

**BUDDHISM**  
**A COLLECTION OF NOTES ON DHAMMA**  
**CONTENTS**

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PREFACE</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION TO THERAVADA BUDDHISM</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>PART I - TRIPLE GEM</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>01 – The Buddha</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>02 – Nine Attributes of Buddha</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>03 – Dhamma</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>04 – Six Attributes of Dhamma</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>05 – Sangha</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>06 – Nine Attributes of Sangha</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>07 – Going for Refuge</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>08 – Two Schools of Buddhism</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>09 – Revival of Buddhism in India</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>10 – Spread of Buddhism to the Western World</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>11 – Buddhism and the Modern Views</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>12 – Misrepresentation of Buddhism</b>	<b>19</b>

<b>PART II – DHAMMA DOCTRINES AND CONCEPTS FOR LIBRATION</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>01 – The First Sermon – Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>02 – The Second Sermon - The Not-self Characteristic and Three Basic Facts of Existence</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>03 – The Fire Sermon</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>04 – The Buddha’s Teachings on Existence of Beings, their World, and Related subjects</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>05 – The Law of Kamma</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>06 – The Natural Orders or Laws of Universe</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>07 – Analysis of Dependent Co-arising</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>08 – Transcendental Dependent Arising</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>09 – Human Mind</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>10 – The Moral Discipline (Sila Kkhandha)</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>11 – The Concentration Discipline (Samadhi Kkhandha)</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>12 – The Five Spiritual Faculties</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>13 – Dhammapada</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>14 – Milindapana – Questions of Milinda</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>15 – The Inner Virtue and Virtuous Actions of Sila (Perfections, Sublime States, and Blessings)</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>16 – The Buddha’s Charter of Free Inquiry (Kalama Sutta)</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>17 – Conclusion of Part II</b>	<b>49</b>

<b>PART III – DHAMMA FOR SOCIAL HARMONY</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>01 - Big Three's for Children</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>02 - Gradual Practice of Dhamma</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>03 - Moral Conducts</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>04 - Moral Responsibility</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>05 - Moral Downfall (Parabhava Sutta)</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>06 - Conditions of Welfare (Vyagghapajja Sutta)</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>07 - Social Responsibility</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>08 - Burmese Way of Life</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>09 - Domestic Duties</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>10 - Social Duties</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>11 - Spiritual Duties</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>12 - Meditation, Concentration and Wisdom</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>13 – Conclusion of Part III</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>65</b>

# BUDDHISM

## A COLLECTION OF NOTES ON DHAMMA

### PREFACE

When I was young growing up in central Myanmar [Burma], I accompanied my religious mother to Buddhist monasteries and we took five or eight precepts regularly. As I moved on to adult life, especially in the United States, I was so busy with my earthly personal life that I was less active with spiritual matters. I pursued a professional career, raised my family and lived a simple life in the Buddhist way. I had no in-depth knowledge of the Dhamma and I even forget the basis that I acquired in my youth.

Then my good friend U Htin Paw aroused my spiritual interest by mentioning a Pali word: *Anatta*, which means 'no-self or no-soul'. Many key words of the Dhamma flashed back in my mind, so I decided to focus my attention on spirituality and enrich my mind with Buddhism and its meditation and concentration methods.

I started reading the Dhamma in Burmese and English, and the Internet made my efforts to study the Dhamma easy. I took notes to remember the salient points and to share my spiritual learning experiences with my family. I want to instill in my children the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism so they can live in harmony with others and nature.

The result of my efforts is this collection of notes on Theravada Buddhism. The notes are comprehensive, but not complete. They only address a few basic selections from the basket of Discourses (Sutta Pitaka), but they do not cover the basket of rules of conduct for monks and nuns (Vinaya Pitaka) or the basket of detailed analysis of Buddhist philosophy (Abhidhamma Pitaka).

The notes are divided into three parts. The first part covers the general topics of Buddhism. The second part deals with the fundamental concepts and basic doctrines of Buddhism in conventional and ultimate terms for liberation of suffering. The third part contains notes on the Buddhist way of life for social harmony, peace and happiness.

A brief summary of the notes is also provided in the next section as an introduction for casual observers who want to know more about Theravada Buddhism. More serious devotees can use this as a starting point for a gradual learning of the Buddhist doctrines.

All the notes are copied and pasted with minor editing so that I do not introduce any wrong interpretations. These notes are the fundamental teachings of the Buddha essential for lay people like me. I will distribute this summary to relatives, friends and others who want to understand Buddhism.

Buddhism is the genuine spiritual teaching of universal truth emphasizing the three Facts of Life, the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, but no all-mighty creator god. I hope the gentle philosophy of the Buddha will bring peace and tranquility. If all the people in this world regardless of religion can eliminate the four evils of greed and lust (*Loba*); anger and hatred (*Dosa*); delusion and ignorance (*Moha*); and fear (*Bhaya*), and can cultivate the four sublime states of mind that are loving kindness (*Metta*); compassion (*Karuna*); sympathetic joy (*Mudita*); and equanimity (*Upekkha*), the world will be a much better place to live.

# INTRODUCTION TO THERAVADA BUDDHISM

Buddhism is non-aggressive, non-violent, and non-militant. It is the moral, ethical, and philosophical teachings of the Buddha. Theravada Buddhism is one school of Buddhism that follows the original Dhamma as recorded in the ancient Pali Tipitaka. Theravada Buddhism has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia including Myanmar.

Mahayana Buddhism, the second school of Buddhism, is found throughout North and East Asia. Both schools believe all basic doctrines of the Buddha and follow the same principles and practices, although they have variations in the exact nature of the practices. One important aspect of both Buddhism is no notion of Creator God.

The Buddha himself is not a creator god. He was simply a human being who attained the highest spiritual enlightenment. The Buddha knew the natural truths of living beings and non-living matters. The Buddha's belief on existence was simple and revolutionary at that time.

Buddhists regard the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha as the three precious gems of Buddhism. They pay homage to them and take refuge in them. The Buddha's teaching, known as the Dhamma, is not a system of blind faith, but a system of principles and disciplines based on the true nature of the world and beings. The Sangha is a congregation of monks who practice the Dhamma and propagate the Buddha's teachings.

At the essence of the Buddha's teachings is the concept of the Five Aggregates, which basically states that the existence of all beings is a phenomenal process of combining physical and mental aggregates. For human, they are divided into five categories or aggregates (*Khandas*). These aggregates are physical form, feelings, perceptions, mental fabrications or formations, and consciousness.

The physical aggregate itself is composed of millions of small compound particles called (Kalapas). Each particle is formed by four basic elements, namely the solid matter earth (*Pathavi*), the fluidity water (*Aapo*), the calorific fire (*Tejo*) and the free moving air (*Vayo*). These small particles are short lived and constantly replaced by new particles, as they are in a state of perpetual change or flux. The body needs nutrients like solid foods, liquids and air to support growth and to provide energy to the 32 body parts that make up the physical aggregate including the heart, lungs, bones, and flesh.

The remaining four aggregates form the human mind. The mind also needs nutrients like idea and knowledge for mental growth. All mind aggregates are also changing with time. Because of this concept, the Buddha believed that there is no permanent entity such as the self, ego, or soul that can be attached to a living being. This concept is totally different from the concepts of other religions that accept a creator god and a human soul.

When the being dies, the aggregates also die along with the being. However, the life cycle continues when the mental energies are re-established in a new body with the rebirth. This rebirth is not the same as the reincarnation of a soul, and the act of kamma is the driving force behind the rebirth. Beings are constantly going through this endless cycle of life or existence (*Samsara*), which includes birth, suffering, and death. This concept of rebirth and cycle of life is totally different from the view of other religions and that of annihilationist, who believe in a temporary ego-entity that is annihilated at death.

These concepts are the foundation upon which all of the Buddha's doctrines were established. There are many doctrines, concepts and practices, but I have selected six important fundamental doctrines and some other relevant facts here presented in sequence.

## **1 The Middle Way**

In his first sermon the Buddha laid down three doctrines. The first doctrine teaches us not to follow the two extremes and instead to take the middle way. One extreme is devotion to sensual desire. The other extreme is devotion to self-torment. The middle way leads the Buddha to enlightenment and gives vision and knowledge. The Buddha always took the middle ground in all aspects. His philosophy was not to take life too easily or too harshly.

## **2 The Four Noble Truths**

The second doctrine outlines the Four Noble Truths. The First Noble Truth is suffering (*Dukkha*), or the idea that all people suffer from physical pain, mental anguish and dissatisfaction in this ever-changing life. The Second Noble Truth is the origin or cause of suffering, which is craving (*Tanha*). This craving leads to attachment, which causes rebirth into the endless cycle of birth, suffering, and death. The Third Noble Truth is the cessation of suffering, which can only happen when we let go of craving and attachment. Finally, the Fourth Noble Truth outlines the path leading to the cessation of suffering, also known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

## **3 The Noble Eightfold Path**

The Buddha's third doctrine is the Noble Eightfold Path, or the way leading to the cessation of suffering. The eight components are at the heart of Buddhist training and discipline, and they are divided into the three categories of Wisdom, Moral Conduct, and Concentration.

### **Wisdom**

1. Right View - Understanding the Four Noble Truths and the Three Facts of Life.
2. Right Intention – The selfless renunciation of craving and extending feelings of goodwill to all beings.

### **Moral Conduct**

3. Right Speech – Abstaining from false, slanderous, abusive or pointless speech.
4. Right Action – Refraining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.
5. Right Livelihood – Earning a living in a righteous way that does not bring harm to others. For example, not killing animals, cheating, or trading weapons, intoxicating beverages and poisons.

## **Concentration**

6. Right Effort – Making efforts to abandon evil states of mind and defilements and instead cultivating goodwill.
7. Right Mindfulness – Presence of mind, grounding and mindfulness exercises.
8. Right Concentration – Meditation for a wholesome one-pointed state of mind.

## **4 The Three Facts of Life**

The second sermon, known as Anatta Sutta that the Buddha delivered right after the first sermon contains one very important doctrine. This fourth doctrine is about the three basic facts of life or existence. They are:

1. Impermanence of Life (*Anicca*) – Everything in life including the aggregates are subject to change, decay and death or disintegration.
2. Suffering in Life (*Dukkha*) – All beings are dissatisfied with their changing lives, suffering physical pain, and are stressed with their lives most of the time.
3. No-self, No-soul or Insubstantiality (*Anatta*) – Life has no permanent self that is attached to the aggregates of life because the aggregates are constantly being replaced. The Buddha proved that there is no self, no ego and no soul by analyzing each aggregate of being.

The no-self characteristic was a bold new fact in the Buddha's time and it is very hard to comprehend even at the present time. It is the contemplation of the Three Facts that helps to destroy the infatuation with sense-pleasure, and this results in the cessation of craving and Samsara.

## **5 The Fire of Craving, Hatred, and Ignorance**

The Buddha delivered the fifth doctrine in the Fire Sermon some months later. He said, "The six senses and all sensing components are burning with the fire of lust, craving and greed (*Loba*); with the fire of hate and anger (*Dosa*); and with the fire of delusion and ignorance (*Moha*). I say it is burning with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, with lamentations, with pains, with grief, with despairs." Only a wise noble follower can find estrangement and separate themselves from the senses and fade out passion and craving. With the cessation of craving, he or she is liberated.

## **6 The Law of Kamma**

The final sixth doctrine is the Law of Kamma, also known as the law of action or cause and effect. Kamma is one of the main teachings of the Buddha and it refers to intentional action or volition. The Buddha's Law of Kamma stated that whatever a person experiences, whether pleasant, painful or neither pleasant nor painful at the present time is the result of old kamma, or old intended actions from past lives. That experience is modified by new kamma, or the new intended actions taken physically, verbally, and mentally in the present life.

The Law of Kamma is non-linear, complex, and has multiple feedback loops, with the present moment shaped both by the past and present kamma. Therefore, present actions shape not only the present but also the future. Bright kamma brings bright results and dark kamma brings dark results.

The Buddha requires all Buddhists to avoid and eliminate the three evils of craving and greed (*Loba*), hate and anger (*Dosa*), and delusion and ignorance (*Moha*), which are the roots of bad or dark kamma. Buddhists are also required to cultivate four sublime states of mind that include loving kindness (*Metta*), compassion (*Kurana*), sympathetic joy (*Mudita*) and equanimity (*Upekkha*). These sublime states lead to bright kamma.

### **The Five Laws of Nature**

According to the Buddha, kamma is not the sole law of nature. It is one of the five laws of nature that cause things to happen in the universe. Although life experience is mostly affected by kamma, it is also influenced by the four other laws. The five orders of process (*Niyamas*) or natural laws are:

1. Order of Cause and Effect (*Kamma*) as explained above.
2. Order of Inorganic Matter (*Utu*) such as rains and storms.
3. Order of Organic Matter (*Bija*) such as plants and trees.
4. Order of Mind and Psychic (*Cita*) such as consciousness, perceptions, thoughts and mind power.
5. Order of Norm or Nature of Existence (*Dhamma*) such as the phenomenal process of all beings, gravitation and magnetic fields.

These are natural laws. There is no law-giver, which means no one created these laws and no one can interfere with them. They operate in their own field without the intervention of external human and other spiritual sources.

### **The Analysis of Dependent Co-Arising / the Transcendental Dependent Arising**

To explain the cause and effect relationship of existence, the Buddha utilized sequential logic that identified 12 links or conditions that give rise to birth and suffering. In the Dhamma doctrines this logical sequence is called the Analysis of Dependent Co-arising (*Paticca Samuppada Vibhanga Sutta*). The basic concept in the Analysis of Dependent Co-Arising is that ignorance is the root cause of suffering, followed by eleven sequential steps such as consciousness and craving, all the way through to birth and suffering.

The Buddha always included a corollary of this sequence. The corollary sequence shows that if ignorance ceases, the remaining eleven conditions also cease, which results in the fading and cessation of suffering.

The Buddha also gave another twelve conditions and eleven sequential steps to describe the Buddhist Dhamma practice starting from suffering to the knowledge of destruction of cankers. He put together the two applications of this 'dependent arising' to form the Transcendental Dependent Arising (*Patacca Samuppada*) in the Upanisa Sutta. These twenty-three conditions and twenty-two logical steps are crucial to the Buddha's doctrines. An insight into this long logic is sufficient to understand the entire Dhamma.

### **Human Mind**

The Buddhist Dhamma also emphasizes that the human mind can become corrupted by and fixated on seven kinds of obsessions (*Anusayas*). These obsessions must be eliminated for liberation and happiness in this life.

## **Morality**

Morality is the starting point of Buddhism, so the Buddha emphasized rules of moral conduct that include outward physical and verbal actions and inner moral virtues. Three components of the Noble Eightfold Path are under the moral discipline. He set the rules of moral conduct by prescribing the five precepts on a daily basis, eight precepts on special Buddhist days and ten precepts for novice monks and nuns.

The ten supreme perfections (*Paramis*) are the noble characteristics of the bodhisattvas (those aspiring to Buddhahood) as the required virtuous moral actions. These actions are generosity, virtue, renunciation, wisdom, persistence, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving kindness, and equanimity.

In addition, there are ten bases of merits and ten righteous good actions for devotees to follow and ten mental defilements and ten unwholesome actions for devotees to avoid.

The Buddha added the Four Sublime States of Mind as the required inner moral virtues. They are loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. He also laid down the 38 highest life blessings (*Maha Mingala*) that are wholesome pursuits. Burmese Buddhists take these 38 blessings as the required ways of living in harmony within society.

## **Concentration**

The three components of the Noble Eightfold Path that are under the concentration discipline group are described in great detail in the Buddhist Dhamma and they include practices and concentration methods. They are for serious devotees only. Please refer to the main notes for further details.

## **Spiritual Faculties**

In the Five Spiritual Faculties, the Buddha gave five cardinal spiritual virtues called power (*Bala*) that are needed to pursue Buddhism. They are faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Like seeds to plants, faith is essential for the spiritual life to grow. Without vigor or energy, one cannot make much progress. Mindfulness occupies a central portion of Buddhism, and concentration continues the work of mindfulness to the next level. And finally we come to wisdom, the highest power of all. Wisdom penetrates into the Dhamma and disperses the darkness of delusion. All five faculties must be balanced and work in unison.

## **The Dhammapada**

The Dhammapada is the best known and most widely esteemed Buddhist text in the Pali Tipitaka. It covers all the essential principles elaborated in 425 verses. Due to its immense importance, the Dhammapada has been translated into numerous languages including Burmese. It is considered one of the world's best classic religious scriptures. Here are two shortened samples of six verses:

- Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief. All actions are made by mind. If a person speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him like the wheels that follow the ox. If a person speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow. (DP 1 & 2)
- "He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, and he robbed me." Those who harbor such thoughts do not end their hatred. Those who do not harbor such thoughts end their hatred. Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is an eternal law.

Those who do not realize that one day we all must die continue the fights. But those who do realize this settle their quarrels. (DP 3, 4, 5 & 6).

### **The Milindapanha**

Milindapanha is another Dhamma text in the Pali cannon equally revered by Theravada Buddhists. It is the most comprehensive and useful set of Buddhist FAQs in existence. The questions and answers are between the Greek King, Menander, and the Buddhist monk Ven. Nagasena.

The king, a wise philosopher and skilled debater, knew Buddhism well enough to come up with over 250 questions concerning profound points of the Dhamma. Ven. Nagasena masterfully answered each question, often with unusually vivid and apt similes.

At their first meeting, Ven. Nagasena explained the designation of the Five Aggregates of human beings by comparing the aggregates of assembly of the chariot. The king was so deeply inspired by Ven. Nagasena's wisdom that he converted to Buddhism, handed over his kingdom to his son, joined the Sangha and eventually became an Arahant himself.

### **The Kalama Sutta**

When it came to accepting his teachings, the Buddha encouraged everyone to arrive at the truth through logical reasoning as opposed to blind faith. In the Kalama Sutta (also known as the Charter of Free Inquiry) the Buddha said, “Do not believe upon hearsay, nor upon tradition, nor upon rumor, nor upon scripture, nor upon surmise, nor upon axiom, nor upon reasoning, nor upon bias, nor upon another's seeming ability, nor upon the teacher's advice. Observe, analyze, and believe what is true, good, reasonable, beneficial, accepted by wise men, and helpful to your quest for happiness and liberation.” The Buddha asked the citizens of the Kalama to try and test the Buddhism and see the result. They did.

### **The Dhamma for Social Harmony**

The Dhamma also covers the daily practices for lay people for social harmony. Every aspect has been laid down in detail in Part III of the notes. This includes:

- How Burmese Buddhist children are taught several sets of three key words of the Buddha.
- How adults learn the Dhamma gradually.
- How lay people practice the Dhamma.
- How lay people conduct their daily lives.
- How Burmese Buddhists live by the 38 blessed (Mingala) ways.
- And how lay people fulfill domestic and social duties.

The Buddha set precise rules for lay devotees to follow that covered moral conduct, moral responsibility, and moral downfall, conditions of welfare, social responsibility, domestic duties of the family, and social duties. In this way, Buddhism truly provides both spiritual and social guidance for happiness, health, tranquility and inner peace of mind in present lives as well as future lives. Some of these social teachings may be out dated but they are morally correct and applicable for today world.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I mainly used the website <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/> to search for documents for my notes because it provides a very comprehensive search engine on Buddhism. Other sites I used include <http://dhammadownload.com/>, <http://www.myanmarnet.net/nibbana>, <http://www.buddhanet.net/>, and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism>

I would like to acknowledge that these notes are mostly based on the written materials of seven Buddhist monks: two Americans - Bhikkhu Bodhi and Thanissaro Bhikkhu; one British - Bhikkhu Ñanamoli; two Burmese - Mahasi Sayadaw and Sayadaw U Pyinnyathiha; and two Germans – Nyanati Loka Mahathara and Nyanaponika Thera.

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Aung Thaik

# **BUDDHISM**

## **A COLLECTION OF NOTES ON DHAMMA**

### **PART I – THE TRIPLE GEM**

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma - Sambuddhassa. I start my note with this chant to pay homage to the Buddha, the Exalted One, the Worthy One, and the Fully Self-Enlightened One.

Buddhism is non-aggressive, non-violent and non-militant, but rather the moral, ethical, and philosophical teachings of the Buddha. The teachings, known as the Dhamma, are more comprehensive than philosophy and are complete with practical actions and meditation to follow.

It may be regarded as a religion if religion means the teaching system for spiritual liberation of suffering. But it may not be a religion as defined in the Western sense because Buddhism has no divine God or Creator. The Buddha himself is not a Creator God. He is the teacher of gods, who are beings in heaven, and men. And the Dhamma is not a system of blind faith.

Buddhism starts with the understanding of nature. Its ultimate aim is the liberation of suffering and the cessation of endless cycles of birth, suffering and death. His teachings on social harmony provide happy and healthy living as well as a peaceful and tranquil inner mind in this life. He founded a congregation of Sangha or monks to propagate these teachings.

Buddhists regard the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha as the Three Precious Gems of Buddhism. They respect them, pay homage to them and take refuge in them. This chapter includes notes on the Triple Gem and related information on Buddhism.

#### **1- Buddha**

The Buddha was not a Creator God, a divine incarnation, or a prophet bearing a message of divine revelation. He was a human being who by his own striving and intelligence reached the highest spiritual attainment. He had perfect wisdom, full enlightenment, and complete purification of the mind. Buddha is just an honorary title that means he was fully educated and enlightened. His other titles include Bhagava, Araham, Tathagata and many others. All these names signify the qualities, characteristics and nature of Buddha.

He was born on Friday, the full moon day of Kason (May), in the year 623 B.C. at an open grove known as Lumbini Park near Kappilavatthu in the present-day Nepal while his mother was returning to her parent's palace for his birth. He was named Siddhatta, which means 'wish fulfilled'. His family name was Gotama. His parents were King Suddhodana, head of the State, and Queen Maha Maya Devi, the first consort of the king. She passed away seven days after his birth.

Queen Gotami, the sister of Maya Devi, became the royal stepmother and raised the prince along with her son Nanda. At the early age of sixteen he married his beautiful cousin, princess Yasodhara. Because of the prediction that he might become a holy man, his father prevented him from experiencing any human suffering. He was provided with a luxurious life, living with his wife in three elegant seasonal palaces and surrounded by young and beautiful attendants and entertainers. He knew no personal grief.

Yet he decided to leave the worldly life to search for truth and eternal peace after he saw four omens: an old man, a diseased man, a dead man and a dignified monk. So at the age of 29, on the day his first and only son, Rahula was born, he left the palace to become a hermit. He searched for the truth for almost six years.

First, as an ascetic under two well-known teachers he practiced strenuous and severe austerities and extreme meditation without success. Later, he found the Middle Way (*Majjhimapatipada*) and followed mindfulness meditation. Finally, at the age of 35 he attained full enlightenment and Buddhahood under the Bodhi Tree located at the present-day Bodhgaya in India. It was Wednesday, the full moon day of Kason (May).

He preached his first discourse, known as the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, to five ascetic former companions at the Deer Park in Senath near the old city Varanasi on Saturday, the full moon day of Waso (June) of 588 B.C. Here he set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma and established Buddhism. His companions became his first noble disciples.

As he converted more people including his cousin Ananda, brother Nanda, stepmother, wife, and son to become his disciples, he established an order of monks and nuns known as the Sangha. Buddha did not discriminate. Men of all castes could be ordained as monks (*Bhikkhus*) and women as nuns (*Bhikkhunis*). Ven. Ananda later became his personal assistant and heard and memorized all his discourses.

The Buddha delivered the Dhamma to Sanghas and laymen around Northern India for 45 years of his Buddhahood from the time of enlightenment until the time of his passing away (*Mahaparinibbana*). In the early summer morning past midnight of the full-moon day of Kason (about May 543 B.C.) on a Tuesday, the Buddha passed away in Kusinara town (present-day Kushinagar, India). His last words were "Oh Bhikkhus! These are my last words now. All conditioned and compounded things have the nature of decay and disintegration. With steadfast mindfulness, endeavor diligently for your own liberation."

Buddhists all over the world regard the following four places as Buddhist holy places:

- Where he was born – Lumbini, Nepal,
- Where he attained enlightenment - Bodhgaya, India
- Where he gave his first discourse – Sarnath, India
- Where he passed away – Kushinagar, India

The Buddha was the most energetic of all religious teachers. Because he taught three real facts of life: Impermanence or Change (*Anicca*), Suffering or Un-satisfactoriness (*Dukkha*), and Not-self or Insubstantiality (*Anatta*), he was wrongly designated as a pessimist. But this is not true because he gave reasons for suffering and ways to eliminate suffering. He was also called annihilationist, but he was not because he did not believe in the annihilation of an existing being at death. He believed in rebirth. His concept of the existence of being as a phenomenal process of five aggregates was new and revolutionary. This concept is in line with modern scientific theory.

Buddhism is the gentlest religion around. Its philosophy is non-violent and non-militant. Buddhists only want social harmony without any conflicts, and the doctrines are all based on the laws of nature. At the same time, Buddhists will not subscribe submission to aggression of others.

## 2- The Nine Attributes of Buddha

As a Buddhist I used to recite the Pali verse below to praise the Nine Attributes of the Buddha. I was told that by recitation you could calm and purify your mind, overcome your fears and protect yourself against danger.

“Iti pi so bhagava araham sammāsambuddho vijjācaranasampanno sugato Lokavidu anuttaro purisadammasarathi sattha devamanussanam buddho bhagava.”

The Buddha has nine attributes or qualities, namely:

1. *Araham* - He is worthy of worship because he uprooted all mental impurities and defilements and possessed perfect virtue (*Sila*), perfect concentration (*Samādi*) and perfect wisdom (*Pinna*).
2. *Sammāsambuddho* - He was the Fully Self-Enlightened One. He gained all ultimate realities by his own insight knowledge and these were awakened by his own effort without any help from others. The Dhamma is fully invested in him.
3. *Vijjācaranasampanno* - He was perfect in three kinds of knowledge (*Vijja*) and fifteen virtuous conducts (*Carana*)
4. *Sugato* - He was the Blessed One, capable of working for the welfare and happiness of the entire world and delivering truths and benefits.
5. *Lokavidu* - He had essential knowledge of the existences and complete knowledge of three worlds, namely the world of living beings (*Satta Loka*), the world of formations (*Samkhara Loka*), and the world of the universe (*Okasa Loka*).
6. *Anuttaro purisadammasirathi* - He was capable of taming and guiding unruly men and all other beings and setting them free from passions and defilements.
7. *Sattha devamanussanam* - He was the teacher of gods and men, able to solve many problems and to point out the advantages of the present life, of the life hereafter and of Nibbana.
8. *Buddho* - He was the Omniscient and Enlightened One with the knowledge for cessation of suffering
9. *Bhagava* - He was the Exalted One, having vanquished all cravings, aversions and delusions, and he was glorified with six supernatural powers.

## 3- Dhamma

The Dhamma is the teachings of the Buddha. The word Dhamma means ‘the truth’. All teachings were made verbally in Sanskrit. Soon after his passing, five hundred noble monks (*arahats*) headed by Ven. Maha Kassapa held the First Buddhist Council to compile all his teachings. The recitation of the Vinaya by Ven. Upali was accepted as the Vinaya Pitaka, while the recitation of the Dhamma by Ven. Ananda was established as the Sutta Pitaka.

When the Third Buddhist Council was held in the year 250 B.C. under the Great Emperor Asoka of India, the Abhidhamma Pitaka was recited at the Council along with additional sections of the Khuddaka Nikaya. A written record of the Pali Tipitaka was made at the Fourth Buddhist Council for the first time in about 100 B.C. The final Sixth Buddhist Council was held not too long ago in Rangoon or Yangon in 1956. The Buddha’s teachings are grouped into three baskets:

- The Basket of Discipline (*Vinaya Pitaka*), which covers the subject of disciplines and rules for monastic life in three volumes. The first volume, Suttavibhanga, contains Patimokkha training rules or

codes of conduct for individual monks and nuns. The second Khandhaka volume includes etiquette and duties, as well as the rules and procedures for addressing offences for the monastic community of bhikkhus. The third volume is the summary of the rules classified and re-classified in various ways. There are many English translations available.

- The Basket of Discourses (*Sutta Pitaka*), which includes more than 10,000 discourses (Suttas) delivered by the Buddha and his close disciples on various occasions. It also includes many discussions, stories, poems, and lessons on Buddhism. The discourses are divided into 5 Nikaya volumes according to the classifications of the discourses. The first Digha Nikaya Volume contains 34 long discourses. The second *Majjhima* Nikaya contains 152 medium length discourses. The third *Samyutta* Nikaya contains 2,889 short discourses grouped into 5 groups and 56 sub-groups. Several thousand more suttas are collected in the fourth Anguttara Nikaya volume. The fifth Khuddaka Nikaya is the collection of Little Texts which consists of 18 different books including Dhammapada, Milindapanha, and Jataka. This collection of notes is taken from a small portion of the Sutta Pitaka. Many suttas are translated into English. More than one thousand sutta translations are available on <http://www.accesstoinsight.org>.
- The Basket of Ultimate Doctrine (*Abhidhamma Pitaka*), which deals with the philosophy of the Dhamma in great depth. It is the ultimate treatment of the absolute truth (*Paramattha-desana*) of Buddhism. The underlying doctrinal principles presented in the Sutta Pitaka are reorganized into a systematic framework and analyzed under the nature of mind and matter in seven volumes. It is dense and difficult reading. But with the Abhidhamma, the Buddha methodically constructed a quasi-scientific model of mind. This would make a modern systems theorist or cognitive scientist gasp in awe, and it ensures its place in world history as a monumental feat of intellectual genius. Not all volumes are available in English translation. You can explore Abhidhamma Pitaka by studying more modern commentarial text books.

#### 4- Six Attributes of Dhamma

The Dhamma has six attributes, namely:

1. *Svakkhato* - From the beginning to the middle to the end, the complete Dhamma is well-explained and good.
2. *Sanditthiko* - It can be experienced in this present life.
3. *Akaliko* - It gives immediate effects and produces immediate results.
4. *Ehipassiko* - It invites people to come, investigate and test the Dhamma.
5. *Opaneyyiko* - It will lead towards the final goal of full liberation (Nibbana)
6. *Paccattam veditabbo vinnuhi* - It is to be practiced by everyone for himself.

#### 5- Sangha

Sangha means a congregation of monks and nuns who practice the Dhamma and who have the same spiritual views. The Sangha must follow the 227 monastic rules for monks and 300 monastic rules for nuns laid down by the Buddha, as well as many more minor rules.

There are two kinds of Sangha: Ariya Sangha and Puthujjana Sangha. A member of the Ariya Sangha has realized one or more of the stages of holiness, the four supra mundane paths (*Magga*), and fruitions (*Phala*). A member of the Puthujjana Sangha is an ordinary monk (Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis) who still possesses all ten fetters binding to the round of rebirths, but he or she always tries to reach the noble state of an Ariya.

The task of the Sangha is to put the Buddha's teaching into practice and to preach to other laymen. The monks and nuns dedicate their whole lives to the practice of the Buddha's teachings to get rid of defilements and practice insight meditation in order to know correctly the true nature of mind and matter. They live a simple life with shaved heads. They are calm and well restrained in thoughts, words and deeds. They are entirely dependent on the support of laypeople. They have no other source of income and they cannot handle money with some exceptions.

## 6- The Nine Attributes of the Sangha

The Sangha has nine attributes, namely:

1. *Supatipanno* - Practiced the Dhamma well, never breaking the Vinaya rules.
2. *Ujupatipanno* – Practiced the Dhamma correctly to gain higher knowledge.
3. *Nayapatpanno* – Practiced the Dhamma wisely and intelligently to realize Nibbana.
4. *Samicipatipanno* – Practiced the Dhamma respectably.
5. *Ahuneyyo* - Worthy of normal offerings.
6. *Pahuneyyo* - Worthy of hospitality at home for special occasions.
7. *Dakkhineyyo* - Worthy of accepting special gifts intended for no other reason but Nibbana.
8. *Anjalikaraniyo* - Worthy of reverent salutations and praying.
9. *Anuttaram punnakkhettam Lokassa* - Provides the finest field of merit for charity and generosity.

## 7- Going for Refuge

Buddhists pay homage to the Triple Gem in front of a Sangha or an image of the Buddha. Then they take refuge as an acknowledgment of allegiance. Finally, they undertake the five precepts.

When Burmese Buddhists pay homage daily, they also add parents and teachers because they are also worthy of worship. They recite a prayer passage in Burmese that includes two purposes of praying: to ask forgiveness for any wrongful actions made and to wish for merit for good deeds done.

Going for refuge is their commitment to accept the protection of the Triple Gem from harm and danger of the present life and future existences, to seek the guidance of the Triple Gem for liberation from suffering, and to practice the doctrines of the Triple Gem. It is a method of cultivation and a practice of inner mind development. In fact, all Buddhists recite the following Pali verses regularly to reaffirm the conviction prior to taking on the Five Precepts:

<i>Buddham saranam gacchami</i>	I go to the Buddha for refuge.
<i>Dhammam saranam gacchami</i>	I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
<i>Sangham saranam gacchami</i>	I go to the Sangha for refuge.
<i>Dutiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami</i>	For a second time, I go to the Buddha for refuge.
<i>Dutiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami</i>	For a second time, I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
<i>Dutiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami</i>	For a second time, I go to the Sangha for refuge.
<i>Tatiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami</i>	For a third time, I go to the Buddha for refuge.
<i>Tatiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami</i>	For a third time, I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
<i>Tatiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami</i>	For a third time, I go to the Sangha for refuge.

## 8- Two Schools of Buddhism

Two major schools of Buddhism are generally recognized: Mahayana (The Great Vehicle) and Theravada (The School of the Elders). There are many more branches in each school.

The Mahayana school of Buddhism spread to China and Japan via northern land routes through Tibet. Mahayana is found throughout East Asia (China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, etc.) and includes the traditions of Pure Land, Zen, Nichiren Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Shingon, and Tiantai (Tendai). In some classifications Vajrayana, practiced mainly in Tibet, Mongolia and adjacent parts of China and Russia, is recognized as a third branch.

The Theravada school was introduced to Southeast Asian countries by Sri Lanka through southern boat routes after the decline of Buddhism in India. Theravada has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, etc).

The two Buddhist schools vary on the exact nature of the path to liberation, the importance and canonicity of various teachings and scriptures, and especially their respective practices. However, both take refuge in the Triple Gem and believe all basic doctrines. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism - cite\\_note-4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_-_cite_note-4).

One consistent belief held by all Buddhist schools is the lack of a Creator God. Many other practices including ethical precepts; support of the monastic community; renouncing conventional living and becoming a monastic; the development of mindfulness and practice of meditation; cultivation of higher wisdom and discernment; and the study of scriptures are also the same. Some devotional practices, ceremonies, and invocation of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are mostly in the Mahayana tradition.

## 9- The Revival of Buddhism in India

Buddhism almost disappeared in India, its birthplace, during the late Middle Ages. One of the reasons for this was the moral corruption of some of the Sangha communities. The Buddha had predicted the disappearance of the true Dhamma and the arising of a counterfeit Dhamma if worthless followers, monks, nuns and laypeople became degenerated with sensual pleasures and lived without respect and deference for the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, the training, and concentration. But the true Dhamma could not disappear the way a boat sinks completely all at once. This was what happened in India.

Besides the decay of spirituality, the main reason for the extinction of Buddhism in India was the Muslim conquest and the spread of their religion. Like the Taliban of today, they destroyed the Buddhist Viharas, slaughtered Buddhist monks and burnt Buddhist books. Now Buddhism has been revived again in India. India has even adopted as its emblem the Buddhist Four-Lion Symbol of Emperor Asoka.

The great Indian leader of non-violence Mahatama Gandhi said, "It is my deliberate opinion that the essential part of the teachings of the Buddha now forms an integral part of Hinduism. It is impossible for Hindu India today to retrace her steps and go behind the great reformation that Gautama effected in Hinduism. By his immense sacrifice, by his great renunciation, and by the immaculate purity of his life he left an indelible impression upon Hinduism, and Hinduism owes an eternal debt of gratitude to that great teacher."

India's first prime minister Pandit Nehru said, "The Buddha emphasized reason, morals, principles and experience. The Buddha had the courage to point out the un-satisfactoriness of popular religion, superstition,

ceremony and priest craft. He was not interested in the metaphysical and theological outlooks, miracles, revelations, and dealings with the supernatural. His appeal was to reason, logic, and experience; his emphasis was on ethics and his method was one of psychological analysis, a psychology without a soul. His whole approach comes like the breath of the fresh wind from the mountain after the stale air of metaphysical speculation.”

He continued, “The Buddha has been something greater than all doctrines and dogmas, and his eternal message has thrilled humanity through the ages. Perhaps at no time in past history was his message of peace more needed for a suffering and distracted humanity than it is today.”

He said again, “His eyes are closed but some power of the spirit looks out of them and a vital energy fills the frame. The ages roll by and Buddha seems not so far away after all; his voice whispers in our ears and tells us not to run away from the struggle but calm-eyed, to face it, and to see in life even greater opportunities for growth and advancement.”

## **10- Spread of Buddhism to the Western World**

The Western and Buddhist worlds have occasionally intersected throughout history. It is possible that the earliest encounter was in 334 BCE, early in the history of Buddhism, when Alexander the Great conquered most of Central Asia.

According to the Dhamma Pali document Milindapanha (Questions of Milinda), the Bactrian Greek king Milinda (Menander), who ruled ancient Bactria (the present day Afghanistan) and Northern India around 150-110 BC, became a Buddhist Arahant monk. Most of his Bactrian Greek followers were Buddhist.

During the 19th century, Buddhism came to the attention of Western intellectuals through the work of Western scholars and imperial civil servants. Western spiritual seekers were attracted to Buddhism, and the first Buddhist Society, London was founded in 1924. After the Second World War, a mainstream Western Buddhism emerged.

Today, Buddhism is practiced by increasing numbers of people in the Americas, Europe and Oceania. Buddhism has become the fastest growing philosophical religion in Australia and some other Western nations.

All over world, a mighty Buddhist wave is set in motion. Sooner or later, Buddhist philosophy will flood the world with its beneficial influence. The world is no longer satisfied with dogmas based on blind belief. Everywhere in the world there are people striving for freedom and independence, both externally and internally.

The more thinking men feel that the destinies of beings are not dependent on others, the more they will practice the meditations and concentrations of the mind that is within them for the freedom of worry and pain, with or without religious conversion.

You do not need permission to practice any one of the Buddha’s teachings. The Buddhist philosophy is not based on blind belief, but it is based on the doctrines of truth. It is not dogmatic. The true nature of the doctrines can make a man free and independent in his thinking and assure him of happiness and peace.

## **11 – Buddhism and Modern Views**

How well does the Buddhist Dhamma stand in modern views of the present world? Very well. This whole write-up is my own view. All of the Buddha's teachings on the basic truths of nature have stood the tests of time for over 2,500 years. All the new discoveries and explorations do not alter the three marks of creature existence. These characteristics are still true. The Four Noble Truths are still valid. New-world views never affect the Dhamma.

Darwin's theory of evolution does not surprise the Buddhist world. It just proves the Buddhist's concept of being. The Buddha already said that the existence of being is a phenomenal process of aggregates. The body aggregate is composed of many small compound particles of elements. These particles are formed and disintegrated in short time, and are constantly being replaced with new particles. This is in line with medical findings of human cells. In addition, the law of Kamma in Buddhism is similar to the physical law of action and reaction.

The Buddha's method of mindfulness and concentration practice is effective and beneficial to human health. Numerous medical tests reveal its effective healing in human bodies. The Dhamma also improves mental health. The not-self or no ego (*Anatta*) doctrine can alleviate the mental problem of narcissism and extreme self-love. The Buddhist meditation practice (*Bhavana*) also has calming effects on the mind.

## **12- Misrepresentation of Buddhism**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Christian missionaries in Asia misrepresented Buddhism as having a negative soteriology (doctrine of salvation), which served to justify their evangelical incursions into the heartlands of Buddhism. Even though Buddhism has spread to the Western world, many Westerners are still confused about Buddhism because of this. Even Pope John Paul II repeated this misrepresentation in his book '*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*'.

The American Buddhist monk Bhikkhu Bodhi wrote an essay on this subject intended to be a short corrective response to the Pope's demeaning characterization of Buddhism. These are some excerpts from Rev. Bodhi's article:

“Serious scholars of comparative religion have long recognized the misrepresentations rooted in misunderstanding and in deliberate distortion. The Pope took this view because the Buddhist path of deliverance does not recognize a personal God as the agent and end of salvation. Behind the misrepresentation we can detect echoes of the ancient texts.

“There are, monks, some recluses and brahmans who charge me with being an annihilationist, saying that the recluse Gotama teaches the annihilation of an existent being. That is false misrepresentation. What I teach, in the past as also now, is suffering and the cessation of suffering.”

“Western scholars in the past have focused on the Buddhist doctrine of salvation. This view is one-sided to begin with, so it must yield one-sided results. The living traditions of Buddhism as practiced by its adherents reveal that this attitude is wrong.

“Buddhism addresses as wide a range of concerns as any other of humanity's great religions. Nibbana remains the ultimate goal of Buddhism, and is “the central point” of the Dhamma, but it is by no means “the only point”. Buddhism does not regard the world as “the source of evil” for man. The Buddhists use "good" and "evil," solely to evaluate intentional actions. The Buddha does declare that worldly existence is dukkha, which means suffering, not evil. Buddhism finds the cause of suffering and the way to end the suffering.

“The Pope interprets the Pali word Upekkha as "indifference". The real meaning of this word is equanimity, not indifference. Upekkha is freedom from all points of self-reference. The attainment of Nibbana does not issue in a stolid indifference to the world.

“The Buddha himself led an active life of 45 years after his enlightenment dedicated to the uplift of humanity. Throughout Buddhist history, the great spiritual masters of the Dhamma have emulated the Awakened One's example, heeding his injunction to wander forth "for the welfare and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of devas and humans.

“Buddhism has inspired and animated all the Asian cultures in which it has taken root. It spread without violence and bloodshed, without forcible conversions, winning adherents entirely by its lofty teachings and the exemplary lives of its followers. Wherever the Dhamma took root, it has provided hope and encouragement, pointing to lofty ethical and spiritual ideals.”

# BUDDHISM

## A COLLECTION OF NOTES ON DHAMMA

### PART II – DHAMMA DOCTRINES AND CONCEPTS FOR LIBERATION OF SUFFERING

The Buddha gave the Dhamma on two levels. He taught to laymen in conventional language at the mundane level and to his disciples in more philosophically correct or spiritual language at the supra-mundane level. The first teaching relates to relative truth such as the rising and setting of the sun, and the second teaching to absolute truth in the ultimate sense such as the rotation of the Earth around the sun.

#### **1 – The First Sermon – Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion (*Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana-Sutta*)**

The Buddha gave his first sermon to five former ascetic companions at the Deer Park in Senath. With this sermon he set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma and established Buddhism. This sermon contains three basic Buddhist doctrines.

##### **Doctrine No. 1 – The Middle Way (*Majjhima Patipada*)**

There are two extremes that should not be cultivated or followed by anyone seeking the truths of existence. One extreme is devotion to the indulgence of pleasure in the objects of sensual desire and the attempt to extinguish dissatisfaction by gratifying desire. This is inferior, low, vulgar, ignoble, and leads to no good. The Buddha experienced this extreme in his youth.

The other extreme is devotion to self-mortification and self-torment or trying to gain liberation by afflicting the body. This is painful, ignoble and leads to no good. The Buddha experienced this extreme during six years of ascetic practice.

The middle way discovered by the Buddha gives vision and knowledge. The middle way method that the Buddha practiced afterward led him to enlightenment. It leads to peace, direct acquaintance, discovery, and to Nibbana, the true liberation of suffering.

##### **Doctrine No. 2 – The Four Noble Truths (*Sacca*)**

The First Noble Truth is suffering (*Dukkha*): Dukkha is suffering, stress, un-satisfactoriness, or discontent. Human existence is full of suffering. Birth is suffering; aging is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; living with a disliked one is suffering; separation from a loved one is suffering; not getting what one wants is suffering. In short, suffering is the five clinging (*Upadana*) aggregates.

The Second Noble Truth is the origin or cause (*Samudaye*) of Dukkha. The origin of suffering is the craving or desire (*Tanha*) for enjoyment and lust. This leads to attachment and clinging onto the aggregates of life that

renew living beings, and this is accompanied by and associated with suffering. This is the continuing cycle of birth and death (*Samsara*). In other words, the craving for sensual desires and clinging to living beings are the causes of suffering.

The Third Noble Truth is the cessation (*Nirodha*) of Dukkha. There is a way to end suffering. This includes fading out the craving of lust and ceasing clinging to the five aggregates of life, which leads to the cessation of the cycle of life (*Samsara*).

The Fourth Noble Truth is the path (*Magga*) of practice leading to the cessation of Dukkha. The way leading to the cessation of craving and suffering is simply the Noble Eightfold Path given below.

### **Doctrine No. 3 - The Noble Eightfold Path (*Magga*)**

The eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are not sequential steps, but rather components that are given in a practical action order. The eight path factors can be divided into three groups: (i) the moral discipline group (*Sila Khandha*) made up of Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood; (ii) the concentration group (*Samadhi Khandha*) made up of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration; and (iii) the wisdom group (*Paññā Khandha*) made up of Right View and Right Intention.

These three groups represent three stages of training: training in higher moral discipline, training in higher consciousness, and training in higher wisdom. All eight paths must be taken simultaneously.

- 1- Right View (*Samma Ditthi*) – Right View involves a correct understanding of the Four Noble Truths. This leads to understanding of the Noble Eightfold Path, the Three Facts of Existence and other Dhamma doctrines.
- 2- Right Intention (*Samma Sankappa*) – Right Intention includes the intention of renunciation or non-sensuality, good will and non-cruelty or harmlessness.
- 3- Right Speech (*Samma Vaca*) – Right Speech means not speaking lies, slander, harsh or abusive language, and idle chatter or pointless speech.
- 4- Right Action (*Samma Kammanta*) – Right Action means refraining from three unwholesome deeds, namely taking life, taking what is not given and sexual misconduct.
- 5- Right Livelihood (*Samma Ajiva*) – Right Livelihood is concerned with ensuring that one earns one's living in a righteous way. Avoid wrong livelihood such as dealing in weapons, trading human beings, meat production and butchery, and selling poisons and intoxicants.
- 6- Right Effort (*Samma Vayama*) – The Buddha stressed the need for Right Effort, for diligence, exertion, and unflagging perseverance to restrain and abandon defilements and to develop wholesome states. In short, it means to avoid evil that could potentially arise and to abandon evil that has already arisen. In addition, it means to arouse good and wholesome states of mind and to develop good and wholesome states of mind that are already present.
- 7- Right Mindfulness (*Samma Sati*) – Mindfulness is presence of mind, attentiveness or awareness. The mindfulness exercises have a powerful grounding function. Mindfulness meditation includes mindful contemplation of the body, mindful contemplation of feelings, mindful contemplation of the consciousness of mind, and mindful contemplation of phenomena and ideas.
- 8- Right Concentration (*Samma Samadhi*) – Right Concentration represents an intensification of a mental factor present in every state of consciousness. *Samadhi* is exclusively wholesome one-pointedness and concentration in a wholesome state of mind. The goal is to attain concentration to the levels of the first

*Jhana*, the second *Jhana*, the third *Jhana* and the fourth *Jhana*. Refer to Section 11 for the meaning of *Jhana*.

The Noble Eightfold Path is followed and developed progressively until the practitioner attains the four stages of realization or awakening, namely:

1. The initial first stage – the stream-enterer who will return to the human realm no more than seven times when wrong view ritualism and doubt are ended.
2. The second stage – the once-returner who has weakened sensuality and ill will.
3. The third stage– the non-returner who has ended sensuality and ill will.
4. The final full awakening stage – the Arahatship where lust for form, lust for the formless, conceit, agitation and ignorance are ended, this being the end of craving which causes suffering.

After the first sermon, the five Bhikkhus were pleased with the Buddha's teaching. But only one Bhikkhu, the venerable Kondañña, understood and became a 'stream-enterer' with his attainment of the first of the four progressive stages of realization.

The essence of the Buddha's teaching can be summed up in two principles: the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The first covers the side of doctrine, and the second covers the side of discipline. In the structure of the teaching these two principles lock together into an indivisible unity called the *Dhamma-vinaya*, the doctrine-and-discipline, or, in brief, the Dhamma. These Four Noble Truths are what is real, not unreal, and no other. They do not deceive or disappoint. They are true then and true now.

## **2 – The Second Sermon - The Not-self Characteristic (*Anatta-lakkhana-Sutta*) and the Three Basic Facts of Existence**

The Buddha continued his preaching with the second sermon on the characteristic of Not-Self to the same five Bhikkhus immediately. He also included the well-accepted two facts of existence. The second sermon brought all of them to the fourth and final stage of realization, that of Arahatship. It was said, "There were six Arahats in the world after the second sermon." This sermon contains one Buddhist doctrine and several concepts of existence.

### **Doctrine No. 4 - The Three Basic Facts of Existence**

There are three basic facts or marks of existence for all living beings. They are:

1. Impermanence or Change (*Anicca*) – All five aggregates (*Khandha*) of life are impermanent, so all beings are subject to changes, decay and death.
2. Suffering or Un-satisfactoriness (*Dukkha*) – Because of the impermanent nature of life, all beings are dissatisfied with their lives and are suffering.
3. Not-self or Insubstantiality (*Anatta*) – The existence of being is a natural phenomenal process of five aggregates. These five aggregates of life are changing and are not following the self's direction. So existence is not self. All five aggregates must be regarded as 'This is not mine, this is not I, and this is not myself'.

If you perceive, develop and practice these three facts, you remove all ignorance and all sensual passion, all passion for material existence, and all passion for becoming. Then you remove and abolish all conceit of "I am."

**Impermanence (*Anicca*)** - Impermanence (*Anicca*) is the very core of the Buddha's teaching. It is the basis for the other two characteristics of existence, Suffering and No-self. The fact of Impermanence means that reality is never static but is dynamic throughout, and this is the basic nature of the world without any exception. Change is the essential characteristic of all phenomenal existence. All things that arise or form as the effect of causes will in turn give away, decay and deteriorate. This fact can be easily understood by observing the changing process of living creatures from birth to death. Non-living matter also follows the same process of growth and decay. There is no lasting form or body.

**Suffering or Un-satisfactoriness (*Dukkha*)** - There are three types of suffering: the suffering of physical pain, the suffering of fabrication, and the suffering of change. Therefore, the impermanent nature of life leads to the suffering of fabrication and change. Human beings are dissatisfied with birth, change and death. *Dukkha* is fully explained in the Four Noble Truths.

**Not-self (*Anatta*)** - Buddha introduced the third 'Not-self' (*Anatta*) fact of existence in this second sermon. *Anatta* means there is no self attached to human existence. This was a bold new fact in the Buddha's time and it is very hard to comprehend even the present time. He proved that there is no self, no egos and no soul in beings by analyzing each aggregate of being. For example, Buddha said, "Form or body, one of the aggregates, is not-self. If this form is self, it would not lead to affliction and it would stay the same way the self wants. Because the form leads to affliction on its own accord according to the past and present actions of *Kamma*, and the form is changing by its impermanent nature, the form cannot be self." Buddha proved the other four aggregates in the same way.

These facts apply to animate and inanimate existence. Existence can be understood only if these three basic facts are comprehended. To 'see things as they really are' means seeing them consistently in the light of the three characteristics. Ignoring or distorting these three basic facts can only lead to frustration, disappointment and despair. Ignorance of these three, or self-deception about them, is by itself a potent cause for suffering.

At the time of the Buddha, there were three spiritual beliefs regarding the eternal ego-entity or soul. The first one stated that an eternal ego-entity or soul exists only in human beings and that it is created by a divine creator God and outlasts death. The soul waits for a final judgment day. This is the Eternal Life belief of Christianity and some other religions. The second one stated that there is a temporary ego-entity in human beings that is annihilated at death. This is the Annihilationism or Materialism belief. The third Eastern belief stated that there is an eternal ego-entity created by past actions (*Kamma*) that moves on to another being after death. This is the Brahman belief.

The Buddha's teachings are completely different. The Buddha's belief is that neither an eternal nor a temporary ego-entity exists in being. The existence of being is nothing more than an amalgam of ever-changing phenomenal process of five aggregates for humans. This process is occurring in accordance with the law of cause and effect (*Kamma*), and it is constantly changing (forming and decaying) from moment to moment. Moreover, each aggregate is not-self. What we call self, ego, soul, personality etc., are merely conventional terms referring to a non-existing entity.

At death the being and its aggregates die along with the body. But a new being is reborn again under the law of *Kamma*. The Buddha taught that the psychophysical phenomenal process continues to the next existence

under the repeated cycle of birth and death (*Samsara*), until the being is released from the cycle of life after following the Noble Eightfold Path.

When a layman asked the Buddha, “Is there a self or is there a not-self?” the Buddha did not give a “yes or no” answer because a definite answer would give the layman the wrong impression. In another instance, a disciple asked, “Is consciousness a man's soul?” and the Buddha gave serious and ample replies sufficient to remove any doubt about the Anatta doctrine.

This doctrine is a bit deeper than the first three doctrines. This is absolute truth. But the truth is hard to comprehend for ordinary men like us because no permanent individuality can be found in human beings in accordance with the Anatta doctrine.

The Greek king Menander even asked Ven. Nagasena, “If Nagasena is just a designation, not a permanent individual, what is Hagasena?” in *Milindapana* (see section II-14). I think the Buddha recognized the individual in humans, but not a permanent soul. Each man has a different body, features, coloring, appearance and mind. The Buddha said, “You can only compare with yourselves.” You or I or names are designations for conventional recognition of individuals in this life.

It is the contemplation of the Three Facts that helps to destroy the infatuation of sense-pleasure. This contemplation also softens the hardest of hearts, binds one to another with love and compassion, and destroys the barriers of caste, creed and race among the peoples of this earth. The acceptance of the true fact of Anatta may also alleviate the intensity of the psychological condition of narcissism and all resulting world problems.

Narcissism is the third human instinct found and labeled by Sigmund Freud. Its intensity is sometimes many times stronger than the intensity of the well accepted two other instincts, the love instinct - libido and the hunger instinct - ego.

Erich Fromm, the author of the book *The Heart of Man*, expanded on narcissism and applied it to group behavior, nationalism and war. It was due to Fromm's insight that the concept of narcissism was salvaged from its limited base in the libido theory and given a more comprehensive interpretation.

Fromm himself makes a reference to Buddhism that is extremely significant for an understanding of narcissism. Fromm says that the essential teachings of all the humanistic religions in the world can be summarized in one sentence: "It is the goal of man to overcome one's narcissism. Perhaps this principle is nowhere expressed more radically than in Buddhism."

Fromm concludes on these lines that if man sheds the “illusion of his indestructible ego” and the other objects of greed, only then can he be totally open, awake and be fully related to the world. The illusion of the indestructible ego that Fromm mentions is quite clearly a reference to the Buddhist doctrine of Anatta (egolessness). There is no ego entity existing apart and independently of those physical and mental processes that constitute life.

### **3 – The Fire Sermon (*Aditta-pariyaya-Sutta*)**

The third cardinal discourse, the Fire Sermon, was delivered some months later to an audience of a thousand ascetics converted from the heaven-bent practice of fire worship to Bhikkhus. These first three sermons are known as the Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha. The Fire Sermon contains one Buddhist doctrine.

### **Doctrine No. 5 – The Six Senses Are Burning**

The Buddha said, “All is burning. All six sensing gates that include the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and minds; the six senses that are vision (form and color), sound, smell, taste, touch, and ideas; the six sensual contact; as well as 6 states of consciousness; and 6 feelings; are burning with the fire of craving, lust and greed; with the fire of hate and anger; and with the fire of delusion and ignorance. I say it is burning with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, with lamentations, with pains, with grief, with despairs.

“When a noble follower who has heard the truth sees thus, he finds estrangement in the senses, in consciousness, in contacts and feelings. When he finds estrangement, passion fades out. With the fading and cessation of passion, he is liberated. When liberated, there is knowledge that he is liberated. He understands: 'Birth is exhausted, the holy life has been lived out, what can be done is done, of this there is no more beyond.’”

The Bhikkhus were glad and they approved his words. During his utterance, the hearts of those thousand Bhikkhus were liberated from taints through clinging no more.

## **4 – The Buddha’s Teachings on the Existence of Beings, Their World, and Related Subjects**

Before continuing to the next important doctrine on the law of Kamma, let us pause a bit to reflect on the three cardinal discourses of the Buddha and to review the related concepts. The Anatta doctrine in the second sermon requires the understanding of the Buddha’s concepts of the existence of beings and their worlds in order to fully understand and accept the doctrine. Here are all the concepts and definitions:

**The Existence of Beings** - The Buddha’s belief on the existence of beings is simple: there is no creator God and there is no naturally formed temporary existence that annihilates at death. The existence of being is simply a phenomenal process of aggregates. For humans there are five aggregates. When the being dies, the aggregates also die. However, the life cycle continues with rebirth by the force of Kamma in another process, and the being process continues in the next existence.

**The Five Aggregates (*Khandha*) of Human Life** - Humans have five aggregates, one physical form aggregate and four mental aggregates in abstract formats. These are:

1. Aggregate of Physical Form (*Rupa Khandha*) - This is the human body. It is called form (*Rupa*), because it is afflicted (*Ruppati*) with cold and heat, with hunger and thirst, and with touch. The human body with 32 organs is not a stable entity, but a continuum of matter as explained below.
2. Aggregate of Feeling (*Vedana Khandha*) - This includes the affective feelings of pleasure, suffering and equanimity, all based on the six senses.
3. Aggregate of Perception (*Sañña Khandha*) - This is the recognition of objects and color, sound, smell, taste, touch and ideas.

4. Aggregate of Mental Fabrications (*Sankhara Khandha*) - This covers all aspects of action including willing, planning, and making by mind. This aggregate also fabricates form, feeling, perception, mental fabrication and consciousness as a fabricated thing.
5. Aggregate of Consciousness (*Vinnana Khandha*) - This is consciousness of the senses such as bitterness, saltiness, sourness and sweetness.

**The Five Clinging Aggregates** - When the above five aggregates are cling-able and are accompanied with mental fermentation (*Asav*), they are called the five clinging-aggregates.

**The Body (*Kaya*)** - The human body, the first aggregate, is not a stable entity. It is composed of millions of small compound particles called (*Kalapas*). Each particle is a compound formed by four basic elements, namely the solid earth element (*Pathavi*), a liquid water element (*Apo*), a calorific fire element (*Tejo*) and an oscillatory free moving air element (*Vayo*). These small particles are short lived and are constantly being replaced by new particles. They are all in a state of perpetual change or flux. The body needs food, liquids and air to support growth and to provide energy. There are 32 body parts such as the heart, lungs, bones, flesh, etc.

**The Mind (*Mano*)** - The mind is composed of the remaining four aggregates of feeling, perception, mental fabrication and consciousness. The mind is conditioned by contact with the six senses. Contact is the cause and the condition for the delineation of the mind aggregates. The mind proceeds all actions; it is the commander who directs, manages, and acts on mental, verbal, and physical activities. The mind also needs mental nutriments to acquire wisdom and knowledge.

**The Name & Form (*Namarupa*)** – This is the union of mental (*Nāma*) and physical phenomena (*Rūpa*). It is also translated as mind and body; mind and matter; and mentality and physicality. This is the complete man who is given a name for individuality.

**The Four Nutriments** - There are four nutriments for the establishing of beings and for future rebirth. The four nutriments are: 1. Physical solid food and liquid drink, gross or refined. 2. Sense-contacts. 3. Sense-consciousness. 4. Intellectual intention.

**The Six Sensing Gates** – The body has six sensing gates, namely the eyes, ears, nose, tongue/mouth, body and mind, to take the nutriments and senses.

**The Six Senses** – The six external senses are form and color or sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and ideas. This is also defined as sense media or sense base.

**The Six Sensual Contacts (*Phassa*)** – The six contacts between body-gates and external senses are eye contact, ear contact, nose contact, tongue contact, body contact and mind contact.

**The Feelings (*Vedana*)** - The affective feelings of bodily or mental pleasure and pain with the neutral feeling of equanimity (neither pain nor pleasure) are based on the six senses.

**The Perception: (*Sañña*)** – This simply means recognition of the six senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and ideas).

**Mental Fabrication (*Sankhara*)** – This means making mental actions. Other translations of the term Sankhara include mental formations, mental determination, volitional energy, and Kamma formations. It

covers all aspects of actions including willing, planning, making, choosing, and using. Actions include all mental, verbal, and physical actions. Sankhara is also used to designate fabricated forms and materials, living or non-living, with associated character of change and decay.

**Estrangement (*Nibbida*)** – This means finding out the intimate hidden contradictoriness in any kind of self-identification based on form, feeling, perception, determinations or consciousness. It means seeing any object as impermanent and subject to pain and suffering, and turning the mind to the exhaustion of craving and the fading of passion.

**The Six Senses of Consciousness (*Vinnana*)** – The six senses of consciousness are eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness and mind consciousness.

**Craving (*Tanha*)** – Craving includes passion, lust, delight, craving for the nutriment of physical food, and the six senses. Ultimately craving is for sensuality, for becoming or for non-becoming.

**Clinging (*Upadana*)** – Clinging is the attachment to sensuality, views, precepts and practices, and theories of the self. It happens because of craving.

**The Cycle of Life - Birth, Suffering, and Death (*Samsara*)** - Birth and death are two ends of the same process of life. Death ends one process, but does not end the cycle of life. The Samsara journey continues with rebirth and starts another process after death. The cycle of life is kept going by the force of Kamma, the natural law of action and effect. The Samsara process is supported by nutrition.

Samsara is like a never-ending journey of a train on a circular track. The journey begins when one gets on the train and ends when he gets off. Afterward, he gets on the train again to start another journey. The Samsara journey really ends when one is liberated from suffering and enters Nibbana.

**Rebirth** – Rebirth means being reborn into any one of the thirty-one realms, not necessarily to a human realm. It may be the hells, the animal world, the world of ghosts or demons, the human world or the heavens.

The Kamma energy (*Kamma Vego*) is necessary for rebirth. Through wholesome deeds rooted in generosity, kindness and wisdom, one beautifies one's mind and thereby creates bright Kamma, which is productive for a happy rebirth to preferred realms. Through unwholesome deeds rooted in greed, hatred and delusion, one creates unwholesome dark Kamma, which is the generative cause of bad rebirths, of future misery and bondage in the realms of deprivation.

The ultimate implication of the Buddha's teaching on Kamma and rebirth is that human beings are the final masters of their own destiny. Rebirth is not reincarnation of the soul. In other words, it is not really the transmigration of a real being or a soul entity; it is the transmission of the Kamma energy.

However, many people in the past as well as the present have wondered what is passed on and how it happens. The Buddha did not clarify and reveal the details, although he made rebirth an integral part of his Dhamma. He said such details are not necessary for the Dhamma practice. The details do not add any effective understanding and logic; they just make the rebirth principle more confusing to mind consciousness. The details are super abstract facts like the electromagnetic field.

By using wisdom to dig more deeply below the superficial face of things, we can uncover the Buddha's subtle truths hidden by our preoccupation with appearances. Thereby we can uproot the binding defilements and win the peace of deliverance, the freedom beyond the cycle of Kamma and its fruit.

Many modern transcendental researchers on the psyche and mindfulness meditation have indicated that a much deeper field than the electromagnetic field exists in nature. This unified field is making all kinds of laws for nature. These researchers may one day provide the answers to the metaphysical.

**The Defilements (*Kilesa*)** – The desires, passions or craving, aversion and delusion with regard to the sense gates, senses, sensual consciousness and sensual contact are defilements. There are ten kinds of defilements, namely craving (*Loba*) for form and existence (*Rupa-raga*), craving for non-form existence (*Arupa-raga*), aversion (*Dosa*), delusion (*Avijja*), personal ego belief (*Sakkaya-ditthi*), doubt (*Vicikiccha*), wrong conception of practice (*Silabbata-paramasa*), ill will (*Byapada*), conceit (*Mana*), and restlessness (*Uddhacca*).

**Nibbana** - Nibbāna means liberation from the three evils and cessation of suffering. It denotes the extinguishing of a fire of passion. It carries the connotations of stilling, cooling, and inner peace. 'Total nibbāna' denotes the experience of Awakening, and in others the final passing away of an Arahant.

**The Three Worlds of Universe** - The Buddha classified the whole universe into three worlds as follow:

1. **The World of the Physical Universe (*Okasa-Loka*)** – This world consists of many worlds in the solar system in which non-living things and living beings have their existence. Thus heaven is the physical world of celestial beings, while Earth is the physical world of humans, animals, and things in general.
2. **The World of Form or Materials (*Sankhara-Loka*)** – This world covers all non-living forms, materials and matters and all living beings with form like humans and animals. These forms and materials are compounded and conditioned. They are subject to changes and decay. This is the physical earth world. It is the world of fabrication (Sankhara) with the phenomena process.
3. **The World of Beings (*Satta-Loka*)** – This world covers all thirty-one realms of living creatures or beings including Brahmas, devas, humans, demons, ghosts, animals and beings in hell.

**The Thirty-One Realms of Existence of Beings** - There are thirty-one distinct 'planes' or 'realms' of existence into which beings can be reborn during their long wandering through Samsara. These range from the extraordinarily grim and painful hell realms all the way up to the most exquisitely refined and blissful heaven realms. They are also the process of aggregates, but they may or may not have a complete five aggregates. These realms exist in the world of beings (*Satta-Loka*).

**The Three Worlds (*Loka or Bhumi*) of Beings** - The world of beings is customarily sub-divided into three distinct 'worlds' listed here in descending order of refinement:

- The Immaterial World (*Arupa-Loka*). Consists of four immaterial or formless (Brahma) realms that are accessible to those who pass away while meditating on the formless (*Jhanas*).
- The Fine-Material World (*Rupa-Loka*). Consists of sixteen fine material (form) Brahma realms that are accessible to those who have attained at least some level of Jhana. The Fine-Material World and the Immaterial World together constitute the heavens (*Sagga*).

- The Sensuous World (*Kamma-Loka*). Consists of eleven realms that include six deva realms, one human realm and four lower realms of woe or deprivation (*Payajhana*). This world is governed by the Law of Kamma.

Twenty-seven of these realms are favorable destinations and include our own human realm as well as several realms occupied by devas and Brahmas. Beings can be liberated from the human (*Manussa*) realm only. The lowest four (*Payajhana*) realms are the ‘bad’ destinations, which include the ghost (*Peta*), demon (*Asura*), animal (*Tiriccihna*) and hell (*Niraya*) realms.

**The Questions of Metaphysics** – The Buddha was presented with many metaphysical questions, such as the origin of universe, the eternity of cosmos, and what passes on to the next life. The Buddha refused to answer such questions because such facts are unnecessary for the liberation of suffering and attainment of Nibbana. He compared the questioner to a wounded man who has been shot by an arrow and asks unnecessary questions before taking treatment for his wounds. He also said that there are innumerable subjects not revealed by him, but they are also not concerned with the holy life or contribute any benefit to the Dhamma practice.

## 5 – The Law of Kamma

Kamma literally means action, but ultimately it means volition (*Cetana*). Involuntary and unintentional actions not Kamma actions. The doctrine of action and effect (Kamma) is one of the Buddha's main teachings. It is the prime teaching that sets him apart from his contemporaries. It addresses an unequal and ill-balanced world and answers the questions: Why people are different? Why is one born rich and another poor? Why do some people die young and others grow old? What causes these inequalities? Who is responsible?

Before the Buddha there were three sectarian views on human fate. One view was that whatever a person experiences whether pleasant, painful, or neither pleasant nor painful, is caused by God’s creation. Another view was that whatever a person experiences is caused by what was done in the past. The third view was that whatever a person experiences is without cause and without condition.

These three views, which are still present, are obsessive and extreme. The Buddha said, “When one’s experience is the result of a Supreme Being’s act of creation or the past Kamma done in previous life or without cause and without condition as stated in these views, there is no desire and no effort in this present life to correct the experience. No one takes the ownership of one’s experience.”

The Buddha took a middle ground on the law of Kamma, as before. His view was that one’s own past Kamma actions gave discernable results of different desirability now, and those results could be modified by one’s own present Kamma actions. Each person is the owner of his actions and his experience is the result of his Kamma. All the inequalities in the world are the results of different Kammās. Here is the Buddha’s doctrine on Kamma:

## Doctrine No. 6 – The Law of Kamma

Intentional action or volition is Kamma. There are two divisions of Kamma: old Kamma or old intended actions from past lives, and new Kamma, the new intended actions taken physically (Kaya Kamma), verbally (Vaci Kamma) and mentally (Mano Kamma) in the present life. The effects that one experiences now are due to both old and new Kamma.

The law of Kamma is non-linear and complex. It has multiple feedback loops, with the present moment shaped both by past and present Kamma. The present actions shape not only the future lives but also the present life.

There are four types of Kamma: Kamma that is dark with dark results; Kamma that is bright with bright results; Kamma that is dark and bright with dark and bright results; and Kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright results. The last type leads to the end of Samsara and it is essentially the cessation of Kamma formation.

The cause of Kamma action is the six sensual contacts. Kamma is experienced in all realms of the beings in the Kamma world including those six deva realms. The result of Kamma is of three sorts: that which arises right here and now, that which arises later in this lifetime, and that which arises in future lives. The cessation of sensual contact is the cessation of Kamma and the Noble Eightfold Path is the way of practice leading to the cessation of Kamma.

### **Kamma and Causes**

There are six classes of intention: intention aimed at sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch sensations and ideas. They are divided into three kinds of fabrications: meritorious fabrications that ripen in pleasure, demeritorious fabrications that ripen in pain, and imperturbable fabrications that bring formless states of mental absorption (*Jhana*).

There are two sorts of right views. One is Relative Right View with fermentations, and this sides with merit resulting in the acquisitions of becoming. The other is Absolute Noble Right View without fermentations and this is transcendent.

The Relative Right View produces fruits that are the results of good and bad actions in this life, the next life and future lives of Samsara. The Absolute Noble Right View means knowledge in terms of suffering, knowledge in terms of the origination of suffering, knowledge in terms of the cessation of stress, and knowledge in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress. This is called the Four Noble Right View that liberates beings from the never-ending Samsara and takes them to Nibbana. This Noble Right View is a factor of the Eightfold Path.

### **Skillfulness**

Abandon what is unskillful. It can be done. It should be done because it is non-conducive to benefit and happiness. Develop what is skillful. It can be done. It should be done because it is conducive to benefit and happiness.

There are three great evils: greed (*Loba*), aversion (*Dosa*), and delusion (*Moha*). They are the roots of unskillful things. If a person is overcome by evils, his mind is possessed by evils. He kills living beings, takes what is not given, performs sexual misconduct with another person's wife or daughter, and tells lies, makes

abusive speech, divisive speech, and idle chatter. He is doing unskillful acts that will result in long-term harm and suffering. The worst unskillful acts are taking the life of a mother, father, or monk, wounding the Buddha, and splitting the community of monks.

Bodily acts, verbal acts and mental acts are to be done with repeated reflection. You should reflect on whether the act you want to perform will lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both. Is it an unskillful act with painful consequences and results? If yes, don't do it.

What is skillful? Three physical skillful acts are abstaining from taking life, from taking what is not given, and from sexual misconduct. Abstaining from lying, abusive speech, divisive speech, and idle chatter are four skillful verbal acts. Lack of covetousness, lack of malevolence, and right views are three skillful mental acts. These are ten righteous good actions (Kusala-Kammaphata). Ten opposite actions (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, harsh speech, slander, useless talk, evil mind, ill will, & wrong view) are unwholesome and unskillful courses of action (Akusala-Kammaphata).

## Results

There are four kinds of Kamma based on the severity of actions and effects. The first one is serious action (*Garuka Kamma*) that produces its effects in this life or future lives. The second is death-approximate or near death (*Asana Kamma*) that produces the most effects in the next lives. The third is habitual (*Acinna Kamma*) that produces its effects in this life and lesser effects on next lives. The present effect molds the character of a person and his living conditions. The fourth is cumulative (*Kafatta Kamma*), embraces all small effects of minor offenses and produces effects in this life or next lives if the other three Kamma effects cannot influence the next lives. A person who conducts the worst unskillful acts goes directly to hell. There is no corrective remedy to change the bad Kamma.

The results of all Kamma are accumulative. For example, the effects of serious dark Kamma can be neutralized by the effects of serious brighter Kamma or the effects of near death bright Kamma.

The Buddha illustrated the accumulated effects this way: If a certain person does unskillful acts, after death he will usually reappear in the plane of deprivation, a bad destination. But sometimes he can reappear in good destinations, even in the heavenly world, because his bright Kamma from past lives, later in this life, or near death take over his dark Kamma. Similarly, a man making skillful acts may reappear in a good or bad destination.

In another Sutta the Buddha addressed the effects of various serious dark actions when the doer is reborn back into the human realm. A murderer will be short-lived wherever he is reborn. A man who injured others will be reborn sickly. An angry man will be ugly, etc. Beings are the owners of their Kamma, heir to their Kamma, born of their Kamma, related through their Kamma, and have their Kamma as their arbitrator. Kamma is what creates distinctions among beings in terms of coarseness and refinement. Similarly, the Buddha addressed the positive effects of bright Kamma in the next life such as long life and good health..

There is the case when a trifling evil deed is done by a certain individual with an undeveloped mind but discernment takes him to hell. There is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by another individual with a developed mind and discernment is experienced in the here and now. This is like a small grain of salt in a small cup of water and that same grain of salt in a big bucket of water. The saltiness is not the same.

These are a few Suttas on Kamma. Kamma is a complicated law where no one takes account of one's actions and no one is deciding the outcome. It is a law of nature. In Buddhism there is no God who creates and decides the fate of the individual. I will end this section with one more Sutta.

In this Sutta, the Buddha compared two people, one hero who killed enemies of the king and a vigilante who killed the citizens of the king. The hero was rewarded with garlands and sensual pleasures, while the vigilante was bound and sentenced to death. They conducted the same unskillful acts, but they got different results even in this life.

The Law of Kamma is not the only a law of nature. These cases presented above indicate that the effect may or may not follow the Law of Kamma. Mostly the effects will be the results of the Kamma causes with a few exceptions. In one sense the effect is the result of Kamma. In another sense the effect is not totally the result of the Kamma. That is because there are four more laws of nature in this universe that also influence the effects.

## 6 – The Natural Orders or Laws of Universe

According to the Buddha, there are five orders of processes (*Niyamas*) or natural laws that operate in the physical and mental realms of the universe. They are:

1. *Kamma Niyama* – The order of cause and effect given above for the experience of beings.
2. *Utu Niyama* – The physical inorganic order such as the seasonal phenomena of winds and rains. It is the law of inorganic matter.
3. *Bija Niyama* – The order of germs and seeds or the physical organic order such as rice production from rice seeds or the sweet taste from sugarcane. The scientific theory of cells and genes may be included in this order. It is the natural law of organic matter.
4. *Cita Niyama* – The order of mind and psychic law such as the processes of consciousness, power of mind, etc. This is the natural law for mental aggregates.
5. *Dhamma Niyama* – The order of the norm such as the natural phenomena processes occurring at the advent of a Bodhisattva in his last birth or gravitation, magnetic fields, etc. This is the natural law for phenomenal processes.

These all-embracing five orders or laws can explain every mental or physical phenomenon. Kamma is only one of the five laws that prevails in the Universe. The orders are natural laws like gravitation or magnetic fields. There is no law-giver as they operate in their own field without the intervention of an external independent ruling agency. Nobody decreed that fire should burn, and nobody commanded that water seek its own level. These are intrinsic characteristics.

The Buddha did not create these laws and the Buddha could not interfere with these laws. And Buddhism does not believe in an almighty God who can determine the fate of an individual. Buddhists believe that the sorrow and happiness one experiences are the natural outcomes of one's own good and bad actions. We are the masters of our own lives and we create what we are.

## 7 – The Analysis of Dependent Co-arising (*Paticca Samuppada Vibhanga Sutta*)

The Buddha utilized a long sequential logic to clarify the Dhamma doctrines. In this Sutta, he gave the analysis of Dependent Co-arising logic to define ignorance (*Avijja*) as the root cause of suffering (*Dukkha*).

Ignorance means not knowing the Four Noble Truths of Dukkha. This sequential logic includes twelve conditions each supporting the next in eleven steps. Here is the entire logical sequence:

1. From ignorance (*Avijja*) as a requisite or supporting condition come mental fabrications (*Sankhara*).
2. From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness (*Viññana*).
3. From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name and form (*Namarupa*).
4. From name and form as a requisite condition come the six sense media (*Salayatana*).
5. From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes sense contact (*Phassa*).
6. From sense contact as a requisite condition comes feeling (*Vedana*).
7. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving (*Tanha*).
8. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance (*Upadana*).
9. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes existing (*Bhava*).
10. From existing as a requisite condition comes birth (*Jati*).
11. From birth as a requisite condition then aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair come into play (*Dukkha*).

Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress and suffering.

The corollary of this formula, which constantly accompanies it, describes the conditioned fading and cessation of suffering. It shows how when ignorance ceases, fabrication ceases, consciousness ceases, name and form cease, six-fold sense media ceases, contact ceases, feeling ceases, craving ceases, clinging ceases, existence ceases, birth ceases and finally, the cessation of the entire mass of suffering.

This type of logic was a new and bold reasoning at the time of Buddha. It is neat and clever. Even Ven. Ananda exclaimed to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, lord, it's astounding, how deep this dependent co-arising is and how deep its appearance, and yet to me it seems as clear as clear can be."

The Buddha concurred. He said, "Don't say that, Ananda. Don't say that. Deep is this dependent co-arising and deep its appearance. It is because of not understanding and not penetrating this Dhamma that this generation is like a tangled skein, a knotted ball of string, like matted rushes and reeds, and does not go beyond transmigration, beyond the planes of deprivation, woe, and bad destinations." (Note – Here, I am taking the note from the work of one monk. The note in the next section is the work of another monk. Sometimes they have two different words for the translations of the same Pali word, but they meant the same.)

## **8 – Transcendental Dependent Arising (*Paticca Samuppada Upanisa Sutta*)**

Transcendental Dependent Arising (*Paticca Samuppada*) is the central principle of the Buddha's teaching. This principle is so crucial to the Buddha's doctrine that an insight into Dependent Arising is held to be sufficient to yield an understanding of the entire teaching. In the words of the Buddha: "He who sees dependent arising sees the Dhamma; he who sees the Dhamma sees dependent arising."

In the Upanisa Sutta, the Discourse on Supporting Conditions, he put together two applications of Dependent Arising. The first application is the usual one, the causal sequence of Samsaric suffering given above. The second application of Dependent Arising structures the path leading to deliverance from suffering. The second sequence also has twelve conditions in eleven steps. Here are the complete twenty-two steps in reverse sequence - the destruction of the cankers from ignorance:

- 1 Knowledge of destruction of the cankers (*Asavakkhaye ñāna*) has emancipation (*Vimutti*) as a supporting condition.
- 2 Emancipation has dispassion (*Viraga*) as a supporting condition.
- 3 Dispassion has disenchantment (*Nibbida*) as a supporting condition.
- 4 Disenchantment has knowledge and vision of things as they are (*Yathabhutañānadassana*) as a supporting condition.
- 5 Knowledge and vision of things as they are has concentration (*Samadhi*) as a supporting condition.
- 6 Concentration has happiness (*Sukha*) as a supporting condition.
- 7 Happiness has tranquillity (*Passaddhi*) as a supporting condition.
- 8 Tranquillity has rapture (*Piti*) as a supporting condition.
- 9 Rapture has joy (*Pamojja*) as a supporting condition.
- 10 Joy has faith (*Saddha*) as a supporting condition.
- 11 Faith has suffering (*Dukkha*) as a supporting condition.
- 12 Suffering has birth (*Jati*) as a supporting condition.
- 13 Birth has existence (*Bhava*) as a supporting condition.
- 14 Existence has clinging (*Upadana*) as a supporting condition.
- 15 Clinging has craving (*Tanha*) as a supporting condition.
- 16 Craving has feeling (*Vedana*) as a supporting condition.
- 17 Feeling has contact (*Phassa*) as a supporting condition.
- 18 Contact has six-fold sense base (*Salayatana*) as a supporting condition.
- 19 Six-fold sense base has mentality-materiality (*Namarupa*) as a supporting condition.
- 20 Mentality-materiality has consciousness (*Viññana*) as a supporting condition.
- 21 Consciousness has Kamma formations (*Sankhara*) as a supporting condition.
- 22 Kamma formations have ignorance (*Avijja*) as a supporting condition.

The sequence can be repeated in the normal forward order, such as ignorance is the supporting condition for Kamma formations, Kamma formations are the supporting condition for consciousness, and so on, ending with emancipation as the supporting condition for the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers.

When rain descends heavily upon some mountaintops, the water flows down along the slope and fills the clefts, gullies, and creeks. These being filled, fill up the pools, fill up the ponds, fill up the streams, fill up the rivers, and fill up the great ocean. In the same way, the Dependent Arising follows the sequence. The Buddha repeated the whole sequence in forward order again.

## 9 – The Human Mind

The human mind is so fickle and unsteady that it is difficult to guard and control. The mind is extremely subtle and hard to detect, but it is ever swift in seizing whatever it desires. Dwelling in the cave of the heart, the mind without form wanders far and alone. It is wise to subdue and tame this mind. A tamed and guarded mind brings happiness. Otherwise, the mind can be agitated, corrupted and obsessed with evils. The Buddha said in Anusaya Sutta 1 that there are seven kinds of obsessions (*Anusaya*), namely:

1. The obsession of sensual passion (*Kāma-rāg Anusaya*).
2. The obsession of resistance (*Paṭigh Anusaya*).
3. The obsession of views (*Diṭṭh Anusaya*).
4. The obsession of uncertainty (*Vicikicch Anusaya*).

5. The obsession of conceit (*Mān Anusaya*).
6. The obsession of passion for becoming or life (*Bhava-rāg Anusaya*).
7. The obsession of ignorance (*Avijj Anusaya*).

With the abandonment and destruction of these seven obsessions, the holy life is fulfilled. When each obsession has been abandoned, its root is destroyed and it deprives the conditions of future development and future arising. This is what happens when a monk who has cut through craving has turned away from the fetter, and by rightly breaking through conceit has put an end to suffering and stress (Anusaya Sutta 2).

The Buddha continued in another Cetana Sutta that the seven obsessions, with or without intention (*Cetana*), are supporting conditions for the stationing of consciousness. With consciousness there is renewed becoming and suffering in the future. Only when there is no intention and no obsession, is there no support for consciousness and no future rebirth. Such is the cessation of suffering.

## 10 – The Moral Discipline (*Sila Kkhandha*)

Virtue or moral conduct (*Sila*) is the cornerstone upon which the entire Noble Eightfold Path is built. The practice of virtue is defined by the middle three factors of the Eightfold Path (Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood). But it is the starting point for Buddhist practice. At one time the Buddha told a monk, "First, establish yourself in the starting point of wholesome states. That is, in purified moral discipline and in Right View. Then, when your moral discipline is purified and your view straight, you should practice the four foundations of mindfulness.

The Pali word for moral discipline, *Sila*, has three levels of meaning:

1. Inner virtue, i.e., endowment with such qualities as kindness, contentment, simplicity, truthfulness, patience, love, compassion, etc.
2. Virtuous actions of body and speech which express those inner virtues outwardly
3. Rules of conduct governing actions of body and speech designed to bring them into accord with the ethical ideals.

*Sila* has the characteristic of harmonizing our actions of body and speech. The harmony achieved by maintaining *Sila* does not stop at the social level, but leads our actions into harmony with a higher law — the law of Kamma, of action and its fruit, which reigns invisibly behind the entire world of sentient existence.

The Buddha prescribed a set of precepts as guidelines to good conduct. The most basic set of precepts found in the Buddha's teaching is the (*Pañca-Sila*), the five precepts. This section deals with moral conducts and here are all three sets of rules:

### The Five Precepts (*Pañca-Sila*)

The Buddha considered killing, stealing, illicit sexual misconduct, and incorrect speech serious unskillful actions. He also thought that intoxication allows the three evils of *Loba*, *Dosa* and *Moha* to penetrate one's mind and cause him to engage in physical, verbal, and mental misconduct. So he laid down the five precepts for the laymen to follow. These five precepts are the minimal ethical code for the Buddhist laity. They are administered regularly by the monks to the lay disciples at almost every service and ceremony, following

immediately after taking refuge to the Triple Gem. These basic training rules are observed by all practicing lay Buddhists on a daily basis:

1. *Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.
2. *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.
3. *Kamesu micchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct.
4. *Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from making incorrect speech (lies, slander, abuse, and idle chatter).
5. *Suramerayamajja pamadatthana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs, which lead to carelessness.

### **The Eight Precepts (*Attha-Sila*)**

These eight precepts retain the five precepts with one modified third precept and three more precepts on moderations. They are observed by the lay disciples on the special Uposatha Observance Days.

1. I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.
2. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.
3. *Abrahmacariya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* – I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual activity.
4. I undertake the precept to refrain from making incorrect speech.
5. I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs, which lead to carelessness.
6. *Vikalabhojana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from eating at the forbidden time (i.e. after noon).
7. *Nacca-gita-vadita-visukkadassana mala-gandha-vilepana-dharana-mandana-vibhusanathana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainment, wearing garlands, using perfumes, and beautifying the body with cosmetics.
8. *Uccasayana-mahasayana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place.

The Buddhist observance days are:

- Sangha Magha Puja Day (full moon day in February)
- Buddha Visakha Puja Vesak Day (full moon day in May)

- Dhamma Asalha Puja Day (full moon day in July)
- End of the Rains Retreat (Pavarana) Day (full moon day in October).
- End of One Month After Rains Retreat (Anapanasati) Day (full moon day in November)

### **The Ten Precepts (Dasa-Sila)**

Novice monks (*Samanera*) and nuns (*Samaneri*) observe the Ten Precepts. They are similar to the eight precepts except one precept is divided into two and one new precept is added for money. Here are the last four of the ten precepts:

7. *Nacca-gita-vadita-visukkadassana -vibhusanattana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainment.

8. *Mala-gandha-vilepana-dharana-mandana-vibhusanattana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from wearing garlands, using perfumes, and beautifying the body with cosmetics.

9. *Uccasayana-mahasayana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place.

10. *Jatarupa-rajata-patiggahana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami* - I undertake the precept to refrain from accepting gold and silver (money).

### **The Rewards of Virtue**

The rewards and blessings of wholesome morality are freedom from remorse or faith, joy, rapture, tranquility, happiness, concentration, vision and knowledge, detachment or disenchantment, and deliverance or dispassion.

### **The Benefits of the Precepts**

Abstaining from the taking of life leads to longevity, abstaining from stealing to prosperity, abstaining from sexual misconduct to popularity, abstaining from false speech to a good reputation, and abstaining from intoxicants to mindfulness and wisdom.

There are five sets of great gifts, one set each for each precept undertaken. Each set includes three gifts: freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression.

Five blessings accrue to the righteous person through his practice of virtue:

1. A great increase of wealth through diligence.
2. A favorable reputation.
3. A confident deportment without timidity in every society.
4. A serene death.

5. After death, rebirth in a happy state in a heavenly world.

When a person spends time with friends who are advanced in virtue, he talks and discusses with them about their conviction and virtue. Then he consummates conviction, virtue, generosity and discernment.

At any time when a disciple of the Buddha is recollecting his virtue, his mind is not overcome with passion, aversion, and delusion. His mind holds straight based on virtue and he gains a sense of the goal, a sense of the Dhamma, and joy connected with the Dhamma. In one who is joyful, rapture arises. The body grows calm and the calmed body experiences ease. In his ease, the mind is concentrated.

## **11 – The Concentration Discipline (*Samadhi Kkhandha*)**

The division of concentration discipline (*Samadhi Kkhandha*) is comprised of three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration). Right Effort provides the energy demanded by the task, Right Mindfulness gives the steady points for awareness, and Right Concentration brings the requisite stillness to the mind by unifying it with undistracted focus on a suitable object.

### **Right Effort (*Samma Vayama*)**

Energy (*Viriya*), the mental factor behind Right Effort, can appear in either wholesome or unwholesome forms. The same factor fuels desire, aggression, violence, and ambition on the one hand and generosity, self-discipline, kindness, concentration, and understanding on the other.

The unwholesome states (*Akusala Dhamma*) are the defilements and the thoughts, emotions, and intentions derived from them. The wholesome states (*Kusala Dhamma*) are states of mind untainted by defilements, especially those conducive to deliverance.

The Buddha has stressed the need for effort, diligence, exertion, and unflagging perseverance to prevent the arising of un-arisen unwholesome states, to abandon arisen unwholesome states, to arouse un-arisen wholesome states, and to maintain arisen wholesome states. These are four right efforts:

### **Right Mindfulness (*Samma Satipatthana*)**

Mindfulness is the presence of mind, attentiveness or awareness. Yet the kind of awareness involved in mindfulness differs profoundly from the kind of awareness at work in our usual mode of consciousness. All consciousness involves awareness in the sense of knowing or experiencing an object. But with the practice of mindfulness, awareness is applied at a special pitch.

The task is simply to note whatever comes up just as it is occurring. The Buddha calls this process of mental construction elaboration, embellishment, or conceptual proliferation (*Papañca*). Mindfulness exercises are a powerful grounding function, as they facilitate the achievement of both serenity and insight.

Right Mindfulness is cultivated through a practice called The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Cattaro Satipatthana*). This is the mindful contemplation of four objective spheres: the body, feelings, states of mind, and phenomena. The contemplation of the body is concerned with the material side of existence; the other three are concerned principally (though not solely) with the mental side. The four applications of mindfulness are:

1. Contemplation of the Body (*Kayanupassana*) - The Buddha begins his exposition of the body with contemplation of the mindfulness of breathing (*Anapanasati*).
2. Contemplation of Feeling (*Vedananupassana*) - The next foundation of mindfulness is feeling (*Vedana*). In the early stages, the contemplation of feeling involves attending to the arisen feelings and noting their distinctive qualities that could be pleasant, painful or neutral as the practice advances. As one goes on noting each feeling, letting it go and noting the next, the focus of attention shifts from the qualities of feelings to the process of feeling itself.
3. Contemplation of the State of Mind (*Cittanupassana*) - With this foundation of mindfulness we turn from a particular mental factor, feeling, to the general state of mind to which that factor belongs.
4. Contemplation of Phenomena (*Dhammanupassana*) - In the context of the fourth foundation of mindfulness, the multivalent word (*Dhamma*) has two interconnected meanings. One is the mental factor (*Cetasikas*). The other is the element of actuality, or the ultimate constituents of experience.

### **Right Concentration (*Samma Samadhi*)**

The eighth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path is Right Concentration. Concentration represents an intensification of a mental factor present in every state of consciousness. This factor, one-pointedness of mind (*Citt'ekaggata*), has the function of unifying the other mental factors in the task of cognition. Samadhi is defined as the centering of the mind and mental factors rightly and evenly on an object. Right Concentration means withdrawing from sensuality and unskillful acts. Samadhi, as wholesome concentration, can be developed through either of two methods:

1. The development of serenity (*Samatha-Bhavana*). The goal of this system of practice is directed expressly towards the attainment of deep concentration at the level of absorption.
2. The development of insight (*Vipassana-Bhavana*). This path is intended to generate the incidental accompaniment of insight.

Concentration is not attained all at once, but develops in stages. The four Jhanas make up the usual textual definition of Right Concentration. Thus, the Buddha says:

- Secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and dwells in the first Jhana, which is accompanied by initial and sustained application of mind and filled with rapture and happiness born of seclusion.
- Then, with the subsiding of initial and sustained application of mind, by gaining inner confidence and mental unification, he enters and dwells in the second Jhana, which is free from initial and sustained application but is filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration.
- With the fading out of rapture, he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending, and he experiences in his own person that bliss of which the noble ones say, 'Happily lives he who is equanimous and mindful.' Thus he enters and dwells in the third Jhana.
- With the abandoning of pleasure and pain and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and dwells in the fourth Jhana, which has neither-pleasure-nor-pain and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

“The ending of the mental fermentations depends on the first Jhana... the second Jhana... the third... the fourth... the dimension of the infinitude of space... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the

dimension of nothingness. I tell you, the ending of the mental fermentations depends on the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception."

The higher reaches of the Dhamma may seem remote from us in our present position and the demands of practice may appear difficult to fulfill. But even if the heights of realization are now distant, all that we need to reach them lies just beneath our feet. The entire Dhamma with its Noble Eightfold Path is always accessible to us; they are mental components that can be established in the mind simply through determination and effort.

We have to begin by straightening out our views and clarifying our intentions. Then we have to purify our conduct — our speech, action, and livelihood. Taking these measures as our foundation, we have to apply ourselves with energy and mindfulness to the cultivation of concentration and insight. The rest is a matter of gradual practice and gradual progress, without expecting quick results. For some, progress may be rapid, for others it may be slow, but the rate at which progress occurs should not cause elation or discouragement.

Liberation is the inevitable fruit of the path and is bound to blossom forth when there is steady and persistent practice. The only requirements for reaching the final goal are two: to start and to continue. If these requirements are met, there is no doubt the goal will be attained. This is the Dhamma, the undeviating law. More information on the meditation practices are given in Part III.

## **12 – The Five Spiritual Faculties**

The practice of the Buddha's teaching is most commonly depicted in the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddhist scriptures, however, illustrate the quest for liberation in a variety of other ways. One of the groups of factors given special prominence in the Buddha's Suttas is the Five Cardinal Virtues or spiritual faculties (*Indriya*). These are the faculties of faith, vigor or energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. The same five virtues are called powers (*Bala*). The emphasis is on the fact that they are unshakable by their opposites. Spiritual progress depends on the emergence of these five virtues.

### **Faculty of Faith**

Faith is called 'the seed', and without it the plant of spiritual life cannot start at all. This faith is much more than the mere acceptance of beliefs. It requires the combination of four factors — intellectual, volitional, emotional and social. Generally speaking, faith is only a preliminary step before the virtue of intellectual wisdom has become strong enough to support a vigorous insight into the true nature of reality.

What then in Buddhism are the objects of faith? They are essentially:

1. The belief in Kamma and rebirth.
2. The acceptance of the basic teachings about the nature of reality, such as conditioned co-production, emptiness, etc.
3. Confidence in the Three Refuges (the Buddha, the Dharma and the Order of Sangha)
4. A belief in the efficacy of the prescribed practices, and in Nirvana as the final way out of our difficulties.

Volitionally, faith implies a resolute and courageous act of will. Emotionally, faith is an attitude of serenity and lucidity. Socially, faith involves trust and confidence in the Buddha and the Sangha. This is a new condition not mentioned in the Noble Eightfold Path.

## **Faculty of Vigor or Energy**

Little need be said about the need for being energetic if one wants to achieve something. Without vigor, without strenuous effort, without perseverance, one obviously cannot make much progress. Excess is to be deprecated, even in virtues.

All the Five Virtues must be regarded as one whole. Their balance and harmony is almost as important as the virtues themselves. They support each other to some extent, but they also stand in each other's way. This faculty is similar to Right Effort of the Noble Eightfold Path covered in section 11 above.

## **Faculty of Mindfulness**

A Buddhist owes his soberness to the cultivation of the third virtue of mindfulness (*Sati*). Whereas faith and vigor, when driven to excess, must be restrained by their counterparts (i.e., wisdom and tranquil concentration), the virtue of mindfulness does not share this disability. Mindfulness should be strong everywhere.

In Buddhism alone mindfulness occupies a central position. If one were asked what distinguishes Buddhism from all other systems of thought, one would have to answer that it is the dharma-theory and the stress laid on mindfulness. This is same as Right Mindfulness covered in section 11 above.

## **Faculty of Concentration**

Concentration (*Samadhi*) continues the work of mindfulness. It deepens our capacity to regain the peaceful calm of our inner nature. But here we are at once faced with the difficulty of concentration that occurs in Buddhist psychology twice: (1) as a factor essential to all thought; and (2) as a special and rather rare virtue.

The function of concentration is to provide some stability in this perpetual flux by enabling the mind to stand in, or on, the same object without distraction for more than one moment. In addition, it is a synthetic quality that binds together a number of mental states that arise at the same time, "as water binds the lather of soap." This is same as Right Concentration covered in section 11 above.

## **Faculty of Wisdom**

And so we come to wisdom (*Paññā*), the highest power of all. This faculty is same as the wisdom discipline of the Noble Eightfold Path. This subject has not been discussed in detail yet. Wisdom is based on concentration. There are three stages of wisdom:

1. Learning about what tradition has to say concerning the psychological and ontological categories that form the subject-matter of wisdom
2. Discursive reflection on the basic facts of life.
3. Meditational development.

The third alone requires the aid of concentration, whereas without it there can be proficiency in the first two. And the wisdom that consists of learning and reflection should not be discredited.

The main stream of Buddhist tradition has always greatly held learning in great esteem. Wisdom, which is the fifth and crowning faculty, is not the wisdom that can be found in the untutored child of nature, the corny sage of the backwoods, or the self-made philosopher of the suburbs. It can operate only after a great deal of traditional information has been absorbed and a great deal of sound learning acquired.

The required skill in metaphysical and psychological analysis would be impossible without good knowledge of the material on which this skill ought to be exercised. From this point of view, learning is perhaps less to be regretted than its absence.

The second stage is reflection, which is an operation of the intellect to increase wisdom by discursive meditations on the basic facts of life. It is on the level of mental development (*Bhavana*) that this meditational technique reaches its maturity. Then it requires the aid of mindfulness and concentration. Wisdom penetrates into Dhammas as they are in themselves. It disperses the darkness of delusion, which covers up the own-being of Dhammas.

Wisdom may be held to concern itself with three possible topics: true reality, the meaning of life, and the conduct of life. Buddhist tradition assumes that the second and third depend on the first. In its essence wisdom is the strength of mind that permits contact with the true reality, which is also called the realm of Dhammas.

Delusion, folly, confusion, ignorance and self-deception are the opposites of wisdom. It is because ignorance, and not sin, is the root evil that wisdom is regarded as the highest virtue. A holiness which is devoid of wisdom is not considered impossible, but it cannot be gained by the path of knowledge, to which alone these descriptions apply. The paths of faith, of love, of works, etc., each have their own laws.

## **13 – Dhammapada**

The Dhammapada is the best known and most widely esteemed text in the Pali Tipitaka, the sacred scriptures of Theravada Buddhism. The work is included in the Khuddaka Nikaya (Minor Collection) of the Sutta Pitaka, but its popularity has raised it far above the single niche it occupies in the scriptures to the ranks of a world religious classic.

Composed in the ancient Pali language, this slim anthology of verses constitutes a perfect compendium of the Buddha's teaching, comprising between its covers all the essential principles elaborated at length in the forty-odd volumes of the Pali canon.

According to the Theravada Buddhist tradition, each verse in the Dhammapada was originally spoken by the Buddha in response to a particular episode. Due to its immense importance, the Dhammapada has been translated into numerous languages including Burmese. In English alone several translations are available.

There are 423 verses grouped under 26 chapters in the Dhammapada. Here are the notes on 20 verses from the first chapter:

### **Yamakavagga: The Pairs**

Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief. All actions are made by mind. If a person speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him like the wheels that follow the ox. If a person speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow. (DP 1 & 2)

“He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me and he robbed me.” Those who harbor such thoughts do not end their hatred. Those who do not harbor such thoughts end their hatred. Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is a law of eternal. Those who do not realize that one day we all must die, continue the fights. But those who do realize this settle their quarrels. (DP 3, 4, 5 & 6)

Just as a storm throws down a weak tree, Mara overpowers the man who lives for the pursuit of pleasures. Just as a storm cannot prevail against a rocky mountain, so Mara can never overpower the man who lives on meditating and in moderation. (DP 7 & 8)

A man who is depraved, devoid of self-control and truthfulness, should not don the monk's yellow robe; he surely is not worthy of the robe. Only those who have purged depravity, established virtues and are filled with self-control and truthfulness are worthy of the yellow robe. (DP 9 & 10)

Those who mistake the unessential to be essential and the essential to be unessential, dwelling in wrong thoughts, never arrive at the essential. Those who know the essential to be essential and the unessential to be unessential, dwelling in right thoughts, arrive at the essential. (11 & 12)

Just as rain breaks through an ill-thatched house, so passion penetrates an undeveloped mind. Just as rain cannot break through a well-thatched house, so passion never penetrates a well-developed mind. (DP 13 & 14)

The evil-doer grieves here and hereafter; he grieves in both the worlds. He laments and is afflicted, recollecting his own impure deeds. The doer of good rejoices here and hereafter; he rejoices in both the worlds. He rejoices and exults, recollecting his own pure deeds. The evil-doer suffers here and hereafter; he suffers in both the worlds. The thought of his evil action torments him, and he suffers even more when gone to realms of woe/deprivation. The doer of good delights here and hereafter; he delights in both the worlds. The thought of his good action delights him, and he delights even more when gone to realms of bliss/heaven. (DP 15, 16, 17 & 18)

Even though he recites the sacred texts, if he does not act accordingly, that heedless man is like a cowherd who only counts the cows of others. He does not partake of the blessings of the holy life. Although he can't recite the sacred texts, but he puts the Teaching into practice forsaking lust, hatred, and delusion with true wisdom and an emancipated mind, clinging to nothing of this or any other world, then he indeed partakes of the blessings of a holy life. (DP 19 & 20)

## **14 – Milindapañā – Questions of Milinda**

The seven-part Milindapañā (the Burmese version of the Pali canon) contains collections of question and answer dialogues between the Arahant Ven. Nagasena and the Bactrian Greek king Milinda. Milinda was the Greek king Menander who ruled the ancient dominion of Bactria (founded by Alexander the Great) and the northern part of India from about 150-110 BC. Bactria corresponds with present-day Afghanistan.

The king, a wise philosopher and a skilled debater, knew Buddhism well enough to come up with over 250 questions concerning profound points of the Dhamma, which he asked Ven. Nagasena to answer. Ven. Nagasena masterfully answered each question, often with unusually vivid and apt similes.

At their first meeting, Ven. Nagasena answered the king's question, “What is Nagasena?” by comparing Nagasena, a designation for one particular set of five aggregates of human being, with the chariot, a name

given to the aggregate assembly of the chariot. The king was so deeply inspired by Ven. Nagasena's wisdom that he converted to Buddhism, handed over his kingdom to his son, joined the Sangha, and eventually became an Arahant himself.

The Milindapañā has long been revered by Theravada Buddhists around the world because it addresses many questions of Buddhist doctrine of the sort that often come up in the course of Dhamma study and meditation practice. For example, "Are pleasant feelings skillful or unskillful?" "What is the difference between someone with attachment and someone without?" "Can an Arahant ever break a Vinaya rule?" "Is it better to perform an unwholesome act knowingly or unknowingly?" "How far away is the Brahma-world?" "Why are some people healthy and others ill; some people attractive and others ugly; some rich, and others poor?" All told, the Milindapañā is the most comprehensive and useful collection of Buddhist FAQs in existence.

## 15 - Inner Virtue and Virtuous Actions of Sila (Perfections, Sublime States, and Blessings)

As stated before, Sila has three levels of meaning. The third level, the rules of moral conduct, is covered in section 10. Here other inner virtues and virtuous actions will be covered. First, let's explore the ten perfect characteristics.

### The Ten Spiritual Perfections (*Paramis*)

The spiritual perfections (*Paramis*) are the noble characters of the bodhisattvas, the future Buddha. There are ten characters: generosity (*Dāna*), virtue (*Sīla*), renunciation (*Nekkhamma*), discernment/wisdom (*Paññā*), energy/persistence (*Viriya*), patience/forbearance (*Khanti*), truthfulness (*Sacca*), determination (*Adhiṭṭhāna*), good will/loving kindness (*Mettā*), and equanimity (*Upekkhā*). These characters or qualities are developed over many lifetimes by a bodhisatta, as detailed in the *Jataka* (Birth Stories).

- 1 Generosity (*Dāna*) – Giving has the characteristic of relinquishing. Its function is to dispel greed and its manifestation is non-attachment. An object that can be relinquished is its proximate cause. Burmese Buddhists really believe in Dana. It is not surprising that a recent world record ranks Myanmar along with the United States as one of the top most generous countries in the world.
- 2 Virtue/Morality (*Sīla*) - Virtue has the characteristic of composing (*Siilana*), co-ordinating (*Samaadhaana*) and establishing (*Pati.t.thaana*); Its function is to dispel moral depravity, or its function is blameless conduct. Its manifestation is moral purity, and shame and moral dread are its proximate cause.
- 3 Renunciation (*Nekkhamma*) - Renunciation has the characteristic of departing from the sense pleasures and existence. Its function is to verify their un-satisfactoriness, and its manifestation is the withdrawal from them. A sense of spiritual urgency (*Sa.mvega*) is its proximate cause.
- 4 Discernment/Wisdom (*Paññā*) - Wisdom has the characteristic of penetrating the real specific nature of phenomena, or the characteristic of sure penetration. Its function is to illuminate the objective field, and its manifestation is non-confusion. Concentration or the Four Noble Truths is its proximate cause.
- 5 Energy/Perseverance/Persistence (*Viriya*) - Energy has the characteristic of striving. Its function is to fortify, and its manifestation is indefatigability. An occasion for the arousing of energy or a sense of spiritual urgency is its proximate cause.

- 6 Patience/Forbearance (*Khanti*) - Patience has the characteristic of acceptance. Its function is to endure the desirable and undesirable, and its manifestation is tolerance or non-opposition. Seeing things as they really are is its proximate cause.
- 7 Truthfulness (*Sacca*) - Truthfulness has the characteristic of non-deceptiveness in speech. Its function is to verify in accordance with fact, and its manifestation is excellence. Honesty is its proximate cause.
- 8 Determination (*Adhitthāna*) - Determination has the characteristic of determining upon the requisites of enlightenment. Its function is to overcome their opposites, and its manifestation is unshaken in that task. The requisites of enlightenment are its proximate cause.
- 9 Good Will/Loving Kindness (*Mettā*) - Loving-kindness has the characteristic of promoting the welfare of living beings. Its function is to provide for their welfare or to remove resentment, and its manifestation is kindness. Seeing the agreeable side of beings is its proximate cause.
- 10 Equanimity (*Upekkhā*) - Equanimity has the characteristic of promoting the aspect of neutrality. Its function is to see things impartially, and its manifestation is the subsiding of attraction and repulsion. Reflection upon the fact that all beings inherit the results of their own Kamma is its proximate cause.

The ten perfections are to be practiced by all beings. Their fruit in brief is the state of perfect Buddhahood.

### **The Four Sublime States of Mind.**

The four sublime states of mind are known under the name of *Brahma-vihara*. They are the right or ideal way of conduct towards living beings (*Sattesu samma patipatti*). They provide the answer to all situations arising from social contact. They are the great removers of tension, the great peace-makers in social conflict, and the great healers of wounds in the struggle of existence. They level social barriers, build harmonious communities, awaken slumbering magnanimity, revive joy and hope, and promote human brotherhood. They are:

1. Love or Loving Kindness (*Metta*) – The Pali word *Metta* means love, loving-kindness, friendliness, goodwill, benevolence, fellowship, amity, concord, inoffensiveness and non-violence. This the universal love that includes love without desire to possess, love without sensuous fire, love without selection, love that embraces all beings, and love that is a sublime nobility of heart. The *Karaniya Metta Sutta* consists of three parts. The first part covers the application of loving-kindness in one's day-to-day conduct. The second part expresses loving-kindness as a distinct technique of meditation leading to Samadhi. And the third part underlines a total commitment to the philosophy of universal love and to practice loving-kindness through all bodily, verbal and mental activities. It is one factor of ten perfections.
2. Compassion (*Karuna*) – The Pali word *Karuna* means compassion, sympathy, and the aspiration to find a way to be truly helpful to oneself and others. The world suffers with weeping and crying in distress, but only few compassionate men see and hear the weeping and crying. It is compassion that removes the heavy bar, opens the eye to sufferings, and makes the narrow heart wide. It gives us the rich experience of suffering, thus strengthening us to meet it. Compassion reconciles us to our own destiny by showing us the life of others.
3. Sympathetic Joy (*Mudita*) – The Pali word *Mudita* means appreciative or sympathetic joy. This means taking delight in one's own goodness and that of others. Your heart will open not only with compassion, but also joy with others. Only a small share of happiness and joy is allotted to beings! Whenever a little happiness comes to them, you may rejoice with them. That means at least one ray of your joy has pierced through the darkness of their lives and dispelled the gray and gloomy mist that enwraps their hearts. Your life will gain joy by sharing the happiness of others. The Buddha taught us

the real joy in our lives, which are full of suffering. He asked us to seek and find real joy within ourselves and to rejoice in the joy of others. Let us teach everyone to unfold their joy to sublime heights and share that joy.

4. Equanimity (*Upekkha*) – The Pali word *Upekkha* means Equanimity or a perfect balance of mind. We see clearly how difficult it is to attain and maintain balance of the mind. Human life never stays the same. It continually moves up and down, rises and falls, experiences success and failure, gain and loss, honor and blame. Our heart responds to all of this with happiness and sorrow, delight and despair, satisfaction and disappointment, hope and fear. These waves of emotion keep us unbalanced. We need to put our mind on the Island of Equanimity. But the kind of equanimity required has to be based on vigilant presence of mind, not on indifferent dullness. It has to be the result of hard, deliberate training, not the casual outcome of a passing mood. However, equanimity would not deserve its name if it had to be produced by exertion again and again. True equanimity should be able to meet all these severe tests and to regenerate its strength from sources within. It will possess this power of resistance and self-renewal only if it is rooted in insight. It is one factor of ten perfections.

Elizabeth Harris, inter-faith personnel, and Deepak Chopra, a renowned spiritual teacher and medical doctor, use these four states of mind to promote humanity. This is the common ground upon which Buddhists and all people of other religions can work together for a humane society.

### **The Life's Highest Blessings (*Maha Mangala*)**

The word *Maha* means ‘high’ and the word *Mangala* means ‘blessing’. This Sutta provides a plan that is true at all times for the material and spiritual well-being of individuals in a democratic society. The discourse provides lessons of direct practical application that are capable of immediate and fruitful use by people in all walks of life, irrespective of differences of sex or status, race or religion.

This Sutta has a special significance in the national life of Myanmar. It is certainly Myanmar's most valuable heritage of proven truth. It is one of the first lessons a child in Myanmar learns by heart and goes on to live by that standard. There is even a captivating contemporary popular song in Burmese on the Sutta. All people in Myanmar greet one another with “Mangala”, which means bless you.

There are thirty-eight blessings detailed in twelve Pali stanzas. These blessings cover the entire Dhamma suttas. It gives an understanding of the synthesis of its thirty-eight constituents. These constituents are so arranged that they not only follow one another in proper sequence, but they also group themselves into categories. Here they are:

### **The Thirty-Eight Highest Blessings**

**Stanza I** - The Buddha was asked, “What are the highest Blessings in life?” The Blessed One replied, “The Supreme Blessings are:

**Stanza II** – 1. *Asevanaa ca baalaana.m*: Not associating with fools. 2. *Pan.ditaana~n ca seyanaa*: Associating with the wise. 3. *Puujaa ca puujaniyaana.m*: Reverencing those worthy of respect.

**Stanza III** – 4. *Patiruupadesavaaso*: Residence in a suitable locality. 5. *Pubbe ca katapu~n~nataa*: Having made merit in the past. 6. *Attasammaapa.nidhi*: One's mind is properly directed.

**Stanza IV** – 7. *Bahusacca~n*: Profound learning. 8. *Bahusippa~n*: Proficiency in one's work. 9. *Vinayo ca susikkhito*: Well-learned moral discipline 10. *Subhaasitaa ca yaa vaacaa*: Gracious kindly speech.

**Stanza V** – 11. *Maataapitu upa.t.thaana.m*: Giving support to parents. 12. *Puttadaarassa sa"ngaho*: Cherishing wife and children. 13. *Anaakulaa ca Kammantaa*: Business pursuits that are peaceful and free from conflicts.

**Stanza VI** – 14. *Daana*: Acts of giving. 15. *Dhammacariyaa*: Conduct according to Dhamma. 16. *Naatakaana~n ca sa"ngaho*: Helping one's relatives. 17. *Anavajjaani Kammaani*: Doing blameless actions.

**Stanza VII** – 18. *AArati paapaa*: Shunning evil. 19. *Virati paapaa*: Abstaining from evil. 20. *Majjapaanaa ca sa~n~namo*: Refraining from intoxicants. 21. *Appamaado ca dhammesu*: Diligence in practice of what is Dhamma.

**Stanza VIII** – 22. *Gaaravo*: Reverence. 23. *Nivaato*: Humility. 24. *Santu.t.thi*: Contentment. 25. *Kata~n~nutaa*: Gratefulness. 26. *Kaalena Dhammasavana.m*: Timely hearing of the Dhamma.

**Stanza IX** – 27. *Khantii*: Patience 28. *Sovacassataa*: Meekness when corrected. 29. *Sama.naana~n ca dassana.m*: Meeting (seeing) monks. 30. *Kaalena Dhammasaakacchaa*: Discussing the Dhamma at the proper time.

**Stanza X** - 31. *Tapo*: Energetic self-restraint. 32. *Brahmacariyaa*: Holy and chaste life. 33. *Ariyasaccaana dassana.m*: Insight into the Noble Truths. 34. *Nibbaana sacchikiriya*: Realization of Nibbaana.

**Stanza XI** - 35. *Phu.t.thassa Lokadhammehi citta.m yassa na kampati*: A mind unshaken by the ups and downs of life. 36. *Asoka.m*: Freedom from sorrow. 37. *Viraja.m*: Freedom from defilements of passion. 38. *Khema.m*: Perfect security.

**Stanza XII** *Etaadisaani katvaana sabbattham-aparaajitaa sabbattha sotthi.m gacchanti*: Those who have acted in this way cannot be defeated and always live in safety.”

## 16 - The Buddha's Charter of Free Inquiry (*Kalama Sutta*)

The instruction of the Kalamas (*Kalama Sutta*) is justly famous for its encouragement of free inquiry. The Sutta sets forth the principles that should be followed by a seeker of truth. It was given to the citizens of Kalama who were in doubt about the reality of rebirth and Kammic retribution.

The Buddha began by assuring the Kalamas that under such circumstances it was proper for them to doubt, an assurance that encouraged free inquiry. Here the Buddha permitted the Kalama's doubt on the subject matters beyond their normal cognition. He showed that the reason for pursuing a virtuous life does not necessarily depend on belief in rebirth or retribution, but on mental well-being acquired through the overcoming of greed, hate, and delusion. Here is a portion of the discourse that deals with free enquiry:

The Buddha said, "Do not believe (1) what has been acquired by repeated hearing; (2) nor upon traditionally accepted fact; (3) nor upon rumor that spreads all around; (4) nor upon what is written in a scripture; (5) nor upon surmise that is guessed right; (6) nor upon an axiom that is self-evident truth; (7) nor upon specious reasoning fact; (8) nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; (9) nor upon another's seeming ability to know the subject; (10) nor upon the teacher's advice."

You need to observe and analyze whether the facts are true or false, good or bad, free of blame or not, reasonable or not, acceptable to wise men or not, beneficial or harmful, and/or leading to happiness or suffering. If you find positive results, then you can accept the facts and live up to them. You can investigate whether the Dhamma can provide you with the required benefits and test the results. The Kalama citizens did this.

## 17- Conclusion of Part II

This concludes Part II of the Dhamma for spiritual liberation. This collection of notes covers some of the Buddha's essential teachings. I hope that a sufficient number of sections of the Dhamma are included for you to understand and to practice Buddhism. If you are in doubt like the Kalamas, you will have enough information to analyze the facts.

I have a deep appreciation for the Buddha and believe his vast knowledge and wisdom. I ask you to try to understand his teachings as the Kalama Buddhists did 2,500 years ago. But you need to have faith in Buddhism and strength and power to seek deeply the wisdom of the Buddha. The Buddha's main aim was to end the cycles of birth and death (*Samsara*) and all the sufferings that accompanied the cycles.

Remember these Four Noble Truths given in supra mundane level, as suggested by Nyanatiloka Mahathera. These absolute Four Noble Truths are:

1. The truth of the cycle of rebirth and death and the three facts of existence: impermanency, unsatisfactoriness and impersonality. Existence is a natural phenomenal process of five aggregates. All beings are subject to changes, decay and death. All beings are dissatisfied with their changing lives. All beings must consider, 'This is not mine, this is not I, this is not myself'.
2. The truth of the origin or cause of repeated rebirths and deaths and of the three Facts of Life. They are illusion of self or ego or soul, ignorance of the nature of Dukkha, craving the pleasure of the six senses and clinging to life, which causes the cycle of life.
3. The truth that the cycle of birth and death can be stopped and all suffering can be ended. Through the extinction and cessation of all self-illusion and vanity, ignorance, craving, and attachment to life, one can stop the cycle of birth and suffering.
4. The truth that the Eightfold Path based on Right Understanding, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration is the path leading to this goal. This is the realization of Nibbana.

Remember that whatever you do has consequences, bad or good depending your actions. The effects may appear right away, later in this life, or in future lives. Always avoid the three evils of *Loba*, *Dosa* and *Moha*. Cultivate the four sublime states of mind that are *Metta*, *Kurana*, *Mudita*, and *Upekkha*. Remember to abide by the five precepts or higher number of precepts.

As all of you (my family, relatives, friends and associates) know about me, I am a simple man who grew up in a poor environment and reached this stage purely due to my own Kamma. I have positive attitude and I believe in the goodness of all people. I am a centralist, always taking the middle ground, never leaning to extreme right or left.

All the Buddha's teachings synchronize with my nature. I can really accept the Noble Truths. I see and experience the impermanency of life and human suffering all the time. I try my best to acknowledge and apply the Anatta doctrine to my life. I am amazed that a systematic teaching on the phenomenal process of existence, the Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path to liberation, the Three Facts of Life and the law of Kamma were preached by the Buddha 2,500 years ago. The whole teaching is logical and complete.

# BUDDHISM

## A COLLECTION OF NOTES ON DHAMMA

### PART III – DHAMMA FOR SOCIAL HARMONY

#### 1- Big Three's for Children

When I was young, we Buddhist children were taught to memorize and recite five sets of three big Burmese or (Pali) words and asked to follow them. They are the greatest words of the Buddha. They are easy to understand and easy to practice. We should instill these sets of three words to our children who are growing up in the States.

#### Three Big Evils or Unwholesome Roots (*Mula*)

Recite Lawba (*Loba*), Dawtha (*Dosa*), Mawha (*Moha*).

We are supposed to avoid the three evil roots of greed/craving, anger/aversion and ignorance/delusion. *Loba* means greed, passion, lust, craving, and unskillful desire. *Dosa* means aversion, hatred, and anger. *Moha* means delusion and ignorance.

#### Three Big Wholesome Good Roots

Recite Myatta (*Mettā*), Garuna (*Karuṇā*), Mudita (*Muditā*).

We are supposed to cultivate loving-kindness, compassion and appreciative joy. *Mettā* means loving-kindness, and goodwill. *Karuṇā* means compassion and sympathy. *Muditā* means appreciative/sympathetic joy for the success of others.

#### Three Characteristics for Meritorious Action

Recite Darna (*Dāna*), Thila (*Sīla*), Barwanar (*Bhāvanā*).

We are supposed to have generosity, morality and spirituality. *Dāna* means giving, liberality, charity, offering and generosity. *Sīla* means virtue and morality. *Bhāvanā* means mental cultivation or development for spirituality and meditation.

#### Three Disciplines

Recite Thila (*Sīla*), Thamardi (*Samadhi*), Pyinnga (*Paññā*).

We are supposed to practice virtue, mind concentration and wisdom. *Sīla* means virtue and morality. *Samadhi* means the practice of mind concentration. *Paññā* means discernment, education, insight and wisdom.

#### Three Facts of Life

Recite Anapesa (*Anicca*), Dukekha (*Dukkha*) Ahnutta (*Anattā*).

We are supposed to understand death, suffering, and the nothingness nature of life. *Anicca* means inconstant, unsteady, impermanence and death. *Dukkha* means stress, suffering, pain, distress and discontent. *Anattā* means not-self, egolessness, soullessness, nothingness and ownerless.

## 2- Gradual Practice of Dhamma

The Dhamma is intended to promote three types of good. The three goods are:

1. The good pertaining to the present life (*Ditthadhammattha*), i.e. the achievement of happiness and well-being here and now through ethical living and harmonious relationships based on loving kindness and compassion.
2. The good pertaining to the future life (*Samparayikattha*), i.e. a favorable rebirth within the round of existence by practicing generosity, observing the precepts and cultivating the mind in meditation.
3. The ultimate good (*Paramattha*), i.e. the attainment of Nibbana by following the complete training defined by the Noble Eightfold Path.

For most Buddhists in their day-to-day lives, the pursuit of Nibbana is a distant rather than an immediate goal to be approached gradually during the long cycle of rebirth and death. But he believes these aims can be achieved only by his effort to practice the Noble Eightfold Path. No other one can give it to him, so he learns the Dhamma and practices the doctrines.

The Dhamma, the truth taught by the Buddha, is discovered gradually through sustained practice. The Buddha made clear many times that awakening does not occur like a bolt out of the blue to the untrained and unprepared mind. Rather, it culminates after a long journey and many stages of training. Here is the Buddha's six-stage gradual training:

1. Generosity (*Dāna*)
2. Virtue (*Sīla*)
3. Heaven (*Sagga*)
4. Drawbacks (*Adinava*)
5. Renunciation (*Nekkhamma*)
6. The Four Noble Truths (*Cattari ariya saccani*)

The Buddha advised lay people to practice the Dhamma in five steps as follow:

1. The first step is to activate the spirit of generosity and to observe the precepts as a basis. This includes listening to Dhamma talks by monks.
2. The second step is to control the enjoyment of all the six senses because indulgence of these senses will lead to defilement by greed, aversion and delusion.
3. The third step is to live in moderation. He should be moderate in eating, dressing and sensual pleasure.
4. The fourth step is to be vigilant and mindful about his activities for wholesomeness.
5. The fifth final step is to practice insight meditation.

Buddhists usually pay homage to the Buddha, Dhamma and Shangha, as well as parents and teachers, and they take refuge in the Triple Gems before taking the precepts. They take five precepts regularly in front of a monk or in front of a Buddha image. Unlike Christians, they don't go to the monastery regularly except when there

are special occasions at the monastery, such as Buddhist days (*Uposatha*). On those days they offer a special luncheon to monks and lay visitors and take the eight precepts in front of the monks.

By controlling enjoyment of the senses they can manage craving and avoid the mental formation of *Loba*, *Dosa* and *Moha*. They are also required to cultivate the four sublime states of mind that are *Mettā*, *Karūṇā*, *Muditā*, and *Upekkha*. Many lay Buddhists are unable to undertake the fifth step as stated above. They usually stop at the third or fourth step because they are busy working for a living.

### 3- Moral Conduct

To assist laypeople in the pursuit of moral conduct, the Buddha taught numerous moral guidelines that pertain to ethically upright living within the confines of the world. In addition to the precepts, Spiritual Perfections, Sublime States of Mind, and blessings described in Part II of this collection of notes, the Buddha prescribed more moral medicines for lay devotees. Here are some more rules to abide by for social living:

There are ten bases of merit (*Puñṇakiriya-vatthu*); deeds which spring from the virtuous qualities of detachment, goodwill, and wisdom, and which generate wholesome Kamma. They are:

1. Generosity
2. Morality
3. Meditation
4. Reverence
5. Service
6. Transference of merit
7. Rejoicing in the good deeds of others
8. Hearing the Dhamma
9. Expounding the Dhamma
10. Straightening out one's views

We are required to follow these merits.

There are ten righteous good actions (*Kusala-Kamma*) that derive from the observance of good thought, words and deeds. They are wholesome deeds (*Succarita*) (*thusarite* in Burmese) that should be done. See section II-5 for the list.

There are ten unwholesome courses of actions (*Akusala-Kamma*) that originate from the defilements of greed, hatred and delusion. They are unwholesome deeds (*Duccarita*) (*dusarite* in Burmese) that should be avoided. See section II-5 for the list

There are five mental hindrances (*Pañcanivarana*) to observe:

1. Sensual craving, obsessive hankering for possessions or gratification of the senses.
2. Ill will or hatred that is the emotional opposite of desire, yet it is an equally potent obstacle to personal development.
3. Indolence and mental inertia, the obstacle to strenuous effort.
4. Restlessness and worry are twin hindrances very much in evidence today.
5. Doubt.

There are five additional disciplines that will be helpful in combatting stress and tension in daily life:

1. Keeping the five precepts conscientiously.
2. Having sense control. The mind is constantly attracted to pleasant sense objects and repelled by unpleasant objects.
3. Practicing meditation. Meditation, or *Bhavana*, purifies the mind.
4. Cultivating the four sublime attitudes.
5. One final piece of practical advice: Time, energy, and funds are limited, while wants are unlimited. Therefore a person must have a sense of priorities.

#### **4- Moral Responsibility**

The Buddha made Right Speech, Right Actions and Right Livelihood an integral part of the Noble Eightfold Path. During his long ministry he gave advice on prudent conduct and responsibilities to promote the welfare and happiness of the world, while at the same time steering his followers toward a pleasant rebirth and gradual progress toward final liberation. The achievement of this end is necessarily individual effort.

We Buddhists have a moral responsibility to practice the Dhamma if we want to free ourselves from all suffering and attain real peace of mind. Here I want to emphasize that we are morally responsible to eliminate and avoid at least three groups of fourteen evil things that are described in the *Sigalovada Sutta* as follow:

##### **Four Kinds of Vice**

The Buddha explained the four kinds of vice to Singala. These are taking life, stealing, having unlawful sexual misconduct and telling lies and making unwholesome speech. When a person commits even one of these vices his reputation and moral standards will deteriorate. His offence is against the law, and he may be brought to justice right there. The shame and humiliation is total. His victims also have to suffer agonies. There is nothing good for any of them. The Buddha repeatedly warned of the danger of these vices, so these four vices must be eradicated.

##### **Four Roots of Evil Actions**

These are are greed (*Loba*), anger (*Dosa*), ignorance (*Moha*), and fear (*Bhaya*). The first three evils are covered in many Dhamma suttas. The fourth (fear) is added here in this sutta. The Buddha said, “Whoever does unwholesome deeds, by reason of them his fame and the company he keeps will downgrade as the moon during the waning half.” Therefore, the four roots of evil must be eliminated.

##### **Six Means for Loss of Wealth**

The Buddha added one more set of dangers that are to be avoided to prevent the loss of wealth. They are:

1. Addiction to drinking intoxicants or using drugs with consequence of loss of wealth.
2. Visiting the streets during inappropriate times with the consequence of danger.
3. Frequent enjoyment of entertainment with the consequence of indulgence of sensual pleasure.
4. Indulgence in gambling with the consequence of losing wealth.
5. Keeping bad company with the consequence of associating fools and evil people.
6. Living in idleness with the consequence of laziness.

The Buddha said, "Living in this way (the six means for loss), he leaves many duties undone, new wealth he does not get, and wealth he has acquired dwindles away." The habit of taking intoxicants is the most dangerous and ruinous in the world. It causes infatuation and heedlessness. It is included in the five precepts. These six means must be avoided.

## **5- Moral Downfall (*Parabhava Sutta*)**

This *Parabhava Sutta* points out the causes of downfall or corruption. He who is tarnished by these blemishes of conduct blocks his own road to worldly, moral and spiritual progress. But he who is heedful of these dangers keeps the road open to all those thirty-eight blessings. Here are the twelve causes of one's downfall:

1. He who is averse to Dhamma declines.
2. He who prefers the creed of the wicked declines.
3. He who is fond of sleep, fond of company, indolent, lazy and irritable declines.
4. He who does not support his father and mother who are old and past their youth declines.
5. He who deceives by falsehood a Brahman or ascetic or any other mendicant declines.
6. He who enjoys one's luxuries alone without sharing wealth declines.
7. He who despises one's own kinsmen declines.
8. He who is a rake, a drunkard, a gambler, and who squanders all one earns declines.
9. He who is not contented with one's own wife and is looking for sexual misconduct declines.
10. He who is old but looking for a young wife and is unable to sleep for jealousy of her declines.
11. He who squanders on drinks declines.
12. He who is of noble birth with ambition and means and craves rulership declines.

## **6- Conditions of Welfare (*Vyagghapajja Sutta*)**

In this Sutta the Buddha instructs rich laymen on how to preserve and increase their prosperity and avoid loss of wealth. Wealth alone, however, does not make a complete man or a harmonious society. So the Buddha follows up on his advice on material welfare with four essential conditions for spiritual welfare:

### **Conditions of Worldly Progress**

There are four conditions that are conducive to a householder's wealth and happiness in this life. They are:

1. The accomplishment of persistent effort (*Utthana-sampada*) to earn his living in proper ways and means.
2. The accomplishment of watchfulness (*Arakkha-sampada*) by guarding and watching his wealth.
3. The accomplishment of good friendship (*Kalyanamittata*) with his associates of good faith (*Saddha*), good virtue (*Sīla*), full charity (*Caga*) and full wisdom (*Paññā*).
4. The accomplishment of balanced livelihood (*Sama-jivikata*) by leading a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that his income will stand in excess of his expenses.

### **Destruction**

The wealth thus amassed has four sources of destruction. They are debauchery, drunkenness, gambling, and friendship with evil-doers.

### **Preservation**

There are four sources for the preservation of amassed wealth. These four conditions are conducive to a householder's wellbeing and happiness in this life. They are abstinence from debauchery, abstinence from drunkenness, non-indulgence in gambling, and friendship with good people.

### **Conditions of Spiritual Progress**

There are four conditions that are conducive to a householder's wellbeing and happiness in his future life. They are:

1. The accomplishment of faith (*Saddha-sampada*) or belief in the enlightenment of the Perfect One and his Dhamma.
2. The accomplishment of virtue (*Sila-sampada*) or abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and from intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness.
3. The accomplishment of charity (*Caga-sampada*) or being open-handed, delighting in generosity, attending to the needy, and delighting in the distribution of alms.
4. The accomplishment of wisdom (*Paññā-sampada*) by having the noble penetrating insight that leads to the destruction of suffering.

## **7- Social Responsibility**

Buddhism aims at achieving not only spiritual progress and happiness but also good order and prosperity in society. The Buddha taught social responsibilities as well as supra mundane teachings from time to time. However, he did not elaborate on secular affairs in as much detail as he preached unworldly teachings.

The main reason for becoming a Buddha is to preach the Dhamma, which leads people to avoid sensual pleasure and attachment to things. Too much desire causes greed, lust, resentment, anger, conflict and maltreatment. The Buddha emphasized supra mundane teachings. If everyone follows his social teachings just as he taught them, they can happily make their way in life.

Man has a lot of energy and knowledge to build a peaceful world. He should use his power in the right direction for the benefit of himself and others. Because of some people's selfishness, foolishness, unsympathetic moods and ill will, other people unfortunately want to reciprocate. The mind is easily tempted by evils. Developing four sublime states of mood is the best way to social harmony.

In *Sigalovada Sutta* the Buddha laid down the social responsibilities as follow:

### **Enemies**

These four people should be understood as foes in the guise of friends:

1. He who appropriates a friend's wealth by taking it away.
2. He who renders lip service with empty words.
3. He who flatters by praising others in their presence.

4. He who brings ruin by accomplishing misdeeds together.

They are enemies and should be avoided from afar as paths of peril.

### **Friends**

These four people should be understood as warm-hearted friends:

1. He who helps by guarding and protecting.
2. He who is the same in happiness and sorrow by staying and sharing.
3. He who gives good counsel by restraining evils and encouraging good.
4. He who sympathizes by rejoicing in success and sharing failure.

They are friends and should be cherished devotedly as a mother does her own child.

### **Wealth**

The wise and virtuous shine like a blazing fire. They acquire their wealth in harmless ways and riches mount up for them like a rapidly growing mountain. With wealth acquired this way, a layman provides for household life. He divides his wealth in four portions: one portion for his uses, two portions on his business expenses, and the fourth for saving.

### **Six Quarters**

The laymen should look upon six quarters as follow: the mother and father are in the east; the teachers are the south; the wife and children are the west; the friends and associates are the north; servants and employees are the nadir, and the holy men are the zenith.

### **Socially Responsible Citizens**

Who is fit to lead the household? Those who salute the six quarters; those who are wise and virtuous, gentle and keen-witted, humble and amenable; those who are energetic and not indolent; those who are unshaken in misfortune, flawless in manner and intelligent; those who are hospitable, friendly, liberal and unselfish; those who are a guide, an instructor, and a leader; those who have generosity and sweet speech; and those who are helpful to others and impartial to all. As the case demands, such a one may attain honor.

## **8- Burmese Way of Life**

As noted in chapter II, Burmese people are very fond of the *Maha Mingala Sutta*, which lays down the blessed ways to live. This is my rough translation of the poem *38 Mingala Ways* written by the great teacher Sayagyi Dagon U Tun Myint.

“Stay away from foolish men and avoid their way of living. Associate with wise men; follow their steps and heed their advice. Worship the Triple Gems along with parents and teachers. These are three blessed ways to richness of relationship. This is the Buddha’s ideology. This is the world Mingala blessing.

“For goodness, for wisdom and for wealth, stay put in a residence in a suitable and pleasant locality. Remember and appreciate the special effects of your wholesome deeds from the past. And control yourself to do skillful deeds now for future life. These are three blessed ways to richness of living. This is the Buddha’s ideology. This is the world Mingala blessing.

“Learn verbal knowledge and visual knowledge for well-vested wisdom. Study trade knowledge for the proficiency in your profession for your livelihood. Understand moral discipline well for human social interaction. Learn to speak the truth graciously, pleasantly and politely. These are four blessed ways for richness of wisdom. This is the Buddha’s ideology. This is the world Mingala blessing.

“As a way to repay mountain high debts owed to your parents for raising you, willingly support your old parents. As an act of setting a new loan, cherish and raise your wife and children comfortably. Perform your work seriously and flawlessly. These are three ways for richness of wealth building. This is the Buddha’s ideology. This is the world Mingala blessing.

“With the spirit of good will you can generously give out charity. Don’t conduct wrongful acts physically, verbally, and mentally, but act on the ten bases of righteousness and goodness. Don’t leave out relatives, just give them a helping hand. Participate in group actions for faultless public works. These are four ways for richness of public life. This is the Buddha’s ideology. This is the world Mingala blessing.

“Shun all evil before you encounter it. If you encounter evil, take special caution to abstain from acting evil. Don’t consume intoxicants since they promote corruption of the mind. Take caution in physical acts and speaking. These are four ways for diligence in Dhamma practice. This is the Buddha’s ideology. This is the world Mingala blessing.

“Revere older people, higher ranking officials and more senior people. Don’t be proud, but be humble always. Don’t be greedy, but be contented with what you have. Be grateful to those who gave a favor for your benefit. Try to listen to the Dhamma regularly. These are five ways for richness of humility. This is the Buddha’s ideology. This is the world Mingala blessing.

“For living without fear, control your mind and be patient in dealing. When someone gives corrective advice for your good, listen and accept it eagerly. Meet regularly with honorable people. Try to discuss the Dhamma at all times. These are four ways for richness of mind control. This is the Buddha’s ideology. This is the world Mingala blessing.

“Manage self-restraint in the worldly pleasure of senses. Lead a holy and chaste life and cultivate the Four Sublime States of Mind. Try to understand and wisely accept the Four Noble Truths. Practice and realize cessation of suffering and attainment of Nibbana. These are four ways to liberation. This is the Buddha’s ideology. This is the world Mingala blessing.

“Keep your mind in balance (equanimity) untouched by natural conditions of richness and poorness. Realize that good and bad, happiness and sorrow always happen in rotation. Steady your mind to be unshaken by worldly happenings. Limit your pleasure, end your lust and add tranquility into your life. These are four ways to perfect protection. This is the Buddha’s ideology. This is the world Mingala blessing.

“Those who practice the thirty-eight Mingala blessings will be rewarded with happiness, wealth, fame and dignity, and their lives will be filled with wholesome goodness. You will be free from danger and surrounded

by loved ones. You will be happy physically and mentally. You will be successful in every way. So don the Mingala flower wreath around your body all the time.”

## 9- Domestic Duties

In the *Sigalovada Sutta* the Buddha enumerates the reciprocal duties of parents and children, husband and wife, friends, employers and employees, teachers and students, and religious leaders and laity.

The duties of parents are as follows:

1. Must restrain their children from evil.
2. Encourage them to do good actions.
3. Give them a good education or skill for a profession.
4. Arrange a suitable marriage.
5. Hand over their inheritance to them at a proper time.

The duties of children are as follow:

1. Must support parents in return when they have income.
2. Must look after their parents' affairs on their behalf.
3. Must keep the tradition of the family.
4. Must respect parents and make oneself worthy of love and inheritance.
5. Must give alms for departed parents and must share merit with them.

The duties of a husband are as follow:

1. Must treat his wife courteously and tenderly.
2. Must not treat his wife disparagingly.
3. Must be faithful to his wife.
4. Must give his wife control and authority over domestic matters.
5. Must provide his wife with clothes and ornaments

The duties of a wife are as follow:

1. Must be able to perform household duties very well.
2. Must be industrious in discharging her duties.
3. Must manage well the wealth that her husband brings to her.
4. Must be faithful to her husband.
5. Must be hospitable to relatives from both sides of the family.

There are seven kinds of wife. They are:

1. A wife who behaves like a slayer. She has an inflammable temper, is unfaithful to her husband and treats him contemptuously and aggressively.

2. A wife who behaves like a thief. She wastes or uses or gives her husband's wealth without getting his consent.
3. A wife who behaves like a master. She has no desire to carry out her duties but has a domineering attitude towards her husband and treats him unkindly. She is lazy and gluttonous.
4. A wife who behaves like a mother. She looks after her husband as a mother and uses his wealth economically.
5. A wife who behaves like a sister. She regards her husband as a brother, respects him and complies with her husband's wishes.
6. A wife who behaves like a friend. She is happy whenever she sees her husband as a person feels when she sees her friend from whom she has been long parted. She is moral and highborn and treats her husband respectfully.
7. A wife who behaves like a helping mate. She feels no resentment against her husband. She is obedient to her husband's words. She is free from anger and she is pure and calm in her heart.

The Buddha also advised a wife how to live with a husband as follows:

- A wife should get up earlier and go to bed later than her husband.
- A wife should be ready to do what her husband wants, and treat him courteously and kindly.
- A wife should pay respect to all whom her husband reveres and be hospitable to them.
- A wife should be able to do housework or home-crafts deftly and should not be lazy.
- A wife should use the money her husband gives her economically and should not waste it or keep it dishonestly.

It seems like the Buddha was favoring men. In fact he treated men and women equally. He was the most liberal minded spiritual leader of all religions. He was protecting women from cruel treatment by men by setting rules accepted in those days. His Dhamma is for all without any discrimination.

## **10- Social Duties**

The duties of the leader of a household to friends are as follow:

1. Must be generous in giving what his friend needs.
2. Must talk with his friend courteously.
3. Must look after his friend's wellbeing.
4. Must treat him like himself.
5. Must keep his word and promises.

The duties of friends to the leader of a household are as follow:

1. Must protect him when he is heedless.
2. Must protect his property when he is heedless.
3. Must become a refuge when he is in danger.
4. Must not forsake him in his troubles.
5. Must show consideration for his family.

The duties of an employer to employees are as follow:

1. Must assign his employees to the job according to their ability and physical and mental strength.
2. Must give them due payment and should add bonuses to their wages.
3. Must look after them in sickness.
4. Must share special foods with them.
5. Must let them off work when appropriate.

The duties of an employee are as follow:

1. Must reciprocate by getting up before his employer.
2. Go to bed after his employer.
3. Take only what is given.
4. Perform his duties well.
5. Uphold his employer's good name and fame.

The duties of a teacher are as follow:

1. Should train his pupils in the best discipline.
2. Should teach them well what ought to be taught.
3. Should teach them all arts and sciences.
4. Should introduce them to his friends and associates who should respect them as they do him.
5. Should provide for the student's safety in every quarter. That is, he should give them full support and tell people of their ability so that they can survive anywhere by using their knowledge.

The duties of a student are as follow:

1. He rises from his seat to greet and salute.
2. He waits on the teacher, trusts him and obeys his words.
3. He is eager to learn.
4. He offers personal service to his teacher.
5. He studies his instructions thoroughly and attentively.

## **11- Spiritual Duties**

The duties of religious leaders are as follow:

1. Must restrain people from doing evil.
2. Encourage them to do good.
3. Treat them with loving-kindness.
4. Teach them what they have not heard.
5. Clarify what they have already heard and tell them the path to heavenly planes.

The duties of followers are as follow:

1. Kind deeds.
2. Kind words.

3. Kind thoughts.
4. Keep doors open for the religious leaders.
5. Supplying the religious leader's needs.

## 12- Meditation, Concentration and Wisdom

### Bead Counting

On special Buddha days, most Burmese Buddhists take eight precepts, listen the Dhamma talks from the monks and then they try to control their minds by reciting the Buddha's words or phrases a number of times. Popular words are *Anicca*, *Dukkha*, and *Anattā*. Popular phrases are refuge to the Triple Gem and wishing wellness to all beings. They use a string of beads and move the beads from one side to the other side every time they complete the recitation. This is how they concentrate on the recitation through bead counting.

### Mindfulness Meditation (*Satipatthana*)

*Satipatthana* is the practice of mindfulness (*Sati*) meditation for all who seek the realization of Nibbana. It was given by the Buddha in the *Maha Satipatthana Sutta*. The Blessed One said, "This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and distress, for the attainment of the right method of the Noble Path, and for the realization of unbinding or Nibbana." This is the practice of the four methods of Steadfast Mindfulness given previously in the Part II (section 10). There are many books that describe the method of mindfulness in greater detail. You will also need some guidance for the meditation.

### Development of Concentration

The Buddha talked about the development of *Samadhi* in the *Samadhi Sutta*. He said there are four developments of concentration. They are:

1. The development of concentration that when developed and pursued leads to a pleasant abiding in the here and now.
2. The development of concentration that when developed and pursued leads to the attainment of knowledge and vision.
3. The development of concentration that when developed and pursued leads to mindfulness and alertness.
4. The development of concentration that when developed and pursued leads to the ending of the effluents.

*Samadhi*, as wholesome concentration, can be developed through either of two interrelated methods:

1. The development of serenity (*Samatha-Bhavana*). The goal of this system of practice is directed expressly towards the attainment of deep concentration and a calm and unified mind at the level of absorption.
2. The development of insight (*Vipassana-Bhavana*). This path is intended to generate the incidental accompaniment of insight and to gain understanding of the natural phenomena.

Of the two, Buddhists regard the development of insight as the essential key to liberation. It is held to be the unique discovery of the Buddha, whereas serenity meditation is recognized as common to both Buddhist and

non-Buddhist contemplative disciplines. Serenity meditation helps to achieve a certain degree of concentration. Together the two types of meditation work to make the mind a fit instrument for enlightenment and the end of suffering.

### **Insight Meditation through Mindfulness**

*Satipatthana Vipassana* (Insight Meditation through Mindfulness) is the method developed by Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw. It combines mindfulness meditation and the development of insight. This method is popular and has become one of the foundations of meditation that Burmese Buddhists follow.

Sayadaw said that ordinary people cannot grasp the depth of the Three Facts of existing and the Four Noble Truths without mindfulness. Mindful meditation will lead to a deep understanding of Dhamma and inner peace. Through mindful observation, one comes to realize that there is no self or ego in aggregates (*Khandhas*). Then one can detach from the sensations, feelings, thoughts, ideas, impulses, etc. that are continually arising in the mind. Insight into the mind is known as wisdom (*Paññā*).

Meditators need to possess the virtue of morality, concentration and wisdom before they can start meditation and concentration. For morality (*Sīla*), they should observe at least five precepts. They should have both ordinary worldly morality (*Lokiya Sīla*) and supra mundane morality (*Lokutara Sīla*). In addition, they should practice concentration (*Samadhi*) to reach a tranquil state of mind. To prevent the mind from wandering, the mind should be fixed to a selected object of concentration.

This also requires both ordinary wisdom and supra mundane wisdom. True mundane wisdom includes the knowledge used in welfare and relief work. The virtue of possessing mundane wisdom will lead to a happy life in higher states of existence. Supra mundane wisdom is the wisdom of the path (*Magga*) and fruit (*Phala*). To develop this wisdom, it is necessary to carry out the practice of insight meditation (*Vipassana-Bhavana*). The method of developing this wisdom is to observe materiality (*Rupa*) and mentality (*Nama*) in their true nature.

The Beginner starts with a simpler and easier form of the exercise to note a rising and falling movement of the abdomen during breathing. Successive exercises and training continue under the supervision of meditation teachers who monitor and guide the process.

The first practice in the (*Satipatthana*) mindfulness stage of meditation is to note or to contemplate the successive occurrences of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking at the six sense doors. Then the contemplation moves to objects.

Meditators then pass over the mindfulness meditation stage and continue on to the insight meditation (*Vipassana*) stage. The gradual development by stages of mindfulness, concentration and knowledge will take place in one process to gain the contemplative knowledge of impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

Mahasi Sayadaw's student Sayadaw U Pandita describes the four Vipassanā Jhanas as follows:

1. The meditator first explores his body, then his mind, discovering the three characteristics. The first Jhana consists in seeing these points and in the presence of *Vitakka* and *Vicara*. Phenomena reveal themselves as appearing and ceasing.
2. In the second Jhana, the practice seems effortless. *Vitaka* and *Vicara* both disappear.

3. In the third Jhana, *Pīti*, the joy, disappears too and there is only happiness (*Sukha*) and concentration.
4. The fourth Jhana arises, characterized by purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. The practice leads to direct knowledge. Comfort disappears because the dissolution of all phenomena is clearly visible. The practice will show every phenomenon as unstable, transient and disenchanting. The desire of freedom will take place.

Eventually Vipassanā-meditation leads to permanent liberation. A final stage of path-knowledge is attained and Nibbana is realized. This method of Vipassana is the highway leading to Nibbana. Vipassana consists of the four *Satipatthana* (applications of mindfulness) and it is *Satipatthana* that is really the highway to Nibbana.

### **13- Conclusion of Part III**

This concludes Part III. I have included the majority of the Buddha's teachings on social harmony. They are the basic requirements of Buddhist practice that devotees must follow. Some of these teachings may be out dated in modern time, but they are still morally upright in my view. There is no negative advice anywhere.

I have not included any chants here. Burmese Buddhists recite many Pali scriptures by chanting every day. I myself have not learned to recite such verses, except a few that I had mentioned in Part II. I just want to mention that there are eleven Sutta verses known as *Maha Paritas* chants that Buddhists, especially monks, use to recite on different occasions for protection against danger. These chants include *Mangala*, *Retana*, *Metta* and *Khandha Suttas*. Buddhists believe the protective power of these *Sutta* verses.

I now realize that we Burmese have been knowingly or unknowingly following most of the Buddhist practices for social harmony all our life. As Dr. Soni stated in his book *Life's Highest Blessings: The Maha Mangala Sutta*, the 38 ways of blessed living must had been embedded in our heart since our childhood.

I am very fortunate to be born and raised in the golden Land of Myanmar and to earn my living and raise my family in the golden opportunity of the United States of America. I am deeply indebted to both countries. We owe our family lives to them. We spiritually acquire the gentle Buddhism from our native Myanmar and mentally acquire freedom from our adopted United States. I am happy and look forward to a better world.

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