



Dhamma  
*BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU*

The world  
saviour

## **All of you who are interested in the Dhamma :**

Our discourse to-day deals with the subject which you all know, which is: Dhamma – The World Saviour. Now we must realize that we have made the supposition that Dhamma is the world saviour. Therefore, by logic, it must be tenable that the world has to have Dhamma, so that Dhamma may protect or save the world. And what makes it possible for Dhamma to exist in the world?. It's nothing other than people who live therein. Thus it may be said that people must help Dhamma to exist in the world before Dhamma can save the world. We must start by discussing what is Dhamma. When people understand what Dhamma is, then they'll be able to make it possible for Dhamma to exist on this earth. If people do not know what Dhamma means, they will not be able to do so. We must, first of all, try to know what Dhamma is, and I wish to ask you to

pay attention to this matter even more so than to anything else.

When we set up the question as to what is Dhamma, we must, to begin with, take up the word in its literal sense, then we may analyze its meaning later.

Literally the word Dhamma is Pali or Sanskrit, taken into the Thai language in the original form without translation. We are interested to know, at the start, what Dhamma means in the Pali language. Actually Dhamma means **Drong**; **Dhar** is the root of this word, **Dhar** means **Drong**, (pronounce **Song**) which means to stay by itself or support itself - that is, to exist. Whatever is not permanent but is changing will have impermanency or changeability as its nature. In other words, it stays or supports itself in the current of change. Whatever has no change stays by itself because of lack of change. We may conclude that it means to stay or support itself in every case. Therefore, the word

Dhamma, literally, means everything excepting nothing, because there is nothing that cannot stay by itself. Things that move and change stay within the frame of changeability as their nature. Now things which do not change, which we call Nirvana or Asangkhata or the like, have the state of permanency as their nature. Therefore Dhamma means everything without exception, from the finest speck of dust that has no material value and is a changeable matter up to something most valuable, and then the things that are abstract, meaning the spirit, thought, feelings, even acts or kamma, including the acquisition of Nirvana. All these are called Dhamma. It can thus be said that Dhamma means everything and except nothing, if we mean Dhamma in its literal sense.

Now, upon analyzing its meaning, we do employ the word Dhamma to designate only a few things according to certain conditions that we deem fit. We divide the meanings of Dhamma into groups

Dhamma may mean action or Kamma, or Virtue, Beauty, Truth, Correctness or Justice, depending on what we want in various instances. Therefore, according to Attha or sense of the word, Dhamma means only certain things. Now, under our subject: **Dhamma-The World Saviour**, we mean which type of Dhamma, which aspects?. You can probably see for yourselves that it means certain things or certain aspects of the word. This is the point we need to discuss till we understand what is meant when we say “Dhamma - The World Saviour”.

Now I want to invite you to examine the meaning of the word **Dhamma**. First of all, I want to say the Dhamma is a very peculiar word in that no one can give its definition correctly in its full sense. We can say that it is fortunate that in the Thai language we do not interpret this word. We adopt it directly. We have the word Dhamma and use it till it's part of our language. Now what can foreigners do?. They all want to

translate this word, especially into English, which is a universal language employed among nations. Now it becomes a problem as to how this word can be translated. In the end many scores of words are given, which all mean Dhamma. This happens over a long period of time, no less than 30 or 40 years. The final result is that all has to be abandoned, for it is not possible to indicate which word carries the meaning of the word Dhamma to the full. People turn therefore to transliterate the original word, and **Dhamma** is being employed in the English language to an increasing extent like in the Thai language. The problem is thus solved. Even so, in certain cases translation is still required, and it is necessary to choose the words to suit the situations. Therefore, if we wish to understand this word well, we ought to look into the English translations. Analyze all these different words. I think they are very useful, and I like to ask you to be interested enough to listen to them and give them a thought.

As I have already said, the word Dhamma has given rise to 20 or 30 words in the English language. Therefore we ought to put them into groups and see how many words give meanings in which sense. The first group we ought to examine consists of the translation of Dhamma as form, or System, Condition, Thing, or Cosmic Order, or Cosmic Regulation. Every word carries the correct meaning, but only in certain cases, whereas the word Form is the most exact equivalent of the word Dhamma in Pali and Sanskrit. This is because Dhamma in Pali means to remain or stay. Dhar means stay. Now the word Form in the English language comes from **Forma** in Latin, which also means to stay. Therefore we have as definition of the word Form "that which supports that which gives State or Condition to the orderly arrangement of parts which make a thing what it is". Thus you can see that it is the same as Dhamma in Pali, and we have reason to believe that the word **Form** in the English language,

or **Forma** in Latin, is the correct, literal translation of the word Dhamma.

The word System also means the orderly arrangement that gives rise to form. Likewise, the word Condition or that which gives rise to condition also has the same meaning, in so far as it creates form. As to the word "Thing", it is the most correct, for it is a common word with the widest usage. It means everything that exists in the world and beyond the world. The word Cosmic Order and Cosmic Regulation are of the same nature, for they mean that which can stay or exist **per se** in the world according to its own order. Therefore such words as Form and System make up a group of translation equivalent to the word Dhamma in the Pali language.

The second group of translation also consists of many words, such as Doctrine and Religion. Now we must determine what is meant by Religion. Perhaps we may even have to go further and take up the problem as to whether Buddhism is

or is not a religion. When we talk about Buddhism, we mean Dhamma both directly and including its various implications. Whether the word Religion has the same meaning as Dhamma in Buddhism, or whether it means or does not mean religion in the sense that Buddhism stands for is to be given sufficient consideration also. First of all we ought to look into the root of the word **Religion** before we can understand whether Dhamma in Buddhism may be identified with religion or otherwise. Some people deny that one can apply the word Religion to Buddhism or use it to mean Dhamma of Buddhism. Now let us consider whether it is possible or not, and whether there is any way out.

The word Religion has aroused much controversy among scholars of religion and moralists. As a result it has been discovered that in the time of Cicero scholars held that "lig" was the root of the word and this "lig" meant to observe, to carry out. Religion meant carrying out orders from Heaven which came in

the form of revelation or something like that. Emphasis was on observing or executing rules and laws that were laid down. Now we can see that in Buddhism Dhamma is also to be observed. so it can be identified with religion. Later, in the time of Servius, scholars came to think that the root of the word was "leg" instead of "lig". This word "leg" meant to bind or hold in bondage. These learned men explained that Religion meant that which could bind human beings to the highest which was God. Likewise in Buddhism we say that what we call Dhamma or Religion bind human beings to the loftiest, meaning Nirvana or the state of freedom from suffering. This would not be too far-fetched, and the interpretation still makes sense. As time marched on to the era of St. Augustine the Great, we found that this gentleman combined the two words "lig" and "leg", that was, he put the words "to observe" and "to bind" together. This made for a much broader meaning, which was: To observe or to act in

order to bring forth bondage between human beings and what was the highest. The full significance of this would be: a system of study or observation or action either according to words of Heaven or according to the laws of truth on earth as one might choose, in order to create union between men and the highest, which meant God or the extinction of suffering, that is, of Nirvana, as one wished. When we go by such interpretation, then there is no reason why Buddhism or the Dhamma of Buddhism cannot be identified as Religion. No further debate is necessary. The word Dhamma which is translated as Doctrine denotes religion, - any religion, - and Buddhism can then be called religion also. This is the significance of the second group of words.

In the third group of interpretation we find the words Virtue, Moral Quality, Righteousness, Ideal, Duty. This group of words point to the proper sense of value, with the word Righteousness being the most important. This does not mean

merely fairness and correctness, but suitability as well. For this reason modern language scholars and religionists favour the interpretation employed by the theosophists. These people invented the definition, then others followed suit, including Buddhists in England. The Theosophists defined Dhamma as the course of conduct right for a man at his particular stage of evolution. You can see that this interpretation of the word Dhamma is very suitable, for it can be very well applied to the modern age. Please take special note of this, because we shall deal mostly with this concept.

The fourth group of interpretation also consists of several words, such as Cause, Law, Standard, Form and Truth. This group of words points to laws or things which have the power to condition or give rise to something else. This is rather suggestive of the belief in the existence of God.

For people whose faith does not mention anything about God, like in

Buddhism, if the question is posed whether God exists or not, then an answer has first to be given as to what is meant by God. If the answer is that God means Cause or the Highest Principle that governs various things, then we can say straight away that the concept of God exists also in Buddhism, and by God we simply mean Truth. Now if we are to examine the meaning of the word God in general, we shall see that there are several types of "God". We have for example, God the Creator, God the Preserver, and God the Destroyer, — if we go by the concept of God being omnipotent. In the East, especially in Hinduism, there is certainly God who creates, God who protects the world, and God who destroys the world at intervals, known as Brahma, Narayana or Vishnu, and Siva respectively. This is the same as to say that we have Dhamma to create, to protect, and to cause periods of destruction. The reason for this is that, when we talk about Dhamma, we mean something occult, mysterious, that

has no form like human beings, but possessing more power than men. By this we do not mean a personal or an anthropomorphic God who behaves like human creatures, appearing in human form, or possessing human spirit. We do not mean that. However, since we don't quite know what to call this power, we just have to say that it's an impersonal or non-anthropomorphic God, so as to contra indicate anything personal. We are dealing in the realm or even beyond the realm of the abstract. If "God" is used in this sense, then we can say that we have Dhamma as cause of the perpetual motion of matters, out of which the world evolved. Dhamma is the regulator that governs or preserves the world in its present state. Even when certain periods are reached when the world spins round to the point of destruction, it is still by the force that we call Dhamma. We conclude, therefore, that we have Dhamma as God the Creator, the Preserver, the Destroyer. In other words God means

the Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, for God exists everywhere and holds the power over all things. In Buddhism we have nothing other than Dhamma, which appears, for instance, as the Law of Kamma, and is omnipotent, existing everywhere. It's as if there was someone with eyes to see, to punish those who do wrong and reward those who do right everywhere. Dhamma, represented as the the Law of Kamma, is equivalent to God because of its qualities of omnipotence and omnipresence. Omnipotence because it is more powerful than anything else. There is nothing to exceed it. You can make a research on this. Take what you like, -be it something very grand or important or very lofty,-still there is nothing higher than Dhamma. Only Dhamma appears in a form that is indeed difficult to perceive. As to omniscience, it is so because all types of knowledge can be summed up in that single word Dhamma. Because Dhamma means everything as we have said.

The meaning of this word "God" is so varied as to include even such a rather amusing term as "God" the Dictionary. This is to say that God is a single volume dictionary which contains everything that you may wish to look up. This is a characterization, not a joke, though it may sound a bit humourous!. Now what is there in Buddhism?. Again it has just this thing which we call Dhamma. Because Dhamma means everything without any exception, so the word Dhamma alone represents a whole dictionary of things. This is an example to show that Dhamma is God. Only please don't forget that it's not a personal God.

Finally we come to the most important term of all, which is, God the Saviour. We even define "God" further as the World Saviour, who will save the world from being in an undesirable state. This means to say that we have Dhamma-Dhamma - The World Saviour. To this we shall give a further consideration.

When we examine all the translated

words, we shall see what is meant by Dhamma being the world saviour, using the word God as equivalent to Dhamma. If we go by the word God, let us use it to mean Truth. If we go by the word Correctness, then Dhamma must mean a system of behaviour suitable to each particular human being at each particular phase of development. That is exactly the Dhamma that can save or protect the world. If we go by the word Religion, then religion can mean nothing other than the course of action which will bring human being into contact with that which is the highest, or the extinction of suffering.

All in all we can see that it is "God" who saves this world; but by God we must mean an impersonal God. If God is a personal God, who acts and appears like human beings, capable of getting angry and so forth, then we cannot accept Him. This is why a rather funny remark has been made that "Truth is God, but God is not Truth". Just think

really how amusing this is, for it is against logic, and they even say that the remark has been made by no less a person than Mahatma Gandhi!. It is indeed illogical if we go by the concept of a personal God. Actually, to say that Truth is God is quite correct, because Truth is nothing personal, but when we take God as a personal God, then God cannot be Truth. The remark is thus absurd and the only way to make it plausible is to take God as not being personal, but impersonal. In this sense we get the full meaning of the word. If we now substitute the word Dhamma for God, then there can be no misunderstanding, for God is Truth, Truth is God, and always so, because it means an impersonal God, which is Dhamma. This Dhamma is able to perform all the duties of "God", such as creating, preserving or destroying the world. Furthermore, Dhamma exists everywhere, rules over all things, and knows everything. It has the power to protect or save the world, if men will

help make it possible for Dhamma to prevail therein.

Considering our points as above, we may conclude that there is no way to translate the word Dhamma into any other language, and it is better to transliterate the word as such. Therefore we talk about Dhamma - the World Saviour. These are the meanings of the word Dhamma. You have the liberty to pick out whichever meaning that you like the best. Literally it means to stay, meaning everything that can stay by itself or support itself. In terms of sense or value, it becomes Religion which will bind men to Nirvana or God. On the other hand, if we take up the present-day existence or the immediate problem of living, we have to say that Dhamma is the course of action for each phase of development of an individual. If we want to talk in terms of the mysterious, or the supernatural we would have to say that Dhamma is God in every sense of the word. These are the answers to

the question: What is Dhamma?

Next we shall take up the problem as to how this thing called Dhamma is opposed to the world of matter or materialism. If we are clear on this point, we shall be able to understand even better what is meant by Dhamma.

The word materialism is defined as clinging or holding on to worldly matters, not to Dhamma or God. In Dialectic Materialism especially, one attaches so much significance to material thing as to say that everything starts with matter and exists only as matter. There is no talk about the spirit or the mind at all. These materialists hold that the soul, the spirit or the mind is merely an expression of matter, so one need not talk about; one need talk only about matter. This is materialism. In another sense it means being attracted to the allurements of the material world and seeing everything from the materialistic point of view. One is lost in the sensual pleasures that the world offers. This is

also called materialism.

As to the opposite of materialism, we don't really know what to call it. To call it spiritualism or Dhamma-ism is not altogether safe from minor difficulties here and there. Perhaps it's better to call it non-materialism, which means **not** inclined towards materialism. Thus we have materialism and non-materialism as opposites. Dhamma must be on the side of non-materialism, for it does not cling to material things. Some people may use Formism to denote materialism that is in contrast with spiritualism or the like. This is not objectionable, but it still has snags in places; not quite so good as using direct negation. Some people use the word idealism as opposed to materialism. Yet this can be misunderstood, for one might get lost in ideas and ideals. It's not quite safe. Far better to use the word non-materialism. Dhamma is non-materialism by nature of its being the opposite of materialism, both in its literal form and its implications.

We can understand this by examining the situations that prevail in our human society. There is a group of people who contend that the body is all that matters, whereas the mind or the soul has no significance, being under the control of the body. There is an opposite group who says that the body has no meaning, but it's the mind or soul alone that counts. The mind is the cause, the originator of all things, the body is of minor importance, is dependent on the mind and is almost without any worth. These extreme views in either direction are not totally tenable. A middle point of view would be more correct, for both the body and the mind are mutually dependent of one another. One should not hold up this or that as being the only significant part. Both the body and the mind run parallel to one another. In spite of this, we do go by what is more important. It is as if the mind is the leader, and the body the follower. In the language of the Dhamma we say that the mind is like a cripple

with good eyes, while the body is like a blind who is strong and able. The strong man may be able to walk, but, as he is blind, he does not know where to go just like the body. The cripple with good eyes likewise is unable to go anywhere. However, when the two men get together and co-operate, the result will be that they can see, and they can walk. And who should be the one to give orders?. It will certainly have to be the one with eyes, or the cripple fellow who gives the order. We say, therefore, that the mind is more important than the body, and that the two must follow one another in a proper order. We believe, at the same time, that we pull through troubles because of the mind, not the body. Furthermore, we do not consider that the morsels of food that we eat are so very important in the making of human beings. On the contrary, we think that right conduct, guided by right mind, is more important. We do not regard sensual enjoyment of life as being

excessively wonderful, as the materialists do. We conceive of something more noble, and we regard the attachment to sensual pleasures a potent enemy which brings us disaster.

In this connection we ought to remind ourselves of the story of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, in the book of Matthew, we learn that Satan took Jesus up on a hill, where there was nothing to be seen but stones and pebbles. Satan proposed to Jesus that if he was really the Son of God, he should try turning these pebbles into loaves of bread, so that people could use them as food. Jesus replied that such a miraculous deed would not be necessary, for man did not live by bread alone, but by obeying the orders of the Lord, they would find life. Now we can see right away that Jesus was not a materialist. He did not believe that man survived because of food. Why then should one be so preoccupied with the business of baking or trying to turn pebbles into bread. It was far better to think of what

God has decreed concerning what one should do and how one should conduct oneself, for this was the way to attain a real life and make life worth living. Life dependent on food means a materialistic life, not a real one. However we should always aspire to the real life which results from right behaviour according to orders of the Lord. This gives us a clear example of what we mean by materialism versus non-materialism.

In India, in the time of Buddha, there existed several sects of materialism, such as the Caravaka sect, led by a man of that name, and the Lokayata sect, etc. These people put faith in the material world, as has been explained. They even claimed that the fulfillment of sensual pleasure was Nirvana, for they believed that when one could give full satisfaction to all the bodily desires, then un-happiness would not be felt. They set out, therefore, to seek the point of saturation of sensual enjoyment, calling it Nirvana. Now some of you may be perplexed why the word

Nirvana was mentioned in this connection. However, if you understand the situation correctly, your perplexity will be erased. Actually, the word Nirvana existed, was much used and talked about, even before the time of Buddha. There was Nirvana that meant to cool, to die down and cool off, to be tranquil and cool. Even in the kitchen people used to say: "The rice nirvanaed down enough now, and we may eat!." This was "nirvana" in the colloquial language, which meant to cool down. Anything that cooled down to the end point of cooling would be said to have reached the perfect or absolute nirvana. This was the sense of the word employed in ancient days. Now when a new sage arrived who discovered the Dhamma that made for cooling or calming down of the mind, because of destruction of desire, anger, and delusion, there was no better word to be used than the word "nirvana". What people used to mean "cool" then came to be adopted to signify the Dhamma. Therefore people who thought that the

fulfillment of bodily need made for peace of mind and cessation of desire identified Nirvana with sensual pleasures. In a later era, when it was discovered that the peace of mind attained through meditation was even deeper or "cooler" than this, then the word Nirvana was applied to Jhana or Samapati (the attainment of inner tranquility). Later still Buddha realized that this was not yet the absolute peace. He then dedicated himself to the search for Truth and found Nirvana to be extinction of desire, anger and delusion. Such is the history of the word Nirvana.

The materialist Caravaka sought happiness in the most excessive way according to their principle which they thought was the best that man could aspire to. However, it was not Dhamma in the sense that we mean here. We do not consider such practice as being suitable for human beings. We even condemn it as over-materialism, clinging only to what the material world may bring. Even to-day there are still people who say: "Eat,

drink and be merry, for to-morrow we may die". In fact, there is so much of this sort of talk everywhere even in Thailand. It makes people turn to indulge in eating, drinking and merry-making, satisfying just the ways of the flesh. All this makes up the philosophy of materialism. But this cannot be what we call Dhamma. We want something better than food, drink or merriment. By this we mean the calm and coolness of inner tranquility. Without Dhamma, eating, drinking and merry-making are but fires. It's eating fire, drinking fire, and dancing on the fire, when there is no Dhamma. When Dhamma exists, however, eating, drinking and the enjoyment of life will all be peaceful. In the end we shall even be above Death also. We shall never say "to-morrow we may die", because we are already beyond the reach of Death. An opposite reaction will result in such a fashion.

Now I'd like you to take an interest in what we call "Heaven". This word

is dubious and does not have a fixed meaning. In Buddhism "Heaven" belongs to the material world and is the aspiration of the materialists. In other religions, however, "Heaven" may not mean materialism. On the contrary, it may signify the highest attainment of human beings, for it is believed that in Heaven one will be with God. Heaven is the abode of God, and to be in Heaven is to be with God. Therefore Heaven is not considered to be in the nature of materialism. We do not know how the believers of these other religions picture their Heaven, but "Heaven" in Buddhism or in the Pali language means a place filled with pleasures of form, sound, smell, taste and touch that living creatures may desire. Thus, Heaven, no matter of which plane, still belongs to materialism. Please be careful of this word which is most dubious. We must think very well and understand correctly what it means. If you think that Heaven is the abode of God and so must be the highest place, you may do so. Only such a Heaven

must certainly mean something other than a place filled with merriment, servants, fairies and angels. Heaven of this sort belongs to materialism, whereas Dhamma means not losing oneself in the enjoyment of good things and being able to control them. In other words, Dhamma is non-materialism.

From what has been said thus far, we may conclude that, according to materialism, the body or matter is above the mind, and so one becomes slave of the body or matter. As a result, there is not enough of matter to satisfy human need in this world. Dhamma is the opposite. If we are not materialistic, but lean towards Dhamma, it means that the mind is above the body. It is therefore a master, not a slave, of matter. This results in an excess of matter in the world, for nobody wants it. Now-a-days, however, people are much inclined towards materialism. They are greedy; they gather their worldly goods, trying to snatch them from one another, and making plans to

store up enough for hundreds of years ahead. Yet how can there be sufficient matter to go round, when everybody happens to want the same things at the same time?. Even if the world could produce a hundred or a thousand times more than its output at the present, it still would not be enough. Materialism thus makes for an insufficiency of matter. If on the other hand, we go by Dhamma, there will be an excess of matter, because we are able to find happiness without needing much of material things. The difference exists in such a fashion. The saddest state of affairs is to be a slave or a servant of matter, and the most pleasant state is to rule over matter. This is the difference.

If we are to examine the crises that occur in this world, no matter in what period, be it in the past or perhaps in the future, but especially at the present, and ask ourselves whether the world crises arise out of materialism or Dhammaism, then we shall understand the difference

between materialism and Dhamma. In fact, you probably know already, without any explanation being necessary, that permanent crises arise from materialism. Because all human creatures blindly serve matter, so they become, as a result, slaves of Mara or Satan which feeds on matter. When men and beasts become slaves of matter, then they are dazed and blind. They cannot see anything except the wonderful tastiness that the material world offers. They put all their strength and their thoughts in search of material things. The result is such as to serve them right; that is; the more search is made, the more they become enslaved by matter, and increasingly so. That is why the world turns out to be a material world, resulting in permanent crises. Now if we do not allow ourselves to be slaves of materialism, if we will only interest ourselves and look into what Dhamma is, we will be able to control material things. Permanent crises in the world will then disappear in a flash. The differences are

worth noticing to everyone, for they are concerned with life and death of men.

We shall feel all the more depressed when we compare two simple words, namely. Human Conduct and Animal Behaviour, and see what different meanings they convey. Animals, we realize, do not know anything except what can be eaten. That is why there is a saying: "If you want to bind animals, bind them with food". There is no purpose in animal behaviour, except for material acquisition. As to human beings, if their action is directed only towards material gains, then it is also animal behaviour, even though it's among scholars, scientists or great professors. Only when one's action does not make one a slave of matter, then may one call it Human Conduct. When, a while ago, we talked of eourse of conduct right for a man, we meant to say "Human". In other words, it's the same as saying "Course of Human Conduct". If we keep comparing these two words, therefore, we will be cultivating Hiri and Ottappa, being

afraid and ashamed of acting like animals or bending towards materialism.

From what I have said so far, there are enough examples to show how Dhamma and materialism are the opposite of one another. Now, with the rest of the time available, we shall talk about how Dhamma saves the world.

With regards to this question of how Dhamma saves or protects the world, we believe in general that, without Dhamma, there is increased suffering in proportion to increased material progress. You must listen very well and try to understand this, that the more advanced we are in material things, the more we shall suffer, if there is no Dhamma. Now-a-days we go forward in material ways, without blending progress with Dhamma, so we are unhappy. We become insomnia and mentally ill, as shown by statistics. This is not mere guessing. According to records from hospitals all over the world we see mental patients in increasing number, because the material world expands without

being supported by Dhamma. This is enough to make us realize that Dhamma protects men from nervous and mental afflictions in the face of material progress. At least it protects us from psychological disturbances, which may in turn cause true organic diseases.

Now, at least, if we want to talk on a lower level, we ought to see that Dhamma saves men from being like animals. It makes men differ from animals, in other words. Everyone knows that to be an animal is an undesirable state, for it's a lowly form of existence, contemptible and without honour. We are saved from that level of existence because of Dhamma. In India of ancient times there used to be a saying that "To eat, to find pleasure in sleep, to fear danger and to try to run away from danger, to indulge in sexual intercourse, — all these habits prevail equally among men and beasts. Dhamma alone differentiates men from animals and makes men superior. Without Dhamma men and animals are alike" This ancient

saying ought to be remembered always, as it prevents us from falling prey to materialism. The pleasure of eating, sleeping, etc, pertains to materialism. Dhamma is loftier and is contrary to all this. Therefore we hold that, first and foremost, Dhamma saves men from being like beasts.

Now when we take up the subject of Buddhism in particular, we have a saying: "One has oneself as a refuge. One has Dhamma as a refuge. There is nothing else to depend on". When we say that Dhamma is our refuge, we mean the Dhamma that lifts the status of men so that they will progress till they reach the end point or the highest point of development attainable. When we say that; "one has oneself as a refuge", we mean that one has to work out one's own salvation and must not seek aid from the material world. One must work for this accomplishment with one's mind, not with anything material. Everyone must rely on himself and must not look for help even

from a personal God. An impersonal God, of course, already means Dhamma and can therefore be regarded as a refuge. "Personal God", on the other hand, implies another Being and so does not fit in with the saying; "One has oneself as a refuge; one has Dhamma as a refuge". From the above statements we can see that the principle of Buddhism is not related to anything material, does not depend on, and is not under the power of the matter. It is under the power of Dhamma, is related to Dhamma, and depends on Dhamma. What is more, it is to be acquired by self. Actually this relying on self is also a principle of Dhamma. It means that Dhamma saves one from the power that is binding, distracting and deceiving, then places one within the frame of blissful peace in the way of the Dhamma. This is because Dhamma is capable of building up ideas and ideals over and above the enjoyments of the flesh. As to materialism, it knows only one goal, which is the attainment of sensual pleasures. Dhamma

deals with the mind in its varying depths of peace until Nirvana is reached in the end. This is what we mean when we say that Dhamma protects each and every man individually.

Now, in terms of society as a whole, how does Dhamma protect us?. If we can really grasp the essence of Dhamma, we shall feel that all life is one, and human beings are made of the same stuff. Thus we can no longer hate, nor can we kill. According to materialism, on the other hand, everyone is for himself, and each is out to grasp what he can. This results in men lying with one another in gathering wealth, at the same time trying to destroy one another, on the ground and underground, in hot war and cold war in permanent crises. As to Dhamma, the more we study it and ponder upon it till we comprehend the profundity of Nature or of the Universe — the more we shall see that all human beings are one, and that all life is one life. Therefore we cannot kill one another. Infact, we shall feel

only kindness and compassion towards one another. For these reasons we say that Dhamma protects the world as a whole. It protects us individually as we have said; likewise collectively.

In connection with Dhamma, I should like to ask you to think in terms of Ethics or moral Philosophy. It is believed that the essence of Dhamma or **Summum Bonum** or the highest virtue, consists of four components. These are: (1) Happiness or blissfulness, which is of the mind, not of the body; (2) Perfection in human conduct; (3) Duty for Duty's sake, not for the sake of Me or Mine; (4) Goodwill, which we maintain towards others, and others maintain towards us, resulting in Universal Goodwill. Only these four virtues make up the **Summum Bonum**. Nothing else does.

But now we are sinking in the ways of the flesh, which means already a faulty start. We haven't got Perfection, or the best of human qualities, because we have become slaves of Satan or Mara, which

is Matter. This reveals itself by perpetual desire. The more we have and consume, the more we want than ever before. This is insatiability. Dhamma alone gives the mind a complete satisfaction. As to duty, we work for the sake of money, not for Duty's sake, and it's plain materialism. Moreover, we are all out for ourselves, seeking our own gains. Even when we are given the types of job that ought to impel us to support Dhamma, such as those of preachers, judges or the like, we are still bent on the thoughts of acquiring material wealth for ourselves. We do not like supporters of Dhamma, because we fall under the power of materialism. It is therefore not Duty's sake, and it's not goodwill coupled with Dhamma, or true Goodwill. It is looking out for material things, not for kindness. Thus the world is not in the position to say that we have Dhamma as the World Saviour.

Actually we ought to do the opposite of the above, that is, we ought to find true happiness which is the way of the

mind and of the Dhamma. We should also cultivate our qualities as human beings in the highest sense. This is to seek a way to contentment, to develop the mind to be capable of expected tasks, and to be free from sensual desires and excessive thirst for material things. In addition, we ought to find happiness in our work, not in the money gained from labour. Money becomes a trivial matter when the mind ascends to a higher plane and derives pleasure more from the work itself than from fortune. We see that people who are so absorbed in their work as to forget their wives and children behave that way because they actually enjoy working. True Dhamma leads to such an ideal or an end result, which is what saves the world. Because of Dhamma men will not seek happiness in material things. They will all be contented and satisfied and will not try to take advantage of one another. They will be happy in what they do, not in the material gains, and they will feel that all human creatures are one, that all

lives are one life. Dhamma saves the world in such a fashion. It may be called God or anything else that conveys the proper meaning of the word "God". The result is that we are saved. In the language of the Dhamma we say "Vimutti" or saved from suffering, which may be termed Liberation, Emancipation or Salvation as you prefer. This is the subjective of all religions. It stems from what we call Dhamma or God in the form of Dhamma as has been explained.

With the small amount of time that is left, I wish to say a word on the question of why people these days are so negligent of Dhamma – the World Saviour. The answer to this question may already be found in what has been said above, and that is: Men have become slaves of the Demon of sensual pleasures. However, please do not be mistaken that this thing that we call Demon or Satan or Mara is ugly or frightening. Only fools will picture the Mara as a fierce giant or a ferocious beast with fangs. They are stupid in

doing so. Better to picture the Demon or Satan or Mara as a most handsome and a most clever fellow, with the most alluring baits in his possession. And why should we picture him in such a fashion?. The reasons are: Mara or Satan has to be very handsome in order to captivate admirers, and has to be exceedingly clever-cunningly clever, that is – in order to lure people to his way. To draw the devil as Cupid or something like that is indeed quite correct. That is the real Satan. We become slaves of the sensual or material world. When this happens, we all turn our backs to religion or merely practise it in a hypocritical manner.

When I say we turn our backs to religion, I mean we observe religion only in form, and we pretend that we believe in God and in religion. Troops fighting in the battle fields, for instance, perform religious rites, but only as a matter of pretext. It's going through rituals because of fear, and fear is a kind of stupidity that compels men to act. It's not really

reaching true Dhamma or true religion. To pray because we are afraid, or to pray or give alms because we want to win a lottery; all mean turning our backs to religion. We don't know what it's all about. We merely seek material gains. At the same time, we get mixed up with religion or what signifies religion. We perform religious rites and pray in a religious manner. This is what we mean when we say that we pray to God because we are slaves of the Demon of the flesh. Please try to see how pertinent this is. We do not pray and bow to God because we are under the power of Dhamma or have acquired Dhamma. In reality we are slaves of Satan, and Satan orders us to pray to God so that we should be fortunate enough to find riches and happiness in the sensual or material world. Materialism holds power over most people now a-days, and people are so wrapped up in it that they cannot find a way out. As a result, they become nervously, mentally or emotionally ill to increasing degrees. We

may say, in short, that because people are slaves of materialism so they become negligent of Dhamma.

Now our last problem is: How are we to correct this situation or dilemma? To this we can give a blunt and direct answer, and that is: We must face Dhamma with honesty, and, with equal honesty, turn our backs to materialism. In turning our backs to materialism and facing Dhamma or religion or God we must do it intelligently. We must turn to our own God. Then we shall be able to solve this problem.

I daresay religion can help solve this problem. Only one must take the right course of action, and not be misled by ignorance. One must attain true Dhamma and comprehend the meaning of Dhamma. One must realize that God is Dhamma, that Dhamma is God, that God is Truth, and Truth is God. When this is perceived, then our problem will be solved.

Now if I may be somewhat specific on what is to be done, I should say that we need first to study the Dhamma

seriously, then live according to the principles of Truth till we attain results and then help others by making the Dhamma known to them. Thus there are four things to do, namely: To study the Dhamma, to put it into practice, to strive for attainment, and to make Dhamma known among men. At the present, however, we fool ourselves even in our study. We only pretend to study. Sometimes we go so far as to say that we study the Dhamma in order to make worldly gains. This is not real study, but only a pretext. Some people may be earnest about it, yet subconsciously or unknowingly they cheat themselves. Just figure out how many minutes in the course of 24 hours, do we spend on Dhamma, and how many hours, how many minutes, do we spend on other interests. Now that we have already lived for 20, 30, 50 and 60 years, how many days have we spent on the study of the Dhamma, and how many years, how many days have been taken up by other matters. Then we shall really see how

serious we are in our study of the Dhamma. If we record our daily activities, we shall find that we still do not really penetrate into the Dhamma, and that we are not truly happy in our Dhamma study. When our study is not done in earnest, then there is no need to talk about the practice, for this will also not be genuine. We shan't know how to carry it out. We are only dreaming and talking in our dreams. We study about unimportant things, not any urgent matter. We waste time, and we practise religion without any clear insight. We do not get directly down to the way to end suffering. Those who wish to be savants in the Dhamma, must be especially careful. They can be easily led out of the path of the Dhamma. I don't know exactly where they go, but in the end they probably become slaves of materialism. This is because of the fact that when one wants to be a pundit or a savant, one actually wants to be famous. One uses fame as a tool for material gains. It is thus studying the

Dhamma in order to become a pundit, which amounts to being a slave of materialism. This is a false sort of study, a fake type of practice. One has to practise religion in order to penetrate into the depths of the Dhamma, and only from the right sort of study can one attain real result.

As to spreading the Dhamma or making the Dhamma known, we can do it easily if we really understand what Dhamma is. If on the other hand, we ourselves do not arrive at a clear understanding, it will be most difficult to try to explain Dhamma to other people. Why?. It is because when one teaches Dhamma, it is necessary to illustrate with examples, and one must be able to point out happiness. One cannot teach merely with words or with reading and writing. Such methods of teaching have almost no meaning, but actual practice and by giving examples means a great deal. It makes people believe. It makes people trust you and follow you. To preach with words does not build

up confidence in the listeners, for they will always wonder whether the preacher can carry out what he preaches or not. Thus when the Ariyas or the Pure Souls spread the Dhamma, they do so only by showing us what kind of people they are. They show us the type of life that they live. They do not need to preach. Better still, they show us what it's like to be happy. They show us purity, light, peacefulness and bliss. All the actions of the Pure Souls are carried out correctly, in line with what we call Summum Bonum or the Highest or God-like achievement of man. They attain true happiness or blissfulness. They achieve perfection, and they carry out duty for Duty's sake. They do not work for money, nor for fame, but only for the sake of duty. They also have true goodwill, which is Universal Loving Kindness. This is how they spread the Dhamma. Therefore when we form a group or an association and shout loudly with words, it's far from being able to make the Dhamma known. Let each of

us, on the other hand, spread the Dhamma by being an example, by the way we are, the way we conduct ourselves and the way we talk. Let us likewise demonstrate happiness, again by the way we are, the way we act, and the way we talk. Then there will be no need to try to persuade others. People will trust us and follow our example, without our having to utter a word. We can thus solve our problem,—by real study, real practice, real attainment, and real spread of the Dhamma through the right technic. By these means we shall make people turn their backs to materialism and turn their faces towards their own religions. Dhamma will become the World Saviour in such a fashion.

We do conclude that real Dhamma is the right action properly taken at each particular phase of development of an individual, and it is truly in the position to save or protect the world. If we wish to call Dhamma God, we ought to consider Him in this form. We must also acknowledge the fact that, if Dhamma is to save

or protect the world, we ought to help the world possess Dhamma. Let Dhamma exist in the world, so that Dhamma may save the world. We must face Dhamma, and turn our back to the enemy of Dhamma, which is materialism. This is all there is to it.

Let us end our discourse at this point, as sufficient time has been spent on it for the day.

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10 New e-books (PDF)

Presented herein on the occasion of

**The 10th Anniversary of  
The Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives**  
(24 March 2021)

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2. A Buddhist Charter
3. Buddhism in 15 Minutes
4. Another Kind of Birth
5. Christianity and Buddhism  
*(Mutual Understanding Between Religion Series #1, #2, #3)*
6. Dhamma - The World Saviour  
*(Mutual Understanding Between Religion Series #6)*
7. Two Kinds of Language  
*(Mutual Understanding Between Religion Series #8)*
8. Exchanging Dhamma While Fighting  
*(Mutual Understanding Between Religion Series #10)*
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