Buddha-Dhamma for Inquiring Minds

by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

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By Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu
Translated from the Thai by Ariyananda Bhikkhu
Edited by Santikaro

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Anumodanā

To all Dhamma Comrades, those helping to spread Dhamma:

Break out the funds to spread Dhamma to let Faithful Trust flow,
Broadcast majestic Dhamma to radiate long-living joy.
Release unexcelled Dhamma to tap the spring of Virtue,
Let safely peaceful delight flow like a cool mountain stream.
Dhamma leaves of many years sprouting anew, reaching out,
To unfold and bloom in the Dhamma Centers of all towns.
To spread lustrous Dhamma and in hearts glorified plant it,
Before long, weeds of sorrow, pain, and affliction will flee.
As Virtue revives and resounds throughout Thai society,
All hearts feel certain love toward those born, aging, and dying.
Congratulations and Blessings to all Dhamma Comrades,
You who share Dhamma to widen the people's prosperous joy.
Heartiest appreciation from Buddhadāsa Indapañño,
Buddhist Science ever shines beams of Bodhi long-lasting.
In grateful service, fruits of merit and wholesome successes,
Are all devoted in honor to Lord Father Buddha.
Thus may the Thai people be renowned for their Virtue,
May perfect success through Buddhist Science awaken their hearts.
May the King and His Family live long in triumphant strength,
May joy long endure throughout this our world upon earth.

from

Buddhadāsa Indapañño

Mokkhabalārāma
Chaiya, 2 November 2530

Editor's Foreword

Buddha-Dhamma for Students (title of original translation) was composed of two talks given by Ajahn Buddhadāsa in January 1966 to students at Thammasat University, Bangkok.[1] Then and in the years since, many young Thais have returned to Buddhism in search of answers and choices not provided by their modern (Western-style) education. In the face of rapid social change, at times bordering on chaos, they sought a non-violent approach to the issues and injustices of the times. Their interest is both praised and recognized as needing guidance. Applying a confused or incorrect version of Buddhism to social confusion and conflict would not help matters. Thus, Ajahn Buddhadāsa endeavored to set both young and old straight as to what Buddhism really teaches. He did so by going back to the original principles pointed out by Lord Buddha, as found in the Pāli suttas, explaining these simply and directly, and showing that their relevance is timeless. Natural truth is relevant and applicable in ancient India, contemporary Siam, and even the overly developed and increasingly stagnant West.

The Thai publication of these talks was originally titled *Lak Dhamma Samrab Nak Seuksa* (Dhamma Principles for University Students). A closer look at the words in this title will clarify the purpose of this book. First, we must understand what is meant by *seuksa* (borrowed from Sanskrit)

[1] Considered the most liberal of Thailand's major universities and the center of protests in the 1970s, as well as the site of a ghastly massacre of students by extreme nationalists.

and *sikkhā* (Pāli counterpart).[2] Thais have used *seuksa* to translate the English terms 'study' and 'education,' but modern usage is impoverished in comparison to the original meaning. *Seuksa* goes further than merely accumulating knowledge and professional skills, as we commonly find today, formation of character having been jettisoned. *Seuksa* means to learn things that are truly relevant to life and then to thoroughly train oneself in and according to that knowledge. This 'study' leads ever more deeply into the heart, as we find when *sikkhā* is analyzed into the elements *sa* (by, for, and in oneself) and *ikkha* (to see) – 'to see oneself by oneself' which evolves into training oneself.

Nak means 'one who does, one who is skilled at or expert in' a particular activity. A *nak-seuksa* is a 'student,' but not by virtue of enrolling in a school, putting on a uniform, or carrying books. A true student must *seuksa* in all meanings, aspects, and levels of the word until being expert at *seuksa*. There are no institutions, schedules, or curricula that can contain the genuine student. Being a student is a fundamental duty of all human beings for as long as we breathe.

Lak means 'principle, standard, post, bulwark.' A *lak* is something we can hold onto – wisely – for stability and safety. Wise students begin their investigations with fundamentals and take care to be grounded in them firmly before proceeding further. In fact, the real basics are often enough. Identifying the principles that establish us in the core of our subject is a start. Careful reflection on them leads to understanding.

[2] Pāli terms are translated and explained in parenthesis. If further explanation is needed, they can be found in Glossary.

However, only by incorporating them into our lives through practice do they become a trustworthy bulwark against egoism and suffering.

'Dhamma'[3] defies translation. Dhamma is the core of all spiritual endeavor and all life, even the most mundane. Dhamma can mean 'phenomenon,' 'teachings,' and 'supreme, absolute Truth.' Here, for a practical start, we can emphasize four vital meanings of the word 'Dhamma':

> 'Nature' – all things, including humanity and all we do, and the natures of those things;
>
> 'Law' – the natural law underlying and governing all such phenomena;
>
> 'Duty' – the way of living required of each human being, and all other beings, with every breath and at every opportunity, by the law of nature;
>
> 'Fruit' – the result of duty done correctly according to natural law.

These are the ground in which students of the truth of life must establish their principles. This Dhamma is the reality to which all study should lead.

Samrab means 'for.' Dhamma principles don't float around in a metaphysical or philosophical twilight zone. They have a clear purpose and practical value. They are for the inspiration and enrichment of students. They are for those people who are curious about life, who want to understand what we are doing here and where we should be going, who are weary of

[3] 'Buddha-Dhamma' means 'Buddha's Dhamma' or the 'Dhamma taught by Buddha, the Awakened One.'

selfishness and misery. Dhamma principles aren't intended, however, as articles of faith to be believed, memorized, and recited for emotional satisfaction within an illusion of security. They are for study, investigation, experiment, and deepening as a vehicle for one's own realization of the truth that is the meaning of human life.

This book covers a variety of topics that are generally confused or ignored, although they make up the essence of what Buddhism has to offer. When issues such as suffering and emptiness are pushed back into a dim, intangible ambiguity by the scholarly discussions that are all too common in modern Buddhism, Ajahn Buddhadāsa strives to help us see them in our own breathing and living. Where the academics, both Eastern and Western, see theories and philosophies, he sees the tools to live life in truth and peace. His vision and teaching are clear and succinct; we hope that our attempts to translate them into English do him and his teachers – Buddha, Dhamma, nature, life, and suffering – justice.

Presented here are questions that all Dhamma cultivators have asked ourselves at one time or another. Others in turn will ask these questions of us. Therefore, it is convenient to have lucid, concise responses handy when we need them, especially when they are supported by quotations from Buddha himself, yet aren't overly technical or elaborate. The best approach is down-to-earth, leaving aside the mysticism and mythology with which we so often pleasantly distract ourselves. Keeping the investigation – in both this book and our own lives – practical, factual,

and straightforward eliminates the misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and misinformation that can distort religion. Confronting these truths simply and in daily life will reveal their profundity and liberate us from suffering and the ignorance that causes it.

This little book has been reprinted a few times since Ariyananda Bhikkhu (Rod Bucknell) first translated it. The current edition was revised, first by myself and later with help from Rod, in 1988. We corrected minor errors and printing irregularities, and tried to improve readability, but without making major changes. At that time, visitors to Suan Mokkh helped with suggestions and proof-reading. Unfortunately, their names are too numerous to mention. Phra Dusadee Metaṃkuro, Chao Assava, and their friends in The Dhamma Study & Practice Group were responsible for business and publication duties at that time. Their kindness and dedication in publishing many valuable Dhamma books then and since deserves acknowledgement, appreciation, and support.

This 2018 update came about at the instigation of Phramahā Ritthi Thiracitto of Wat Atamayatārāma in Woodinville, WA. Volunteers with the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok checked the transcribed text from previous edition. Subsequently, François Merigoux with volunteers Cindy Stewart and Jo Marie Thompson have copy edited. Lastly, I – now upasaka rather than bhikkhu – have gone through the manuscript carefully checking it with the Thai original and benefitting from a much better understanding of Thai and Ajahn Buddhadāsa than I had in 1988. In consequence, there has been a fair amount of improving

accuracy, updating language, and streamlining phrasing.

Rereading what is for me a trusted review of Buddha-Dhamma basics has been a joy and a return to my roots. No matter how much I delve into the nuances of Buddhism's more subtle teachings, as well as the complexities of its history, it is refreshing to return to a straightforward expression of essential benchmarks that have grounded my study and practice for three decades. I am grateful to Ajahn Ritthi for provoking this opportunity and colleagues at the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives (Bangkok) for making it happen. May all readers find similar contentment and inspiration in this small, potent text.

May the efforts of the many Dhamma friends and comrades who have contributed to this book benefit not only their own cultivation of awakening, selflessness, and spiritual peace, but that of Dhamma students and practitioners the world over. May this book be read carefully and repeatedly so that the profound truths presented within will take root in our hearts. May we all study and live in harmony with this Dhamma, thereby quenching all traces of misunderstanding, selfishness, and *dukkha*.

Santikaro Bhikkhu
Suan Mokkhabalārāma
Rains Retreat, 1988
(updated for 2018 edition,
Santikaro Upasaka
Kevala Retreat, Wisconsin, USA)

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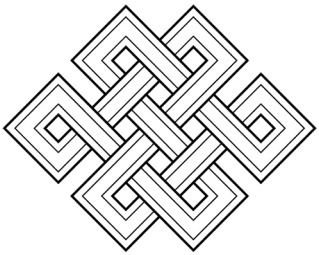

Buddha-Dhamma for Inquiring Minds

Fellow truth-seekers:

Today's talk is entitled, 'Dhamma Principles for Students.'

I wish to make it clear to you that today's talk will deal only with fundamentals and basic principles, and so is especially intended for students, that is to say, for intelligent people, as well as intellectuals in general.[1] I shall discuss these broad principles of Dhamma (natural truth) using the question-and-answer format, first putting a question to you, and then supplying an answer. Having heard the question first, you will find the answer easier to understand and remember. This, I feel, is the most appropriate method of presentation for you who are students, that is, intelligent people. Reputedly, at the time of the Buddha, intelligent people never asked about anything but basic points and fundamental principles. They

[1] While he was addressing a large group of university students, the Thai term *nak-seuksa* has a broader meaning that applies to anyone who commits to and seriously undergoes a program of study. Inquiry into Dhamma is necessarily such a program, one that isn't limited to book learning and intellectual pursuits. (Primary and secondary students are known as *nak-rian*, learners.)

never wanted long-winded explanations. This has the virtue of saving time, among other things.

That is how I shall do it today: pose a question as our topic, and then answer it in terms of basic principles. In this way, you will get the essentials of a large number of topics, facts that will serve as a good general foundation. Having this foundation knowledge will bear good fruit in the future; it will be of assistance to you in studying and in understanding other speakers.

One more point. The form of my talk is designed to prepare you for those occasions when you will be asked questions by people from other countries and other religions. It will enable you to answer their questions, and answer them correctly, without giving rise to any misunderstanding concerning the teaching.

Bear well in mind those points that constitute the essence or real kernel of the subject. If you manage to remember that much, it will be a very good thing, and, I believe, a very great benefit to you all. Now I shall discuss the topics in turn.

1) Suppose we are asked, **'What did the Buddha teach?'**

The best way of answering is to quote the Buddha himself, 'Monks, now, as in the past, I teach only *dukkha* (suffering, distress) and the quenching of *dukkha*.'

Whether or not this answer agrees with what you had thought, please take good note of it. There are many other ways we may answer, but this one saying of the Buddha sums

up his teaching succinctly.

The Buddha taught only *dukkha* and the quenching of it. This renders irrelevant any questions without a direct bearing on the elimination of *dukkha*. You need not consider such questions as 'Is there rebirth after death?' or 'How does rebirth take place?' These can be considered later.

Consequently, if a foreigner asks us this question, we shall answer it by saying, 'The Buddha taught nothing other than *dukkha* and the ending of it.'

2) **'What did he teach in particular?'**

A) As you can see, this is a large subject that can be answered from many different points of view. If asked this, we can say first of all that he taught us to travel the middle way, to be neither too strict nor too loose, to go to neither the one extreme nor the other. On the one hand, we are to avoid the extremely harsh self-mortification practiced in certain yoga schools, which simply creates difficulties and trouble. On the other hand, we avoid behavior that indulges in sensual pleasures, which amounts to saying, 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!' This is a cynical expression appropriate only for people overly interested in sensual pleasures.

By contrast, the middle way consists of, on one hand, not creating hardships for ourselves and, on the other hand, not indulging in sensual pleasures to our heart's content. Walking the middle way brings about conditions that are in every way conducive to study and practice, and to success in putting an end to *dukkha* (suffering). The expression 'middle

way' can be applied generally in many varied situations. It will never lead you astray. The middle way consists of striking the golden mean. Knowing causes, knowing effects, knowing oneself, knowing how much is enough, knowing the proper time, knowing individuals, knowing groups of people: these seven noble virtues constitute walking the middle way.[2] This is one way of answering the question.

B) We could answer it equally well by saying that he taught self-help. You all understand what self-help is; you hardly will want it explained. To put it briefly, we ought not to rely on fortune and fate. We aren't to rely on celestial beings, nor even, finally, on what is called 'God.' We must help ourselves, as in the well-known quote from the Buddha, 'Oneself is the refuge of oneself.' Even in theistic religions, it is said that God helps only those who help themselves. In other religions, this matter of self-help may be stated more or less definitely, but in Buddhism it is all important. The one who must help oneself is any one of us who suffers pain and anguish because of delusion. As it is our own delusion, we must turn to the way of self-help to be free of it. The Buddha said, 'Buddhas merely point the way. Making the effort is something that everyone must do for themselves.' In other words, Buddhism teaches self-help. Let's bear this in mind.

C) Another way of answering is to say the Buddha taught that everything is subject to causes and conditions. All things happen in consequence of causes and conditions, and in accordance with natural law. This statement is like the answer

[2] The seven qualities of *dhammaññū*, one who knows Dhamma (AN 7.68, Dhammaññū Sutta).

received by Sāriputta when, prior to his entering the monastic community, he questioned a wandering monk and was told that the Buddha teaches thus: 'For everything arising from a cause, we must know the cause of that thing and the ceasing of the cause of that thing.' This Dhamma principle is scientific in nature, and we can say that the principles of Buddhism agree with the principles of science. The Buddha didn't use individual persons or subjective things as criteria; Buddhism is a religion of reason.

D) To answer yet another way, as a rule of practice, the Buddha taught, 'Avoid evil, do good, purify the mind.' Collectively, these three are the Ovāda-Pāṭimokkha, meaning the 'summary of all exhortations.' Avoid evil, do good, purify the mind. Avoiding evil and doing good need no explaining, but making the mind pure isn't as obvious. If one goes about grasping and clinging, even to goodness, mind will be gloomy and muddled, such as being afraid of not getting something good one wants or afraid of losing an existing good. The anxiety and worry that come with attaching to this and that as 'mine' also produce suffering. Even though we have succeeded in avoiding evil and doing good, we still must know how to free mind. Don't grasp at or cling to anything as being self ('me') or as belonging to self ('mine'). Doing so will create misery, as 'me' and 'mine' are a heavy burden of suffering (*dukkha*). In other words, grasping and clinging are like always carrying a heavy weight. Such is the burden of suffering. Even a load of precious gems carried on the shoulders or head is just as heavy as a load of rocks. So don't carry rocks or gems of *dukkha*. Put them aside. Don't let there be any weight on

your head, which here means mind. This is what is meant by 'purify mind,' the third part of the Ovāda-Pāṭimokkha. The first thing is to avoid evil, the second is to do good, and the third is to make mind pure. This is yet another basic teaching of the Buddha.

E) Another teaching that provides an important reminder is, 'All concocted things – everything in this world – are perpetually flowing and forever breaking up. They are all impermanent. May everyone be impeccable in heedfulness!' Please listen carefully, however young you may be, to these words. They apply equally to all ages, all sexes, and all classes. Everything in this world is in perpetual flux, forever breaking up. All is impermanent. Therefore, we must equip ourselves fully with heedfulness. Don't fool around with these things! They will bite you. They will slap your face. They will bind and hold you fast. They will make you sit and weep, or perhaps even commit suicide.

In conclusion, let's bring together these various ways of answering the question, 'What did the Buddha teach?' which we can answer in one of the following ways:

(1) He taught to follow the middle way;

(2) He taught self-help;

(3) He taught us to be familiar with the law of conditionality and to adjust causes and conditions appropriately for the desired results to follow;

(4) He taught the basic principle of practice, 'Avoid evil, do good, purify the mind';

(5) And he reminded us that all concocted things are impermanent and perpetually flowing, so we must be fully equipped with heedfulness.

These are prominent ways that the question can be answered. If asked what the Buddha taught, then answer in any one of these ways.

3) **'Put as briefly as possible, what is the basic message of Buddhism?'**

This can be answered in one short sentence spoken by the Buddha himself: 'Nothing whatsoever should be grasped at or clung to.'

That nothing should be grasped at or clung to is a handy maxim from the mouth of the Buddha himself. We don't need to waste time in searching through the Tipiṭaka (the recorded Teaching), because this one short statement puts it all quite clearly. In the entire body of the discourses, believed to cover eighty-four thousand Dhamma topics, a single sentence encapsulates them all: 'Nothing should be clung to.' To grasp at things and cling to them is suffering (*dukkha*). When we come to know this, we can be said to know all the utterances of the Buddha, the entire eighty-four thousand Dhamma topics. To put this into practice is to practice Dhamma completely, in its every phase and aspect.

The reason people fail to keep the ethical principles (*sīla*) is that we grasp at and cling to things. If we refrain from grasping at and clinging to anything whatsoever, and put aside love and hatred, we can't fail to keep the ethical principles.

The reason the minds of people are distracted and unable to concentrate is that they grasp at and cling to things. The reason people lack insight is the same. When we are finally able to practice non-grasping, simultaneously we realize the noble paths, their fruits, and ultimately Nibbāna.

The Buddha was someone who grasped at absolutely nothing. The Dhamma teaches the practice and the fruit of the practice of non-grasping. The Saṅgha (community of noble disciples) consists of people who practice non-grasping, some who are still in the process of practicing and some who have completed the practice. This is what Saṅgha is.

When people asked the Buddha whether his entire teaching could be summarized in a single sentence, he answered that it could, and responded, 'Nothing whatsoever should be grasped at or clung to.'

4) **'How is this non-grasping and non-clinging to be put into practice?'**

If you meet someone who asks by what means one may practice the essence of Buddhism, you can again answer by quoting the Buddha. We don't have to answer with our own ideas. The Buddha explained how to practice in succinct and complete terms. When seeing a visual object, just see it. When hearing a sound with the ears, just hear it. When smelling an odor with the nose, just smell it. When tasting something by way of the tongue, just taste it. When experiencing a tactile sensation by way of the general skin and body sense, just experience that sensation. And when a mental object, such

as a sorrowful thought, arises in mind, just know that mood of sorrow.

Let's go over it again for those of you who have never heard this before. When seeing, just see! If at all possible, in seeing, just see. When listening, just hear; when smelling an odor, just smell the odor; in tasting, just taste; in detecting a tactile sensation through the skin and body, just experience that sensation; and on the arising of a mental object in mind, just be aware of it. This means not adding to the experience by concocting an ego out of it. The Buddha taught that when one practices like this, ego will not exist; and the non-existence of ego is the end of suffering (*dukkha*).

The words, 'When seeing a visual object, just see it' need explaining. When objects make contact with the eye, observe and recognize them; know what to do about whatever is seen. But don't stir up loving or hating. If you create loving, you will desire; if you create hating, you will want to destroy. Thus it is that there are lovers and haters. This is what is called 'ego' or 'self.' To let egoism proceed is suffering and mistaken. When something is seen, let there be intelligence and awareness. Don't allow your mental defilements to compel you to grasp and cling. Cultivate enough intelligence to know which line of action is right and appropriate. And if no action is required, have equanimity. If you want some sort of result from this thing, then proceed with full awareness and intelligence, not giving birth to ego. In this way, you will get the result you want and no suffering arises. This is a concise principle of practice, and should be regarded as most excellent.

The Buddha taught this to the ascetic Bāhiya: When

seeing, just see. When hearing, just hear. When smelling an odor, just smell. When tasting, just taste. When experiencing a tactile sensation, just experience. When sensing something in mind, just sense. Let things stop right there and insight will function automatically. Take the course that is right and fitting. Don't give birth to 'the lover' or 'the hater.' If we desire to act in accordance with that liking or disliking, that is ego birth. Such a mind is turbulent, isn't free, and functions without any insight at all. The Buddha instructed Bāhiya and also Māluṅkyāputta along these lines.

Why haven't we mentioned virtue, meditation, insight, doing good, or alms-giving in connection with the most fruitful practice? These are helpful conditions, but they aren't the heart of Dhamma, not the essential matter. We do good, give alms, observe morality, develop concentration, and gain insight to have the balance and naturalness recommended to Bāhiya. To simply see while seeing something and simply hear when hearing something is to be balanced and natural. We will have stability, unshakeability, and equilibrium regarding sense objects of every kind that touch us in any possible way and by every sensory route, such that ego doesn't arise. Doing good and alms-giving are means of getting rid of ego. Observing ethics is a way to have mastery over ego, as is meditation practice. Acquiring knowledge and wisdom serves to destroy ego. Here, we aren't speaking of several different matters; we are speaking of one urgent everyday matter. Our eyes see this and that, our ears hear this and that, our nose smells odors, and so on for all six sense channels. If we guard these six channels, we guard everything. This single practice

covers all practices comprehensively. It is the very essence of Dhamma practice. If you meet a foreigner who asks how to practice, answer in this way.

5) **'Where can one learn and where can one study?'**

We answer this by quoting the Buddha once again, 'In this fathom-long body together with awareness and intelligence.' We learn in a human body accompanied by awareness and knowing. This means a living person, specifically, oneself.

In this fathom-long body accompanied by awareness and intelligence the Tathāgata (the Buddha) has made known the world, the origin of the world, the thorough quenching of the world, and the way to practice in order to realize the thorough quenching of the world. When he spoke of the origin of the world, the thorough quenching of the world, and the way of practice leading to the thorough quenching of the world, he meant that the whole Dhamma is to be found within the body and mind. Learn here. Don't learn in a school, in a cave, in a forest, on a mountain, or in a monastery. Those places are external. Build a school inside, build a university within the body. There, examine, study, investigate, research, scout around, and find out the truth about how the world arises, how it comes to be a source of suffering, how there may be thorough quenching of the world (that is, quenching of suffering), and how to work towards attaining that thorough quenching. That is, rediscover the four noble truths yourself. Sometimes the Buddha used the word 'world' and sometimes the word 'suffering' (*dukkha*). The nature of the world, of

suffering; the nature of its arising, its origin and source; the nature of its thorough quenching, the cessation of suffering and the turbulent world; and the nature of the practice which leads to *dukkha*'s end: these can be searched for and found in this body and nowhere else. If one appears to have found it elsewhere, it can only be as an account in a book, hearsay, mere words, and not reality itself. However, when it is looked for and found in this fathom-long body together with this mind, then it will be real. So if asked where to learn, say, 'We learn in this fathom-long body, together with awareness and intelligence.'

6) **'To what may Dhamma be compared?'**

The Buddha said, 'Dhamma may be compared to a raft.' He used the word 'raft' because in those days rafts were commonly used for crossing rivers, and this explanation of Dhamma as a raft could be readily understood. This simile has an important meaning. One shouldn't become so attached to Dhamma that one forgets oneself, that one becomes careless and proud of being a teacher, a scholar, or a thinker. If one forgets that Dhamma as teachings and texts is just a raft, this danger will arise. The Dhamma raft is a vehicle that will carry us across to the other shore. Having reached the further shore and climbed onto firm ground, we shouldn't be so foolish as to carry the raft along with us.

This simile is meant to teach us to recognize and use Dhamma as merely a means to an end, not to grasp at and cling to it to the point of forgetting ourselves. If we don't recognize

the true function of this raft, we may find ourselves keeping it for show or as something to quarrel over. Sometimes it is regarded as a race to be run, which is wasteful and useless. It should be used as intended for crossing over, for crossing the stream. Knowledge of Dhamma should be used to cross over beyond suffering. It shouldn't be retained for detrimental purposes, for fighting with that sharp-edged weapon the tongue, for arguing, or as an object of ceremonial obeisance. Don't grasp at and cling to it such that, even after having reached the shore and having landed, you aren't willing to leave the raft behind, but want to carry it everywhere with you.

7) **'What should a householder study?'**

This Dhamma, said to resemble a raft, is just as applicable for householders as it is for home-leavers.[3] If we are to answer in accordance with what the Buddha taught, then we must say, 'Householders should study all the *suttantas*, that is, the heart of the Tathāgata's discourses concerning *suññatā* (emptiness).'

These *suttantas* are well-organized expositions of the teaching. They constitute a good system forming the pithy substance or heart of the teaching. *Sutta* means 'discourse' and *anta* means 'end.' Hence, a *suttanta* is a discourse that is well set out, well ordered, and the core subject matter of something. It is like the word *vedanta*. *Veda* is 'knowledge'; *vedanta* is substantial knowledge well set out and systematically arranged.

[3] *Pabbajita*, those who go out from the householder life to be less encumbered in their spiritual practice.

Remember this word *suttanta*. It has been oversimplified and misunderstood as the fables one hears in some temples. Actually, the *suttantas* are utterances of the Tathāgata, that is, what the Buddha taught and especially those connected with *suññatā* (emptiness). When householders ask how they are to practice Dhamma for the most enduring benefits and happiness, the Buddha replied that they should 'Train in and penetrate to the meaning of *suttantas* that are spoken by the Tathāgata, profound, deep in the meaning, world transcending, and connected especially with emptiness.'[4]

This word *suññatā* may seem strange to you, but don't lose heart just yet, because it happens to be the most important word in Buddhism. Please listen carefully. The word *suññatā* may be translated as 'emptiness.' But the word 'empty' has several usages and meanings. The *suññatā* of the Buddha doesn't mean material emptiness, it isn't a physical vacuum devoid of any substance. Not at all! *Suññatā* is emptiness regarding spiritual matters and refers to the essential nature of things. All sorts of things may be present, as many things as would fill the whole world, but the Buddha taught that they are empty, or have the property of emptiness, because there's nothing in any of them that either is an essential self or belongs to a self. The aim of this perspective is, once again, non-clinging regarding all things. Householders should study in particular those sayings of the Buddha that deal with *suññatā*. Generally, this subject has been misunderstood as being too lofty for householders. The reason for this is

[4] *Ye te suttantā tathāgatabhāsitā gambhīrā gambhīrātthā lokuttarā suññatāppaṭisaṃyuttā.*

simply that too few people wish to practice according to these sayings of the Buddha. So please keep clearly in mind that even a householder must study about, practice, and then discover *suññatā*. It isn't only for home-leavers.

I hope, then, that you, as householders, will no longer be afraid of the word *suññatā* or of the subject of *suññatā*. Take steps to increase your knowledge and understanding of it. *Suññatā* is a theme requiring subtle and delicate explanation; it may take a long time. Consequently, we have discussed only the actual core of the matter, just its essence – and that is enough – namely, emptiness of the notion of 'being self' or 'belonging to self.' If mind realizes that there's nothing that is self and that there's nothing that belongs to self, mind is 'empty' and free. 'This world is empty' means just this.

8) **'What is the *amata-dhamma*?'**

Amata means 'deathless' or 'undying'; *amata-dhamma* is the *dhamma* (phenomena, reality) that doesn't die. And what is that? The Buddha once said, 'The cessation of greed, hatred, and delusion is *amata-dhamma*.' *Amata-dhamma* is the undying reality, the reality that can't die (because it was never born), as well as the *dhamma* that brings deathlessness. Wherever there is greed, hatred, and delusion, this is called the mortal condition. One experiences suffering. One has ego, which subjects one to birth, aging, disease, and death. When greed, hatred, and delusion cease – the ceasing of delusion being the ceasing of ignorance and misunderstanding – there no longer arises the false sense of selfhood and there's no

more self to die. When there is no ego, who is there to die? If one is searching for an immortal state, one must search for the condition that is free of greed, hatred, and delusion. This is what the Buddha taught. *Amata-dhamma*, as we have frequently heard, is the ultimate, the highest teaching of Buddhism. The 'undying' taught by other traditions is something different. In Buddhism, it is the cessation of greed, hatred, and delusion.

9) **'What is the Dhamma that is highest and most profound, that transcends the world and death in all their forms?'**

The Buddha called it *suññatāppaṭisaṃyuttā* which means 'Dhamma connected with *suññatā*,' or even '*suññatā*' itself. Dhamma that is permeated with *suññatā* is Dhamma at its highest and most profound. It transcends the world, transcends death, and is none other than *amata-dhamma* (deathless *dhamma*).

What of the newer, later explanations of Dhamma?

The Buddha said, 'Discourses of any kind, though produced by a poet or a scholar, though versified, poetical, splendid, and melodious in sound and syllable, are not in line with this teaching if they are not connected with *suññatā*.' Please remember the important words 'not connected with *suññatā*.' Therefore, if a discourse isn't concerned with *suññatā*, it must be the words of a later disciple, an innovation, a new understanding of Dhamma, and not the Tathāgata's words. If the words of a disciple don't treat of *suññatā*, they

are an outside teaching (*bāhiraka*).

If we seek the original and highest Dhamma that is true to the Buddha, there's no possible way other than through those accounts that refer to *suññatā* (emptiness).

10) **'Which aspect of the teaching, as recorded in the Pāli Texts, did the Buddha teach most of all?'**

Answer once again by quoting the Buddha: 'The five *khandhas* are impermanent (*anicca*) and not-self (*anattā*).' These five *khandhas* are the five aggregates into which a person is divisible. The body aggregate is called *rūpa*; the aggregate of feeling, both pleasurable and painful, is called *vedanā*; memory, recognition, and perception is called *saññā*; active thinking is called *saṅkhāra*; and the cognition that knows this or that object via the six senses is *viññāṇa*. *Rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*: these five are called the five aggregates or *khandhas*. These five aggregates are impermanent and devoid of selfhood, which is what the Buddha taught most of all. These five aggregates don't last, continually flow, and constantly change. They can't be 'self' (*attā*) because they are in perpetual flux, and no one can take them to be 'me' or 'mine.'

To summarize this once again, all things are impermanent and nothing can be held to be 'me' or 'mine.' Keep this brief statement in mind as what the Buddha taught most of all.

11) **'Whom did the Buddha teach that we should believe?'**

If you are asked this, answer with the Buddha's advice from

the Kālāma Sutta: believe one's own clear seeing. What is meant by 'seeing clearly?' It means knowing directly without needing to rely on logical reasoning, deduction, speculation, hypothetical thinking, or assumption. We should see as clearly as we see a physical object right in front us, that acting upon a certain object in a certain way produces a certain result. This is the meaning of 'seeing clearly.' There's no need to rely on reasoning, assumption, or supposition. In Buddhism, we are taught not to believe anyone, nor to believe anything, without seeing clearly for ourselves reality.

The following questions illustrate what is meant here. Why are we warned not to believe the Tipiṭaka (the Buddhist Canon)? Not to believe a teacher? Not to believe what is widely reported or rumored? Not to believe what has been thought out by reasoning? Not to believe what has been arrived at by means of logic? These examples are a help towards right understanding, because all blind credulity is foolishness. Suppose we open the Tipiṭaka, read a certain passage, and then believe it without thinking, without testing it, and without critical examination. That would be foolish belief in the Tipiṭaka, which the Buddha forbade. Believing what a teacher says without having used our own eyes and ears, without thinking critically, and without having seen for ourselves that what he says is really so, this is what is meant here by 'merely believing a teacher.' It is the same with believing any report or rumor that happens to arise. 'Believing in what has been arrived at by way of logic' means that, having learnt how to reason correctly and being experienced in reasoning, we deduce a certain proposition must be logically so. That is still

not good enough. Don't put trust in any such sort of reasoning.

Here, be careful and don't listen carelessly, thinking that this discourse forbids us to read the Tipiṭaka. Nor does it forbid us to consult a teacher, to listen to reports and rumors, or to use logical reasoning. Rather, it means that although we may have read, listened, and heard, we shouldn't simply accept what is offered in these ways unless we have first thought it over, considered it carefully, fathomed it out, examined it fully, and seen clearly for ourselves that something really is so.

For instance, the Buddha taught that greed, anger, and delusion are causes that give rise to suffering. If we ourselves aren't yet acquainted with greed, anger, and delusion, there's no way that we can believe this, there's no need to believe it, and to believe it would, in such a case, be foolish. When we know in ourselves what greed is like, what anger is like, and what delusion is like, and that whenever they arise in mind, they produce suffering as if they were fires burning us, then we can believe on the basis of our own experience.

Concerning what the Buddha taught, even what appears in the Tipiṭaka, whatever we have read or heard, we must investigate until we see clearly the facts being taught. If, still, we don't see it clearly and must fall back on reasoning, leave it for a while. We only need to believe and practice what we see clearly through our own experience. Gradually, we shall come to believe and see more and more clearly. There's nothing to fear. This is a well-known teaching of the Buddha.

If a foreigner asks you about this Kālāma Sutta, do explain it properly. If you explain it wrongly, you will misrepresent the Buddha's teaching. Not simply believing the Tipiṭaka, nor

believing a teacher, nor believing reports and rumors, nor believing reasoning and logic – these have a hidden meaning. We must discover it. To believe straight away is foolishness. The Buddha forbade such foolishness firmly and definitely. He warned against believing prematurely, even his own words. Only after testing and coming to see clearly may we believe a teaching.

To believe straight away is foolishness; to believe after seeing clearly is good sense. This is the Buddhist policy on belief: not believing foolishly, not relying only on other people, or on texts, conjecture, reasoning, or whatever the majority believes, but rather believing what we see clearly for ourselves. This is how it is in Buddhism. We Buddhists make it our policy.

12) **'How do the minds of ordinary people and dedicated Buddhist practitioners differ?'**

We shall consider a perspective that gives some understanding of the difference in level between the minds of ordinary people and the minds of Buddhists who actually practice. 'Ordinary people' refers to people who have never been proper Buddhists, know nothing of genuine Buddhism, merely follow customs, are Buddhists in name only, or according to birth records through having been born of Buddhist parents. To be a 'true Buddhist' is to be *ariya*, those of noble practice who understand everything around them correctly to a far higher degree than ordinary people.

The Buddha humorously said, 'Between the view

of *ariyas* and the view of ordinary people there is an enormous difference.' For example, from the perspective of the *ariyan* discipline, singing songs is the same thing as weeping, dancing is the antics of madmen, and hearty laughter is the behavior of immature children. Ordinary people sing, laugh, and enjoy themselves without noticing when they are weary. In the discipline of the *ariyas*, singing looks the same as weeping. If we observe someone singing loudly, it not only looks the same as weeping but, furthermore stems from the same emotional conditions as does weeping. As for dancing, this is the behavior of lunatics! If we are just a little observant, we will realize as we are getting up to dance, that we surely must be at least ten percent crazy or else we couldn't do it. Because it is universally considered something pleasant, we don't see it as the behavior of lunatics. Some people like to laugh; laughter is something enjoyable. People laugh a lot, even when it isn't appropriate. However, in the *ariyan* discipline laughter is regarded as the behavior of children. If we could laugh less, that would be a good thing, and not to laugh at all would be even better.

These are illustrations of the way in which the *ariyan* discipline differs from the traditions of ordinary people. According to the traditions of ordinary people, singing, dancing, and laughing are of no consequence and are normal events, while in the *ariyan* discipline they are looked upon as pathetic. Such is the view of those whose minds are highly developed.

The point here isn't that we should never do such things. The Buddha wants us to know that there are higher and lower

ways to behave, and that we need not create hardships for ourselves more than is necessary. Don't behave commonly too often. Though we aren't yet *ariya*, we may still raise our standards of behavior. Certain behaviors are at times amusing, but eventually we get tired of them. We then raise ourselves to the level of Buddhist practice and discipline of the *ariyas*.

Some people don't like to hear about 'discipline.' They worry that restraining themselves might lead to *dukkha*. However, lack of discipline creates much more trouble than it avoids. Giving in to passing moods is *dukkha*; lack of discipline perpetuates *dukkha*. Noble discipline uplifts our behavior and minds above our changing moods.

When it occurs to us that we ought to improve our status somewhat, we may apply for admission into the society of the Buddha, that is, having the mindful intelligence and understanding that diminishes suffering. Avoid making things unnecessarily hard and fruitless for yourself. The reward you will reap with nobility is to rise from the level of ordinary commoner to become a true Buddhist in the *ariyan* discipline. The Buddha's hope for his teaching is that there would come to be many noble ones and that we wouldn't remain ordinary worldlings forever.

13) **'Which way of practice constitutes the ordinary path and which is the shortest, most direct path?'**

Concerning ordinary practice, we might answer 'The noble eightfold path.' You have probably heard the details, namely, right understanding, right aim, right speech, right action,

right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This is called noble eightfold path. It has a most orderly arrangement that can be grouped under the aspects of morality, concentration, and insight. It forms a progressive system of practice, which we refer to as walking the ordinary path. It is suitable for people who can't take the more direct path. It isn't a wrong path; however, it is the ordinary level of right path and takes a long time.

The Buddha has taught a shortcut as well. He said that when there's no clinging to any of the six sense media (*āyatana*) and things associated with them as being self-entities, then noble eightfold path will arise instantly in all of its eight aspects. This is a most important and fundamental principle of Dhamma.

First of all, we must review that the six sense media (*āyatana*) are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Each of these six organs has five aspects. In the case of the eyes, the first aspect is the eyes themselves; the second is the visual object that makes contact with the eyes; the third is the sense awareness or cognition (*viññāṇa*) that knows that visual object making contact with the eyes; the fourth is the activity of contact (*phassa*) effected in the meeting of cognition, eyes, and visual object; and the fifth is the pleasurable or painful feeling (*vedanā*) that arises with the contact. These are the five aspects to sense experience. The eyes have these five aspects. The ears have five also, the nose has five, and so on. Each of them plays a part in inducing a lack of mindfulness leading to grasping at something as being ego or self. For example, we grasp at the awareness

that cognizes and sees via the eyes. Because we can be aware of something, we jump to the conclusion that 'I'm aware of it.' In this way, we grasp at and cling to eye-consciousness as being self, or grasp at eye-contact (fourth aspect) as self, or cling to eye-contact feeling pleasant or unpleasant (fifth aspect) as self. Sometimes a melodious sound comes to the ears and we grasp at the awareness of melody as being self. Sometimes a tasty flavor comes to the tongue and we grasp at the awareness of tastiness as being self.

Each of the six sense media has five aspects, making altogether thirty aspects. Any of these can be grasped at as self, clung to with the greatest ease many times over in a single day. As soon as we grasp and cling, suffering results. We are mistaken and have enmeshed ourselves in a mass of suffering. This isn't walking the path. When there is neither grasping nor clinging due to awareness that none of the sense media and their aspects are self, the Buddha said noble eightfold path is fully present in that very moment. At that moment there is right understanding, right aim, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right unification. To practice non-grasping at the six sense media is a shortcut for the entire eightfold path to arise immediately.

The Buddha taught the quickest shortcut – emptiness of sense media – in one of his discourses. Not holding on to self regarding eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind gives rise to the entire noble eightfold path in a single moment. If we aren't up to the shortcut, then study the noble eightfold path of morality, concentration, and wisdom. Practicing it from the beginning, proceeding gradually and by slow degrees, may

use up much time. So we find that Buddhism offers both an ordinary way and a shortcut.

14) **'What role does *kamma* play in Buddhism?'**

Many Westerners have written books on Buddhism, and they seem to be most proud of the chapters dealing with *kamma* (Sanskrit, *karma*) and rebirth. However, their explanations are wrong, quite wrong every time. Those Westerners set out to explain *kamma* (action), but all they really say is that good *kamma* is good and evil *kamma* is evil. 'Do good, receive good; do evil, receive evil,' without further development, is exactly the same doctrine as is found in every religion. Such a simple formulation is not the Buddhist teaching on *kamma*.

A similar over-simplification happens with 'rebirth.' People speak as if they had seen with their own eyes the very same individuals being reborn. This misrepresents the Buddha's main message: the non-existence of 'the person,' 'the individual,' or 'the self.' Even though 'I' am sitting here now, no individual can be found. When there's no individual, what is there to die? What is there to be reborn? The Buddha consistently taught that a truly existing individual or person can't be found. Thus, birth and death are matters of conventional, relative truth. The writers of books entitled 'Buddhism' generally explain *kamma* and rebirth quite wrongly.

Do pay close attention to this matter of *kamma*. To be the Buddhist account, it must deal with the end of *kamma*, not just with *kamma* itself and its effects – as found in all religions.

To be the Buddha's teaching, it must speak about the end of *kamma*.

A *sabbakammakkhayaṃ-patto* is one who has realized the end of all *kamma* (action). The Buddha taught that *kamma* ends with the end of lust, hatred, and delusion (*rāga*, *dosa*, and *moha*). This is easy to remember. *Kamma* ceases when lust, hatred, and delusion cease, that is, when the defilements end. If lust, hatred, and delusion do not end, *kamma* does not end. When lust, hatred, and delusion do end, old *kamma* ends, present *kamma* is not created, and new future *kamma* is not produced – thus *kamma* past, present, and future ends. The ending of lust, hatred, and delusion is how we must explain the end of *kamma*. Only such an account of *kamma* can be called the Buddhist account.

So we find there is a third kind of *kamma* (action). Most people know of only the first and second kinds of *kamma*, good and evil *kamma*. They don't know yet what the third kind of *kamma* is. The Buddha called the first kind of *kamma* heavy or evil *kamma*, and the second kind light or good *kamma*. The kind of *kamma* that can be called neither-heavy-nor-light is that which puts an end to both evil *kamma* and good *kamma*. This third kind of kamma is a tool for putting a complete stop to both heavy and light *kamma*. The Buddha used these terms 'heavy *kamma*,' 'light *kamma*,' and '*kamma* neither-heavy-nor-light.' This third type of *kamma* is *kamma* in the Buddhist sense, *kamma* according to Buddhist principles. As has been said, to put an end to lust, hatred, and delusion is to put an end to *kamma*. Thus, the third kind of *kamma* is the ending of lust, hatred, and delusion; in other words, it is noble eightfold

path. Whenever we behave and practice in accordance with noble eightfold path, that is the third type of *kamma*. It is neither evil nor good; rather it brings to an end heavy *kamma* and light *kamma*. It is world-transcending (*lokuttara*), above good and above evil.

This third type of *kamma* is never discussed by Westerners in their chapters on '*Karma* and Rebirth.' They get it all wrong; what they expound isn't Buddhism at all. To be Buddhist, they should deal with the third type of *kamma*, the *kamma* that is capable of ending lust, hatred, and delusion. Then the whole lot of old *kamma* – evil *kamma* and good *kamma* – ends as well.

Something more about this third kind of *kamma* is that the Buddha said, 'I came to a clear realization of this through my own sublime wisdom.'[5] This teaching of the distinctly different, third type of *kamma* wasn't acquired by the Awakened One from any existing creed or religion. It is something he came to know with his own insight and then taught to all. So let's be mindful that the teaching of this third type of *kamma* is the real Buddhist teaching on *kamma*. Any manual on *kamma* in Buddhism, any book entitled '*Kamma* and Rebirth,' ought to be written on these lines. Do study closely and take an interest in the Buddhist explanation of *kamma*. The usual account of good and bad *kamma* is found in all religions. Buddhism has it too. It tells us that doing good is good and doing evil is evil. They all teach the same thing. However, the Buddha said that merely producing good *kamma* doesn't quench suffering completely and absolutely, because

[5] *Mayāsaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā*.

one goes right on being infatuated by and clinging to good *kamma*. In other words, good *kamma* still causes one to go round in the cycles of birth and death, albeit in good states of existence. That isn't complete quenching, coolness, Nibbāna.

So there is a *kamma* (action) taught exclusively by the Buddha, a third type that does away with all *kamma* and makes an end of lust, hatred, and delusion. Nibbāna is realized through this third type of *kamma.*

15) **'Must a person necessarily have heard the Buddha-Dhamma from the Buddha himself in order to make an end to suffering?'**

There have been some who have argued vehemently that we must hear Dhamma from the Buddha himself, that only then could we really understand. But the Buddha himself said that there were some who, though they hadn't heard Dhamma directly from him, would still be able to walk the right path. There are some who, not having heard about it from the Buddha, would nevertheless, through continuous reflection, consideration, and study, through constant observation and practice, be able to walk the right path.

We ought to raise our hands in homage and immerse ourselves in the sincerity of the Buddha that he didn't make Dhamma his monopoly, that he didn't set himself up as indispensable. Though this may seem a minor issue, it is of utmost importance.

16) **'If doubt arises whether a certain teaching is the Buddha's or not, how can we settle the matter?'**

The Buddha laid down a principle for testing: examine and measure against the Suttas (discourses) and compare with the Vinaya (discipline). This principle is based on not believing anything second hand and not taking anyone else as sole authority. If doubt arises concerning a certain statement by someone who claims to have heard it from the Buddha or from a learned group of elders, and which the person says leads to the cessation of suffering, the Buddha said that it must be tested in two ways:

(1) Examine and measure it against the Suttas.[6] The Suttas contain important themes and threads that run through them and constitute distinct lines of meaning. If a claim doesn't fit with these themes, it must be discarded.

(2) Compare it with the Vinaya.[7] The Vinaya is a model, standard, and systematic training. If the claim in question doesn't fit the system, if it doesn't conform with the Vinaya, then discard it.

Don't simply trust any monk, nor any section of the Saṅgha, nor any group of elders, nor any group of learned and practiced individuals who claim to have heard such and such from the Buddha or who follow a tradition of practice stemming from him. The Buddha always asked that we, before all else, raise intelligent doubt and investigate. Measure claims against the Suttas, do they fit? Compare with the Vinaya, do they conform?

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[6] *Sutte osāretabbaṃ*.

[7] *Vinaye sandassetabbaṃ*.

This method is a means of ensuring that, though Buddhism lasts two thousand years, three thousand years, five thousand years, or however many thousands or tens of thousands of years, if this principle remains in use, the religion or Dhamma-Vinaya will not become distorted or confused. It is an extremely useful principle known as the Great Standard (Mahā-Padesa). It is the Buddha's teaching establishing the practice of testing things against the Suttas and the Vinaya. Interestingly, he didn't mention the Abhidhamma.

17) Now we are going to talk about modern people and take a closer look at ourselves. **'What did the Buddha say people would be like in succeeding ages?'**

In one of the Numerical discourses,[8] the Buddha speaks of future generations, which includes our own, as 'rejoicing in unrighteous pleasures, being too much given to covetousness, and pursuing false Dhamma.' They will find great delight in pleasurable excitement of an unrighteous kind, that is to say, they are far too self-centered. They will completely lack awareness, and thus their greed grows intense and excessive. They will fall into false Dhamma, because of falling completely under the power of the defilements.

The Buddha made this statement more than two thousand years ago, yet he used the term 'people of later ages,' which extends from when the Master made this observation until the present day. Our duty is to look at ourselves in this present age. Do people in the world today take excessive

[8] *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, the fourth major collection of suttas, arranged by the number of qualities or aspects of practice under each thematic heading.

delight in unrighteous pleasures, behave far too selfishly, and lean towards false Dhamma? Obviously people at present are very different from people at the time of the Buddha. However, if we are to live correctly according to the pattern set by the Buddha, then, although we may take some pleasure in colors, shapes, sounds, scents, and tastes, we will do so with constant mindfulness and right knowledge, and will not let greed become excessive. This means that we will not pursue the colors, shapes, sounds, scents, tastes, and tactile stimuli more than is necessary, not excessively. The single word 'excess,' that is to say, more than necessary, signifies the cause of all the upsets, difficulties, and troubles of the world at this time.

I have read that Christianity considers a person to be 'sinful' who seeks beyond what is needed. One who merely seeks after more than is necessary is considered by Christian standards to be a sinner. Perhaps we don't yet consider ourselves sinners, because we prefer not to see ourselves that way or because we really consider ourselves not as yet excessive. Perhaps we think that there's nothing about us that is excessive. This matter can be discussed only with people who are honest with themselves.

In an excellent Tibetan book of parables, all the birds assemble together. They voice their opinions and express their thoughts on the way of Dhamma practice that brings happiness. Each variety of bird speaks its own mind. In the end, all the birds assembled resolve that, 'We will not seek food in excess of what is necessary. This is the ultimate.' Finally, they request the whole gathering not to seek more food than necessary. Here the story ends.

One ought to consider that seeking more than one needs is a source of suffering and torment for oneself and causes trouble for other people all over the world. Think it over! Pursuing false Dhamma means knowing something is wrong, yet wanting that wrong thing without feeling fear or shame, because defilements preponderate and overwhelm one. A person confirmed in this way of thinking is badly fitted to Dhamma and by habit is opposed to it. So if we want to be free of suffering, we must pursue no more than is necessary.

18) Now we shall ask something about the Buddha, **'To whom did the Buddha pay homage?'**

The Buddha's own answer was that he paid homage to Dhamma and to Saṅgha communities with exemplary qualities. Saṅgha communities that conduct themselves well and practice properly can be said to possess exemplary qualities. So the Buddha respected Dhamma and Saṅgha communities of exemplary qualities. We ought to reflect how even the Buddha himself paid homage to Dhamma; and if all the members of a practice community conducted themselves well and behaved properly as a group, the Buddha paid homage to them as well. This can be applied to behavior at the present time, in our own Thailand and anywhere in the world. This means we ought to respect Dhamma. If even the most exalted person paid respect to the training rules and communities that practiced well, surely so should we today.

19) **'Where can we find the Buddha?'**

The Buddha said, 'Anyone who sees Dhamma, sees the Tathāgata. Anyone who does not see Dhamma, does not see the Tathāgata. One who does not see Dhamma, though he grasps at the robe of the Tathāgata and holds it fast, cannot be said to see the Tathāgata.' ('Tathāgata' is the word often used by the Buddha to refer to himself impersonally.)

This means that the Buddha isn't found in the externals of a body. Rather, the Buddha is found in the qualities and virtues in the heart of the Buddha that are called Dhamma. That is what we must see in order to say that we have found the Buddha.

When we prostrate ourselves before the Buddha's image, we look through the image, seeing beyond the physical body of the Buddha, which the image represents. Then we look through the Buddha's physical body to his mind, and look through that mind until we penetrate the qualities and virtues present in his mind. We see those qualities as the pure, radiant, peaceful Dhamma, devoid of grasping and clinging, perfectly free. Then we have found the Buddha.

20) **'Does the Buddha exist at this moment or not?'**

If we are asked this question, we can answer with this saying of the Buddha: 'O Ānanda, the Dhamma and the Discipline, which the Tathāgata has taught and demonstrated, let them be your teacher when I have passed away.' Even now we are studying Dhamma and Discipline, practicing Dhamma

and Discipline, and realizing the benefits of Dhamma and Discipline. Thus, the Teacher still exists. This stanza is well known because it was spoken by the Buddha as he was about to pass away. Please take special interest in that it tells us the Teacher yet exists.

21) **'Did the Buddha end *kamma*?'**

If asked this, we must not denigrate the Buddha by answering carelessly or recklessly with words that misquote him and belittle his worth.

The Buddha necessarily ended *kamma* (action) completely because he wiped out the defilements, which is the meaning of 'ending *kamma*.' He transcended every kind of *kamma*, and this is what made him famous. Word spread widely and gloriously that the sage Gotama had become *sabbakammakkhayaṃ-patto*, that is, one who has realized the end of all *kamma*. The news of this event spread through India, reaching the adherents of other sects and religions. For instance, a southern brahmin named Bāvari sent sixteen disciples to the Buddha, to ask him questions and obtain knowledge from him. Others came to test him. Because of the news that the sage Gotama had become *sabbakammakkhayaṃ-patto*, had realized the complete end of *kamma*, people in India at that period were full of admiration. They were overjoyed at hearing the words *sabbakammakkhayaṃ-patto.* It was for just this reason that people became so interested in the Buddha.

We too ought to follow the Buddha's example and be interested in ending *kamma*.

22) **'What sort of inner life did the Buddha experience?'**

The Buddha once said concerning himself, 'The Tathāgata dwells in the Temple of Emptiness (*suññatā-vihāra*).' This 'temple' is a spiritual dwelling, not a physical one. *Vihāra* refers to a spiritual dwelling place, that is, a dwelling of mind and heart. The Temple of Emptiness is an ever-present experience devoid of any notions of 'self' or 'belonging to self.' To dwell in the Temple of Emptiness is to live in full awareness that all things are empty and free of selfhood. Experiencing this is *suññatā*, emptiness, and dwelling in it is called the Temple of Emptiness. The Buddha dwelt in the Temple of Emptiness, experiencing supreme bliss continuously. This is what the Master said of himself.

23) **'Why is it taught that all things are empty, that this world, that every world, is empty?'**

People unfamiliar with Buddhism may ask you questions such as, 'Why did the Buddha say the world is empty when it contains all these things? There is matter. There is mind. Isn't the world just full up with things? What about all these creations?'

The meaning is that all of the world is empty of self or of anything belonging to self. There's nothing that can be taken as being self or belonging to self. Self – a separate abiding essence – can't be found in anything: not in mind, nor in matter, nor in the various products and creations that arise out of mind and matter. That Buddhism asserts the emptiness of all things refers to nothing other than the awareness that

all things are empty of selfhood.

24) **'Why is mind experiencing the world's emptiness described as an empty or free mind (Thai, *cit-waang*)?'**

A verse in one of the later text says, 'That is truly empty which is empty of lust, hatred, and delusion.'[9] A mind is empty (unencumbered, disengaged, or free) when it is free of lust, hatred, and delusion.

When, by whatever method or means, a mind is free of all traces of lust, hatred, and delusion, it can be described as 'empty or free mind' (*cit-waang*). Here, we refer only to what happens through practice. When one is asleep, mind is also empty! While that is likewise true emptiness, it didn't come about intentionally through practicing Dhamma; therefore, it doesn't belong in the same category. If we have made an effort in some way so that mind is emptied of lust, hatred, and delusion, even if only for a moment, such mind is said to be free, void, empty. Whenever there's no clinging, mind is empty and there's no suffering. If there is clinging, there is suffering instead of emptiness. This freedom and emptiness can increase until complete – absolute freedom and emptiness. *Arahants* (fully realized individuals) are absolutely free. *Ariyas* at lower stages of awakening are largely free. Ordinary worldlings can be free and empty occasionally.

At any moment that there is freedom from lust, hatred, and delusion, in that moment there's no sense or notion of 'self.' This is known as empty-free mind (*cit-waang*).

[9] *Rāgadosamohehi suññatattā suññato*.

25) **'What is total emptiness?'**

Total emptiness or freedom is called Nibbāna. The reality completely and thoroughly empty of self-essence is Nibbāna. This can be summarized by 'Nibbāna is supreme emptiness.'[10] This unique vision transcends ordinary knowledge. We transcend the various types of conventional knowledge through seeing that 'Nibbāna is supreme emptiness.'

Nibbāna is supreme emptiness, supreme emptiness is Nibbāna. Do remember that what we refer to as 'Nibbāna' is the perfection of emptiness. That is, emptiness of greed, hatred, and delusion.

26) **'What is Nibbāna?'**

If someone persistently raises this question, answer that Nibbāna is the immortal-element (*amata-dhātu*). Say it is the element that doesn't perish. All other elements perish, but this one doesn't perish or die, because it is free of lust, hatred, and delusion. When empty of these passions, there's no notion of self-essence, there's no grasping or clinging to selfhood, and thus there's no perishing. Because this is the end of what dies, it is called the immortal-element or undying element. This deathless element is the cessation of mortal elements.

27) **'In saying someone finds satisfaction in Nibbāna, what is that satisfaction called?'**

We Buddhists teach that we ought not to go about liking and

[10] *Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ suññaṃ*.

disliking, finding satisfaction in this and dissatisfaction in that. So if someone finds satisfaction in Nibbāna, what are we to call that?

Concerning satisfaction in Nibbāna, we have terms like *dhamma-rāga* (passion for Dhamma) or *dhamma-nandi* (delight in Dhamma). There may be some alarm in hearing the use of a Pāli word like *rāga* (lust) together with the word 'Dhamma.' Here we must understand that the *rāga* in *dhamma-rāga* isn't the kind that desires visual objects, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactile stimuli. *Dhamma-rāga* isn't sensual lust. Though it means satisfaction as intense as that which ordinary householders find in sensuality, in this case the satisfaction is found in emptiness, in deathlessness, in Nibbāna.

Currently, many of us fear and hate Nibbāna, not wanting to go near it. Just hearing the word we shake our heads. So we have no desire for or delight in Dhamma or Nibbāna. Our desires are all directed towards sensuality: colors and shapes, sounds, odors, and tastes. To be fair and just, we ought to find as much satisfaction in Nibbāna as we now find in colors and shapes, sounds, odors, and tastes. Then our practice for transcending suffering will go easily. These words *dhamma-rāga* and *dhamma-nandi* were used by the Buddha in this sense.

28) Here is a question that definitely should be brought up: **'Is Nibbāna realized at death or here in this life?'**

Teachers who lecture in the fancy preaching halls only talk about Nibbāna after death. In the Tipiṭaka, however, we

don't find this idea. Instead, we find expressions such as *sandiṭṭhika-nibbāna* (Nibbāna that one sees personally) and *diṭṭhadhamma-nibbāna* (Nibbāna here and now). The blissful conditions experienced in the eight degrees of deep, subtle concentration known as absorptions (*jhāna*) are *sandiṭṭhika-nibbāna* or *diṭṭhadhamma-nibbāna*. For the present purpose, we may understand these absorptions to be a foretaste of Nibbāna. There are four with a material basis (*rūpa-jhāna*) and four with an immaterial basis (*arūpa-jhāna*). They have the flavor of, but aren't identical with, real Nibbāna. Because these states aren't perfect and absolute, they have been called *sandiṭṭhika-nibbāna* or *diṭṭhadhamma-nibbāna*.

Yet there are still better words than these. On one occasion the Buddha described the end of lust, hatred, and delusion as '*sandiṭṭhikaṃ … akālikaṃ ehipassikaṃ opaneyyikaṃ paccattaṃ veditabbaṃ viññūhi*,' that is, 'directly visible, giving immediate results, inviting all to see, leading inward, and to be individually experienced by the wise.'[11] These terms imply living persons who have realized, felt, and tasted Nibbāna, and who can call their friends to come and see what they have found. This shows clearly that people who haven't died can know the taste of Nibbāna in their hearts.

There are other expressions as well. *Anupādā-parinibbāna* is something realized while life still remains. *Parinibbāyati* refers to the end of suffering and defilements without any need for the extinction or disintegration of the five aggregates (the body-mind complex), that is to say, without anyone needing to die physically.

[11] AN 3.55, Nibbuta Sutta.

In ordinary everyday language this word *nibbāna* simply means 'coolness, absence of heat, absence of suffering.' Thus, I should like you to consider the wisdom of our Thai ancestors who had a saying, 'Nibbāna is in dying before death.' You probably have never heard this saying, but it is very common among rural people. They say:

> Beauty is found in the corpse.
> Goodness is found in relinquishment.
> The monk is to be found in earnestness.
> Nibbāna is found in dying before death.

Are we, their descendants, more clever or more foolish than our ancestors? Do ponder over this saying, 'Nibbāna is in dying (to selfhood) before death (of the body).' The body doesn't have to die. But attachment to the self-concept must. This is Nibbāna. People who realize this have obtained supreme, unmeasurable bliss.

29) To give you a clearer, deeper understanding of this subject, we shall consider the question, **'Can the lower animals experience Nibbāna?'**

In one of his discourses, the Buddha uses the words *parinibbāyati* and *parinibbuto* in reference to animals that have been trained until their aggression and fierceness have been tamed. For dogs, elephants, horses, or any animals that are trained until tame and no longer unruly, we can use the word *parinibbuto*, the same word used regarding *arahants* (those who have eliminated the defilements completely).

These two words are applicable to those who have put out the fires completely, people who are completely cooled down. In the Pāli language as spoken at the time of the Buddha, the word *parinibbāna* could be used in this way, also. When applied to human beings, it meant achieving the end of defilements, that is, arahantship (spiritual perfection). When applied to lower animals, it meant ending aggressiveness. Applied to coals, *nibbuto* refers to cooling down after being removed from an oven. In speaking of boiled or steamed rice which had been served in a bowl and cooled enough to be eaten, the word used was *parinibbāna*. This was an ordinary word, used in a general way for everyday things of human life, to indicate things becoming cool, non-threatening, or harmless.

Rather than remaining worse off than the beasts to which words like these also can be applied, we ought to take good advantage of Nibbāna. Don't put it off until death comes, which is the height of stupidity, wasting the Buddha's invaluable gift. Let's study afresh the terms *nibbāna* and *parinibbāna* with its derivative *parinibbuto*. Then there will arise the courage and ardor for the job of penetrating to and touching that which is called Nibbāna. Let's not shrink back like those people who, on hearing 'Nibbāna,' become drowsy, apprehensive, or just bored.

I ask all of you young, inquiring people to interest yourselves in the word 'Nibbāna.' The getting rid of harmful influences, even the passing of one's youth, may be called a kind of Nibbāna. Just as with animals which have been trained until their dangerous aggressiveness has been eliminated,

these are *parinibbuto*, that is, thorough, complete coolness. So let's be completely cool people who have nothing that can set us on fire and burn us. Let's not thoughtlessly produce heat, but rather win the prize that is Nibbāna. We begin with the kind known as *sandiṭṭhika-nibbāna* or *diṭṭhadhamma-nibbāna*, and then by degrees work up to the fullest level of Nibbāna.

30) **'What is the highest good for humanity?'**

The Awakened One once said, 'Buddhas say Nibbāna is supreme.'[12] Supreme means 'the ultimate and highest good for humanity.' In the international language of ethics, it is known by the Latin term *summum bonum*, the utmost goodness, the best and highest thing attainable by human beings in this very life. Buddhist students agree that if there is a *summum bonum* in Buddhism, it must be Nibbāna itself. So if someone asks what the *summum bonum* of Buddhism is, you should answer 'Buddhas say Nibbāna is supreme.'[13]

31) **'Are there any *arahants* in the world at the present time?'**

This question can be answered by quoting the Buddha, 'If *bhikkhus* live rightly, the world will not be empty of *arahants* (worthy, undefiled beings).'[14] He said this on the very day he died.

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[12] *Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ vadanti Buddha*.

[13] This concludes the first of the two lectures.

[14] *Sace me bhikkhu sammā vihareyyum asunna loko arahanteti assa.*

If doubts or questions arise as to whether there are any *arahants* nowadays, don't go answering simply 'Yes' or 'No.' This would be a serious mistake. You must answer by quoting the Buddha, 'If *bhikkhus* live rightly, the world will not be empty of *arahants*.'

32) **'What is meant by living rightly?'**

'Right living' has a special meaning of its own. To live rightly is simply to live in ways such that the defilements (*kilesa*) can't obtain nourishment nor be stirred up in any way. Hence, there's nothing more to it than living all the time with mind free and empty (*cit-waang*), that is, mind that views the entire world as something empty and doesn't clutch or grab at anything as being self or belonging to self. Then, though one continues to speak, think, and act, to seek, use, and consume things, one doesn't have the notion of grasping at any of them as being self. Just acting with constant awareness, acting wisely, acting with insight into the circumstances in which one is involved – that is what is known as 'living rightly.' In other words, living rightly is living in such a way that the defilements have no means of arising and no means of obtaining nourishment.

We also can say that living rightly is keeping to noble eightfold path. This is right living because right understanding, the first aspect of noble path, is simply the knowledge, the understanding, the unobscured insight, that there's nothing that should be grasped at or clung to. Thus, in striving, in speaking, in all activity whatsoever, there is simply

no grasping or clinging.

If we live rightly as described, the defilements become undernourished and emaciated. They fall away of their own accord and are completely cooled. There's no way they can arise again, because one has given up the habit of letting them arise. This is important because the *anusaya* (unwholesome tendencies), which build up within us, are only a matter of familiarity with defilement. However, those who don't know this look upon the defilements as permanent entities or selves, and thus fall into the wrong view of eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*). To believe that the defilements are permanent entities lying deep within the character is to be an eternalist, one who clings to belief in an eternal self or soul. Those who have understanding based on Buddhist principles and insight can't regard these things as independent and permanent entities, essences, or selves. There are reasons for them happening; they arise in conformity with causal laws. When they arise too frequently, one gets used to them and regards them as permanent aspects of one's nature. Believing them to be permanent misleads us to think they are lying in wait deep within us all the time.

Do understand that the *anusaya* are only habitual tendencies, the results of a process of familiarization. This is how the word *anusaya* is used.

33) 'Is it difficult or easy to be *arahant* (liberated from *kilesa*)?'

Almost everyone answers that it is extremely difficult. No

one dares to think or speak of it as being easy. Here again, let's keep to the principle of not giving unqualified answers. Anyone who gives unqualified answers, saying, for example, 'there is' or 'there's not,' 'it's easy' or 'it's difficult,' isn't a follower of the Buddha.

The Buddha's principle is that of causes and conditions. If we act rightly through understanding the principle of causes and conditions, being *arahant* is easy. If we go against the principle of causes and conditions, it is extremely difficult. Only because we are accustomed to the defilements does it appear difficult to become *arahant*. Here we ought to bear in mind that saying of the Buddha, 'If we live rightly, the world will not be empty of *arahants*.' This living rightly isn't difficult, it isn't beyond our capacity. Blockade the defilements to prevent their obtaining nourishment. If we need to kill a tiger, we could pen him in with nothing to eat, and he would die eventually. It wouldn't be necessary for us to go in, confront the tiger, and let him bite and claw us. This is what is meant by saying it isn't beyond our capacity. This is the skillful method, and it lies within our abilities.

Therefore, being *arahant* will be easy or not depending on whether we use the right or the wrong methods. If we follow what the Buddha said, it isn't difficult. 'Live rightly and the world will not be empty of *arahants*.'

34) **'Would we be able to recognize *arahants* (awakened people) if we met one?'**

People like asking this very much. For instance, there are some

who doubt if we could recognize an *arahant* now living in the world. If asked whether we could recognize an *arahant* if one came walking along, we should consider the following. In the case of us not recognizing them or even *arahants* themselves not able to recognize one another as such, a report has it that the Elder Sāriputta didn't know that Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya was *arahant*, also. Ven. Sāriputta carried on expounding Dhamma to him, the purpose of which was to make possible the attainment of arahantship. This shows that Sāriputta didn't know that Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya was *arahant*. Conversely, for cases of recognizing *arahants* as such, even a god in the Brahma world who was himself no *arahant* was able to recognize which people were *arahants*. He could foretell who would die having realized Nibbāna and who would die without having realized Nibbāna.

Thus, if asked whether we should be able to recognize an *arahant* or not, we must say that we might be able to or not, depending on the circumstances. Even *arahants* themselves might not recognize one another as such. So we ought not to give an unqualified answer, saying that we could recognize one or that we could not, as do the teachers in temple preaching halls who like being dogmatic about such things.

35) **'Where could we meet an *arahant*?'**

We must find *arahant* in the end of the defilements. Don't go searching for them in forests, in monasteries, in caves, on mountains, in villages, in cities, or in meditation centers. You can look for *arahant* in the ending of the defilements.

Carrying out whatever tests, investigations, or experiments will prove to you the end of the defilements. If this isn't possible, there's no need to search, no need to seek. You will know for yourself, that's all.

Where there is extinction of the defilements, there is *arahant*.

36) **'Householders cannot be *arahant*, can they?'**

Don't give unqualified answers to this question either, saying they can or can't. It must be answered by saying that *arahants* have transcended householding and monkhood alike. Please note that the belief that anyone becoming *arahant* must hurry off and be ordained within seven days or else die was made by overconfident, careless teachers of later ages, and appears only in commentaries, sub-commentaries, and other post-canonical works. *Arahants* must always transcend householding and monastic categories. No one can make *arahants* into householders, yet they live above and beyond the state of monkhood, too.

Therefore, don't make statements as to whether *arahants* can live at home or not. Even though some *arahants* might be forced to live at home, they could never be made into householders. They transcend both householding and home-leaving.

37) **'How is it that a murderer can be *arahant*?'**

This can be answered very easily. What is called 'the person' (or 'the individual') has to be killed before being *arahant*. If

what we call 'the person' hasn't been killed, there's no way to be *arahant*. First, the idea of 'the person,' of 'self,' of 'I' and 'he' or 'she,' of 'being' or 'individual' is killed. That is, any attachment to the ideas that 'this is an animal,' 'this is a person,' 'this is an abiding entity,' or 'this is a self' are dropped. To do this is to kill the person or to kill off the thing we refer to as 'the person.' Doing this, one simultaneously becomes *arahant*. Hence it is said that the person is killed off before being *arahant*.

The Buddha sometimes used stronger words than above. On several occasions he said that the parents must be killed before being *arahant*. 'Mother and father' are the defilements of ignorance, craving, and clinging, or any karmic activities that function as parents or propagators cooperating to give birth to the 'I,' to the idea of 'the person.' They must be killed off to become *arahant*.

Then there is the story of Aṅgulimāla, a notorious killer. Aṅgulimāla became *arahant* by killing off the person. When he heard the word 'stop' from the Buddha, he understood it in its right sense. Some people, through misunderstanding, try to explain what the Buddha meant in saying that he had 'stopped,' by explaining that he had stopped killing people as Aṅgulimāla was still doing when they met. That is, they explain that the Buddha had stopped all killing, whereas Aṅgulimāla was still going about killing people. This isn't the right explanation. When the Buddha said 'I have stopped,' he meant 'I have stopped being "the person," have completely ceased being "the person."' Aṅgulimāla understood this rightly, with the result that he too was able to kill off the person, to kill

the idea of being this individual. Thus Aṅgulimāla became *arahant* like the Buddha.

Even the simple word 'stop' in this story has been misunderstood by most people. It has been wrongly understood, wrongly explained, wrongly discussed, and wrongly taught, so that the account becomes self-contradictory. To say that one becomes *arahant* merely by ceasing to kill people is ridiculous. One has to stop being the person and kill the clinging belief in individuals, selves, 'I,' and 'they,' before one can be *arahant*. In other words, to become *arahant*, kill 'the person.'

38) To give us a better understanding of the foregoing questions and answers, let's consider, **'What is the world full of?'**

Some people with a certain outlook answer, 'This world is full of suffering (*dukkha*).' For instance, they say that only *dukkha* arises, only *dukkha* persists, and only *dukkha* passes away. This is correct in its own way, but it is hard to understand.

The question should be answered as the Buddha answered it: 'This world is full of empty things. This world is empty. There's nothing that is "self" or that belongs to "self."'

Don't be satisfied with saying simply, 'In the world there is only suffering, there's nothing that is not suffering.' Although a correct statement, it is ambiguous and liable to be misinterpreted, for those same things, if one doesn't grasp and cling at them, aren't suffering at all. Let this be well understood. Neither the world nor any of the things that comprise the world is or ever has been in itself suffering.

The moment one grasps and clings, there is suffering; if one doesn't grasp and cling, there's no suffering. To say that life is suffering is shallow, oversimplified, and premature. Life grasped at and clung to is suffering; life not grasped at or clung to isn't suffering.

This life has purpose, it isn't pointless. Some people like to say that life has no meaning because they don't know how to give it meaning. If we know how to use this life as an instrument for finding out about the world, about the causes of the world's arising, about the thorough quenching of the world, and about the way of practice leading to the thorough quenching of the world, then life does have purpose. Life, then, is a means of studying, practicing, and obtaining the fruits of practice. It is a means of knowing the best thing that human beings can and ought to know, namely, Nibbāna. So remember, this life does have purpose, although for the fool who doesn't know how to use it, it has no purpose at all.

What is the world full of? From one point of view, you might say, 'It's full of suffering,' or simply 'It's suffering.' From a higher point of view, you can say there is only a process of phenomena arising, persisting, ceasing, arising, persisting, ceasing. With grasping and clinging, suffering is produced. Without grasping and clinging, phenomena simply continue arising, persisting, and ceasing on their own. So we must bear in mind that someone who is freed and *arahant*, doesn't regard these things as suffering, nor as happiness either. The unsoiled *pañcakkhandha* (five aggregates, body-mind complex) of *arahants* can't be said to be involved in suffering. There is only the causally conditioned flowing, changing, and revolving of

the five aggregates.

What is the world full of? It is full of things that arise, persist, and cease. Grasp and cling to them, and they are suffering (*dukkha*). Don't grasp and cling to them, and they aren't suffering.

39) **'What sort of goodness (*puñña*) has little effect and what sort has great effect?'**

The Buddha taught, 'The value of doing good that is self-serving is not worth the sixteenth sixteenth part of the value of cultivating friendliness (*mettā*).'

The self-serving (*opadhika*)[15] kinds of doing good (merit-making) include doing good for the sake of looking good and enhancing one's reputation, in exchange for paradise or heaven, in order to be reborn beautiful or rich, and to gain sensual pleasure. Such merit-making is *opadhika*, that is, acquisitive and mixed up with grasping and clinging. Merit-making caught up with grasping and clinging is still doing good, but can't have the sixteenth sixteenth part of the value of practicing *mettā*. Friendliness isn't selfish; it is practiced for the sake of other people. There is universal love for all other people. Goodness born of *mettā* is great good; merit based on greed doesn't amount to the sixteenth sixteenth part of that of *mettā*.

In the Pāli language, when it was desired to indicate a great quantitative difference between things, expressions

[15] *Opadhika,* associated with *upādāna* (clinging) and *upadhi* (stuff clung to, assets).

like 'the sixteenth part taken sixteen times' were commonly used. Suppose we have one unit of something. Divide it up into sixteen parts and take one of these. Again, divide that part into sixteen parts and take one of them. Then divide that part yet again into sixteen parts. Again take one and divide it. Carry on like this a total of sixteen times to get the sixteenth sixteenth part.

The self-serving merit-making sort of doing good is described as not worth the sixteenth sixteenth part of the goodness based on friendliness (*mettā*).

40) **'Where is great goodness to be found?'**

The Buddha once said, 'Developing awareness-of-impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) for only as long as it takes to click the fingers has more effect and value than providing meals for the entire Saṅgha when led by the Buddha himself.' This means that if we could invite the whole community of Buddhist monastics together with the Buddha at its head to offer them food, we would still not gain as much merit as by successfully developing awareness-of-impermanence even for only as long as a click of the fingers. This is a most fundamental point revealing the Buddha's pure intention.

Be wary of great deeds of charity such as some people display in temple halls, because they are concerned with the sensual realms. Great charity, to be genuine, must be as the Buddha described. Developing awareness-of-impermanence for just a brief moment is far better than all the lavish displays of providing for monks.

41) **'Where is the happy destination (*sugati*) found? Where do we go to find happy destinations?'**

In the early texts, there is a passage that speaks of celestial beings (*devatā*) dying, passing away, coming to the end of their merit and life spans. It also tells of their wishing to attain the happy destination, seeking for it, and wishing to know where to find it. In the end, they come to the conclusion that the happy destination is found in the realm of human beings. The celestial beings rejoice saying, 'May your wishes be fulfilled! Go to the happy destination in the human realm!'

The expression 'happy destination in the human realm' signifies that in the human realm, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-selfhood can more readily be perceived than in the celestial realms. In the human realm, there are awakened beings, there are *arahants*, and there are the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. In the celestial realm, that jungle of sensuality, there are none of these things. Thus, celestial beings come to the human realm in search of the happy destination and celebrate each other for so aspiring. It is ridiculous that human beings here should want to go to the celestial realm for happiness. Concerning people who seek paradise and happy future existence in the realm of celestial beings, they invest in it by making merit, giving to charity, selling their houses and goods, to build things in monasteries. How is that 'going to a happy destination'? Think it over.

42) **'How much interest do the things called psychic powers (*iddhi*) deserve?'**

First of all, we shall say something about the *iddhis* themselves. The word *iddhi* means 'power.' It was originally an everyday word, a household term applied to things with the ability to promote success in perfectly ordinary ways. Anything with the ability to promote success was called an *iddhi*. Later, the meaning was extended to cover success in marvelous, miraculous ways, until we come across the sort of *iddhis* that are exclusively mental phenomena. Because they are mental, they have productive and beneficial properties that render them far more marvelous and wide-ranging than anything physical. They are like our labor-saving devices. Nowadays we have bulldozers that can build roads and so on. These too would have been called *iddhis*. But these are physical marvels. The *iddhis* we are concerned with here have to do with mind; they are mental, not physical.

Exponents of *iddhis* (psychic powers) have trained their minds in ways that they can cause other people to experience whatever the exponents wish them to feel. They can cause others to see things with their own eyes just as someone with such abilities wishes them to see, to hear clearly and distinctly such sounds as he wishes them to hear, to smell just as he wishes them to smell, to experience taste sensations as if they are really experiencing them with the tongue, and to feel softness, hardness, and other such tactile stimuli as if they are felt through the skin. The process can then be extended until the demonstrator is able to cause the other person to experience fear, love, or any mental state without realizing

why. The *iddhis* are thus extremely useful and quite wonderful.

However, this kind of mental influence doesn't produce physical things. The psychic powers are incapable of creating real physical things of any practical value. They alone can't create dwellings or huts to live in, or rice, fish, or food to eat, so that those with *iddhis* might live without any problems. Such practical things can't happen. The objects appear to exist or are experienced as existing in eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind for only as long as the *iddhi* is being demonstrated. Thereafter they disappear. So the *iddhis* aren't capable of building huts or temples by themselves. There definitely have to be lay supporters to build and offer them. For instance, Jetavana and Veluvana – famous graves given to monastics for dwelling – had to be built and offered to the Buddha.[16] And several times the Buddha went without food because of famine and had to eat rice set out as horse feed, and only a handful of it a day.

This serves to remind us that the material and mental are two different matters. It is possible to demonstrate *iddhis* of both types. The Buddha didn't deny mental *iddhis*, but he strongly disapproved of demonstrating them because they are mere illusions. He therefore prohibited the demonstration of them by *bhikkhus*, and he himself refrained from it. We don't come across it in the Tipiṭaka that the Buddha demonstrated *iddhis*. The accounts of the Buddha demonstrating *iddhis* occur only in commentaries and other later works. Consequently, we may be skeptical of such accounts – though really there's

[16] In Thailand, *iddhis* are most often associated with monks, some of whom benefit financially and even create scandals.

no need for us to judge them true or false.

The Buddha once said, 'The various *iddhis* that are demonstrated – flying through the air, becoming invisible, clairaudience, clairvoyance, and the like – are *sāsava* and *upadhika*.' *Sāsava* means 'associated with or involving *āsavas*' (the influxes leading to attachment to sensual pleasure, becoming, views, and ignorance). In other words, *iddhis* performed with grasping and clinging, or motivated by grasping and clinging, are called *sāsava*. The performance of *upadhika-iddhis* is motivated by *upadhis*, which are things acquired and subject to clinging. They are likewise *iddhis* motivated by attachment. They are demonstrated by a mind that grasps and clings. *Iddhis* of this sort are *sāsava* and *upadhika*.

Now let's turn our attention to the opposite kind of *iddhi* – *anāsava* and *anupadhika*, not mixed up with fermenting influxes and acquisitions of clinging – namely the ability to control one's own mind at will. We shall take as a particular example the subject of foulness (*paṭikkūla*). Here one causes oneself to see foul things as disagreeable, to see attractive things as disagreeable, and to see everything as foul and disagreeable; or to see everything as agreeable; then to see everything as neither of these, as neither attractive nor foul. This is one example demonstrating the ability to control mind so completely that mindfulness, clear awareness, and equanimity can be maintained in the presence of sense objects – shapes and colors, flavors, odors, sounds, and tactile objects – that might concoct mind. Having mindfulness, ready awareness, and equanimity is an *iddhi*. It is an *iddhi* of the

type called *anāsava* (free of *āsava*, undefiled) and *anupadhika* (free of *upadhi*, neither grasped nor a basis for grasping). These are the things called the *iddhis* and how we ought to view them.

The real *iddhis* that are demonstrated in order to cause psychic miracles, the *sāsava* and *upadhika* types, are still difficult to perform. To master them involves much practice, which is organized into a great system. They can be accomplished, genuinely achieved and demonstrated, by only a very few people. There is a spurious variety, too, based on pure deception, sheer trickery, sometimes involving the use of incantations.

There are people who can demonstrate what are apparently genuine *iddhis*, but to acquire those skills is very difficult and requires arduous training. By contrast, the *anāsava-* and *anupadhika-iddhis* lie within the capabilities of most people. This sort is worth thinking about. As it is, we are interested in the sort of *iddhis* we can't perform but aren't interested in the most beneficial ones, those we can practice ourselves. These things called *iddhis* certainly have a strange attraction for us, but our thinking on the subject needs to be completely revised.

43) **'From what do happiness and suffering originate? And from what does suffering originate?'**

It is generally said that happiness and suffering arise from previous *kamma* (actions). This is the least correct answer. Suffering is something that arises from causes and

conditions, and these causes and conditions are of several sorts, kinds, and varieties. Ignorance is a cause, craving is a cause, clinging is a cause, and *kamma* is a cause, too. Now in saying that suffering comes from *kamma*, we ought to have in mind new *kamma*, actions in the present life, that is to say, the brand-new ignorance, craving, and attachment of this life. Think of these as the factors responsible for suffering, the roots causing the arising of suffering. We must realize that old *kamma* is unable to stand up to new *kamma*, because we have the ability to produce new *kamma*. New action, the third type of action, is capable of abolishing old action completely.[17] Old *kamma* consists of just good actions and bad actions. There's no other sort of old *kamma*. New *kamma*, however, can be any one of three kinds, the third kind being simply noble eightfold path. When we reach the third level of *kamma*, it suppresses the first and second types of *kamma*. If we live the path thoroughly, that is, put a complete end to the defilements, the new *kamma* (noble path) completely overwhelms the old *kamma*, both good and bad. That is to say, old actions (the first and second types only) can't stand up to new *kamma* (the third type).

Thus, we ought to take an interest in this thing called noble path. I spoke before about what it is like if we practice the ordinary way, and what it is like if we practice the shortcut.[18] The practice of the shortcut consists in direct self-examination with a view to destroying grasping at notions of 'self' and 'belonging to self.' That new *kamma* will

[17] See #14, page 25.

[18] See #13, page 22.

be of the third type, the most powerful action. Once arisen it will be razor-sharp and capable of destroying a great quantity of longstanding old *kamma*. Suffering arises from new *kamma*, from today's ignorance, craving, and attachment. These arise through our having seen shapes and colors, heard sounds, smelt odors, and tasted flavors just yesterday and the day before. They can be wiped out by the new *kamma* of each situation. Don't deceive yourselves into thinking it is all due to old *kamma*. Old *kamma* can be traced back further to even older causes. What can you do about those? So don't ignore new *kamma* of this third type. It is capable of annihilating old *kamma*, both bad and good, absolutely and completely.

44) This subject brings us to the question, **'Where can we quench suffering (*dukkha*)?'**

We don't quench suffering in a monastery, in the forest, at home, or on a mountain. We have to quench suffering right in the cause of suffering itself. We must investigate and find out how suffering arises in us each day and from what roots it originates. Then we cut off that particular root. Yesterday's suffering has already been and gone. It can't come back, it is over and done with. The suffering that arises today, right now, is the problem. Suffering that may arise tomorrow isn't yet a problem; it hasn't happened yet. Rather, the suffering arising and happening right now must be dealt with quickly. Where, then, is it to be quenched? It must be quenched at its root. We must study life until we realize that, as the Buddha said, suffering arises simply from grasping and clinging.

That birth, aging, and death are suffering is usually proclaimed eloquently, but ambiguously. However, birth isn't suffering, aging isn't suffering, and death isn't suffering where there's no attachment to 'my birth,' 'my aging,' and 'my death.' At the moment, we are grasping at birth, aging, pain, and death as 'ours.' If we don't cling, they aren't suffering, they are only concoctions changing (*saṅkhāra*). Conditioned things change in a certain way and we call it 'birth'; conditioned things change in a different way and we call it 'aging'; conditioned things change in another way and we call it 'death'; but we fail to see them as just concoctions changing. We see them as particular realities happening and, what is more, we consider them 'my birth,' 'my aging,' and 'my death.' This is a multilayered delusion because 'I' is a delusion to start with; so seeing a bodily change as 'my birth' or 'my aging' is yet further delusion. We fail to see that these are simply bodily changes. As soon as we see them as only changing conditions, birth, aging, and death disappear, and 'I' disappears with them. There's no longer any 'I' and such changing conditions aren't suffering.

The Buddha said, 'Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, and death is suffering,' yet the majority of people, almost all in fact, misunderstand him. They point to the condition of birth, the condition of aging, and the condition of death as being suffering itself. Some can't explain it at all. Some, hesitant and uncertain, explain it vaguely and ambiguously, evasively hemming and hawing. This is because they forget that the Buddha concluded his description with 'In summary,

the five clinging-together-aggregates are suffering.'[19] The aggregates are body and mind operating together as a person. If there is grasping at anything as being 'I' or 'mine,' the five aggregates are suffering immediately. Those five aggregates are the burden, the suffering, the fire and brimstone. All the suffering is in the five clinging-together-aggregates.

Now suppose these five aggregates are in the condition known as 'aging.' If mind doesn't grasp at and cling to them as 'aging,' or as 'my aging,' there will not be suffering. Seeing body as empty, feelings as empty, perceptions as empty, activities as empty, and cognition as empty – seeing the whole flowing and swirling conditioning of everything as empty – there's no path for suffering. Such are pure *pañcakkhandha*, aggregates freed from grasping. These are what we presume to call the five aggregates of an *arahant*. Actually, *arahants* can't be described as being the owners of any aggregates, but we look on those aggregates as being the receptacle of the virtues of arahantship. That type of mind can't grasp at the aggregates in any way as being 'mine.' Still, we speak of them conventionally as the pure *pañcakkhandha* of *arahants*.

Once again, where is suffering quenched? We quench suffering at the root of suffering, namely, grasping and clinging to things. Suffering due to attachment to wealth must be quenched there in that attachment. Suffering due to grasping and clinging to the illusions of power, prestige, honor, and fame must be quenched there in that grasping and clinging. Then wealth, power, and prestige will not be in themselves suffering. So find out where it arises and quench

[19] *Saṃkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*.

it there. In the words of the old-time Dhamma experts, 'whichever way it goes up, bring it down that same way.'

45) Concerning 'really knowing,' **'To really know something, how much do we have to know?'**

I advise and request that all students and investigators of Dhamma listen particularly to the words of the Buddha that I am about to quote. The Buddha said that to really know something, we must know five things about it, namely:

(1) What are its characteristics and properties?

(2) What is its origin, its source?

(3) What is its *assāda*, its enticing quality, its appeal, its allurement?

(4) What is its *ādīnava*, the hidden danger, the sinister power to harm that lies concealed in it?

(5) What is the *nissaraṇa*, the skillful means by which we can get the better of it and escape its power?

These five questions make up a valuable set.

If you study something from these five perspectives, you will get the better of it. At the present time, you may be studying on the graduate level or postgraduate level. However, if you aren't studying in these five ways, you will be mastered by your subject matter, that is, by the world. If we study the world in terms of these five aspects, there's no way we will be mastered by the world. So let's be careful about studying the world. Why are we studying? For what ultimate purpose

are we studying? If we are studying so as to build peace in the world, then let's be very careful. Our studies will bring no beneficial results if not based on these principles of the Buddha.

You probably have never heard of these things called *assāda*, *ādīnava*, and *nissaraṇa*, yet the Tipiṭaka is full of them. These three words – *assāda*, *ādīnava*, and *nissaraṇa* – hardly appear in what we hear and read, but please remember that they appear frequently in the Tipiṭaka. When the Buddha wished to impart a real knowledge of anything, he taught along these lines. Sometimes he cut it short, considering only the last three. What is the nature of something's *assāda* (its allurement)? What is the nature of its *ādīnava* (its harmful properties, especially hidden ones)? Everything has both attractive and harmful qualities. What is the nature of the *nissaraṇa*, the cunning maneuver by means of which we can get the better of it?

There is, so to speak, a hook hidden in that bait hanging there. The *assāda* is the juicy bait enticing the fish to bite. The concealed hook is the *ādīnava*, that is, the dangerous, cruel power to harm that lies hidden inside the bait. And the *nissaraṇa* is the technique for outwitting the hook and bait. The fish must have a technique for eating the bait without becoming hooked. The thing called the bait then no longer functions as bait and instead becomes a good piece of food, which the fish can happily swallow without getting hooked.

Therefore, we ought always to look at the world in these terms. One aspect of the world, the *assāda*, the bait, lures us until we become so deeply engrossed in it that we turn a deaf

ear and a blind eye to all else. But there is a hook inside the bait. People who get hooked on the world can't break free; they drown in the world, that is, in suffering. Conversely, *ariyas*, noble ones advanced in practice, look carefully and see profoundly what the *assāda*, the *ādīnava*, and the *nissaraṇa* are like. They are thus able to live in the world, swallowing the bait of the world without getting caught on the hooks. They know everything well enough to be fully aware of these five aspects: its properties, its *samudaya* (root cause), its *assāda* (bait), its *ādīnava* (hook), and the *nissaraṇa* (stratagem). To know anything well we have to learn about and come to know all five factors, or at a minimum the last three.

Whatever we do, whatever we get involved with in the course of our studies and other activities, we ought to apply this principle to them all. Then we shall know how to discern, and shall be able to reap the greatest reward without being hurt. This is what 'really knowing' means. By acting on this knowledge, it will be an easy task to practice Dhamma and leave behind the defilements. Viewing the world in terms of these five aspects, we shall see it as filled up with *assāda* or attractive allurement on the outside and *ādīnava* or danger on the inside. We shall know the *nissaraṇa* of recognizing swindles, counterfeits, deceptions, illusions, and shall not be hooked by any bait in the world. Mind that operates with wisdom will view colors and shapes, flavors, odors, sounds, tactile objects, and mental images rightly in terms of these five aspects. It will not be overpowered by them and there will not develop craving and clinging that give birth to ego and selfishness. Emptiness and freedom will become our day-

to-day condition. Ultimately, practicing Dhamma for progress towards Nibbāna will not be beyond our capacities.

46) **'What does it mean to enter the stream of Nibbāna?'**

Think back to the word 'Nibbāna' in the sense already discussed, that is, as the highest good attainable by humanity.[20] If, in any one lifetime, one doesn't come to know the reality known as Nibbāna, or fails even to taste the flavor of Nibbāna, that life has been wasted.

'Stream of Nibbāna' refers to a course that has gained sufficient momentum to ensure flowing and tending only towards Nibbāna. It flows towards the quenching of suffering, with no backflow in the direction of suffering and the woeful realms. We call this course 'the stream.'

One who has reached the stream is a *sotāpanna,* stream-enterer. Not yet realizing complete Nibbāna, stream-enterers attain *diṭṭhadhamma-nibbāna*,[21] or *tadaṅga-nibbāna* (coincidental Nibbāna), or whatever is appropriate in their cases. Having reached the real stream of Nibbāna, they will never again be deluded by the *assāda* and *ādīnava* (baits and hooks) of the world. The world never again will be able to deceive them. This doesn't mean, for instance, that they give up all connections with the world, or even all consumption of sensuality. It means simply that their minds have begun to view these things as unworthy of grasping and clinging. It is practically certain that they will not grasp and cling, except in

[20] See #30, page 42.

[21] See #28, page 38.

occasional slip-ups and moments of forgetfulness.

To be *sotāpanna*, they must give up three of the fetters (*saṃyojana*), namely belief in a permanent ego-entity (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), and superstition (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*). Giving up ego-belief gives up one kind of delusion, giving up doubt gives up another kind of delusion, and giving up superstition gives up a third kind of delusion. They haven't yet given up sensual passion (*kāma-rāga*), the fourth fetter, nor have *sakadāgāmī,* once-returner (a higher level of nobility than *sotāpanna*), altogether given it up either. This means that though sensual passion isn't yet fully abandoned, still they don't fall into the pits of sensuality. Though they have contact with or consume sensuality, they do so mindfully, with clear awareness as noble ones. But don't forget that they have given up ego-belief, doubt, and superstition. This is the criterion for having entered the stream of Nibbāna and being certain of realizing Nibbāna itself.

This is a matter of giving up foolishness and misunderstanding. One must give up misunderstanding before giving up sensual passion. *Kāma-rāga* isn't as dangerous and terrifying of a problem or enemy as delusion. A Pāli text states that the most putrid thing of all is mind clinging to self, to ego. Rather than pointing to sensuality as the most foul-smelling thing, the Buddha pointed to the delusion of a separate and lasting self. We tend to overestimate and overvalue the extent of *sotāpanna* giving up involvement in sensuality. When this standard is thus misconceived, the whole picture becomes distorted and there's no way things can be brought into

agreement. So it is essential to know what reaching the first stage, the stream of Nibbāna, involves. Not sensual passion but foolishness and stupidity must be given up first.

Ego-belief (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, individuality-view) consists of self-centeredness. Self-centeredness, as it normally occurs every day, comes from failure to perceive *suññatā* (emptiness) even in a crude way. Mind is busy and not free; consequently there is ego-belief. To be *sotāpanna* means giving up ego-belief for good. In the normal course of events, belief in an individual ego arises and ceases, arises and ceases. Every day, ego-belief occurs many times, over and over. But there are also times when it isn't present. We ought to study what it is like to have ego-belief and what it is like to be free of ego-belief. When there is self-centeredness, that is *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*.

Vicikicchā is doubt or hesitancy about what one wants and what is real. Should we believe the Buddha or not? Should we practice for the complete quenching of suffering on the supramundane level or not? Because of such doubts, we aren't sufficiently interested in Dhamma. It is hard to be interested in Dhamma even for five minutes a day. Yet, we are interested in such things as fun and laughter, food and drink, study and learning, business and work, for hours and hours a day. If the time spent on fun and laughter were devoted instead to developing an interest in Dhamma, we would understand it quickly. University students have plenty of doubts about where and what to study, and the parents and elders of students have even more doubts. The most important kind of doubt is about whether or not it would be a good thing to adopt the Buddha's way of quenching suffering. Such

indecision about the path constitutes a great problem and a great danger because it causes delay. Most people consider the prospect lacking in flavor, unpleasant, disagreeable, and devoid of attraction, because they are infatuated with the allurements of the world. Such doubts must be eradicated. Ending the suffering to which we are already subject requires determination to end suffering.

The third fetter is *sīlabbata-parāmāsa,* chronic superstition. Have a look at yourself and see what sort of superstitious habits are found in you. You have been taught to fear harmless little lizards and similar animals until it has become a habit, which is superstitious, primitive, and childlike. You have been brought up to believe in sacred trees, sacred mountains, sacred temples, sacred spirit houses: all this too is superstition. To sum up, *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* is superstition regarding our own actions. Things that should be used in a particular way are used in a different way – for instance, letting charitable deeds reinforce selfishness when they should be used to eliminate it – this is superstition. So there are charitable deeds which are superstition, and there is rigorous adherence to moral precepts, by both home-leavers and householders, that is superstition. Any chronically superstitious and false understanding is covered by the term *sīlabbata-parāmāsa*.

Please bear with me while I give just one more example of the third fetter: the four woeful realms that are depicted on the walls of temples: the hells, the realm of beasts, the realm of hungry ghosts (*peta*), and the realm of cowardly demons (*asura*). These are known as the four woeful realms. We are

taught to believe that on dying we may descend into a woeful realm. We are never taught that we fall into woeful realms every day. Such woeful realms are more real and more important than those on temple walls. Don't fall into them! If you don't fall into these daily woeful realms, you will be sure not to fall into any after death. However, this is never taught, so people never understand the real essence and meaning of the words 'four woeful realms.' The Buddha wasn't a materialist. The body wasn't his primary reference. The hell where beings are boiled and fried in copper woks are materialist with a physical orientation. The Buddha took mind as his reference standard.

47) Having mentioned them, let's consider, **'What is the meaning of the four woeful realms?'**

The first of the woeful realms is hell. Hell (*naraka*) is anxiety (in Thai, literally, 'a hot, agitated heart'). Whenever we experience anxiety as if our hearts are being burnt and scorched, we immediately are reborn as hell creatures. This is a spontaneous rebirth, occurring mentally, or emotionally. While biologically human, shaped and dressed as we are here, we fall into the *niraya* hell as soon as we plunge into the hot agitation of anxiety. Whether worry about fear of punishment, anxiety about possible loss of prestige or fame, anxiety of any sort – that is hell.

Rebirth in the realm of beasts is foolishness. We are born into this realm whenever we are inexcusably foolish about something we ought to know. Examples of such foolishness

are being confused about whether Dhamma and Nibbāna are beneficial and desirable, not daring to have contact with or get close to Buddhism, and credulous in believing that showing interest in Dhamma or Buddhism would make us old-fashioned and odd. That is how children see it, and their parents, too. They hold each other back and keep themselves far away from Dhamma. Whatever the form of foolishness, it amounts to rebirth as a beast. As soon as confusion arises and overwhelms us, we become beasts. We become beasts by spontaneous rebirth, by mental rebirth. This is the second woeful realm.

The third woeful realm is the *peta*, ghosts that are chronically hungry because their desires continually outrun their satisfaction. This is a chronic mental hunger that people suffer from, rather than hunger for bodily food. For instance, one wants to get a thousand baht.[22] Then just before getting the thousand baht, one suddenly wants to get ten thousand baht. Just before getting the ten thousand baht, it jumps to a hundred thousand baht. No sooner is one in reach of the hundred thousand baht, one wants a million baht, then a hundred million. Chasing but never catching, running but never reaching, *petas* have all the symptoms of chronic hunger. Such people resemble hungry ghosts in having stomachs as big as mountains and mouths as small as needles' eyes. The intake is never sufficient for the hunger, creating rebirth as *peta* constantly.

The direct opposite of *peta* are people who, on getting

[22] In the 1960s, 20 baht equaled 1 US dollar.

ten satang,[23] are content with getting just the ten satang, or on getting twenty satang are content with twenty. But don't get the idea that being easily satisfied means they fall into decline and stop looking for what's needed. Intelligence tells us what has to be done, and we go about doing it the right way. In this way, we are filled to satisfaction every time we undertake something. We enjoy the seeking and then are satisfied. This is how to live without being *peta*, that is, without being chronically hungry. Pursuing things with craving constitutes being *peta*. Undertaking things intelligently isn't craving and can't be *peta*; in such cases, we are simply doing our duties.

A wise wish such as the wish to quench suffering isn't craving. Don't go telling people the wrong thing, spreading the word that all wants are craving or greed. To be craving or greed it must be a desire stemming from foolishness. The wish to attain Nibbāna is a craving, if pursued with foolishness, infatuation, and pride. Going for popular lessons in insight meditation without knowing what it is all about involves ignorance, craving, and greed that leads to suffering because it is full of grasping and clinging. However, if you wish to realize Nibbāna, after clearly and intelligently understanding suffering and the means for its quenching, and in this frame of mind steadily and earnestly learn insight meditation in a proper way, that desire for Nibbāna isn't craving or suffering. So wanting isn't necessarily always craving. It depends on where it has its origin. If desire stems from ignorance and defilements, the symptoms will be

[23] 100 satang equal 1 baht.

similar to those of chronic hunger – that chasing without ever catching. We speak of this chronically hungry condition as 'spontaneous rebirth as a hungry ghost' (*peta*).

The last woeful realm is the *asuras* (cowardly titans). First, to explain the word *asura*: *sura* means 'brave, courageous,' and *a* means 'not,' thus, *asura* means 'not brave' or 'cowardly.' Understand this as whenever we are spontaneously reborn as *asuras*. Being afraid of harmless little lizards, millipedes, or earthworms is unjustified fear and a form of suffering. To be afraid unnecessarily, without a good cause, or from thinking about something too much, is rebirth as *asura*. We may fear death, but our fear is made a hundred or a thousand times greater by our own exaggeration. Fear torments people all the time. Afraid of falling into hell, we become *asuras* instead. Our fears of falling into the four woeful realms mean rebirth as *asuras* every day, day after day, month after month, year in and year out. If we act rightly and don't fall into the woeful realms these days, months, and years, we can be sure of not falling into any woeful realms as depicted on temple walls, after death.

This interpretation of the painful *apāya* realms agrees in meaning and purpose with what the Buddha taught. There's no reason to be foolish about them. Confused beliefs regarding them should be recognized as superstition. The most pitiable thing about Buddhists is the inaccurate way we interpret the Buddha's teachings and the foolish ways we put them into practice. Please take this example of superstitious understanding of *apāya* and apply this approach to other

beliefs.[24] There is no need to go looking for superstition in other places. In the commentaries there are references to people imitating the behavior of cows and dogs, which were practices current in India at the time of the Buddha, though they don't exist today. Still, there are plenty of modern behaviors that are just as foolish and much more undesirable. So give up all superstitions, both old-fashioned and modern, and enter the stream of Nibbāna. Give up belief in a permanent ego-entity, give up doubt, and give up superstition in order to enter the stream of Nibbāna and open the Dhamma-Eye – the eye that sees Dhamma and is free of delusion and ignorance.

Bear in mind that we common worldlings always have a certain measure of ignorance and delusion in the forms of ego-belief, doubt, and superstition. We must raise our levels beyond these three kinds of foolishness in order to enter the stream of Nibbāna. From that point on there is an inclining flow, a convenient sloping downward towards Nibbāna, like a large stone rolling down a mountainside. If you are to become acquainted with Nibbāna and the stream of Nibbāna, if you are to practice towards realizing Nibbāna, you must understand that these three kinds of delusion and foolishness must be abandoned before one can give up sensual desire and ill-will, which are fetters of a higher and more subtle order. Simply giving up these three forms of ignorance constitutes entering the stream of Nibbāna. To completely give up self-centeredness, doubt in pinpointing one's life objective, and ingrained superstitious behavior is to enter the stream of Nibbāna. You can see that this kind of giving up is universally

[24] The same can be said for modern beliefs imported from the West.

valuable and applicable to everyone in the world. These three forms of ignorance are undesirable. As soon as we are able to abandon them, we wake up to the *ariyan* level. Prior to this, we were foolish, deluded people, lowly worldlings, not at all noble. When we have improved and progressed to the highest level of worldlings, we must advance still further, reaching the stage where there's nowhere to go except to enter the stream of Nibbāna by becoming *sotāpanna*. From there, we naturally incline, progress, and flow on to Nibbāna itself.

The practice leading away from grasping, self-centeredness, and delusion is to investigate and see everything as unworthy of being grasped at or clung to. Such practice slices through doubt, hesitancy, foolishness, and self-centeredness. Therefore, we ought to get interested in non-clinging starting right this very minute, on the level most appropriate for us. If you fail in an examination there's no need to weep. Simply determine to start again and do your best. If you pass an examination, don't get carried away. Realize that this is just the normal way of things. Then there will have arisen some understanding of non-grasping and non-clinging.

When you are sitting for an examination, just forget about yourself. Listen carefully! When starting to write an answer, just forget about being yourself. Forget about the 'me' who is being tested and who will pass or fail. Think only of taking the exam. You may think beforehand about how to pass the examination successfully, but as soon as you start to write – forget all that. Leave only concentration that will pierce the questions and discover the answers. Mind free of any 'me' and 'mine,' empty of passing and failing, is immediately agile

and clean. It remembers instantly and thinks keenly. Sitting for an examination with proper concentration produces good results. This is how to apply mind free of clinging (*cit-waang*), that is, Buddha's non-grasping and non-clinging, when sitting for examinations. In this way, you will be good.

Some who can't let go always feel anxious about failing. They become so nervous that they can't call to mind what they have learned. They can't write accurate and orderly answers. Consequently, they fail thoroughly. Others are carried away by the idea that 'I'm brilliant, I'm certain to pass.' Such students carried away by this sort of grasping and clinging are also bound to do poorly, because they lack *cit-waang*. On the other hand, anyone with *cit-waang* has no 'me' or 'mine' involved and doesn't become panicky or over-confident. There is only concentration, which is a natural power. Entirely forgetting about self, they comfortably pass. This is an elementary, most basic example of the beneficial effects of non-attachment and of *cit-waang*.

A foolish person, upon hearing the word *suññatā* mentioned in temple lecture halls, understands it as a material vacuum, nothingness or something meaningless.' Such materialistic emptiness is how certain groups understand it. The *suññatā* of the Buddha means absence of anything that we should grasp at and cling to as being an abiding entity, essence, or self, although physically anything can be there in its entirety. If we cling, there is *dukkha*; if we don't cling, there is freedom from *dukkha*. The world is described as empty because there's nothing whatsoever that we can get away with grasping. So we must cope with

this empty world with mind that doesn't cling. If we need something, we go after it with mind free from grasping, so that our objective is achieved without becoming a source of suffering.

Misunderstanding the word 'empty,' just this one single word, is enormous superstition (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) that stops people cold and constitutes a major obstacle to them finding the stream of Nibbāna. Instead, let's understand the word 'empty,' and all other words used by the Buddha, properly and completely. He described the world as empty because there's nothing in it that can be taken as a self or ego. He answered Mogharāja's question by saying, 'Always regard the world as something empty. Look always on this world with all that it contains as empty.'[25] Viewing it as empty, mind is automatically free of grasping and clinging. Lust, hatred, and delusion cannot occur. Seeing like this is the meaning of *arahant*. If not successful yet, keep on trying. Although still an ordinary person, one will suffer less. No suffering arises as long as there is *cit-waang*. Whenever one gets carried away and lapses, there is suffering again. If we keep good watch, empty-free increasingly often and lastingly, we penetrate to the core of Buddhism by entering the stream of Nibbāna.

48) In the short time remaining I wish to consider a final question, **'What was the Buddha's final will and testament for us?'**

A will, as everyone knows, is a set of last instructions we file as death approaches. When on the point of dying, the

[25] Sn 5.16, Mogharāja Sutta.

Buddha spoke these last words, 'All concoctions naturally decay. Perfect yourself in heedfulness!'[26] All things are nothing but perpetual flows of concocting, that is, empty of selfhood. All things are *anicca*, they change incessantly, they flow endlessly. Such perpetual flux is devoid of any self or of anything belonging to self. Be vigilant and well prepared. In other words, don't be foolish, don't become infatuated with things, and don't regard anything as worth grasping at and clinging to. Don't let mindfulness lapse such that you are tricked into clinging. This is what he meant by fully evolved heedfulness. With such heedfulness we are always well prepared.

Consider children and teenagers. Look how completely heedless they can be, regarding all sorts of things as loveable, as worth having. Attaching to things as either loveable or hateful is ultimately a source of distress to themselves and to others simply because they ignore the Buddha's will. They waste the benefit of human birth with Buddhist parents. They cannot carry out the Buddha's last wishes.

All of us – young, old, and in between – are in a position to carry out the Buddha's last instructions. Don't be heedless or mindless. Don't thoughtlessly regard things as worth grasping at and clinging to. Always view the world as empty of any self or of anything belonging to self. Thus, our minds will be free of grasping; lust, hatred, and delusion will not arise; and we will receive the highest thing that is possible for humanity. In other words, all problems will cease, and that is all there is to it.

The Buddha gave another final instruction, which concerns others: 'Go forth and reveal Dhamma, splendid

[26] *Vayadhammā saṅkhāra*; *appamādena sampādethā* (DN 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta).

in its beginning, middle, and end.' I like to interpret this as enjoining us all to help in teaching non-grasping and non-clinging on an elementary level to children, on an intermediate level to adults, and on the highest, most advanced level to those realizing Supreme Dhamma and for whom nothing else matters. The Buddha taught only non-clinging, nothing more. It can be taught on different levels to children, to middle-age people, and to elders. Another way to interpret this injunction is to teach Dhamma for the benefit of people living in this world, on a low level; for benefits in other worlds, at an intermediate stage; and for the sake of the highest benefit, which transcends all worlds. Still, the whole essence of the teaching can be summed up as freedom from suffering through non-clinging.

This non-grasping and non-clinging, this emptiness of self and anything belonging to self, is the most important story. So please, every one of you, remember the one single word that reveals the entire Dhamma, the single syllable *waang* (empty, void, free), which in Pāli is *suññatā* – the core and essence of Buddhism. People break the trainings because mind isn't *waang*. People lack concentration and presence because mind isn't *waang*. People have no insight or wisdom because mind isn't *waang*. The Buddha's mind was always free and empty. *Cit-waang* is just what Buddhahood is. The Dhamma is the same: studying emptiness, practicing for emptiness, and realizing the fruit of that practice, which is the fullest emptiness, namely, Nibbāna. The Saṅgha is the people following the Buddha's system of practice for having *cit-waang*. Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha are summed up in

the word *waang* (free, void, empty).

We keep the moral precepts through abstaining from grasping and clinging, through being free of defilements, and through freedom from grasping and clinging. Whenever mind is *waang*, the defilements are absent and concentration is its most complete. When understanding the world is empty so that there's no grasping or clinging to anything as self, 'me,' or 'mine,' wisdom is complete. The path and fruit of Nibbāna consist in steadily realizing emptiness and in successively tasting the fruits of emptiness through to the very culmination. Generosity, morality, taking refuge (in Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha), mindfulness, meditation, insight, compassion, path and fruit, and Nibbāna – all these are summed up in the single word *waang* (empty, free).

This is why the Buddha said that emptiness and teachings concerning emptiness 'are my words.' If not about emptiness, they are teachings of others, unorthodox teachings composed by later disciples. 'All discourses of the Accomplished One are profound, have deep significance, are the means of transcending the world, and deal primarily with emptiness.'[27] This was spoken by the Tathāgata. On the other hand, 'A discourse of any kind, though produced by a poet or a learned man, versified, poetical, splendid, melodious in sound and syllable, is not in keeping with the teaching if not connected with *suññatā*.'[28] There are two kinds of discourses, the original core teachings and later developments. Those dealing with *suññatā* were

[27] *Ye te ye suttantā tathāgata bhāsita gambhīrā gambhīrātthā lokuttarā suññatāppaṭisaṃyuttā.*

[28] *Ye te suttantā kavikatā kāveyyā cittakkharā cittabyañjanā bāhirakā sāvakabhāsitā.*

spoken by the Tathāgata; those not dealing with *suññatā* were composed by later followers.

We should be clear that the Buddha considered *suññatā* and discourses concerning *suññatā* to be the real essence of Buddhism. This is why he said, 'When the teaching of *suññatā* dies out and no one is interested in it any longer, the real essence of Dhamma will have been lost.' Then, Buddhism will be like the drum of the Dasāraha kings in ancient times, which was handed down from generation to generation. As it wore out in places, it was patched and mended time and time again, over a long period, until none of the original remained, only new materials.

Whenever monks are no longer concerned with studying and listening to topics relating to *suññatā*, which is what they ought to be studying and practicing, at that time it can be said that the original substance of Buddhism has been lost completely and that only new material remains, the sayings of later disciples, just as happened with the drum. Please contemplate this discourse. The Buddha urged us to teach Dhamma, splendid in its beginning, middle, and end, in terms of non-grasping and non-clinging. But what is the condition of Buddhism at the present time? Is it like the original old drum or does it consist of just new material, just patches? We can find this out for ourselves by simply examining modern Buddhist teaching and practice to see whether or not people are interested in *suññatā* and practice *suññatā*.

These were the Buddha's last will and instructions to his disciples: to practice heedfulness of this teaching, to proclaim and disseminate it, and to restore the decayed

material to fresh and good condition. This is done by studying, by digging and probing, by discussing and debating, by putting into practice and investigating, until understanding of this teaching is fully revived. Then we can say that Buddhism is restored to its original condition.

Conclusion

We have summarized essential Buddhist teachings in short sections, so divided as to be easily understood and remembered, together with quotations from the Pāli source texts. While I haven't gone into much detail, the explanations here are enough for broad, general understanding. Further, I have endeavored to show how these principles are inter-related and have threads (*suttanta*) connecting them. I hope you will remember the topics we have discussed as they illustrate fundamental principles for you to keep in mind and for considering when judging and deciding the various questions you will encounter in the future.

The Buddha said that if doubt arises on any point, we must compare the doubtful proposition with the general principles. If a statement fails to fit in with the general principles, reject it as not being a teaching of the Buddha. Whoever made the statement has got it wrong; such teachers are teaching the wrong thing. Even if someone claims to have heard it from the Buddha himself, don't believe a word of it. If it doesn't fit in with the general principles, that is, doesn't correspond with the Suttas and the Vinaya, reject it as not being the Buddha's words. The Buddha's teaching is centered

in non-grasping, non-clinging, *suññatā*, *anattā* (not-selfhood), and anything dealing only with natural elements (*dhātu*), rather than with beings, persons, individuals, selves, 'I,' and 'he' or 'she.'

Out in the country, in the district where I come from, we had to learn this Pāli verse on the first day we went to live in the village monastery:

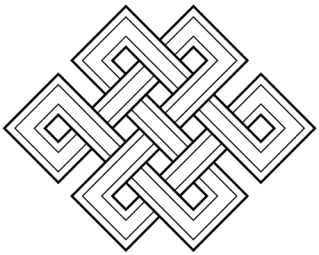
> *Yathāpaccayaṃ pavattamānaṃ*
> *dhātumattamevetaṃ*
>
> These things are merely natural elements ceaselessly concocted by conditions,
>
> *Dhātumattako*
>
> Merely elements of nature,
>
> *Nissatto*
>
> Not lasting beings,
>
> *Nijjīvo*
>
> Not individual lives,
>
> *Suñño*
>
> Empty of self.

We learned this first thing on the first day of entering our monastery. This came before learning how to pay respect to the Buddha's image, how to chant, and how to perform the morning and evening services. Even the pre-ordination procedures came later. In other words, new arrivals were equipped with the highest knowledge, the very essence of

Buddhism, right from the first day we entered the monastery to ask for ordination. Whether this custom still exists anywhere I don't know, and whether applicants for ordination would understand what the verse means I don't know either. Nevertheless, the objective of this custom was excellent, to give us the essence of Buddhism right from the day we arrived. *Yathāpaccayaṃ*, these things are conditioned, that is, empty of selfhood. *Dhātumattamevetaṃ*, merely natural elements, that is, empty of selfhood. *Nissatto, nijjīvo, suñño*, not individual beings, not personal lives, and empty of selfhood. We once learned this on the very first of moving into our local monastery. If our descendants let this custom die out, who will be to blame when the day comes that *suññatā* is so little understood that there is nothing left of original Buddhism?

I hope these questions and responses stimulate you good people to think through these matters carefully, and thus help nourish and sustain Buddhism, for the sake of the peace and happiness of the world.

As for your egos, just forget about them!



References to Suttas
(Buddha's Discourses)

In the original talks, Ajahn Buddhadāsa provided references (volume and page) to his sources in the Royal Siamese Pāli edition of the Tipiṭaka where appropriate. We have translated them into a form that should help interested readers to consult the English translations. They are listed according to the numbers of the Question-Sections as found in the 'Contents.' Abbreviations for the five collections (*nikāya*) are:

DN Dīgha-Nikāya

MN Majjhima-Nikāya

SN Saṃyutta-Nikāya

AN Aṅguttara-Nikāya

KN Khuddaka-Nikāya, which includes

Itivuttaka

Paṭisambhidāmagga

Sutta-nipāta

Udāna

01) MN 22, Alagaddūpama Sutta.

02) a) SN 56.11, Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta; b) DN 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta; c) MN 79, Cūḷasakuludāyi Sutta and many others; d) KN Dhammapada 2.14, Buddhavagga, verse 183; e) DN 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta

03) MN 37, Cūḷataṇhāsaṅkhaya Sutta

04) KN Udāna 1.10, Bāhiya Sutta

05) AN 4.45, Rohitassa Sutta

06) MN 22, Alagaddūpama Sutta

07) SN 55.53, Dhammadinna Sutta

08) MN 26, Pāsarāsi Sutta

09) SN 20.7, Āṇi Sutta

10) MN 35, Cūḷasaccaka Sutta

11) AN 3.65, Kālāma Sutta

12) AN 3.107, Ruṇṇa Sutta

13) Numerous suttas, e.g., MN 137, Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga Sutta

14) AN 4.237, Ariyamagga Sutta (see also, AN 4.238 and 4.236) and compare with the ordinary level of kamma teaching in AN 3.36, Devadūta Sutta

15) AN 3.24, Bahukāra Sutta and AN 3.26, Sevitabba Sutta

16) AN 4.180, Mahāpadesa Sutta

17) AN 3.56, Paloka Sutta

18) AN 4.21, Paṭhamauruvela Sutta

19) KN Itivuttaka 3.92, Saṅghāṭikaṇṇa Sutta

20) DN 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta

21) KN Sutta-nipāta 5.1, Introductory Verses for The Way to the Beyond

22) MN 121, Cūḷasuññatā Sutta

23) KN Paṭisambhidā Magga 2.10, Suñña-kathā

24) Saddhammappajjotikā Part I (a commentary of the Cuḷaniddesa, which explains Sutta-nipāta 5)

25) KN Paṭisambhidāmagga 3.9, Vipassanā-kathā[1]

26) AN 9.36, Jhāna Sutta

27) MN 52, Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta and AN 9.36, Jhāna Sutta

28) AN 9.51, Diṭṭhadhammanibbāna Sutta and AN 7.53, Nandamātā Sutta

29) MN 65, Bhaddāli Sutta

30) KN Dhammapada 2.14, Buddhavagga, verse 184

31) DN 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta

32) Draws on many sutta passages without directly quoting any one sutta

33) AN 4.161, Saṃkhitta Sutta and AN 4.162, Vitthāra Sutta

34) KN Udāna 7.1-2, Paṭhamalakuṇḍakabhaddiya Sutta and Dutiyalakuṇḍakabhaddiya Sutta

37) MN 86, Aṅgulimāla Sutta

38) AN 10.61, Avijjā Sutta and the many suttas elucidating dependent co-arising and clinging

39) KN Itivuttaka 27, Mettābhāvanā Sutta

40) AN 9.20, Velāma Sutta

41) KN Itivuttaka 83, Pañcapubbanimitta Sutta

43) AN 3.61, Titthāyatanā Sutta

45) SN 22.110, Arahanta Sutta and many similar suttas

48) DN 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta

[1] Editors are unsure of this citation from the Thai text.

Glossary

Pāli dictionaries are arranged according to the Sanskrit order of characters. The order here is according to the English alphabet, for ease of access for readers new to the early Buddhist texts.[1]

Abhidhamma. Higher Dhamma, 'excess Dhamma': the third basket of Tipiṭaka. Ajahn Buddhadāsa preferred the higher teachings within the suttas to the dry analysis found in this basket. Traditional Theravāda has believed that the Abhidhamma was taught by the historical Buddha, within miraculous circumstances. Current scholarly opinion is that it developed centuries after the historical Buddha. ↲

***anusaya*.** Underlying tendencies towards *kilesa*, familiarity with *kilesa*: the stronger the *anusaya*, the easier a reactive emotion is triggered or arises from the internal pressure of the *anusaya*. ↲

apāya, apāyabhūmi. Transient realms of loss and woe that many Buddhists believe will punish evil *kamma* after death. Four realms are mentioned: *niraya* or *naraka*, a purgatory or transient hell of torment for the deceased; *tiracchāna*, realm of beasts; *peta*, realm of unhappy spirits, such as hungry ghosts; and *asura*, titans who fight the heavenly *devas* and regularly lose. None of these is eternal. Ajahn Buddhadāsa is

[1] Compiled by Santikaro Upasaka.

interested in the Dhamma language meaning of these realms, that is, how they represent this-life realms of defiled, destructive egoistic being. ↲

arahant. Worthy (adj.), worthy one (noun): supremely worthy because far removed from the fires of greed, hatred, delusion, and other egoistic reactions, thereby liberated and awakened. ↲

ariya, ariyan. Noble, noble ones: stages of awakening beginning with stream entry (*sotāpanna*) and culminating in *arahant*. Ajahn Buddhadāsa observes that these traditional terms are in 'people language,' conventional terms of apparently existing persons. ↲

attā. Self, essence: something that is independent, self-contained, lasting, and has agency able to maintain and control itself and other things. The ***anattā*** (not-self, without essence) insight is that nothing can be found that actually lives up to the claim of being *attā*. ↲

āyatana. Media of sense experience: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind as well as corresponding sense objects. Interpreted from perspective of modern science, we could say the inner media include relevant portions of the nervous system. Viewed contemplatively, they are the receptive side of experiences through which awareness operates. Outer *āyatana* are the respective sense objects: visual forms, sounds, odors, flavors, tangible sensations, and ideas (including images and memories). ↲

bhikkhu, bhikkhunī. Male and female monastic followers of the Buddha. Originally, they were homeless wanderers living primarily on alms who followed a more rigorous ethical code than householders. Over time, their lifestyles have changed, with many enjoying more privileges than working class folks. *Bhikkhunīs*, non-existent in Thailand when these talks were given, are slowly making a comeback in Theravāda Buddhism. ↲

***dukkha*.** Distress, suffering: the main subject of the fourfold ennobling realities (*ariyasacca*). In other contexts, we find *dukkha* as 'pain' and as the universal, unsatisfying characteristic of all conditioned phenomena. ↲

***jhāna*.** Absorption: four states of deep meditative focus, four exemplars of right *samādhi* (unification of mind) in which a wholesome meditative object is experienced without distraction. ↲

***kamma*,** (Sanskrit *karma*). Action: volitional actions of body, speech, and mind. The consequences or fruit of such actions are *kamma-vipāka*. When actions arise from *kilesa*, the consequences are ultimately destructive. When actions arise from wholesome intentions (*kusala-cetanā*), the consequences are beneficial, yet still egoistic. To end *dukkha*, 'action without an actor' is the way. ↲

kilesa. Defilement, reactive emotions that tarnish and distort mind: greed, hatred, and delusion are the classic exemplars. Further examples include confusion, fear,

pride, envy, shame, boredom, dissociation, bypassing, stubbornness, and excitability. ↲

magga-phala. Path-fruit: a Thai phrase current at the time, derived from Theravāda commentaries, meaning successful completion of something. As was his practice, Ajahn Buddhadāsa reconnected the term with its original meaning: fulfillment of noble path that brings the corresponding fruits of practice, namely, significant reduction or elimination of important *kilesa* and, consequently, immediate relief from *dukkha*. ↲

Nibbāna. Coolness: the going out of the fires and poisons that burn and deform egoistic life. ↲

opadhika, upadhika (alternative spellings). Connected and involved with *upadhi* and *upādāna*: involving possession, egoism, and selfishness. ↲

Pāli, the language of the Tipiṭaka and its derivative texts. Pāli was created when the early Buddhist teachings, originally preserved orally in various closely related vernacular languages of the Buddha's time, were compiled and written down with the aid of ancient Sanskrit grammar. Pāli is older than classical Sanskrit and is closely related to a group of languages known as Middle Indo-Aryan. ↲

saṅgha. Community, group: applies to a wide range of communities, the most important in Dhamma teachings are 1) the Noble Saṅgha of practitioners

who are free of at least the three lower fetters, which is the third Buddhist Gem and Refuge; 2) the Great Saṅgha of all practitioners dedicated to freedom from self-centeredness; 3) popularly, monastics collectively. Monastic status is not necessary for 1) and 2). ↲

suññatā. Emptiness, voidness: in core Buddhist teachings refers to the impossibility of establishing, discovering, or maintaining a truly existing self (*attā*, essence) or anything connected with one (*attaniya*). Roughly synonymous with *anattā*. ↲

sutta. Discourses of the Buddha and leading disciples. ***Suttanta***, as explained by Ajahn Buddhadāsa, are the definitive themes running through the five collections of suttas (*nikāya*). ↲

Tathāgata. One Gone to Thusness: used, generically, for all *arahant* and, specifically, by the Buddha in selfless self-reference. ↲

Tipiṭaka. The three baskets of Buddhist scriptures: Vinaya (Discipline) is the first basket, Suttas (Discourses) the second, and Abhidhamma the third. ↲

upadhi. Acquisitions, assets: the stuff we cling to and, thereby, that underpin the notion of 'me.' ↲

upadhika (***opadhika*** when not in compounds). Connected with *upadhi* and involving *upādāna.* ↲

upādāna. Clinging, grasping, attachment: all clinging boils down to clinging to aspects of experience as 'me,'

'mine,' and 'my self.' Without clinging, *dukkha* dissolves. ↲

vedanā. Feeling tones along a spectrum of pleasure and pain, including both extremes and all gradations between. *Vedanā* arise with all sense experiences, whatever the sensory mode. No English term adequately translates *vedanā* without simultaneously confusing its meaning. Experienced unmindfully, *vedanā* trigger liking and disliking, or confusion, which in turn trigger craving (*taṇhā*). ↲

vinaya, discipline, often understood as the monastic training rules, the primary subject matter of the Vinaya-Piṭaka, the first basket of Tipiṭaka. Importantly, all dedicated Dhamma practice requires *vinaya*, though this has yet to be codified and elaborated for householders. (Theravāda Buddhism has been reluctant to update their code, developed from Indian culture of over two millennia ago, which leaves many modern realities unaddressed.) ↲

viññāṇa. Cognition: the most basic knowing or awareness of a sensory object. All other cognitive and emotional functions occur once there is *viññāṇa*. For more than a century, 'consciousness' has been the standard translation; however, this custom is coming under increasing criticism. ↲

About the Author

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu was born in 1906, the son of a southern Thai mother and an ethnic Chinese father. He followed Thai custom by entering a local monastery in 1926, studied for a couple years in Bangkok, and then founded his own refuge for study and practice in 1932. Since then, he has had a profound influence on not only Thai Buddhism but other religions in Siam and Buddhism in the West. Among his more important accomplishments, he:

- Challenged the hegemony of later commentarial texts with the primacy of the Buddha's original discourses.
- Integrated serious Dhamma study, intellectual creativity, and rigorous practice.
- Explained Buddha-Dhamma with an emphasis on this life, including the possibility of experiencing Nibbāna ourselves.
- Softened the dichotomy between householder and monastic practice, stressing that noble eightfold path is available to everyone.
- Offered doctrinal support for addressing social and environmental issues, helping to foster socially engaged Buddhism in Siam.
- Shaped his forest monastery as an innovative teaching environment and Garden of Liberation (Suan Mokkh).

After a series of illnesses, including strokes, he died in 1993. He was cremated without the usual pomp and expense. ↲

About the Translator

Rod Bucknell first became seriously interested in Buddhism in the mid-1960s, when, during a visit to Thailand, he was introduced to the techniques of insight meditation. After spending a year in various Thai meditation centers and monasteries, he took ordination as a bhikkhu (monk) under the guidance of Ajahn Paññānanda of Wat Cholapratan Rangsarit. He soon became interested also in the teachings of Ajahn Buddhadāsa, and, recognizing their potential value to westerners, began translating some of the Ajahn's more important works into English. During the four years he spent in the monastic saṅgha (1967-1971), he translated altogether six works of varying length, usually in close consultation with the Ajahn in order to ensure accuracy in the rendering of key concepts. Despite his return to lay life, he maintains a close interest – both scholarly and practical – in Ajahn Buddhadāsa's teachings, and has published several related articles in religious studies journals. He is currently retired after having worked for eighteen years as a lecturer in the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland, Australia. ↲

About the Senior Editor

Santikaro Upasaka trained as a bhikkhu under Ajahn Buddhadāsa during the final nine years of his life (1985-1993). During that time, Santikaro regularly translated for Ajahn Buddhadāsa both orally during talks and interviews, as well as in printed works. Santikaro continues translation and other Dhamma work at Kevala Retreat in Wisconsin, USA, and is a close collaborator with the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives. ↲

Recommended Reading (Books)

- *Mindfulness with Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners*
- *Handbook for Mankind*
- *The First Ten Years of Suan Mokkh*
- *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree*
- *Keys to Natural Truth*
- *The Prison of Life*
- *Nibbāna for Everyone*
- *Living in the Present Without Past Without Future*
- *A Single Bowl of Sauce: Teachings Beyond Good and Evil*
- *Under the Bodhi Tree: Buddha's Original Vision of Dependent Co-Arising*

Online Resources

- www.suanmokkh.org
- www.liberationpark.org
- www.bia.or.th

Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives

Established in 2010, the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives collect, maintain, and present the original works of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Also known as Suan Mokkh Bangkok, it is an innovative place for fostering mutual understanding between traditions, studying and practicing Dhamma.

Kevala Retreat (Liberation Park)

Kevala Retreat (Liberation Park) is a Dhamma refuge in the USA's Midwest inspired by Suan Mokkh. Here, Santikaro and friends work to nurture a garden of liberation along the lines taught by Ajahn Buddhadāsa, where followers of the Buddha-Dhamma Way can explore Dhamma as Nature and in the Pāli suttas.