strength of character step by step. This is *chanda*, a factor that lures and propels us into making future progress.

*b. Viriya*: persistence in making the effort to relinquish the evil within ourselves; an unwillingness to lie wallowing in our evils; persistence in fostering virtue within ourselves, in maintaining and developing the virtues we already have, and in using them for the well-being of others. This is termed *viriy'iddhipāda* – persistence as a factor leading to success.

*c. Citta*: Whatever task we undertake, we should be fully intent on it and not shirk our duties. We should try to develop our virtuous actions so that they reach the goal, the supreme well-being to which we all aspire. Whatever happiness is appropriate to us in this life, we should bring it about through our own intentness of purpose. Whatever happiness should arise in future lifetimes, we should set our hearts on striving to cultivate it. As for the happiness unrelated to worldly baits (*nirāmisa-sukha*), we should focus our whole attention on correctly developing the path to reach it. We will then be able to attain our goal without a doubt.

*d. Vimamsā*: The circumspect discernment gained from our studies should be put into practice in line with the factors of the noble path. Before doing anything in thought, word, or deed, we should be circumspect in carefully applying appropriate attention and only then go ahead and act. We should give rise to the mental virtue termed Right Concentration.

Concentration gives rise to discernment; and when the discernment of liberating insight arises within us it leads to the happiness free from material baits (*nirāmisā-sukha*). To be circumspect and thoroughly aware that whatever will not be beneficial to ourselves or others should not be done, and that whatever will lead to our own well-being and that of others – in this life, in the next, or in the ultimate sense – should be fostered within ourselves through our own circumspection and discernment: This is *vimams'iddhipāda* - circumspection as a factor leading to success.

When we do this, we will reap two sorts of results: *iddhiriddhi* – the power that arises from being established in these four qualities; and *puññariddhi* – the influence that arises from our own inner virtue. *Iddhiriddhi* is authority; *puññariddhi* is kindness. To have these two qualities is to be a person with two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, two arms, two legs – *puriso*, a complete human being, who can help others become complete in their hearts as well.

This is what it means to be a person who studies for the sake of emancipation.

3. Studying to be a storehouse keeper (*bhaṇḍāgārika-pariyatti*): This refers to the education of a person who has already finished the training – i.e., an arahant, one who has gained release from all defilements. Why does such a person have to study? For the sake of the work of the religion, so as to be of assistance in helping Buddhism to prosper. When was it ever the case that a person had to be thoroughly acquainted with all aspects of formulated Dhamma and customs before doing away with mental effluents (*āsava*)? Some people are born in lower-class families, others in upper-class families. Some have a great deal of social sophistication, others don't. Still they are able to free their minds from the effluents by means of the practice, for in practice it isn't necessary to know a great deal of formulated Dhamma. Even a person who knows only a fair amount can still put an end to the effluents.

So when such a person sees that he can be of help to people and Buddhists at large, he must educate himself. His study is for the sake of gaining a sense of the differences in societies, in communities, and in types of individuals; to gain a sense of time and place; to know the varieties of beliefs and customs that people adhere to in different regions. When he becomes thoroughly and properly acquainted with all customs and conventions, he can then deal effectively with other people for their benefit. This is why he must study and take an interest in such things. Education of this sort is thus called studying to be a storehouse keeper, and is an aspect of the Department of Education.

These, then, are the three forms of studying memorized Dhamma.

***B. Cintāmaya-paññā:*** Discernment acquired through reflection .

When we have studied – in whichever way – we mustn't stop there. We should take all the Dhamma we have learned and chew it over with our own discernment. To chew things over in this way – thinking and evaluating – may give rise to a flavor different from that of our previous education. We think things through, exploring on our own, instead of simply believing what other people say or what is written in books. We believe our own sense of reason, discovered within ourselves and termed *paccattam* – individual and personal. This sort of education grows out of the earlier sort, in the same way that a person who has learned how to read and write the letters of the alphabet can then go on to use that knowledge to read textbooks and gain knowledge more valuable than the alphabet on its own.

To make a comparison with food, this second form of education has more flavor than the first. The first sort of education is like taking food, arranging it according to type – main-course dishes in one group, desserts in another – and then finding delight simply in seeing it arranged. The second form of education – thinking, evaluating, reasoning things through – is like arranging the food and then tasting it. The person who does this gets much more use out of the food than the person who arranges the food and simply sits looking at it: He can suffuse his body with nourishment and know whether or not the food tastes good, whether it's sour or sweet, very sweet or just a little sweet – all on his own. This is what it means to pursue this second form of education properly. To study in this way gives rise to the flavor of the Dhamma, which can then be used to suffuse the heart with nourishment. When the heart is suffused with the nourishment of good qualities, it gains energy and strength in the area of the Dhamma, termed –

1. *Saddhā-bala:* conviction in the worth of good qualities. Our conviction in the right actions we perform and in the results they will bring us becomes a dominant strength in the heart.

2. *Viriya-bala:* The quality of perseverance becomes dominant. We become resolute and courageous in practicing what is good.

3. *Sati-bala:* Our powers of mindfulness become expansive in the great establishing of mindfulness.

4. *Samādhi-bala:* The mind develops the steadiness and strength termed 'heightened mind' (*adhicitta*), beyond the power of the hindrances.

5. *Paññā-bala:* the discernment of Right View, which comes from the sense of reason fostered in the heart through circumspection. Discernment is strength that can make the mind energetic, competent, and powerful.

Discernment acquired through reflection can give rise to the flavor of the Dhamma through the act of thinking, but for thought to be truly nourishing and

energizing, we must go on to the next level, developing discernment through meditation, so as to be complete in our practice.

**C. *Bhāvanāmayapaññā*:** Discernment acquired through meditation.

*Coming to know ourselves:* We should study and investigate ourselves so as to gain knowledge exclusively within by centering the heart in concentration. To study ourselves by ourselves means to study by means of our own inner alphabet – the various parts put together out of the four properties (*dhātu*) within the body, the five *khandhas*, and the six sense media (*āyatana*). To study on this level means to study with and within the mind, investigating the inner alphabet:

*A = Kesā*, hair of the head.

*B = Lomā*, hair of the body.

*C = Nakhā*, the nails that grow from the ends of the fingers and toes.

*D = Dantā*, the teeth that grow in the mouth along the upper and lower jaws.

*E = Taco*, the skin that enwraps the various parts of the body.

All five are things that a contemplative should study. Usually, before we become ordained, we don't even know our own inner ABC's, much less how to spell. So our preceptors, out of concern for us as their sons in the monkhood, teach us these five things even before we become monks and novices. But if we neglect them after our ordination, it shows that we have no respect for education and no reverence for the teachings of the Lord Buddha. This is the cause for degeneracy in the Department of Education. To be able to read all 32 parts in one's body, and to teach others to do the same, is to qualify as a member of the Saṅgha, or as a true disciple of the Lord Buddha.

We should study all four or all six of the properties within us – earth, water, wind, and fire – as a basis for tranquility meditation, giving rise to *jhāna* in the mind by thinking about and evaluating the parts of the body until we gain an understanding of earth, water, wind, and fire, together with space and consciousness, the overseer of the house. Study the five *khandhas* – body, feelings, labels, mental fabrications, and consciousness. Study the six sense media – eyes and visual objects, ears and sounds, nose and smells, tongue and tastes, body and tactile sensations, intellect and thoughts – by keeping careful restraint over them. The mind will then enter the *jhānas*, beginning with the first, which is composed of directed thinking, evaluating, rapture, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation. Such a person thus goes on to a higher level of education, comparable to high school or secondary education. When the heart becomes quiet, a cool and refreshing sense of pleasure called *rasa*, the flavor and nourishment of the Dhamma, will appear in it. *Attha:* We will realize the aims of

the Dhamma and our own aspirations as well.

Studying on this level will give rise to a higher level of knowledge termed liberating insight (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) – clear comprehension in terms of the four noble truths – enabling us to go beyond suffering and stress. This is termed the skill of release. We will gain a special knowledge that is apart from all of the mundane things we have learned: This is transcendent knowledge that, beginning with liberating insight, enables us to escape one after another the fortress walls of the citadel of Death.

The citadel of Death has ten walls –

1. Self-identification (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*): assuming the truth of our views; assuming that the body is our self or belongs to us.

2. Doubt (*vicikicchā*): uncertainty about the paths and fruitions leading to *nibbāna*.

3. Attachment to habits and practices (*silabbata-parāmāsa*): groping about, i.e., undependability in our behavior, which leads us to clutch at various beliefs, searching for absolute standards of good outside of the acts of our own heart and mind.

4. Sensual passion (*kāma-rāga*): desire caused by the power of defilement.

5. Irritation (*paṭigha*): annoyance coming from the mind's sense of being 'struck' or disturbed.

6. Passion for form (*rūpa-rāga*): attachment to certain kinds of physical phenomena.

7. Passion for formless phenomena (*arūpa-rāga*): attachment to mental phenomena, such as feelings of pleasure.

8. Conceit (*māna*): construing ourselves to be this or that.

9. Restlessness (*uddhacca*): distraction, the mind's tendency to get engrossed or carried away.

10. Ignorance (*avijjā*): delusion; being unacquainted with cause and effect, or with what's true.

All ten of these factors are walls in the citadel of Death. No one who lacks discernment will be able to destroy them, which is why the Buddha was especially insistent on this level of education, teaching the monks to study it from the very day of their ordination so that their education would be complete.

To summarize, there are three aspects to this third level of education –

1. Learning the alphabet: Studying in line with the labels we have for the



various parts of the body, such as hair of the head, etc.

2. Learning to spell: Taking the consonants – such as the four properties of earth, water, wind, and fire – and then adding the vowels – feelings, labels, mental fabrications, and consciousness – so that there is awareness of the six sense media, enabling us to know that there are good sights, good sounds, good smells, good tastes, good tactile sensations, and good ideas in the world, and that sometimes things that are not so good can also come in through the six sense media. The awareness that enters in and interacts in this way can be called *paṭisandhi-viññāna* – consciousness connected with physical phenomena, interacting with physical phenomena, enabling us to know all levels of good and bad. When we are able to evaluate and choose what is good and bad within ourselves, we qualify as being able to ‘read,’ knowing thoroughly all the ways our inner alphabet works in practice.

3. Learning to make sense of it all: The word ‘sense’ (*attha*) here has two meanings:

a. Realizing the results that come from our education.

b. Comprehending all the various parts into which we are analyzed – the 32 parts of the body, the properties, the *khandhas*, and the six sense media – or, what it all comes down to, the body and mind, plus the activity of thought, word, and deed. To put it briefly, all things are achieved through the heart.

*mano-pubbaṅgamā dhammā:*

The heart comes before all else. All things are excelled by the heart and made from the heart. A trained heart is the most superlative thing there is.

When we have tasted within ourselves the flavor and nourishment of all dhammas – mundane and transcendent (the flavor of deathlessness, which surpasses all flavors of the world) – then,

*kevala paripuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ brahmacariyaṃ:*

We have performed the entirety of the holy life. Our training in the holy life is perfect and pure.

This is what it means to graduate, to finish our higher education in the Buddha’s teachings.

Whoever has duties in the area of education, then, should attend to them. Otherwise, Buddhism is sure to degenerate because of our own lack of education as contemplatives. If this happens, the Department of Education established by

the Saṅgha authorities will be futile and worthless because we don't clearly understand its meaning and aims.

### III. THE DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING & DEVELOPMENT

This department is another important area, in that it works for the convenience of the Saṅgha through improving, repairing, and maintaining the physical surroundings in which we live. To be specific, its duties are to build and repair, inspect and maintain our dwellings or monasteries so that they will qualify as *senāsana-sappāya* – comfortable, amenable places for contemplatives to stay.

Meditating monks by and large tend to have fixed notions about this area, believing that to sponsor or do construction work for the sake of Buddhists at large is to devote oneself to merely material concerns, and that such work thus shouldn't be done. Some even believe that work of this sort closes off the paths and fruitions leading to *nibbāna*. Nevertheless, these people have not gone beyond the material benefits they criticize. For this reason, we should examine the area of building and development to see whether or not it is appropriate and accords with the Vinaya.

I would like to divide the duties in this area into two sorts, in line with the two major duties that those who are ordained should take an interest in –

A. The duty of study (*gantha-dhura*): Those monks who are *gāmaṇḍasī*, or village dwellers, are responsible for improving, repairing, and developing the places in which they live, for the sake of the common good of Buddhists at large. When building, they should have a sense of scale, order, and beauty so that their buildings will fit in with their physical surroundings. For example, monks' quarters, restrooms, meeting halls, and ordination halls should be arranged, in so far as possible, in an orderly way, in keeping with their functions. Once built, they should be kept clean and in repair so as to contribute to the beauty of their surroundings. If anything is lacking, and one is in a position to search for it by proper means, then obtain and maintain it in a righteous manner for the sake of one's own convenience and that of the group. All of these activities form a part of the duty of study: improving and developing the place in which we live.

B. The duty of meditation (*vipassanā-dhura*): This refers to those monks termed *arañṇavāsī*, or forest dwellers, who search for secluded areas appropriate for meditation, such as those mentioned in the Pali: under the shade of a tree; in a secluded dwelling; under a lean-to, far from settled areas; in a quiet tower; under an over-hanging rock; in a cave; in a forest; in a cemetery; or in a deserted building. One should learn how to select such a place appropriate for one's need and how to keep it clean and neat for the sake of one's convenience as a meditator

while living there. This is ‘building and development’ in the forest: Observing the protocols of the Vinaya in caring for one’s dwelling, improving and maintaining order in one’s surroundings – and improving oneself while living there. This is building and development on the external level, one sign of a person who knows how to maintain himself in physical seclusion.

As for internal building and development, one should build a shelter for the mind: *vihāra-dhamma*, a home for the heart. One should foster *magga*, the path to one’s home; and *phala*, the goodness that arises in the heart as a result. The shelter along the way is Right Concentration: the first, second, third, and fourth *jhāna*. These four *jhānas* are the true shelter for those who are ordained.

Once we have been ordained as contemplatives, we should realize that we come under this particular department and so should perform our duties properly. But by and large we don’t understand the true aims of the various departments and so grope around in external matters, without building or developing any internal qualities that can give the heart shelter. When the heart has no internal quality as its shelter, it will go living outside, building and helping only other people. If the heart is entangled with external matters, then after death it will be reborn attached to physical objects and possessions. Those who are attached to their monasteries will be reborn there as guardian spirits. Those who are attached to their quarters, their ordination halls, their meeting halls, their bodies, will be reborn right there. This is called sensual clinging: Whatever object we cling to, there we will be reborn. For example, there is a story told in the Dhammapada Commentary of a monk who received a robe that gave him great satisfaction and of which he became very possessive. When he died he was reborn as a louse right there in the robe, all because he had no inner quality as a dwelling for the heart.

So for our building and development to go beyond physical objects, we should build and repair a shelter for the heart. Only then will we be qualified to take on external duties – and in performing our duties, we should be careful not to let our inner home become overgrown with the weeds of defilement, or to let the termites of the hindrances eat into it. Don’t let vermin, lizards, or lice – character flaws (*mala*) – take up residence inside. Roof the home of the heart – *jhāna* – with restraint of the senses so that the fires of passion, aversion, and delusion don’t burn it down.

To purify the principles of our conduct (*sīla*) is to clear and grade our property. To give rise to *jhāna* is to build a home for ourselves. To develop discernment within the mind is to light our home. We will then be safe both while we stay and when we go. When we are able to do this, it will lead to the true prosperity of the religion.

This is what it means to observe our duties in the area of building and

development.

## IV. THE DEPARTMENT OF SPREADING THE DHAMMA

Ways of spreading the Dhamma fall into three categories:

### A. The first category: Study (pariyatti)

This refers to the appointment of monks in the various divisions to teach and train the populace at large. In addition, the establishment of syllabi such as the Nak Dhamma courses, and the appointment of teachers to instruct in accordance with them, can also be classed as a means of spreading the Dhamma.

Spreading the Dhamma can give rise to many sorts of benefits – well-being in this life, well-being in lives to come, and acquaintance with the supreme well-being – *nibbāna*. These are the aims of spreading the Dhamma by means of study, which is one aspect of the good that Buddhism has to offer.

1. Here, for those of us who are interested in well-being with regard only to this life, I would like to point out the way, which has four factors –

a. Initiative (*utthāna-sampadā*): We should be persistent and diligent in our work and our duties, making our living by means that are moral and upright, in line with the principles of Right Action.

b. Maintenance (*ārakkha-sampadā*): We should take good care of the possessions we have earned, and take good care of ourselves – which we have also worked hard to earn – so as not to fall into ways that are evil or wrong.

c. Having admirable friends (*kalyāṇa-mittatā*): We should associate with good people and avoid associating with immoral people who would lead us astray and cause our possessions to be squandered away.

d. An appropriate lifestyle (*samajīvitā*): We should spend our earnings wisely and provide for our needs in a proper way. We should avoid spending our earnings in wrong ways that would soil how we live.

These four principles form the way to our well-being in this lifetime, but we shouldn't be short-sighted or unrealistic, for the reality of each and every human being born is that we will all have to die and be parted from the happiness found in this world.

2. This being the case, we must provide for our well-being in the lives to come. The way to happiness in the lives to come, as taught by the religion, is as follows –

a. Conviction (*saddhā-sampadā*): We should be consummate in our convictions, believing that there is good and evil, believing in (*puñña*), and believing in the principle of kamma. We should then avoid doing evil, and cultivate goodness as far as we are able.

b. Virtue (*sīla-sampadā*): We should be true to our moral principles and train ourselves to be pure in our actions in terms of thought, word, and deed. Whatever we do should be done with honesty and rectitude.

c. Generosity (*cāga-sampadā*): We should be consummate in our generosity, making donations to others, for instance, as we are able. To make sacrifices in this way, the Buddha teaches, is a noble treasure, bearing dividends both in this life and in lives to come. If we don't make sacrifices in this way, our possessions will bear us fruit only in this lifetime. At death, they will vanish. We won't be able to transfer them for use in the next life, just as Thai currency or any national currency can't be used outside the boundaries of its country. When a person travels abroad, he won't be able to use his native currency at all unless he has the discernment to exchange his money beforehand and deposit it in an appropriate bank. Only then will it be of use to him when he goes abroad. In the same way, people of discernment deposit their possessions in the bank called the field of merit (*puññakkhetta*): When they sacrifice their wealth in this way, it becomes a noble treasure, bearing dividends on the road ahead. And this doesn't apply only to possessions: When a person crosses the border from one country into another, even his native language won't be of any use. The Buddha thus taught us a foreign language – chanting and the meditative practice of developing goodwill – to serve us as language in the world to come.

d. Discernment (*paññā-sampadā*): We should be circumspect and knowledgeable in all our actions. Otherwise, we will act under the influence of such forms of delusion as *chandāgati* – being prejudiced by affection, with no reasonable thought for right or wrong; *bhayāgati* – being prejudiced by fear, with no thought for what is reasonable; *dosāgati* – being prejudiced by anger and dislike, with no thought for right or wrong; and *mohāgati* – being prejudiced by delusion, mistaking right for wrong, and wrong for right. To act in any of these ways means that we have no discernment. For this reason, whatever we may do in the area of making merit, we should first examine and contemplate things properly before acting. Only then will we qualify as being consummate in our discernment.

These four practices open the way to a good destination in the next life, i.e., in heaven, but even then we will still have to go whirling along the cycle of death and rebirth.

3. If we have strong conviction, we will be able to develop ourselves so as to go beyond this to the level of the supreme well-being (*paramattha*), attaining the levels of transcendent virtue. This sort of virtue is something that all Buddhists should aim for. The necessary prerequisites are two:

*conviction and perseverance.*

When we possess these qualities, they will serve as our tools – regardless of whether we are sharp-witted or dull, men or women, people with many defilements or with only a few. Once this is our aspiration, we should then develop two practices that form the path to *nibbāna* –

- a. tranquility meditation: developing stillness in the mind;
- b. insight meditation: developing discernment in the mind; gaining internal insight, seeing through to the natural condition of the Dhamma that lies within us.

The natural condition of the Dhamma is this: birth, momentary existence, disbanding – like a wave on the sea. When the wind blows, great waves rise on the ocean. The same holds true with human life: The natural condition of the *khandhas* within us behaves like a wave. This is called the natural condition of the Dhamma.

Another condition, though, stays as it is, whether or not there are waves – just as the water of the sea, when there is no wind, is smooth, level, and clear. This natural condition in the heart – a condition that doesn't take birth, doesn't change, doesn't disband, and doesn't die, but simply stays as it is – lies within each and every one of us.

These two practices – tranquility and insight meditation – lead to the supreme well-being, *nibbāna*. The two natural conditions lie within each of us. Those who know how to spread the Dhamma into themselves, teaching and counseling themselves, will attain well-being without a doubt.

#### B. The second category: Practice (*paṭipatti*)

Spreading the Dhamma by practicing it, without having to use words, simply behaving well so as to be an example to others through one's manners and behavior: This is an important factor in spreading the Dhamma. Our Lord Buddha, for example, was once staying in a forest with a following of 500 monks. As twilight fell, he rested, inclining on his right side, while the monks all did walking or sitting meditation. No one was talking. Everything was still. Just then, a group of wandering ascetics came into the forest and, seeing this, were completely



won over. They felt so inspired by the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha that they were willing to become disciples. Later, they were of great help in spreading the religion. This shows that good and proper practice is an extremely important force in spreading the Dhamma.

Not only human beings, but even animals are able to follow the example of others' behavior, as when a man with a crippled leg leads a horse with sound legs around on a tether: In no time at all, the horse will learn to walk with a limp. As the leader goes, so go his followers; as the mold is shaped, so are the items molded. Good behavior is thus a way of spreading the religion that has a deep and telling influence on the hearts of those who come after. This is one of our true duties within the religion. Even if our defilements may be heavy and thick, we can still be of service to others in this way.

So in spreading the Buddha's teachings, it's not enough simply to get up and deliver a sermon. A person of discernment teaching the Dhamma can convince others of its value in a variety of ways: by his manners, as already mentioned; or by *ādesanā-pāṭihāriya* – the marvel of knowing another person's thoughts; or by *anusāsani-pāṭihāriya* – the marvel of teaching that, when put into practice, gives the promised results. All of these are means of spreading the Buddha's teachings.

### C. The third category: Psychic Marvels (iddhi-pāṭihāriya)

In some areas of religious work, spreading the Dhamma is done via the mind – as, for example, when the Venerable Culapaṅṭhaka performed a psychic marvel that astounded those who saw, inspiring conviction, reverence, and awe in their hearts. Those who had never before felt inspired by the Buddha's teachings suddenly became inspired because of those events.

Other instances were performed by the Buddha himself, as when he went to break the pride of the three Kassapa brothers. He went out in the rain without getting wet, did walking meditation in the flood without getting wet, which led the elder Kassapa to abandon his stubborn pride – and when he had abandoned his pride, the Buddha was able to teach him the Dhamma. Kassapa and his followers saw the Dhamma appear within themselves, experienced the paths, fruitions, and *nibbāna*, and proclaimed themselves followers of the Buddha. They were then of great help in spreading the religion.

Another example is when the Buddha subdued the bandit, Aṅgulimāla. As Aṅgulimāla ran chasing after him, the Buddha radiated goodwill through the power of *jhāna*, causing the earth between them to rise and fall in great waves until Aṅgulimāla, tired from his running, called out in surrender. The Buddha then instructed him to the point where he was so impressed and convinced that he was eventually able to make his heart attain the Dhamma.

There are many other examples of this sort by which the Buddha was able to proclaim the religion so that it has lasted into the present day. If we take spreading the Dhamma to be simply a matter of words, it wouldn't have been – and won't be – enough.

\* \* \*

Thus, spreading the Dhamma is done in three ways:

A. By deed – showing others the Dhamma through the example of one's manners and behavior; being correct and gracious in one's words and deeds; keeping restraint over one's senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, and ideation so as to be an inspiring example to those who see.

B. By word – teaching and explaining the Dhamma out loud, giving rise to understanding and inspiration in those who hear.

C. By thought (psychic feats, *manomayiddhi*). When one has seen with the power of intuitive understanding that a person is ready to receive the Dhamma, one should spread thoughts of goodwill, dedicating the fruits of one's merit to that person. This way of spreading the Dhamma can be done both in public and in private, with those who are near and those who are far away. It can help certain human and divine beings, and inspire conviction in those whose dispositions lie within the net of the Dhamma, all without having to say a word.

This has been termed, 'anointing with the waters of goodwill.' The goodwill lying in the heart is like a cooling current. Wherever this coolness is directed through the power of a serene heart, it can draw other beings, both human and divine, to become inspired to develop the qualities of their hearts in line with their varying dispositions. Even if we have yet to meet them, and have simply heard news, we can still cause their hearts to become cool and refreshed, contributing to their welfare and happiness. Spreading the Dhamma in this way is beneficial both to us and to others.

To be able to do this, though, we must first give rise to sufficient quality in our own hearts. If the quality isn't yet there, then build it and dedicate it first of all to those to whom you owe 'kamma debts.' Spread this goodness to fill the body. Spread this goodness to fill the mind. This sense of fullness is what is meant by rapture (*pīti*) – i.e., full of what is skillful. Goodness fills the heart, refreshing it with what is skillful. When goodness fills the body and mind, it's like water filling a tank or saturating the earth. Wherever the earth is saturated with water, there the trees and vegetation flourish. But if we don't have enough goodness within, we're like a tank without any water: No matter how far the faucet is opened, only wind will come out. The coolness of wind and the coolness of water are two very

different things. The coolness of wind can cause trees to wither and can send dust clouds flying, but the coolness of water is useful in many ways: It can be used to wash clothes, to bathe the body, to drink, or to sprinkle on the ground, nourishing plants and softening the earth. Not only that, it can also give a deep sense of refreshment. In the same way, people who practice the Dhamma, even if they don't speak a word but simply spread thoughts of goodwill, can be of great benefit to people at large. This is termed *mettā-pāramī* – the perfection of goodwill.

So when goodness arises within us, we can work for the welfare of others even when we sit with our eyes closed, perfectly still. But it's the nature of ignorant people to believe that such a person is simply saving his own skin. They haven't looked deep inside.

The teachers of the past thus made a comparison with thunder and rain. Some people can teach others, but they themselves have no inner goodness. Such people are called *thunder without rain*. They can cause others to feel awe and respect, but can give no sense of cooling refreshment. Some people are like *rain without thunder*. They rarely speak, but spread thoughts of goodwill, dedicating their merit to others. They have received their own full measure of inner goodness and so can give goodness and inspire conviction in the hearts of others even when simply sitting still. Those who find peace and calm in the shelter of such an influence will, in turn, feel the highest form of respect. Some people are like *rain with thunder*, and others, *rain with thunder and wind to boot*: This, for those who are able, is ideal. Such people, after having developed their own inner goodness, are able to teach others, spreading the Dhamma by thought, word, and deed, giving results in many ways: People who are stubborn and fixed in their opinions will be able to soften in an instant, just as giant trees bend before the wind. At the same time, teachers of this sort can be an example to others through their behavior and the kindness of their hearts, feeling no envy for the goodness of others, but only compassion, providing a cooling shelter for all sorts of people. This is the consummate way to spread the Dhamma, causing the religion to prosper in the true and proper way.

The field of spreading the Dhamma is extremely important. Those who practice it will get results in two ways:

1. By knowing how to use authority – the power of the mind – so as to be of benefit.
2. By knowing how to use kindness – the goodness of the heart – so as to benefit their fellow human beings, with no need for power of any sort whatsoever.

Only those who can act in this manner are qualified for the Department of

Spreading the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma and Vinaya.

\* \* \*

When the duties of all these departments are fully observed by a community, a group, or an individual, they will help our religion to prosper and thrive. But as long as we are unable to fulfill these duties, the establishment of directives for each of the various departments is meaningless and can lead, I'm afraid, only to the disappearance of the Buddha's teachings, as happened in India. This is why I have asked to explain our organization and duties so that we will all be thoroughly acquainted with them.

It will be ideal if each individual can observe the duties of all four departments; and, to be true to the Dhamma, each of us should regard all of these duties as his own personal responsibility. If we pay attention only to the directives and rules without reference to the Dhamma, we'll be deficient in our duties, and the establishment of the various departments will be a waste of time. All the thought and consideration devoted to our welfare will be fruitless.

So we should use our authority and inner quality in observing our duties firmly and properly for the sake of the good order of the religion.

If I were to explain things at length, there would be much more to say; but I will stop for the time being with this condensed discussion of the main points at issue, which should be enough to serve us as an adequate guide.

If there is anything in any way wrong or defective in what I have written here, I ask the reader's forgiveness.

*Peace.*

## GLOSSARY

**Abhidhamma (Piṭaka):** The third of the three collections forming the Pali Canon, composed of systematic treatises based on lists of categories drawn from the Buddha's teachings.

**Āpalokana-kamma:** A procedure to use in conducting communal business of the Saṅgha, in which certain non-controversial issues are settled simply with an informal announcement. The following terms – *ñatti-kamma*, *ñatti-dutiya-kamma*, and *ñatti-catuttha-kamma* – refer to procedures where the issue must be settled by a formal motion stated once, twice, or four times, giving all the monks present the opportunity to object to the motion before it is carried.

**Apāya:** State of deprivation; the four lower realms of existence: rebirth in hell, as a hungry ghost, as an angry demon, or as a common animal. In Buddhism, none of these states are regarded as eternal conditions.

**Arahant:** A 'worthy one' or 'pure one,' i.e., a person whose heart no longer has any defilements and is thus not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his Noble Disciples.

**Ariyadhana:** Noble Wealth, i.e., qualities that serve as capital in the quest for liberation: conviction, virtue, shame, compunction, erudition, generosity, and discernment.

**Āsava:** Fermentation; effluent. Four qualities – sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance – that bubble up in the heart and flow out, leading to the flood of further becoming.

**Attha:** Meaning, sense, aim, result.

**Avijjā:** Ignorance; counterfeit knowledge.

**Āyatana:** Sense medium. The six inner sense media are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and intellect. The six outer sense media are their respective objects.

**Bhagavant:** An epithet for the Buddha, commonly translated as 'Blessed One' or 'Exalted One.' Some commentators, though, have traced the word etymologically to the Pali root meaning 'to divide' and, by extension, 'to analyze,' and so translate it as 'Analyst.'

**Brahmā:** An inhabitant of the higher heavens of form and formlessness, a position earned – but not forever – through the cultivation of virtue and meditative absorption, along with the attitudes of limitless goodwill, compassion, appreciation, and equanimity.

**Dhamma:** Event; phenomenon; the way things are in and of themselves;

quality – both in its neutral and in its positive senses: (1) the basic qualities into which natural phenomena – mental and physical – can be analyzed; the terms in which things are known by the sense of ideation. Also, any teaching that analyzes phenomena into their basic terms. This is one sense in which the Buddha’s doctrine is his ‘Dhamma.’ (2) The quality of one’s heart and mind, as manifest by the rectitude, fairness, compassion, composure, discernment, etc., revealed in one’s actions. The manifestations can be enumerated and prescribed as principles (again, ‘dhamma’ – another sense in which the Buddha’s doctrine is his Dhamma) that can then be put into practice and developed as means of removing everything defiling and obscuring from the heart so that the quality of deathlessness can become fully apparent within: This is the Buddha’s Dhamma in its ultimate sense.

**Dhātu:** Element, property, potential. Basic forces that, when aroused out of their latent state, cause activity on the physical or psychological level. In traditional Thai physics, which is based on the physics of the Pali Canon, the four dhātus of earth, water, fire, and wind are said to permeate all matter in latent or potential form. To become manifest, they have to be aroused. Thus, for example, the act of starting a fire is explained as the arousal of the fire-dhātu (*tejas*), which already exists in the air and in the object to be ignited. The lit fire then clings to the fuel, and the object will be on fire. The fire will continue burning as long as *tejas* has sustenance to cling to. When it runs out of sustenance or is forced to let go, it will grow quiet – returning to its normal, latent state – and the individual fire will go out.

On the level of the human body, diseases are explained as resulting from the aggravation or imbalance of any of these four physical properties. Diseases are classified by how they feel: Fevers are attributed to the fire property, dizziness and faintness to the wind property, constipation to the earth property, etc. Well-being is defined as a state in which none of these properties is dominant. All are quiet, unaroused, balanced and still.

There are a number of lists of dhātus given in the Pali Canon. The six dhātus are the four physical properties plus space and consciousness. The 18 dhātus are the six senses, their respective objects, and the acts of consciousness associated with each.

**Gotarabhū-ñāṇa:** Change of lineage knowledge – the glimpse of nibbāna that changes one from an ordinary, run-of-the-mill person to a Noble One.

**Indriya:** Faculty; pre-eminent or dominant quality. The five faculties – conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment – are qualities that, when they become dominant in the mind, can lead to Awakening. The 22 qualities that can dominate consciousness are: the senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, ideation; femininity, masculinity, life; pleasure, pain, joy, sorrow, equanimity; conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration,

discernment; the realization that ‘I shall come to know the unknown,’ final knowledge, the state of final-knower.

**Jhāna:** Absorption in a single object or preoccupation. *Rūpa-jhāna* is absorption in a physical sensation; *arūpa-jhāna*, absorption in a mental notion or state. When Ajaan Lee uses the term *jhāna* by itself, he is usually referring to *rūpa-jhāna*.

**Kamma:** Acts of intention that result in states of being and birth. ‘Kamma debts’ are the moral debts one has to others either through having been a burden to them (the primary example being one’s debt to one’s parents) or from having wronged them.

**Kammaṭṭhā:** Ten guidelines for moral conduct – not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying, not speaking divisively, not using coarse or vulgar language, not speaking idly, not coveting, not harboring ill will, holding right views.

**Kasiṇa:** An object stared at with the purpose of fixing an image of it in one’s consciousness, the image then being manipulated to fill the totality of one’s awareness.

**Kesā:** Hair of the head; the first in the list of 32 parts of the body used as a meditation theme for counteracting lust.

**Khandha:** Aggregate – the component parts of sensory perception; physical and mental phenomena as they are directly experienced: *rūpa* – sensations, sense data; *vedanā* – feelings of pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain that result from the mind’s savoring of its objects; *saññā* – labels, perceptions, concepts, allusions; *saṅkhāra* thought-fabrications (see below); *viññāṇa* – sensory consciousness or cognizance. In Ajaan Lee’s writings, this last khandha refers to the act of attention that ‘spotlights’ objects so as to know them distinctly and pass judgment on them.

**Magga:** The path to the cessation of suffering and stress. The four transcendent paths – or rather, one path with four levels of refinement – are the path to stream entry (entering the stream to nibbāna, which ensures that one will be reborn at most only seven more times), the path to once-returning, the path to non-returning, and the path to arahantship. *Phala* – fruition – refers to the mental state immediately following the attainment of any of these paths.

**Mala:** Stains on the character, traditionally listed as nine: anger, hypocrisy, envy, stinginess, deceit, treachery, lying, evil desires and wrong views.

**Methuna-saṇyoga:** Fetter of lust. Seven activities related to sex that, if a monk finds joy in them, render his celibacy is ‘broken, cracked, spotted, and blemished’ even if he doesn’t engage in sexual intercourse: 1) He consents to being anointed, rubbed down, bathed, and massaged by a woman. 2) He jokes, plays, and amuses

himself with a woman. 3) He stares into a woman's eyes. 4) He listens to the voices of women outside a wall as they laugh, speak, sing, or cry. 5) He recollects how he used to laugh, converse, and play with a woman. 6) He sees a householder or householder's son enjoying himself endowed with the five sensual pleasures. 7) He practices the celibate life intent on being born in one or another of the deva realms, (thinking) 'By this virtue or practice or abstinence or celibate life I will be a deva of one sort or another.'

***Nibbāna***: The 'unbinding' of the mind from sensations and mental acts, preoccupations and suppositions. As this term is also used to refer to the extinguishing of a fire – which, in the time of the Buddha, was seen as clinging to its fuel while burning, and letting go when it went out – it carries the connotations of the stilling, cooling, and peace that come from letting go. (See *dhātu*.)

***Nirāmisā-sukha***: Literally, 'un-raw' pleasure, or pleasure 'not of the flesh.' The bliss and ease of nibbāna, a pleasure independent of sensations or mental acts.

***Nirodha***: Disbanding, stopping, cessation. In the absolute sense, this refers to the utter disbanding of stress and its causes. In an applied sense, it can refer to the temporary and partial suppression of defilement and stress attained in tranquility meditation.

***Nīvaraṇa***: Hindrance; any of five mental qualities that hinder the mind from attaining concentration and discernment: sensual desire, ill will, torpor & lethargy, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.

***Pāli***: The name of the most ancient recension of the early Buddhist texts now extant and – by extension – of the language in which it was composed.

***Pāṭimokkha***: The basic monastic code, composed of 227 rules for monks and 311 rules for nuns.

***Puñña***: Inner worth; merit; the inner sense of well-being that comes from having acted rightly or well, and that enables one to continue acting well.

***Puññakkhetta***: Field of merit – an epithet for the Saṅgha.

***Sambhavesin***: Usually, this term is used to describe a being seeking a place to be born; generally regarded as an abject state. Here, Ajaan Lee uses the term to describe the mind when it is searching for an object to fasten onto.

***Saṅgha***: The community of the Buddha's disciples. On the ideal level, this refers to all those, whether lay or ordained, who have reached at least the path to stream entry (see *magga*). On the conventional level, it refers to the Buddhist monkhood. In Thai, it also refers to the central administration of the Thai monkhood and to any individual monk. Traditionally, Saṅgha does NOT refer to all Buddhists. The traditional term for the entire 'assembly' of the Buddha's followers – ordained or not, awakened or not – is *buddha-parisā*. The reason for this distinction is that Saṅgha is one of a Buddhist's three refuges, whereas not all



members of the *buddha-parisā* can be taken as refuge.

***Saṅkhāra***: Fabrication – the forces and factors that fabricate things, the process of fabrication, and the fabricated things that result. As the fourth *khandha*, this refers to the act of fabricating thoughts, urges, etc. within the mind. As a blanket term for all five *khandhas*, it refers to all things fabricated by physical or psychological forces.

***Stūpa***: Originally, a tumulus or burial mound enshrining relics of the Buddha or objects associated with his life. Over the centuries, however, this has developed into the tall, spired monuments familiar in temples in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma; and into the pagodas of China, Korea, and Japan.

***Suttanta (Piṭaka)***: The second of the three collections forming the Pali Canon, composed of discourses and other literary pieces related to the Dhamma.

***Tejas***: See *dhātu*.

***Vinaya (Piṭaka)***: The first of the three collections forming the Pali Canon, dealing with the disciplinary rules of the monastic order. The Buddha's own name for the religion he founded was, 'this Dhamma-Vinaya' – this Doctrine and Discipline.

***Vipassanūpakkilesa***: Corruption of insight; intense experiences that can happen in the course of meditation and can lead one to believe that one has completed the path. The standard list includes ten: light, psychic knowledge, rapture, serenity, pleasure, extreme conviction, excessive effort, obsession, indifference, contentment.

\* \* \*

If these translations are in any way inaccurate or misleading, I ask forgiveness of the author and reader for having unwittingly stood in their way. As for whatever may be accurate – conducive to the aims intended by the author – I hope the reader will make the best use of it, translating it a few steps further, into the heart, so as to attain those aims.

*The translator*

*Sabbe sattā sadā hontu  
Avera sukha-jīvino  
Kataṃ puñña-phalaṃ mayhaṃ  
Sabbe bhāgī bhavantu te*

May all beings always live happily,  
free from animosity.

May all share in the blessings  
springing from the good I have done.

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