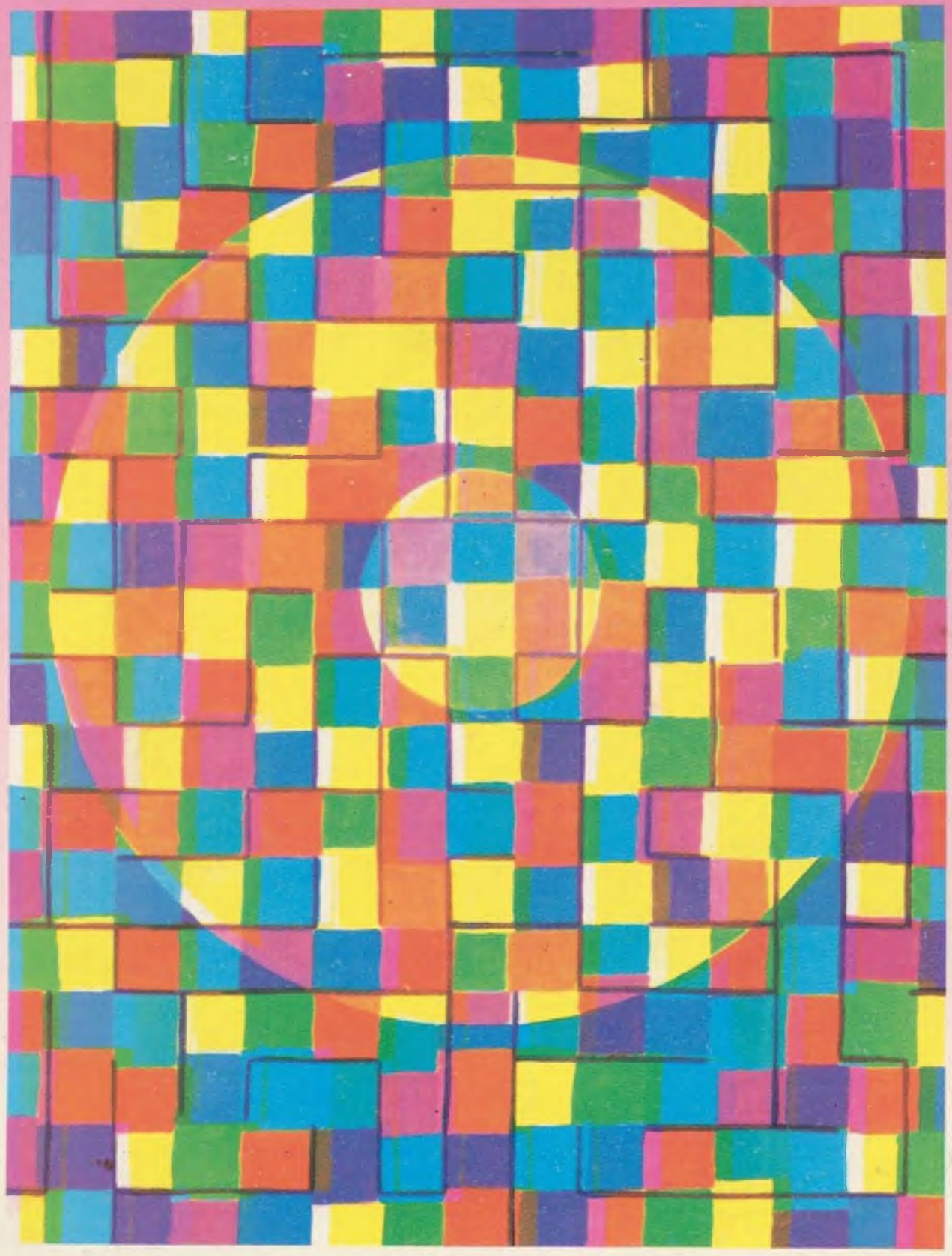
Handbook For Mankind



Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

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The Dhamma Study & Practice Group

HANDBOOK FOR MANDKIND :

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

translated from the Thai by
Ariyananda Bhikkhu (Roderick S. Bucknell)

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by the Sublime Life Mission, Bangkok, Thailand.)

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FOREWORD

In 1956, the venerable Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu gave a series of lectures to a group of prospective judges, which were subsequently edited and arranged into what became *The Handbook for Mankind*. Since then, the success of this small book has been astounding. Well over 100,000 copies have been printed in Thai, and the book still enjoys widespread popularity, more than three decades after the original talks. The reason for the "Handbook's" duration is clear: that the venerable Buddhadāsa offers fresh insights into a timeless Truth (Dhamma), in the direct and simple manner that characterizes all his teaching. The clarity of his insight brings the Dhamma to life, so that today, a new generation of readers, not yet born at the time of these talks, can find meaning in his words.

As a guide for newcomers to the Buddha-Dhamma (the Truth which the Buddha awakened to and subsequently taught), this book is an invaluable guide. In it are contained the essential teachings of Buddhism. The "Handbook" is especially useful for those who approach the Buddha's teaching, not as a subject for scholarly study, but as a means to understand and ennoble their lives.

The Handbook for Mankind was originally published in english by the Sublime Life Mission, but has long been out of print. With their permission, we have reprinted this book, making some corrections where necessary, but leaving the text otherwise intact. Our thanks are due to Mr. Pun Chongprasoed, who first put this book together in Thai, and to all the people whose effort has made possible the reprinting of this book.

The Dhamma Study and Practice Group

ANUMONDANĀ

(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, ageing, and dying.
Congratulations and Blessings to all Dhamma Comrades,
You who share Dhamma to widen the people's prosperous joy.
Heartiest appreciation from Buddhadāsa Indapaññño,
Buddhist Science ever shines beams of Bodhi longlasting.
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

Mokkhabalārāma
Chaiya, 2 November 2530
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KNOW THYSELF

"Know yourself!" - now, these words mean:
That in yourself a gem is found.
Why look without? - all is in vain,
Within a lotus blossoming!
Within the lotus - best of gems,
That which a man should find and know:
"Enlightenment or Knowledge here
All comes from knowing in yourself."

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

LOOKING AT BUDDHISM

If we open any recent book on the origins of religion, we find that there is one point on which all authors are in agreement. They all agree in saying that religion arose in the world out of fear. Primitive forest dwelling man feared thunder and lightning, darkness and storms, and various things about him that he was unable to understand or control. His method of avoiding the danger he saw in these phenomena was to demonstrate either humility and submission or homage and reverence, depending on which he felt was most appropriate.

Later, as man's knowledge and understanding developed, this fear of the forces of nature changed into a fear of phenomena more difficult to apprehend. Religions based on deference to objects of fear such as natural phenomena, spirits and celestial beings, came to be looked down upon as unreasonable and ridiculous. And then man's fear became still more refined into a fear of suffering, suffering of the sort that cannot be alleviated by any material means. He came to fear the suffering inherent in birth, aging, pain and death, the disppointment and hopelessness which arise out of desire, anger and stupidity, which no amount of power or wealth can relieve. Long ago

in India, a country well provided with thinkers and investigators, intelligent people dispensed with all paying of homage to supernatural beings and started seeking instead the means of conquering birth, aging, pain and death, the means of eliminating greed, hatred and delusion. Out of this search arose Buddhism, a higher religion based on insight, a means of conquering birth, aging, pain and death, a method for destroying the mental defilements. Buddhism has its origins in fear of this last kind, just as do all religions based on intelligence. The Buddha discovered how to conquer absolutely what man fears: he discovered a practical method, now called Buddhism, for eliminating suffering.

"Buddhism" means "the Teaching of the Enlightened One." A Buddha is an enlightened individual, one who knows the truth about all things, one who knows just what is what, and so is capable of behaving appropriately with respect to all things. Buddhism is a religion based on intelligence, science and knowledge, whose purpose is the destruction of suffering and the source of suffering. All paying of homage to sacred objects by means of performing rites and rituals, making offerings, or praying is not Buddhism. The Buddha rejected all this as foolish, ridiculous and unsound. He also rejected the celestial beings, then considered by certain groups to be the creators of things, and the deities supposed to dwell, one in each star, in the sky. Thus we find that the Buddha made such statements as these:

"Knowledge, skill and ability are conducive to success and benefit and are auspicious omens, good in their own right, regardless of the movements of the heavenly bodies. With the benefits gained from these qualities, one will completely out-

strip those foolish people who just sit making their astrological calculations." And: "If the water in rivers (such as the Ganges) could really wash away sins and suffering, then the turtles, crabs, fish and shellfish living in those sacred rivers ought by now to be freed of their sins and sufferings too." And: "If a man could eliminate suffering by making offerings, paying homage and praying, there would be no one subject to suffering left in the world, because anyone at all can pay homage and pray. But since people are still subject to suffering while in the very act of making obeisances, paying homage and performing rites, this is clearly not the way to gain liberation."

To attain liberation, we first have to examine things closely in order to come to know and understand their true nature. Then we have to behave in a way appropriate to that true nature. This is the Buddhist teaching; this we must know and bear in mind. Buddhism has nothing to do with prostrating oneself and deferring to awesome things. It sets no store by rites and ceremonies such as making libations of holy water, or any externals whatsoever, spirits and celestial being included. On the contrary, it depends on reason and insight. Buddhism does not demand conjecture or supposition; it demands that we act in accordance with what our own insight reveals and not take anyone else's word for anything. If someone comes and tells us something, we must not believe him without question. We must listen to his statement and examine it. Then if we find it reasonable, we may accept it provisionally and set about trying to verify it for ourselves. This is a key feature of Buddhism, which distinguishes it sharply from other world religions.

Now a religion is a many sided thing. Seen from one angle it has a certain appearance; seen from another angle, it

has another. Many people look at religion from the wrong angle, and Buddhism is no exception. Different individuals looking at Buddhism with different mental attitudes are bound to get different views of it. Because each of us naturally has confidence in his own opinions, the truth for each of us coincides with our own particular understanding and point of view. Consequently, "the Truth" is not quite the same thing for different people. They all penetrate questions to varying depths, by varying methods, and with varying degrees of intelligence. A person does not recognize as true, according to his own ideas of the Truth, anything that lies beyond his own intelligence, knowledge and understanding. And even though he may outwardly go along with other people's ideas as to what is the truth, he knows in himself that it is not the truth as he himself sees it. Each person's conception of the truth may change and develop with the day by day increase in his degree of intelligence, knowledge and understanding, until such time as he arrives at the ultimate truth; and each of us has different ways of examining and testing before believing. So if Buddhism is viewed with differing degrees of intelligence, differing pictures of it will be seen, simply because it can be viewed from any aspect.

As we have said, Buddhism is a practical method for liberating oneself from suffering by means of coming to realize, as did the Buddha himself, the true nature of things. Now any religious text is bound to contain material which later people have found occasion to add to, and our Tipitaka is no exception. People in later ages have added sections based on then current ideas, either in order to boost people's confidence, or out of excessive religious zeal. Regretably even the rites and

rituals which have developed and become mixed in with the religion are now accepted and recognized as Buddhism proper. Ceremonies, such as setting up trays of sweets and fruit as offerings to the "soul" of the Buddha in the same way as alms food is offered to a monk just do not fit in with Buddhist principles. Yet some groups consider this to be genuine Buddhist practice, teaching it as such and keeping to it very strictly.

Rites and ceremonies of this kind have become so numerous that they now completely obscure the real Buddhism and its original purpose. Take for example the procedure of becoming ordained a monk. There has come into existence the ceremony of making gifts to the newly ordained bhikkhu. Guests are invited to bring food and to watch proceedings, and as a result, there is much drunkeness and noise. Ceremonies are performed both at the temple and in the home. The new bhikkhu later leaves the Order again only a few days after having been ordained, and may become an even stronger temple hater than he was before. It must be borne in mind that there was none of this at the time of the Buddha. It is a later development. Ordination at the time of the Buddha meant simply that some individual, who had obtained his parent's consent, renounced home and family. He was a person who was able to close accounts at home and go off to join the Buddha and the Order of bhikkhus. On some convenient occasion he would go and be ordained, and perhaps not see his parents or family again for the rest of his life. Though some bhikkhus might go back to visit their parents again on suitable occasions, this was rare. There does exist a rule permitting a bhikkhu to go home when there is a good reason for doing so, but at the time of the Buddha this was not the done thing. Bhikkhus

did not receive ordination with their parents in attendance, nor did they celebrate the event as a great occasion, only to leave the Sangha again after just a few days, no better off than at first, as commonly happens in the present day.

All this presenting of gifts to newly ordained bhikkhus, this performing of ceremonies, including all sorts of celebration — this we are foolish enough to call Buddhism! Furthermore we choose to make much of it, thinking nothing of spending all our own money, or other people's on account of it. This "Neo-Buddhism" is so widespread as to be almost universal. The Dhamma, the genuine teaching that once was paramount, has become so overlaid by ceremonial that the whole objective of Buddhism has been obscured, falsified and changed. Ordination, for instance, has become a face saving gambit for young men whom people have been pointing at for never having been ordained, or a prerequisite to finding a wife (as having been a monk is considered a sign of maturity), or is done with some other kink of ulterior motive. In some places an ordination is regarded as an opportunity for collecting money, for which job there are always people on hand to help. It is one way of getting rich. Even this they call Buddhism! And anyone who goes and criticises this is considered to be ignorant of Buddhism or opposed to it.

Another example is the presentation of kathina cloth. The Buddha's original intention was to have cloth for robes given to all the bhikkhus simultaneously so that they could sew it together themselves with a minimum loss of time. If there was only one robe, it was allocated to some bhikkhu, not necessarily the most senior one, whom the group considered worthly of using that role or in need of it, and was presented

to him in the name of the entire order. The Buddha's intention was to avoid any bhikkhu's having a high opinion of himself. On that day everyone, regardless of rank, had to humble himself and be one of the crowd. Everyone had to lend a hand cutting and sewing the cloth, boiling tree pith to make the dye, and whatever else was involved in getting the robes ready and finished the same day. Making the cloth into robes was a co - operative effort. That is how the Buddha intended it to be, an event not necessarily involving lay people at all. But nowadays it has become an affair involving ceremony, fun and games, loud laughter and money seeking. It is just a picnic and is devoid of all the desirable results orginally intended.

This sort of thing is a tumour which has developed in Buddhism and thrived. The tumour takes hundreds of different forms too numerous to name. It is a dangerous, malignant growth which by degrees has completely overlaid and obscured the good material, the real pith of Buddhism, and quite disfigured it. One result of this has been the arising of many sects, some large, some insignificant, as off shoots from the original religion. Some sects have even become involved in sensuality. It is essential that we always discriminate in order to recognize what is the real, original Buddhism. We must not foolishly grasp at the outer shell, or become so attached to the various rituals and ceremonies that the real objective becomes quite lost to view. The real practice of Buddhism is based on purification of conduct by way of body and speech, followed by purification of the mind, which in its turn leads to insight and right understanding. Don't go thinking that such and such is Buddhism just because everyone says it is. The tumour has been spreading constantly since the day the Buddha died, ex-

panding in all directions right up to the present day, so that it is now quite sizable. The tumour in Buddhism must not be misidentified as Buddhism itself. It is also wrong for people of other religions to come and point at these shameful and disgraceful growths as being Buddhism. It is unjust, because these things are not Buddhism at all; they are excressences. Those of us interested in furthering Buddhism, whether as a foothold for all people, or for our own private well being, must know how to get hold of the true essence of Buddhism and not just grab at some worthless outgrowth.

Now even the genuine Buddhism is many sided, a fact which may lead to a false grasp of true meaning. For instance, if looked at from the point of view of a moral philosopher, Buddhism is seen to be a religion of morality. There is talk of merit and demerit, good and evil, honesty, gratitude, harmony, open - heartedness and much more besides. The Tipitaka is full of moral teachings. Many newcomers to Buddhism approach it from this angle and are attracted to it on this account.

A more profound aspect is Buddhism as Truth, as the deep hidden truth lying below the surface and invisible to the ordinary man. To see this truth is to know intellectually the emptiness of all things; the transience, unsatisfactoriness and non-selfhood of all things; to know intellectually the nature of suffering, of the complete elimination of suffering and of the way to attain the complete elimination of suffering; to perceive these in terms of absolute truth, the kind that never changes and which everyone ought to know. This is Buddhism as Truth.

Buddhism as Religion is Buddhism as a system of practice

based on morality, concentration and insight, and culminating in liberating insight; a system which when practised to completion enables one to break free from suffering. This is Buddhism as Religion.

Then there is Buddhism as Psychology, as it is presented to us in the third section of the Tipitaka, where the nature of the mind is described in remarkable detail. Buddhist psychology is a source of interest and astonishment to students of the mind even in the present day. It is far more detailed and profound than present day psychological knowledge.

Another aspect is Buddhism as Philosophy. Philosophical knowledge can be clearly seen by means of reasoned logical proofs but cannot be demonstrated experimentally. It contrasts with science, which is knowledge resulting from seeing something clearly, with our eyes, or through physical experimentation and proof, or even with the "inner eye" of intuition. Profound knowledge such as that of emptiness is just philosophy for a person who has not yet penetrated to the truth, and science for another who has done so, such as a fully enlightened individual, or *arahant,* who has seen it clearly, intuitively. Many aspects of Buddhism, in particular the Four Noble Truths, are scientific in so far as they can be verified by clear experimental proof using introspection. For anyone equipped with awareness and interested in studying and carrying out research, the cause - effect relationships are there just as in science. Buddhism is not just something obscure and vague, not just philosophy, as are man made subjects.

Some look on Buddhism as Culture. Anyone with a high regard for culture finds many aspects of Buddhist practice

which are common to all cultures and also many that are characteristically Buddhist and far better and higher than anything in other cultures.

Of all these various aspects, the one a real Buddhist ought to take most interest in is Buddhism as Religion. We ought to look on Buddhism as a direct practical method for gaining knowledge of the true nature of things, knowledge which makes it possible to give up every from of grasping and clinging, of stupidity and infatuation, and become completely independent of things. To do this is to penetrate to the essence of Buddhism. Buddhism considered in this aspect is far more useful than Buddhism considered as mere morality, or as truth which is simply profound knowledge and not really practical; and more useful than Buddhism considered as philosophy, as something to be enjoyed as an object of speculation and argument, but of no value in the giving up of the mental defilements; and certainly more useful than Buddhism considered simply as culture, as attractive behaviour, noteworthy from the sociological viewpoint.

At the very least, everyone ought to consider Buddhism as Art, as the Art of Living — in other words, as skill and competence in being a human being, living in a way that is exemplary and praiseworthy, which so impresses others that they automatically wish to emulate it. What we have to do is to cultivate the "Three Lustres," firstly developing moral purity, then training the mind to be tranquil and steady and fit to do its job, and finally developing such an abundance of wisdom and clear insight into the nature of all things that those things are no longer able to give rise to suffering. When anyone's life has these Three Lustres, he can be considered to have fully

mastered the art of living. Westerners are extremely interested in Buddhism as the Art of Living, and discuss this aspect more than any other. Penetrating so far into the real essence of Buddhism that we are able to take it as our guide to living induces spiritual good cheer and joy, dispersing depression and disillusionment. It also dispels fears, such as the fear that the complete giving up of spiritual defilements would make life dry and dreary and utterly devoid of flavour, or the fear that complete freedom from craving would make all thought and action impossible, whereas in reality a person who organizes his life in accordance with the Buddhist Art of Living is victor over all the things about him. Regardless of whether these things be animals, people, possessions, or anything else, and regardless of whether they enter that person's consciousness by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind, they will enter as losers, unable to becloud, defile, or perturb him. The winning of victory over all things is genuine bliss.

Buddha-Dhamma will enrapture a mind that has developed a taste for it. It can be considered an indispensible form of nourishment too. True, a person still controlled by the defilements continues to desire nourishment by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body and goes in search of it as suits his nature. But there is another part of him, something deeper, that does not demand that sort of nourishment. It is the free or pure element in his mind. It wishes the joy and delight of spiritual nourishment, starting with the delight that results from moral purity. It is the source of contentment for fully enlightened individuals, who possess such tranquillity of mind that defilements cannot disturb them, who possess clear insight into the true nature of all things and have no ambitions with

regard to any of them. They are, so to speak, able to sit down without being obliged to run hither and yon like those people to whom the Buddha applied the simile "smoke by night, fire by day."

"Smoke by night" refers to sleeplessness, restlessness. A sufferer from this complaint lies all night with hand on brow, planning on going after this and that, working out how to get money, how to get rich quickly and get the various things he desires. His mind is full of "smoke." All he can do is lie there until morning, when he can get up and go running off in obedience to the wishes of the "smoke" he has been holding back all night. This fervent activity is what the Buddha referred to as "fire by day." These are the symptoms of a mind that has not achieved tranquillity, a mind that has been deprived of spiritual nourishment. It is a pathological hunger and thirst induced by the defilement called craving. All night long the victim represses the smoke and heat, which in the morning becomes fire, and then blazes hot inside him all day. If a person is obliged, throughout his entire life, to suppress the "smoke by night," which then becomes "fire by day," how can he ever find peace and coolness? Just visualize his condition. He endures suffering and torment all his life, from birth up until he enters the coffin, simply for lack of the insight that could completely extinguish that fire and smoke. To treat such a complaint one has to make use of the knowledge provided by the Buddha. The smoke and fire diminish in proportion to one's degree of understanding of the true nature of things.

As we have said, Buddhism has a number of different aspects or sides. Just as the same mountain when viewed from a different direction presents a different appearance, so different

benefits are derived from Buddhism according to how one looks at it. Even Buddhism has its origins in fear — not the foolish fear of an ignorant person who kneels and makes obeisance to idols or strange phenomena, but a higher kind of fear, the fear of perhaps never attaining liberation from the oppression of birth, aging, pain and death, from the various forms of suffering we experience. The real Buddhism is not books, not manuals, not word for word repetition from the Tipitaka, nor is it rites and rituals. These are not the real Buddhism. The real Buddhism is the practice, by way of body, speech and mind that will destroy the defilements, in part or completely. One need not have anything to do with books or manuals. One ought not to rely on rites and rituals, or anything else external, including spirits and celestial beings. Rather one must be directly concerned with bodily action, speech and thought. That is, one must persevere in one's efforts to control and eliminate the defilements so that clear insight can arise. One will then be automatically capable of acting appropriately, and will be free of suffering from that moment right up to the end.

This is the real Buddhism. This is what we have to understand. Let us not go foolishly grasping at the tumour that is obscuring Buddhism, taking it for the real thing.

THE TRUE NATURE OF THINGS

The word "religion" has a broader meaning than the word "morality." Morality has to do with behaviour and happiness, and is basically the same the world over. A religion is a system of practice of a high order. The ways of practice advocated by the various religions differ greatly.

Morality made us good people, behaving in accordance with the general principles of community life and in such a way as to cause no distress to ourselves or others. But though a person may be thoroughly moral, he may still be far from free of the suffering attendant on birth, aging, pain and death, still not free from oppression by the mental defilements. Morality stops well short of the elimination of craving, aversion and delusion, so cannot do away with suffering. Religion, particularly Buddhism, goes much further than this. It aims directly at the complete elimination of the defilements, that is, it aims at extinguishing the various kinds of suffering attendant on birth, aging, pain and death. This indicates how religion differs from mere morality, and how much further Buddhism goes than the moral systems of the world in general. Having understood this, we can now turn our attention to Buddhism itself.

Buddhism is a system designed to bring a technical knowledge inseparable from its technique of practice, an organized practical understanding of the true nature of things or what is what. If you keep this definition in mind, you should have no difficulty understanding Buddhism.

Examine yourself and see whether or not you know what is what. Even if you know what you are yourself, what life is, what work, duty, livelihood, money, possessions, honour and fame are, would you dare to claim that you know everything? If we really knew what is what, we would never act inappropriately; and if we always acted appropriately, it is a certainty that we would never be subject to suffering. As it is, we are ignorant of the true nature of things, so we behave more or less inappropriately, and suffering results accordingly. Buddhist practice is designed to teach us how things really are. To know this in all clarity is to attain the Fruit of the Path, perhaps even the final Fruit, *Nirvāna,* because this very knowledge is what destroys the defilements.

When we come to know what is what, or the true nature of things, disenchantment with things takes the place of fascination, and deliverance from suffering comes about automatically. At the moment, we are practising at a stage where we still do not know what things are really like, in particular, at the stage of not yet realizing that all things are impermanent and not selves. We don't as yet realize that life, all the things that we become infatuated with, like, desire and rejoice over, is impermanent, unsatisfactory and not self. It is for this reason that we become infatuated with those things, liking them, desiring them, rejoicing over them, grasping at them and cling-

ing to them. When, by following the Buddhist method, we come to know things aright, to see clearly that they are all impermanent, unsatisfactory and not selves, that there is really nothing about things that might make it worth attaching ourselves to them, then there will immediately come about a slipping free from the controlling power of those things.

Essentially the Buddha's teaching as we have it in the Tipitaka is nothing but the knowledge of what is what or the true nature of things — just that. Do keep to this definition. It is an adequate one and it is well to bear it in mind while one is in the course of practising. We shall now demonstrate the validity of this definition by considering as an example the Four Noble Truths.

The First Noble Truth, which points out that all things are suffering, tells us precisely what things are like. But we fail to realize that all things are a source of suffering and so we desire those things. If we recognized them as a source of suffering, not worth desiring, not worth grasping at and clinging to, not worth attaching ourselves to, we would be sure not to desire them. The Second Noble Truth points out that desire is the cause of suffering. People still don't know, don't see, don't understand, that desires are the cause of suffering. They all desire this, that and the other, simply because they don't understand the nature of desire. The Third Noble Truth points out that deliverance, freedom from suffering, *Nirvāna*, consists in the complete extinguishing of desire. People don't realize at all that *nirvāna* is something that may be attained at any time or place, that it can be arrived at just as soon as desire has been completely extinguished. So, not knowing the facts

of life, people are not interested in extinguishing desire. They are not interested in *nirvāna* because they don't know what it is.

The Fourth Noble Truth is called the Path and constitutes the method for extinguishing desire. No one understands it as a method for extinguishing desire. No one is interested in the desire extinguishing Noble Eightfold Path. People don't recognize it as their very point of support, their foothold, something which they ought to be most actively reinforcing. They are not interested in the Buddha's Noble Path, which happens to be the most excellent and precious things in the entire mass of human knowledge, in this world or any other. This is a most horrifying piece of ignorance. We can see, then, that the Four Noble Truths are information telling us clearly just what is what. We are told that if we play with desire, it will give rise to suffering, and yet we insist on playing with it until we are brim full of suffering. This is foolishness. Not really knowing what is what or the true nature of things, we act in every way inappropriately. Our actions are appropriate all too rarely. They are usually "appropriate" only in terms of the values of people subject to craving, who would say that if one gets what one wants, the action must have been justified. But spiritually speaking, that action is unjustifiable.

Now we shall have a look at a stanza from the texts which sums up the essence of Buddhism, namely the words spoken by the bhikkhu Assaji when he met Sariputta before the latter's ordination. Sariputta asked to be told the essence of Buddhism in as few words as possible. Assaji answered: "All phenomena that arise do so as a result of causes. The Perfected One

has shown what the causes are, and also how all phenomena may be brought to an end by eliminating those causes. This is what the Great Master teaches." He said in effect: Every thing has causes that combine to produce it. It can not be eliminated unless those causes have been eliminated first. This is a word of guidance warning us not to regard anything as a permanent self. There is nothing permanent. There are only effects arising out of causes, developing by virtue of causes, and due to cease with the cessation of those causes. All phenomena are merely products of causes. The world is just a perpetual flux of natural forces incessantly interacting and changing. Buddhism points out to us that all things are devoid of any self entity. They are just a perpetual flux of change, which is inherently unsatisfactory because of the lack of freedom, the subjection to causality. This unsatisfactoriness will be brought to an end as soon as the process stops; and the process will stop as soon as the causes are eliminated so that there is no more interacting. This is a most profound account of "what is what" or the nature of things, such as only an enlightened individual could give. It is the heart of Buddhism. It tells us that all things are just appearances and that we should not be fooled into liking or disliking them. Rendering the mind truly free involves escaping completely from the causal chain by utterly eliminating the causes. In this way, the unsatisfactory condition which results from liking and disliking will be brought to an end.

Let us now examine the Buddha's intention in becoming an ascetic. What motivated him to become a bhikkhu? This is clearly indicated in one of his discourses, in which he says that he left home and became a bhikkhu in order to answer the question: "What is the Good?" The word "good" *(Kusala)*,

as used here by the Buddha, refers to skillfulness, to absolutely right knowledge. He wanted to know in particular what is suffering, what is the cause of suffering, what is freedom from suffering, and what is the method that will lead to freedom from suffering. To attain perfect and right knowledge is the ultimate in skill. The aim of Buddhism is nothing other than this perfection of knowledge of what is what or the true nature of things.

Another important Buddhist teaching is that of the Three Characteristics, namely impermanence *(aniccā)*, unsatisfactoriness or suffering *(dukkha)* and non - selfhood *(anattā)*. Not to know this teaching is not to know Buddhism. It points out to us that all things are impermanent *(aniccā)*, all things are unsatisfactory *(dukkha)*, and all things are not selves *(anattā)*. In saying that all things are impermanent we mean that all things changes perpetually, there being no entity or self that remains unchanged for even an instant. That all things are unsatisfactory means that all things have inherent in themselves the property of conducing to suffering and torment. They are inherently unlikable and disenchanting. That they are not selves is to say that in no thing whatsoever is there any entity which we might have a right to regard as its "self" or to call "mine." If we grasp at things and cling to things, the result is bound to be suffering. Things are more dangerous than fire because we can at least see a fire blazing away and so don't go too close to it, whereas all things are a fire we can't see. Consequently we go about voluntarily picking up handfuls of fire, which is invariably painful. This teaching tells us what things are like in terms of the Three Characteristics. Clearly Buddhism is simply an organized practical system designed to show us

what is what.

We have seen that we have to know the nature of things. We also have to know how to practise in order to fit in with the nature of things. There is another teaching in the texts, known as the Chief of all Teachings. It consists of three brief points: "Avoid evil, do good, purify the mind!" This is the principle of the practice. Knowing all things as impermanent, worthless and not our property, and so not worth clinging to, not worth becoming infatuated with, we have to act appropriately and cautiously with respect to them, and that is to avoid evil. It implies not to break with accepted moral standards and to give up excessive craving and attachment. On the other hand, one is to do good, good as has come to be understood by wise people. These two are simply stages in morality. The third, which tells us to make the mind completely pure of every kind of contaminating element, is straight Buddhism. It tells us to make the mind free. As long as the mind is not yet free from domination by things, it cannot be a clean, pure mind. Mental freedom must come from the most profound knowledge of the what is what. As long as one lacks this knowledge, one is bound to go on mindlessly liking or disliking things in one way or another. As long as one cannot remain unmoved by things, one can hardly be called free. Basicly we human beings are subject to just two kinds of emotional states: liking and disliking (which correspond to pleasant and unpleasant mental feeling). We fall slaves to our moods and have no real freedom simply because we don't know the true nature of moods or what is what. Liking has the characteristic of seizing on things and taking them over; disliking has the characteristic of pushing things away and getting rid of them. As long as these two

kinds of emotional states exist, the mind is not yet free. As long as it is still carelessly liking and disliking this, that and the other, there is no way it can be purified and freed from the tyranny of things. For this very reason, this highest teaching of Buddhism condemns grasping and clinging to things attractive and repulsive, ultimately condemning even attachment to good and evil. When the mind has been purified of these two emotional reactions, it will become independent of things.

Other religions would have us simply avoid evil and grasp at goodness. They have us grasp at and become attached to goodness, even including the epitome of goodness, namely God. Buddhism goes much further, condemning attachment to anything at all. This attachment to goodness is right practice at the intermediate level, but it just can't take us to the highest level no matter what we do. At the lowest level we avoid evil, at the intermediate level we do our utmost to do good, while at the highest level we make the mind float high above the domination of both good and evil. The condition of attachment to the fruits of goodness is not yet complete liberation from suffering, because, while an evil person suffers in a way befitting evil persons, a good person suffers also, in a way befitting good persons. Being good, one experiences the kind of suffering appropriate to good human beings. A good celestial being experiences the suffering appropriate to celestial beings, and even a god or Brahma experiences the suffering appropriate to gods. But complete freedom from all suffering will come only when one has broken free and transcended even that which we call goodness to become an Ariyan, one who has transcended the worldly condition, and ultimately to become a fully perfected individual, an Arahant,

Now as we have seen, Buddhism is the teaching of the Buddha, the Enlightened One, and a Buddhist is one who practises according to the teaching of the Enlightened One. With regard to what was he enlightened? He simply knew the nature of all things. Buddhism, then, is the teaching that tells us the truth about what things are really like or what is what. It is up to us to practise until we have come to know that truth for ourselves. We may be sure that once that perfect knowledge has been attained, craving will be completely destroyed by it, because ignorance will cease to be in the very same moment that knowledge arises. Every aspect of Budhist practice is designed to bring knowledge. Your whole purpose in setting your mind on the way of practice that will penetrate to Buddha - Dhamma is simply to gain knowledge. Only, do let it be right knowledge, knowledge attained through clear insight, not worldly knowledge, partial knowledge, halfway knowledge, which for example clumsily mistakes bad for good, and a source of suffering for a source of happiness. Do try your utmost to look at things in terms of suffering, and so come to know, gradually, step by step. Knowledge so gained will be Buddhist knowledge based on sound Buddhist principles.

Studying by this method, even a woodcutter without book learning will be able to penetrate to the essence of Buddhism, while a religious scholar with several degrees, who is completely absorbed in studying the Tipitaka but doesn't look at things from this point of view, may not penetrate the teaching at all. Those of us who have some intelligence should be capable of investigating and examining things and coming to know their true nature. Each thing we come across we must study, in order to understand clearly its true nature. And we must

understand the nature and the source of the suffering which it produces, and which sets us alight and scorches us. To establish mindfullness, to watch and wait, to examine in the manner described the suffering that comes to one — this is very best way to penetrate to Buddha-Dhamma. It is infinitely better than learning it from the Tipitaka. Busily studying Dhamma in the Tipitaka from the linguistic or literary viewpoint is no way to come to know the true nature of things. Of course the Tipitaka is full of explanations as to the nature of things; but the trouble is that people listen to it in the manner of parrots or talking myna birds, repeating later what they have been able to memorize. They themselves are incapable of penetrating to the true nature of things. If instead they would do some introspection and discover for themselves the facts of mental life, find out first hand the properties of the mental defilements, of suffering, of nature, in other words of all the things in which they are involved, they would then be able to penetrate to the real Buddha-Dhamma. Though a person may never have seen or even heard of the Tipitaka, if he carries out a detailed investigation every time suffering arises and scorches his mind he can be said to be studying the Tipitaka directly, and far more correctly than people actually in the process of reading it. These may be just caressing the books of the Tipitaka every day without having any knowledge of the immortal Dhamma, the teaching contained within them. Likewise, we have ourselves, we make use of ourselves, we train ourselves, and we do things connected with ourselves every day, without knowing anything about ourselves, without being able to handle adequately problems concerning ourselves. We are still very definitely subject to suffering, and craving is still present to produce more and

more sufffering every day as we grow older, all simply because we don't know ourselves. We still don't know the mental life we live. To get to know the Tipitaka and the profound things hidden within it is most difficult. Let us rather set about studying Buddha-Dhamma by getting to know our own true nature. Let us get to know all the things which make up this very body and mind. Let us learn from this life: life which is spinning on in the cycle of desiring, acting on the desires, and reaping the results of the action, which then nourish the will to desire again, and so on, over and over incessantly; life which is obliged to go spinning on in the circle of *saṁsārā*, that sea of suffering, purely and simply because of ignorance as to the true nature of things or what is what.

Summing up, Buddhism is an organized practical system designed to reveal to us the "what is what." Once we have seen things as they really are, we no longer need anyone to teach or guide us. We can carry on practising by ourselves. One progresses along the Ariyan Path just as rapidly as one eliminates the defilements and gives up inappropriate action. Ultimately one will attain to the best thing possible for a human being, what we call the Fruit of the Path, *Nirvāna*. This one can do by oneself simply by means of coming to know the ultimate sense of the "what is what."

THREE UNIVERSAL CHARACTERISTICS

We shall now discuss in detail the three characteristics common to all things, namely impermanence, unsatisfactoriness (suffering) and non-selfhood.

All things whatsoever have the property of changing incessantly; they are unstable. All things whatsoever have the characteristic of unsatisfactoriness; seeing them evokes disillusionment and disenchantment in anyone having clear insight mto their nature. Nothing whatsoever is such that we are justified in regarding it as "mine." To our normally imperfect vision, things appear as selves; but as soon as our vision becomes clear, unobscured and accurate, we realize that there is no self-entity present in any of them.

These three characteristics were the aspect of the teaching which the Buddha stressed more than any other. The entire teaching when summed up amounts simply to insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-selfhood. Sometimes they are mentioned explicitly, sometimes they are expressed in other terms, but fundamentally they aim at demonstrating the same single truth. The impermanence of all things had

been taught before the time of the Buddha, but it had not been expounded as profoundly as it was by the Buddha. Unsatisfactoriness, likewise, had been taught but not in its full depth. It had not been treated from the point of view of causation, and no directions had been given as to how it could be thoroughly and completely done away with. Earlier teachers had not understood its true nature as did the Buddha in his enlightenment. As for non-selfhood in the ultimate sense, this is taught only in Buddhism. This doctrine tells us that a person who has a complete understanding of the "what is what" or the nature of things will know that nothing whatsoever is a self or belongs to a self. This was taught only by the Buddha, who truly had a complete and thorough understanding of the "what is what" or the true nature of things.

The ways of practice designed to bring about insight into these three characteristics are numerous; but one single noteworthy fact is bound to be revealed once that perfect insight has been attained, namely the fact that nothing is worth grasping at or clinging to. There is nothing that we should want to get, to have, to be. In short: Nothing is worth getting. Nothing is worth being. Only when one has come to perceive that having anything or being anything is a delusion, a deception, a mirage, and that nothing at all is worth getting or worth being, has one achieved true insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-selfhood. A man may have been reciting the formula: *"anicca, dukkha, anattā"* morning and evening hundreds and thousands of times and yet not be able to perceive these characteristics. It is just not in their nature to be perceptible through hearing or reciting.

Now intuitive insight, or what we call "seeing Dhamma," is not by any means the same thing as rational thinking. One will never come to see Dhamma by means of rational thinking. Intuitive insight can be gained only by means of a true inner realization. For instance, suppose we are examining a situation where we had thoughtlessly become quite wrapped up in something which later caused us suffering. If, on looking closely at the actual course of events, we become genuinely fed up, disillusioned and disenchanted with that thing, we can be said to have seen Dhamma, or to have gained clear insight. This clear insight may develop in time until it is perfected, and has the power to bring liberation from all things. If a person recites aloud: *"anicca, dukkha, anattā"* or examines these characteristics day and night without ever becoming disenchanted with things, without ever losing the desire to get things or to be something, or the desire to cling to things, that person has not yet attained to insight. In short, then, insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-selfhood amounts to realizing that nothing is worth getting or worth being.

There is a word in Buddhism that covers this completely, the word *suññatā*, or emptiness, emptiness of selfhood, emptiness of any essence that we might have a right to cling to with all our might as being "mine." Observation, which leads to the insight that all things are devoid of any essence that is worth clinging to is the real core of the religion. It is the key to Buddhist practice. When we have come to know clearly that everything of every kind is devoid of selfhood we can be said to know Buddha-Dhamma in its entirety. The single phrase "empty of self" sums up the words "impermanent *(aniccā)*, unsatisfactory *(dukkhā)* and not self *(anattā)*." When something

is perpetually changing, devoid of any permanent unchanging element, it can also be said to be empty. When it is seen to be overflowing with the property of inducing disillusionment, it can be described as empty of any entity that we might have a right to cling to. And when we discover on examination that it possesses no stable component whatever that could be its "self," that it is simply nature, changing and fluctuating in accordance with the laws of nature, which we have no right to call a self, then it can be described as empty of self. As soon as any individual has come to perceive the emptiness of all things, there arises in him the realization that it is not worth getting or being any of those things. This feeling of not desiring to get or to be has the power to protect one from falling slave to the defilements or to any kind of emotional involvement. Once an individual has attained this condition, he is thenceforth incapable of any unwholesome state of mind. He does not become carried away by or involved in anything. He does not become in any way attracted or seduced by anything. His mind knows permanent liberty and independence, and is free from suffering.

The statement "Nothing is worth getting or being" is to be understood in a rather special sense. The words "get" and "be" refer here to getting and being with a deluded mind, with a mind that grasps and clings wholly and entirely. It is not suggested that one could live without having or being anything at all. Normally there are certain things one can't do without. One needs property, children, wife, garden, fields, and so on. One is to be good, one can't help being a winner or a loser, or having some status or other. One can't help being something or other. Why then are we taught to regard things

as not worth getting or being? The answer is this: The concepts of getting and being are purely relative; they are worldly ideas based on ignorance. Speaking in terms of pure reality, or absolute truth, we cannot get or be anything at all. And why? Simply because both the person who is to do the getting and the thing that is to be got are impermanent, unsatisfactory (suffering) and nobody's property. But an individual who doesn't perceive this will naturally think "I am getting..., I have..., I am...." We automatically think in these terms, and it is this very concept of getting and being that is the source of distress and misery.

Getting and being represent a form of desire, namely the desire not to let the thing that one is in the process of getting or being disappear or slip away. Suffering arises from desire to have and desire to be, in short, from desire; and desire arises from failure to realize that all things are inherently undesirable. The false idea that things are desirable is present as an instinct right from babyhood and is the cause of desire. Consequent on the desire there come about results of one sort or another, which may or may not accord with the desire. If the desired result is obtained, there will arise a still greater desire. If the desired result is not obtained, there is bound to follow a struggling and striving until one way or another it is obtained. Keeping this up results in the vicious circle: action *(karma)*, result, action, result, which is known as the Wheel of *Saṁsāra*. Now this word *saṁsāra* is not to be taken as referring to an endless cycle of one physical existence after another. In point of fact it refers to a vicious circle of three events: desire; action in keeping with the desire; effect resulting from that action; inability to stop desiring, having to desire once more; action; once again another

effect; further augmenting of desire ... and so on endlessly. The Buddha called this the "Wheel" of *saṁsāra* because it is an endless cycling on, a rolling on. It is because of this very circle that we are obliged to endure suffering and torment. To succeed in breaking loose from this vicious circle is to attain freedom from all forms of suffering, in other words *Nirvāna.* Regardless of whether a person is a pauper or a millionaire, a king or an emperor, a celestial being or a god, or anything at all, as long as he is caught up in this vicious circle, he is obliged to experience suffering and torment of one kind or another, in keeping with his desire. We can say then that this wheel of *saṁsāra* is well and truly overloaded with suffering. For the rectifying of this situation morality is quite inadequate. To resolve the problem we have to depend on the highest principles of Dhamma.

We have seen that suffering has its origins in desire, which is just what the Buddha set out in the Second Noble Truth. Now there are three kinds of desire. The first kind is sensual desire, desiring and finding pleasure in things: in shapes and colours, sounds, scents, tastes, or tactile objects. The second kind is desire for becoming, desire to be this or that according to what one wants. The third kind is desire not to become, desire not to be this or that. That there are just these three kinds of desire is an absolute rule. Anyone is defied to challenge this rule and demonstrate the existence of a kind of desire other than these three.

Anyone can observe that wherever there is desire, there distress is too; and when we are forced to act on a desire, we are bound to suffer again in accordance with the action. Having

got the result, we are unable to put an end to our desire, so we carry right on desiring. The reason we are obliged to continue experiencing distress is that we are not yet free from desire, but are still slaves to it. Thus it can be said that an evil man does evil because he desires to do evil, and experiences the kind of suffering appropriate to the nature of an evil man; and that a good man desires to do good, and so is bound to experience another kind of suffering, a kind appropriate to the nature of a good man. But don't understand this as teaching us to give up doing good. It is simply teaching us to realize that there exist degrees of suffering so fine that the average man cannot detect them. We have to act on the Buddha's advice: if we are to break free from suffering completely, simply doing good is not sufficient. It is necessary to do things beyond and above the doing of good, things that will serve to free the mind from the condition of serfdom and slavery to desire of any kind. This is the quintessence of the Buddha's teaching. It cannot be bettered or equalled by any other religion in the world, so ought to be carefully remembered. To succeed in overcoming these three forms of desire is to attain complete liberation from suffering.

How can we eliminate desire, extinguish it, cut it out at its roots and put an end to it for good? The answer to this is simply: observe and take note of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness (suffering) and non-selfhood until we come to see that there is nothing worth desiring. What is there worth getting or being? What is there such that when a person has got it or become it, it fails to give rise to some kind of suffering? Ask yourself this question: What is there that you can get or be that will not bring distress and anxiety? Think it over. Does

having a wife and children lead to lightheartedness and freedom or does it bring all sorts of responsibilities? Is the gaining of high position and title the gaining of peace and calm or is it the gaining of heavy obligations? Looking at things in this way, we readily see that these things always bring only burden and responsibility. And why? Everything whatsoever is a burden simply by virtue of its characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-selfhood. Having got something, we have to see to it that it stays with us, is as we wish it to be, or is of benefit to us. But that thing is by nature impermanent, unsatisfactory and nobody's property. It cannot conform to the aims and objectives of anyone. It will only change as is its nature. All our efforts, then, are an attempt to oppose and withstand the law of change; and life, as an attempt to make things conform to our wishes, is fraught with difficulty and suffering.

There exists a technique for coming to realize that nothing at all is worth getting or being. It consists in examining things deeply enough to discover that in the presence of craving one has feelings of a certain kind towards getting and being; and that when desire has given way completely to insight into the true nature of things, one's attitude towards getting and being is rather different. As an easy example let us consider eating. One man's eating accompanied by craving and desire for delicious tastes must have certain features that distinguish it from another man's eating, which is accompained not by desire, but by clear comprehension, or insight into the true nature of things. Their eating manners must differ, their feelings while eating must differ, and so must the results arising from their eating.

Now what we have to realize is that one can still eat food even though one lacks all craving for delicious tastes. The Buddha and Arahants, individuals devoid of craving, were still able to do things and be things. They were still able to do work, far more in fact than any of us can with all our desires. What was the power by virtue of which they did it? What corresponded to the power of craving, of desiring to be this or that, by virtue of which we do things? The answer is that they did it by the power of insight, clear and thorough knowledge of what is what or the true nature of things. We by contrast are motivated by desire, with the result that we are, unlike them, continually subject to suffering. They did not desire to get or possess anything, and as a result others were benefitted thanks to their benevolence. Their wisdom told them to make it known rather than remain indifferent, and so they were able to pass the teaching on to us.

Freedom from craving brings many incidental benefits. A body and mind freed from craving can look for and partake of food motivated by intelligent discrimination and not, as before, by desire. If we wish to break free from suffering, following the footsteps of the Buddha and the arahants, then we must train ourselves to act with discrimination rather than with craving. If you are a student, then learn how to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad, and verify that studying is the very best thing for you to be doing. If you have a job of some kind, then learn how to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad, and satisfy yourself that that job is the best thing for you to be doing, and of benefit to all concerned. Then do it well, and with all the coolness and equanimity your insight provides. If, in doing something, we are motivated by

desire, then we worry while doing it and we worry when we have finished; but if we do it with the guiding power of discrimination, we shall not be worried at all. This is the difference it makes.

It is essential, then, that we be always aware that, in reality, all things are impermanent, unsatisfactory and not selves, that is, that they are not worth getting or being. If we are to become involved in them, then let us do so with discrimination, and our actions will not be contaminated with desire. If we act wisely, we shall be free of suffering right from beginning to end. The mind will not bindly grasp at and cling to things as worth getting and being. We shall be sure to act with wakefulness, and be able to proceed in accordance with tradition and custom, or in accordance with the law. For example, though we may own land and property, we need not necessarily have any greedy feelings about them. We need not cling to those things to the extent that they become a burden, weighing down and tormenting the mind. The law is bound to see to it that our piece of land remains in our possession. We don't need to suffer worry and anxiety about it. It isn't going to slip through our fingers and disappear. Even if someone comes along and snatches it from us, we can surely still resist and protect it intelligently. We can resist without becoming angry, without letting ourselves become heated with the flame of hatred. We can depend on the law and do our resisting without any need to experience suffering. Certainly we ought to watch over our property; but if it should in fact slip out of our grip, then becoming emotional about it won't help matters at all. All things are impermanent, perpetually changing. Realizing this, we need not become upset about anything.

"Being" is the same. There is no need to cling to one's state of being this or that, because in reality there is no satisfactory condition at all. All conditions bring about suffering of one kind or another. There is a very simple technique, which we must have a look at later, known as *vipassanā*, the direct practice of Dhamma. It consists of close introspection, which reveals that there is nothing worth being, or that there is really no satisfactory state of being at all. Have a look at this question yourself; see if you can discover any satisfactory condition or state of being. Being a son? a parent? husband? wife? master? servant? Is any of these agreeable? Even being the man with the advantage, the one with the upper hand, the winner —is that agreeable? Is the condition of a human being agreeable? Even the condition of a celestial being or a god — would that be agreeable? When you have really come to know the what is what, you find that nothing whatsoever is in any way agreeable. We are making do with mindlessly getting and being. But why should we go risking life and limb by getting and being blindly, always acting on desire? It behoves us to understand things and live wisely, involving ourselves in things in such a way that they cause a minimum of suffering, or ideally, none at all.

Here is another point: we must bring to our fellow men, our friends, and particularly our relatives and those close to us, the understanding that this is how things are, so that they may have the same right view as we have. There will then be no upsets in the family, the town, the country, and ulimately in the whole world. Each individual mind will be immune to desire, neither grasping at nor becoming wrapped up in anything or anyone. Instead everyone's life will be guided by in-

sight, by the everpresent, unobscured vision that there is in reality nothing that we can grasp at and cling to. Everyone will come to realize that all things are impermanent, unsatisfactory and devoid of any self-entity, that none of them are worth becoming infatuated with. It is up to us to have the sense to give them up, to have right views, in keeping with the Buddha's teaching. A person who has done this is fit to be called a true Buddhist. Though he may never have been ordained nor even taken the precepts, he will have really and truly penetrated to Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. His mind will be identical with that of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. It will be uncontaminated, enlightened and tranquil, simply by virtue of not grasping at anything as worth getting or worth being. So a person can readily become a genuine, full-fledged Buddhist simply by means of this technique of being observant, perceiving impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-selfhood until he comes to realize that there is nothing worth getting or being.

The lowest forms of evil originate in and are powered by desire to get and to be; milder forms of evil consist of actions less strongly motivated by desire; and all goodness consists of action based on the finest, most tenuous sort of desire, the desire to get or to be, on a good level. Even in its highest forms, good is based on desire which, however, is so fine and tenuous that people don't consider it in any way a bad thing. The fact is, however, that good action can never bring complete freedom from suffering. A person who has become completely free from desire, that is to say an *Arahanta*, is one who has ceased acting on desire and has become incapable of doing evil. His actions lie outside the categories of good and evil.

His mind is free and has transcended the limitations of good and evil. Thus he is completely free of suffering.

This is a fundamental principle of Buddhism. Whether or not we are able to do it or wish to do it, this is the way to liberation from suffering. Today we may not yet want it; some day we are bound to want it. When we have completely given up evil and have done good to our utmost, the mind will still be weighed down with various kinds of attenuated desire, and there is no known way of getting rid of them other than by striving to go beyond the power of desire, to go beyond the desire to get or be anything, bad or good. If there is to be *Nirvāna,* freedom from suffering of every kind, there has to be absolute and complete absence of desire.

In short, to know what is what in the ultimate sense is to see everything as impermanent, unsatisfactory and devoid of selfhood. When we really know this, the mind comes to see things in such a way that it does not cling to get or to be anything. But if we have to become involved in things in the ways known as "having" and "being," then we become involved intelligently, motivated by insight, and not by desire. Acting thus, we remain free from suffering.

GRASPING AND CLINGING

How can we get away from and become completely independent of things, all of which are transient, unsatisfactory and devoid of selfhood? The answer is that we have to find out what is the cause of our desiring those things and clinging to them. Knowing that cause, we shall be in a position to eliminate clinging completely. Buddhists recognize four different kinds of clinging or attachment.

1) Sensual attachment (Kāmupānāna) is clinging to attractive and desirable sense objects. It is the attachment that we naturally develop for things we like and find satisfaction in: colours and shapes, sounds, odours, tastes, tactile objects, or mental images, objects past, present, or future that arise in the mind, and either correspond to material objects in the world outside or within the body, or are just imaginings. We instinctively find pleasure, enchantment, delight in these six kinds of sense objects. They induce delight and enchantment in the mind perceiving them.

As soon as an individual is born, he comes to know the taste of these six sense objects, and clings to them; and as time

passes he becomes more and more firmly attached to them. Ordinary people are incapable of withdrawing from them again, so they present a major problem. It is necessary to have a proper knowledge and understanding of these sense objects and to act appropriately with respect to them, otherwise clinging to them may lead to complete and utter dereliction. If we examine the case history of any person who has sunk into dereliction, we always find that it has come about through his clinging fast to some desirable sense object. Actually every single thing a human being does has its origin in sensuality. Whether we love, become angry, hate, feel envious, murder, or commit suicide, the ultimate cause must be some sense object. If we investigate what is it that drives human beings to work energetically, or to do anything at all for that matter, we find it is desire, desire to get things of one kind or another. People strive, study, and earn what money they can, and then go off in search of pleasure — in the form of colours and shapes, sounds, odours, tastes, and tactile objects — which is what keeps them going. Even merit making in order to go to heaven has its origins simply in a wish based on sensuality. Taken together, all the trouble and chaos in the world has its origin in sensuality.

The danger of sensuality lies in the power of sensual attachment. For this reason the Buddha reckoned clinging to sensuality as the primary form of attachment. It is a real world problem. Whether the world is to be completely destroyed, or whatever is to happen, is bound to depend on this very sensual clinging. It behoves us to examine ourselves to find out in what ways we are attached to sensuality and how firmly, and whether it is not perhaps within our power to give it up. Speak-

ing in worldly terms, attachment to sensuality is a very good thing. It conduces to family love, to diligence and energy in the search for wealth and fame, and so on. But if looked at from the spiritual point of view, it is seen to be the secret entrance for suffering and torment. Spiritually speaking, attachment to sensuality is something to be kept under control. And if all suffering is to be eliminated, sensual attachment has to be done away with completely.

2) Attachment to opinions (Ditthupādāna). Clinging to views and opinions is not difficult to detect and identify once we do a little introspection. Ever since we were born into the world, we have been receiving instruction and training, which has given rise to ideas and opinions. In speaking here of opinions, what we have in mind is the kind of ideas one hangs on to and refuses to let go of. To cling to one's own ideas and opinions is quite natural and is not normally condemned or disapproved of. But it is no less grave a danger than attachment to attractive and desirable objects. It can happen that preconceived ideas and opinions to which we had always clung obstinately come to be destroyed. For this reason it is necessary that we continually amend our views, making them progressively more correct, better, higher, changing false views into views that are closer and closer to the truth, and ultimately into the kind of views that incorporate the Four Noble Truths.

Obstinate and stubborn opinions have various origins, but in the main they are bound up with customs, traditions, ceremonies and religious doctrines. Stubborn personal convictions are not a matter of great importance. They are far less numerous than convictions stemming from long held po-

pular traditions and ceremonies. Adherence to views is based on ignorance. Lacking knowledge, we develop our own personal views on things, based on our own original stupidity. For instance, we are convinced that things are desirable and worth clinging to, that they really endure, are worthwhile and are selves, instead of perceiving that they are just a delusion and a deception, transient, worthless and devoid of selfhood. Once we have come to have certain ideas about something, we naturally don't like to admit later on that we were mistaken. Even though we may occasionally see that we are wrong, we simply refuse to admit it. Obstinacy of this sort is to be considered a major obstacle to progress, rendering us incapable of changing for the better, incapable of modifying false religious convictions and other longstanding beliefs. This is likely to be a problem for people who hold to naive doctrines. Even though they may later come to see them as naive, they refuse to change on the grounds that their parents, grandparents and ancestors all held those same views. Or if they are not really interested in correcting and improving themselves, they may simply brush away any arguments against their old ideas with the remark that this is what they have always believed. For these very reasons, attachment to opinions is to be considered a dangerous defilement, a major danger, which, if we are to better ourselves at all, we ought to make all efforts to eliminate.

3) Attachment to rites and rituals (Silabbatupādāna). This refers to clinging to meaningless traditional practices that have been thoughtlessly handed down, practices which people choose to regard as sacred and not to be changed under any circumstances. In Thailand there is no less of this sort of thing than in

other places. There are beliefs involving amulets, magical artifacts and all manner of secret procedures. There exist, for instance, the beliefs that on rising from sleep one must pronounce a mystical formula over water and then wash one's face in it, that before relieving nature one must turn and face this and that point of the compass, and that before one partakes of food or goes to sleep there have to be other rituals. There are beliefs in spirits and celestial beings, in sacred trees and all manner of magical objects. This sort of thing is completely irrational. People just don't think rationally; they simply cling to the established pattern. They have always done it that way and they just refuse to change. Many people professing to be Buddhists cling to these beliefs as well and so have it both ways; and this even includes some who call themselves bhikkhus, disciples of the Buddha. Religious doctrines based on belief in God, angels and sacred objects are particularly prone to these kinds of views; there is no reason why we Buddhists should not be completely free of this sort of thing.

The reason we have to be free of such views is that if we practise any aspect of Dhamma unaware of its original purpose, unconscious of the rationale of it, the result is bound to be the foolish, naive assumption that it is something magical. Thus we find people taking upon themselves the moral precepts or practising Dhamma, purely and simply to conform with the accepted pattern, the traditional ceremonial, just to follow the example that has been handed down. They know nothing of the rationale of these things, doing them just out of force of habit. Such firmly established clinging is hard to correct. This is what is meant by thoughtless attachment to traditional practices. Insight meditation or tranquillity meditation as prac-

tised nowadays, if carried out without any knowledge of the rhyme and reason and the real objectives of it, is bound to be motivated by grasping and clinging, misdirected, and just some kind of foolishness. And even the taking of the Precepts, five, eight, or ten, or however many, if done in the belief that one will thereby become a magical, supernatural, holy individual possessing psychic or other powers, becomes just misdirected routine, motivated simply by attachment to rite and ritual.

It is necessary, then, that we be very cautious. Buddhist practice must have a sound foundation in thought and understanding and desire to destroy the defilements. Otherwise it will be just foolishness; it will be misdirected, irrational and just a waste of time.

4) Attachment to the idea of selfhood (Attavādupādāna). This belief in selfhood is something important and also something extremely well concealed. Any living creature is always bound to have the wrong idea of " me and mine. " This is the primal instinct of living things and is the basis of all other instincts. For example, the instinct to seek food and eat it, the instinct to avoid danger, the instinct to procreate, and many others consist simply in the creature's instinctive awareness of and belief in its own selfhood. Convinced first of all of its own selfhood, it will naturally desire to avoid death, to search for food and nourish its body, to seek safety, and to propagate the species. A belief in selfhood is, then, universally present in all living things. If it were not so, they could not continue to survive. At the same time, however, it is what causes suffering in the search for food and shelter, in the propagating of the species, or in any activity whatsoever. This is one reason

why the Buddha taught that attachment to the self - idea is the root cause of all suffering. He summed it up very briefly by saying: "Things, if clung to, are suffering, or are a source of suffering." This attachment is the source and basis of life; at the same time it is the source and basis of suffering in all its forms. It was this very fact that the Buddha was referring to when he said that life is suffering; suffering is life. This means the body and mind (five aggregates) which are clung to are suffering. Knowledge of the source and basis of life and of suffering is to be considered the most profound and most penetrating knowledge, since it puts us in a position to eliminate suffering completely. This piece of knowledge can be claimed to be unique to Buddhism. It is not to be found in any other religion in the world.

The most efficacious way of dealing with attachment is to recognize it whenever it is present. This applies most particularly to attachment to the idea of selfhood, which is the very basis of life. It is something that comes into existence of its own accord, establishing itself in us without our needing to be taught it. It is present as an instinct in children and the small offspring of animals right from birth. Baby animals such as kittens know how to assume a defensive attitude, as we can see when we try to approach them. There is always that something, the "self" present in the mind, and consequently this attachment is bound to manifest. The only thing to do is to rein it in as much as possible until such time as one is well advanced in spiritual knowledge; in other words, to employ Buddhist principles until this instinct has been overcome and completely eliminated. As long as one is still an ordinary person, a worldling, this instinct remains unconquered. Only the

highest of the ariyans, the Arahanta, has succeeded in defeating it. We must recognize this as a matter of no small importance; it is a major problem common to all living creatures. If we are to be real Buddhists, if we are to derive the full benefits from the teaching, it is up to us to set about overcoming this misconception. The suffering to which we are subject will diminish accordingly.

To know the truth about these things, which are of everyday concern to us, is to be regarded as one of the greatest boons, one of the greatest skills. Do give some thought to this matter of the four attachments, bearing in mind that nothing whatever is worth clinging to, that by the nature of things, nothing is worth getting or being. That we are completely enslaved by things is simply a result of these four kinds of attachment. It rests with us to examine and become thoroughly familiar with the highly dangerous and toxic nature of things. Their harmful nature is not immediately evident as is the case with a blazing fire, weapons, or poison. They are well disguised as sweet, tasty, fragrant, alluring things, beautiful things, melodious things. Coming in these forms they are bound to be difficult to recognize and deal with. Consequently we have to make use of this knowledge the Buddha has equipped us with. We have to control this unskillful grasping and subdue it by the power of insight. Doing this, we shall be in a position to organize our life in such a way that it becomes free of suffering, free of even the smallest trace of suffering. We shall be capable of working and living peacefully in the world, of being undefiled, enlightened and tranquil.

Let us sum up. These four forms of attachment are the

only problem that Buddhists or people who wish to know about Buddhism have to understand. The objective of living a holy life *(Brahmacariya)* in Buddhism is to enable the mind to give up unskillful grasping. You can find this teaching in every discourse in the texts which treats of the attainment of arahantship. The expression used is "the mind freed from attachment." That is the ultimate. When the mind is free from attachment, there is nothing to bind it and make it a slave of the world. There is nothing to keep it spinning on in the cycle of birth and death, so the whole process comes to a stop, or rather, becomes world transcending, free from the world. The giving up of unskillful clinging is, then, the key to Buddhist practice.

THE THREEFOLD TRAINING.

In this chapter we shall examine the method to be used for eliminating clinging. The method is based on three practical steps, namely Morality, Concentration, and Insight, known collectively as the Threefold Training.

The first step is morality *(Sīla).* Morality is simply suitable behaviour, behaviour that conforms with the generally accepted standards and causes no distress to other people or to oneself. It is coded in the form of five moral precepts, or eight, or ten, or 227, or in other ways. It is conducted by way of body and speech aimed at peace, convenience and freedom from undersirable effects at the most basic level. It has to do with the members of a social group and the various pieces of property essential to living.

The second aspect of the threefold training is concentration *(Samādhi).* This consists in constraining the mind to remain in the condition most conducive to success in whatever one wishes to achieve. Just what is concentration? No doubt most of you have always understood concentration as implying a completely tranquil mind, as steady and unmoving as a log of wood. But merely these two characteristics of being tranquil

and steady are not the real meaning of Concentration. The basis for this statement is an utterance of the Buddha. He described the concentrated mind as fit for work *(kammaniya)*, in a suitable condition for doing its job. Fit for work is the very best way to describe the properly concentrated mind.

The third aspect is the training in insight *(Paññā)*, the practice and drill that gives rise to the full measure of right knowledge and understanding of the true nature of all things. Normally we are incapable of knowing anything at all in its true nature. Mostly we either stick to our own ideas or go along with popular opinion, so that what we see is not the truth at all. It is for this reason that Buddhist practice includes this training in insight, the last aspect of the threefold training, designed to give rise to full understanding of and insight into the true nature of things.

In the religious context, understanding and insight are not by any means the same. Understanding depends to some extent on the use of reasoning, on rational intellection. Insight goes further than that. An object known by insight has been absorbed; it has been penetrated to and confronted face to face; the mind has become thoroughly absorbed in it through examination and investigation so sustained that there has arisen a non-rational but genuine and heartfelt disenchantment with that thing and a complete lack of emotional involvement in it. Consequently the Buddhist training in insight does not refer to intellectual understanding of the kind used in present day academic and scholarly circles, where each individual can have his own particular kind of truth. Buddhist insight must be intuitive insight, clear and immediate, the result of having

penetrated to the object by one means or another, until it has made a definite and indelible impression on the mind. For this reason the objects of scrutiny in insight training must be things that one comes into contact with in the course of everyday living; or at least they must be things of sufficient importance to render the mind genuinely fed up and disenchanted with them as transient, unsatisfactory and not selves. However much we think rationally, evaluating the characteristics of transience, unsatisfactoriness and non-selfhood, nothing results but intellectual understanding. There is no way it can give rise to disillusionment and disenchantment with worldly things. It must be understood that the condition of disenchantment replaces that of desiring the formerly infatuatingly attractive object, and that this in itself constitutes the insight. It is a fact of nature that the presence of genuine, clear insight implies the presence of genuine disenchantment. It is impossible that the process should stop short at the point of clear insight. Disenchantment displaces desire for the object, and is bound to arise immediately.

Training in morality is simply elementary preparatory practice, which enables us to live happily and helps stabilize the mind. Morality yields various benefits, the most important being the preparing of the way for concentration. Other advantages, such as conducing to happiness or to rebirth as a celestial being, were not considered by the Buddha to be the direct aims of morality. He regarded morality as primarily a means of inducing and developing concentration. As long as things continue to disturb the mind, it can never become concentrated.

Training in concentration consists in developing the ability to control this mind of ours, to make use of it, to make it do its job to the best advantage. Morality is good behaviour in respect of body and speech; concentration amounts to good behaviour in respect of the mind, and is the fruit of thorough mental training and discipline. The concentrated mind is devoid of all bad, defiling thoughts and does not wander off the object. It is in a fit condition to do its job.

Even in ordinary worldly situations, concentration is always a necessity. No matter what we are engaged in, we can hardly do it successfully unless the mind is concentrated. For this reason the Buddha counted concentration as one of the marks of a great man. Regardless of whether a man is to be successful in worldly or in spiritual things, the faculty of concentration is absolutely indispensible. Take even a schoolboy. If he lacks concentration, how can he do arithmetic? The sort of concentration involved in doing arithmetic is natural concentration, and is only poorly developed. Concentration as a basic element in Buddhist practice, which is what we are discussing here, is concentration that has been trained and raised to a higher pitch than can develop naturally. Consequently, when the mind has been trained successfully, it comes to have a great many very special abilities, powers and attributes. A person who has managed to derive these benefits from concentration can be said to have moved up a step towards knowing the secrets of nature. He knows how to control the mind, and thus has abilities not possessed by the average person. The perfection of morality is an ordinary human ability. Even if someone makes a display of morality, it is never a superhuman display. On the other hand the attainment of deep concentration was

classed by the Buddha as a superhuman ability, which the bhikkhus were never to make a display of. Anyone who did show off this ability was considered no longer a good bhikkhu, or even no longer a bhikkhu at all.

To attain concentration necessitates making sacrifices. We have to put up with varying degrees of hardship, to train and practise, until we have the degree of concentration appropriate to our abilities. Ultimately we shall gain much better results in our work than can the average man, simply because we have better tools at our disposal. So do take an interest in this matter of concentration and don't go regarding it as something foolish and old-fashioned. It is definitely something of the greatest importance, something worth making use of at all times, especially nowadays when the world seems to be spinning too fast and on the point of going up in flames. There is far more need for concentration now than there was in the time of the Buddha. Don't get the idea that it is just something for the people in temples, or for cranks.

Now we come to the connection between the training in concentration and the training in insight. The Buddha once said that when the mind is concentrated, it is in a position to see all things as they really are. When the mind is concentrated and fit for work, it will know all things in their true nature. It is a strange thing that the answer to any problem a person is trying to solve is usually already present. though concealed, in his very own mind. He is not aware of it, because it is still only subconscious; and as long as he is set on solving the problem, the solution will not come, simply because his mind at that time is not in a fit condition for solving problems. If,

when setting about any mental work, a person develops right concentration, that is, if he renders his mind fit for work, the solution to his problem will come to light of its own accord. The moment the mind has become concentrated, the answers will just fall into place. But should the solution still fail to come, there exists another method for directing the mind to the examination of the problem, namely the practice of concentrated introspection referred to as the training in insight. On the day of his enlightenment the Buddha attained insight into the Law of Conditioned Origination, that is, he came to perceive the true nature of things or the "what is what" and the sequence in which they arise, as a result of being concentrated in the way we have just described. The Buddha has related the story in detail, but essentially it amounts to this: as soon as his mind was well concentrated, it was in a position to examine the problem.

It is just when the mind is quiet and cool, in a state of well-being, undisturbed, well concentrated and fresh, that some solution to a persistent problem is arrived at. Insight is always dependent on concentration though we may perhaps never have noticed the fact. Actually the Buddha demonstrated an association even more intimate than this between concentration and insight. He pointed out that concentration is indispensible for insight, and insight, indispensible for concentration at a higher intensity than occurs naturally, requires the presence of understanding of certain characteristics of the mind. One must know in just which way the mind has to be controlled in order that concentration may be induced. So the more insight a person has, the higher degree of concentration he will be capable of. Likewise an increase in concentration results in a

corresponding increase in insight. Either one of the two factors promotes the other.

Insight implies unobscured vision and consequently disenchantment and boredom. It results in a backing away from all the things one has formerly been madly infatuated with. If one has insight, yet still goes rushing after things, madly craving for them, grasping at and clinging on to them, being infatuated with them, then it cannot be insight in the Buddhist sense. This stopping short and backing away is, of course, not a physical action. One doesn't actually pick things up and hurl them away or smash them to pieces, nor does one go running off to live in the forest. This is not what is meant. Here we are referring specifically to a mental stopping short and backing away, as a result of which the mind ceases to be a slave to things and becomes a free mind instead. This is what it is like when desire for things has given way to disenchantment. It isn't a matter of going and committing suicide, or going off to live as a hermit in the forest, or setting fire to everything. Outwardly one is as usual, behaving quite normally with respect to things. Inwardly, however, there is a difference. The mind is independent, free, no longer a slave to things. This is the virtue of insight. The Buddha called this effect Deliverance, escape from slavery to things, in particular the things we like. Actually we are enslaved by the things we dislike too. We are enslaved insofar as we cannot help disliking them and are unable to remain unmoved by them. In disliking things, we are being active, we are becoming emotional about them. They manage to control us just as do the things we like, affecting each of us in a different way. So the expression "slavery to things" refers to the reactions of liking and disliking. All

this shows that we can escape from slavery to things and become free by means of insight. The Buddha summed up this principle very briefly by saying: "Insight is the means by which we can purify ourselves." He did not specify morality or concentration as the means by which we could purify ourselves, but insight, which enables us to escape, which liberates us from things. Not freed from things, one is impure, tainted, infatuated, passionate. Once free, one is pure, spotless, enlightened, tranquil. This is the fruit of insight, the condition that results when insight has done its job completely.

Have a good look at this factor, insight, the third aspect of the threefold training. Get to know it, and you will come to regard it as the highest virtue. Buddhist insight is insight that results in backing away from things by completely destroying the four kinds of attachment. Those four attachments are ropes holding us fast; insight is the knife that can cut those bonds and set us free. With the four attachments gone, there is nothing left to bind us fast to things.

Will these three modes of practice stand the test? Are they soundly based and suitable for all in practice? Do examine them. When you have another look at them you will see that these three factors do not conflict with any religious doctrine at all, assuming that the religion in question really aims at remedying the problem of human suffering. The Buddhist teaching does not conflict with any other religion, yet it has some things that no other religion has. In particular it has the practice of insight, which is the superlative technique for eliminating the four attachments. It liberates the mind, rendering it independent and incapable of becoming bound, enslaved,

overpowered by anything whatsoever, including God in heaven, spirits, or celestial beings. No other religion is prepared to let the individual free himself completely, or be entirely self-reliant. We must be fully aware of this principle of self-reliance, which is a key feature of Buddhism.

As soon as we see that Buddhism has everything that any other religion has and also several things that none of them have, we realize that Buddhism is for everyone. Buddhism is the universal religion. It can be put into practice by everyone, in every age and era. People everywhere have the same problem: to free themselves from suffering — suffering which is inherent in birth, aging, pain and death, suffering which stems from desire, from grasping. Everyone without exception, celestial being, human being, or beast, has this same problem, and everyone has the same job to do, namely to eliminate completely the desire, the unskillful grasping which is the root cause of that suffering. Thus Buddhism is the universal religion.

THE THINGS WE CLING TO.

What are we clinging to? What is our handhold? What we are clinging to is the world itself. In Buddhism the word "world" has a broader connotation than it has in ordinary usage. It refers to all things, to the totality. It does not refer just to human beings, or celestial beings, or gods, or beasts, or the denizens of hell, or demons, or hungry ghosts, or titans, or any particular realm of existence at all. What the word "world" refers to here is the whole lot taken together. To know the world is difficult because certain levels of the world are concealed. Most of us are familiar with only the outermost layer or level, the level of relative truth, the level corresponding to the intellect of the average man. For this reason Buddhism teaches us about the world at various levels.

The Buddha had a method of instruction based on a division of the world into a material or physical aspect and non-material or mental aspect. He further divided up the mental world or mind into four parts. Counting the physical and the mental together makes a total of five components, called by the Buddha the Five Aggregates, which together go to make up the world, in particular living creatures and man himself. In

looking at the world we shall concentrate on the world of living creatures, in particular man, because it is man that happens to be the problem. In man these five components are all present together: his physical body is the material aggregate; his mental asepct is divisible into four aggregates, which we shall now describe.

The first of the mental aggregates is feeling *(vedanā),* which is of three kinds, namely pleasure or gratification, displeasure or suffering, and a neutral kind, which is neither pleasure nor displeasure, but which is a kind of feeling nevertheless. Under normal conditions feelings are always present in us. Every day we are filled with feelings. The Buddha, then, pointed out feeling as one of the components which together go to make up the man.

The second component of mind is perception *(Saññā).* This is the process of becoming aware, similar to waking up as opposed to being sound asleep or unconscious, or dead. It refers to memory as well as awareness of sense impressions, covering both the primary sensation resulting from contact with an object by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body, and the recall of previous impressions. Thus one may be directly aware of an object as black or white, long or short, man or beast, and so on, or one may be similarly aware in retrospect by way of memory.

The third mental aggregate is the actively thinking component *(saṅkhārā)* in an individual — thinking of doing something, thinking of saying something, good thought and bad thought, willed thinking, active thinking — this is the third mental aggregate.

The fourth component of mind is consciousness *(viññāna).* It is the function of knowing the objects perceived by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue and the general body sense, and also by way of the mind itself.

These five aggregates constitute the site of the four kinds of clinging explained in the fourth chapter. Turn back and read it again, and think it over so that you understand it properly. You will then realize that it is these five aggregates that are the object and hand hold for our grasping and clinging. A person may grasp at any one of these groups as being a self according to the extent of his ignorance. For instance, a boy who carelessly bumps into a door and hurts himself feels he has to give the door a kick in order to relieve his anger and pain. In other words, he is grasping at a purely material object, namely the door, which is nothing but wood, as being a self. This is attachment at the lowest level of all. A man who becomes angry with his body to the point of striking it or hitting himself on the head is grasping and clinging in the same way. He is taking those body parts to be selves. If he is rather more intelligent than that, he may seize on feeling, or perception or active thinking, or consciousness, at any one of these groups as being a self. If he is unable to distinguish them individually, he may grasp at the whole lot collectively as being a self, that is, take all five groups together to be "his self."

After the physical body, the group next most likely to be clung to as being a self is feeling pleasurable, painful, or neutral. Let us consider the situation in which we find ourselves, entranced with sensual pleasures, in particular delectable sensations, caught up heart and soul in the various colours

and shapes; sound, scents, tastes and tactile objects that we perceive. Here feeling is the pleasure and delight experienced, and it is to that very feeling of pleasure and delight that we cling. Almost everyone clings to feeling as being a self, because there is no one who does not like delightful sensations, especially tactile sensations by way of the skin. Ignorance or delusion blinds a person to all else. He sees only the delightful object and grasps at it as being a self; he regards that object as "mine." Feeling, whether of pleasure or displeasure, is truly a site of suffering. Spiritually speaking, these feelings of pleasure and displeasure may be considered as synonymous with suffering, because they give rise to nothing but mental torment. Pleasure renders the mind buoyant; displeasure deflates it. Gain and loss, happiness and sorrow, amount in effect to mental restlessness or instability; they set the mind spinning. This is what is meant by grasping at feeling as being a self. We should all do well to have a closer look at this process of grasping at feeling as being a self, as being "ours," and try to gain a proper understanding of it. Understanding feeling as an object of clinging, the mind will be rendered independent of it. Feeling normally has control over the mind, luring us into situations that we regret later on. In his practical path to perfection or arahantship, the Buddha teaches us repeatedly to give particular attention to the examination of feeling. Many have become arahants and broken free from suffering by means of restricting feeling to simply an object of study.

Feeling is more likely than any of the other aggregates to serve as a handhold for us to cling to because feeling is the primary objective of all our striving and activity. We study industriously and work at our jobs in order to get money.

Then we go and buy things: utensils, food, amusements, things covering the whole range from gastronomy to sex. And then we partake of these things with one single objective, namely pleasurable feeling, in other words delightful stimulation of eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. We invest all our resources, monetary, physical, mental, simply in the expectation of pleasurable feeling. And everyone knows well enough in his own mind that if it weren't for the lure of pleasurable feeling, he would never invest study, work and physical energy in the search for money. We can see, then, that feeling is no small matter. A knowledge and understanding of it puts us in a position to keep it under control, makes us sufficiently highminded to remain above feelings, and enables us to carry out all our activities far better than we otherwise could. In similar fashion even the problems that arise in a social group have their origins in pleasurable feeling. And when we analyse closely the clashes between nations, or between opposing blocs, we discover that there too, both sides are just slaves to pleasurable feeling. A war is not fought because of adherence to a doctrine or an ideal or anything of the sort. In point of fact, the motivation is the anticipation of pleasurable feeling. Each side sees itself making all sorts of gains, scooping up benefits for itself. The doctrine is just camouflage, or at best a purely secondary motive. The most deep seated cause of all strife is really subservience to pleasurable feeling. To know feeling is, then, to know an important root cause responsible for our falling slaves to the mental defilements, to evil, to suffering.

If this is how things are in the case of human beings, the celestial beings are no better off. They are subservient to pleasurable feeling just as are humans, and more so, though

they may suppose it to be something better and finer, more subject to free will than is the human variety. But even they are not free from craving and attachment, from the fascination of delectable sensations received by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Still higher up at the level of the gods, sensual delights necessarily have been discarded completely; but even this does not bring liberation from another kind of delight, the pleasure associated with deep concentration practice. When the mind is deeply concentrated, it experiences pleasure, a delightful sensation to which it then becomes attached. Although this has nothing to do with sensuality, it is pleasurable feeling nevertheless. Animals lower down the scale than human beings are bound to fall under the power of pleasurable feeling in much cruder ways than we do. To know the nature of feeling, in particular to know that feeling is not a self at all and not something to be clung to, is, then, of very great use in life.

Perception, too, can easily be seized on as being a self or "one's self." The average villager likes to say that when we fall asleep, something, which he calls the "soul," departs from the body. The body is then like a log of wood, receiving no sensation by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue or body. As soon as that something has returned to the body, awareness and wakefulness are restored. A great many people have this naive belief that perception is "the self." But, as the Buddha taught, perception is not a self. Perception is simply sensation and memory, that is, knowing, and is bound to be present as long as the body continues to function normally. As soon as the bodily functions become disrupted, that thing we call perception changes or ceases to function. For this reason true Buddhists

refuse to accept perception as a self, though the average person does choose to accept it as such, clinging to it as "myself." Close examination along Buddhist lines reveals that quite the opposite is the case. Perception is nobody's self at all; it is simply a result of natural processes and nothing more.

The next possible point of attachment is active thinking, intending to do this or that, intending to get this or that, mental action good or bad. This is once again a manifestation of the arising of strong ideas of selfhood. Everyone feels that if anything at all is to be identified as his self, then it is more likely to be this thinking element than any other. For instance, one philosopher in recent centuries had a naive philosophy on the basis of which he proclaimed: "I think, therefore I am." Even philosophers in this scientific age have the same ideas about "the self" as people have had for thousands of years, maintaining that the thinking-element is the self. They regard as the self that which they understand to be "the thinker." We have said that the Buddha denied that either feeling or perception might be a self. He also rejected thinking, the thinking aspect of the mind as a self, because the activity which manifests as thought is a purely natural event. Thought arises as a result of the interaction of a variety of prior events. It is just one of the aggregation of assorted components that makes up "the individual," and no "I" or "self" entity is involved. Hence we maintain that this thinking component is devoid of selfhood, just as are the other aggregates we have mentioned.

The difficulty in understanding this lies in our inadequate knowledge of the mental element or mind. We are familiar only with the body, the material element, and know almost

nothing about the other, the mental, nonmaterial element. As a result, we have difficulty understanding it. Here it can only be said that the Buddha taught that "the individual" is a combination of the five aggregates, physical and mental. Now, when the event we call thinking takes place, we jump to the conclusion that there is "someone" there who is "the thinker." We believe there is a thinker, a soul, which is master of the body or something of the sort. But the Buddha rejected such entities completely. When we analyse "the individual" into these five components, there is nothing left over, proving that he consists of just these components and that there is nothing that might be "his self." Not even thinking is a self as the average man commonly supposes.

Now the last group, consciousness *(viññāna)* is simply the function of becoming fully aware of objects perceived by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. It is no self either. The organs simply take in the colour and shapes, sounds, odours, tastes and tactile objects that impinge on them, and as a result consciousness of those objects arises in three stages. In the case of the eye there arises clear consciousness of the shape of the visual object, whether it is man or beast, long or short, black or white. The arising of clear consciousness in this way is a mechanical process which happens of its own accord, automatically. There are some who maintain that this is the "soul," the "spirit," which moves into and out of the mind and receives stimuli by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, and consider it to be "the self." Buddhists recognize it as just nature. If a visual object and an eye complete with optic nerve make contact, seeing will take place and there will arise visual con-

sciousness. And there is once again no need for any self whatsoever.

When we have analysed the "being" into its components, namely body, feeling, perception, thinking and consciousness, we find no part which might be a self or belong to a self. Thus we can completely reject the false self idea and conclude that nobody is or has a self at all. When one ceases to cling to things, no longer liking or disliking them, this indicates that one has perceived that those things are not selves. Rational thinking is sufficient to convince one that they cannot be selves; but the result is only belief, not clear insight of the sort that can completely cut out clinging to them as selves. For this very reason we have to study and examine the five aggregates on the basis of the threefold training and develop sufficient insight to be able to give up clinging to this self idea. This practice with respect to the five aggregates serves to develop clear insight and eliminate ignorance. When we have completely eliminated ignorance, we shall be able to see for ourselves that none of the aggregates is a self, none is worth clinging to. All clinging, even the kind that has existed since birth, will then cease completely. It is essential, then, that we study thoroughly the five aggregates, which are the objects of the self conceit. The Buddha stressed this aspect of his teaching more than any other. It may be summed up very briefly by saying: "None of the five aggregates is a self." This should be considered a key point in Buddhism, whether one looks at it as philosophy, as science, or as religon. When we know this truth, ignorance-based grasping and clinging vanish, desire of any sort has no means of arising, and suffering ceases.

Why is it, then, that we normally don't see these five aggregates as they really are? When we were born, we had no understanding of things. We acquired knowledge on the basis of what people taught us. The way they taught us led us to understand that all things are selves. The power of the primal instinctive belief in selfhood, which is present right from birth, becomes very strong in the course of time. In speaking we use the words "I, you, he, she," which only serve to consolidate the self idea. We say: "This is Mr. X; that is Mr. Y. He is Mr. A's son and Mr. B's grandson. This is So - and - so's husband; that is So - and - so's wife." This way of speaking serves simply to identify people as selves. The result is that we are none of us conscious of our clinging to selfhood, which increases daily. **When we cling to something as being a self, the result is selfishness**, and our actions are biased accordingly. If we were to develop sufficient insight to see this idea as a deception, we would stop clinging to the ideas of "Mr. A and Mr. B, high class and low class, beast and human being," and would see that these are nothing more than terms which man has devised for use in social intercourse. When we have come to understand this, we can be said to have dispensed with one sort of social deception. When we examine the whole of what goes to make up Mr. A, we find that Mr. A is simply an aggregation of body, feeling, perception, thinking and consciousness. This is a rather more intelligent way of looking at things. Doing this, one is not deluded by worldly relative truth.

It is possible to carry the process of analysis further than this. For instance the physical body can be divided up rather crudely into the elements of earth, water, wind and fire; or it can be analysed scientifically into carbon, hydrogen, oxygen

and so on. The deeper we look, the less we are deceived. Penetrating below the surface, we find that in fact there is no person; there are only elements, physical and mental. Looked at in this light, the "person" disappears. The idea of "Mr. A and Mr. B, high - class and low - class" dissolves. The idea of "my child, my husband, my wife" vanishes away. When we look at things in the light of absolute truth, we find only elements: earth, water, wind and fire; oxygen, hydrogen and so on; body, feeling, perception, thinking and consciousness. On examining these closely we find they all have one property in common, namely emptiness. Each is empty of what we refer to as "its self." Earth, water, wind and fire, looked at properly, are seen to be empty of selfhood. It is possible for each one of us to see anything and everything as empty in this sense. This done, grasping and clinging will have no means of arising and any already arisen will have no means of remaining. They will dissolve, pass away, vanish entirely, not a trace remaining.

So there are no animals, no people, no elements, no aggregates. There are no things at all; there is only emptiness, emptiness of selfhood. When we don't grasp and cling, there is no way suffering can arise. One who sees all things as empty is quite unmoved when people call him good or bad, happy or miserable, or anything. This is the fruit of knowledge, understanding, and clear insight into the true nature of the five aggregates, which makes it possible to give up completely those four kinds of unskillful clinging.

In summary, everything in the whole world is included within the five aggregates, namely matter, feeling, perception,

thinking and consciousness. Each of these groups is a deception, each is quite devoid of selfhood, but has the seductive power to induce grasping and clinging. As a result, the ordinary person desires to possess, desires to be, desires not to possess, desires not to be, all of which only serves to produce suffering, suffering which is not obvious, but concealed. It behoves everyone to utilize the threefold training in morality, concentration and insight, and eliminate delusion with respect to the five aggregates completely and utterly. A person who has done this will not fall under the power of the five aggregates and will be free of suffering. For him life will be unblemished bliss. His mind will be above all things for as long as he lives. This is the fruit of clear and perfect insight into the five aggregates.

INSIGHT BY THE NATURE METHOD

In this chapter we shall see how concentration may come about naturally on the one hand, and as a result of organized practice on the other. The end result is identical in the two cases: the mind is concentrated and fit to be used for carrying out close introspection. One thing must be noticed, however: the intensity of concentration that comes about naturally is usually sufficient and appropriate for introspection and insight, whereas the concentration resulting from organized training is usually excessive, more than can be made use of. Furthermore, misguided satisfaction with that highly developed concentration may result. While the mind is fully concentrated, it is likely to be experiencing such a satisfying kind of bliss and well being that the meditator may become attached to it, or imagine it to be the Fruit of the Path. Naturally occurring concentration, which is sufficient and suitable for use in introspection, is harmless, having none of the disadvantages inherent in concentration developed by means of intensive training.

In the Tipitaka, there are numerous references to people attaining naturally all states of Path and Fruit. This generally

came about in the presence of the Buddha himself, but also happened later with other teachers. These people did not go into the forest and sit, assiduously practising concentration on certain objects in the way described in later manuals.

Clearly no organized effort was involved when arahantship was attained by the first five disciples of the Buddha on hearing the Discourse on Non - selfhood, or by the one thousand hermits on hearing the Fire Sermon. In these cases, keen, penetrating insight came about quite naturally. These examples clearly show that natural concentration is liable to develop of its own accord while one is attempting to understand clearly some question, and that the resulting insight, as long as it is firmly established, must be quite intense and stable. It happens naturally, automatically, in just the same way as the mind becomes concentrated the moment we set about doing arithmetic. Likewise in firing a gun, when we take aim, the mind automatically becomes concentrated and steady. This is how naturally occurring concentration comes about. We normally overlook it completely because it does not appear the least bit magical, miraculous, or awe inspiring. But through the power of just this naturally occurring concentration, most of us could actually attain liberation. We could attain the Fruit of the Path, Nirvana, arahantship, just by means of natural concentration.

So don't overlook this naturally occurring concentration. It is something most of us either already have, or can readily develop. We have to do everything we can to cultivate and develop it, to make it function perfectly and yield the appropriate results, just as did most of the people who succeeded

in becoming arahants, none of whom knew anything of modern concentration techniques.

Now let us have a look at the nature of the states of inner awareness leading up to full insight into "the world," that is, into the five aggregates. The first stage is joy *(piti)*, mental happiness or spiritual well being. Doing good in some way, even giving alms, considered the most basic form of merit - making, can be a source of joy. Higher up, at the level of morality, completely blameless conduct by way of word and action brings an increase in joy. Then in the case of concentration, we discover that there is a definite kind of delight associated with the lower stages of concentration.

This rapture has in itself the power to induce tranquillity. Normally the mind is quite unrestrained, continually falling slave to all sorts of thoughts and feelings associated with enticing things outside. It is normally restless, not calm. But as spiritual joy becomes established, calm and steadiness are bound to increase in proportion. When steadiness has been perfected, the result is full concentration. The mind becomes tranquil, steady, flexible, manageable, light and at ease, ready to be used for any desired purpose, in particular for the elimination of the defilements.

It is not a case of the mind's being rendered silent, hard and rocklike. Nothing like that happens at all. The body feels normal, but the mind is especially calm and suitable for use in thinking and introspection. It is perfectly clear, perfectly cool, perfectly still and restrained. In other words, it is fit for work, ready to know. This is the degree of concentration to be aimed for, not the very deep concentration where one sits

rigidly like a stone image, quite devoid of awareness. Sitting in deep concentration like that, one is in no position to investigate anything. A deeply concentrated mind cannot practise introspection at all. It is in a state of unawareness and is of no use for insight. DEEP CONCENTRATION IS A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO INSIGHT PRACTICE. To practise introspection one must first return to the shallower levels of concentration; then one can make use of the power the mind has acquired. Highly developed concentration is just a tool. In this developing of insight by the nature method, we don't have to attain deep concentration and sit with the body rigid. Rather, we aim at a calm, steady mind, one so fit for work that when it is applied to insight practice, it gains right understanding with regard to the entire world. Insight so developed is natural insight, the same sort as was gained by some individuals while sitting listening to the Buddha expounding Dhamma. It is conducive to thought and introspection of the right kind, the kind that brings understanding. And it involves neither ceremonial procedures nor miracles.

This doesn't mean, however, that insight will arise instantaneously. One can't be an arahant straight off. The first step in knowledge may come about at any time, depending once again on the intensity of the concentration. It may happen that what arises is not true insight, because one has been practising wrongly or has been surrounded by too many false views. But however it turns out, the insight that does arise is bound to be something quite special, for instance extraordinarily clear and profound. If the knowledge gained is right knowledge, corresponding with reality, corresponding with Dhamma, then it will progress, developing ultimately into right and true know-

ledge of all phenomena. If insight develops in only small measure, it may convert a person into an ariyan at the lowest stage; or if it is not sufficient to do that, it will just make him a high - minded individual, an ordinary person of good qualities. If the environment is suitable and good qualities have been properly and adequately established, it is possible to become an arahant. It all depends on the circumstances. But however far things go, as long as the mind has natural concentration, this factor called insight is bound to arise and to correspond more or less closely with reality. Because we, being Buddhists, have heard about, thought about and studied the world, the five aggregates and phenomena, in the hope of coming to understand their true nature, it follows that the knowledge we acquire while in a calm and concentrated state will not be in any way misleading. It is bound to be always beneficial.

The expression "insight into the true nature of things" refers to seeing transience, unsatisfactoriness and non-selfhood, seeing that nothing is worth getting, nothing is worth being, seeing that no object whatsoever should be grasped at and clung to as being a self or as belonging to a self, as being good or bad, attractive or repulsive. Liking or disliking anything, even if it is only an idea or a memory, is clinging. To say that nothing is worth getting or being is the same as to say that nothing is worth clinging to. "Getting" refers to setting one's heart on property, position, wealth, or any pleasing object. "Being" refers to the awareness of one's status as husband, wife, rich man, poor man, winner, loser, or human being, or even the awareness of being oneself. If we really look deeply at it, even being oneself is no fun, is wearisome, because it is a source of suffering. If one can completely give up clinging

to the idea of being oneself, then being oneself will no longer be suffering. This is what it is to see the worthlessness of being anything, and is the gist of the statement that being anything, no matter what, is bound to be suffering in a way appropriate to that particular state of being. Any state of being, if it is to continue as such, has to be made to last, to endure. At the very least, it must endure in one's mind in the form of a belief in that particular state of being. When there exists "oneself," there are bound to exist things which are other than that self and belong to it. Thus one has one's children, one's wife, one's this, that and the other. Then one has one's duty as husband or wife, master or servant, and so on. All this points to the truth of the statement that there is no state of being such that to maintain it will not involve struggle. The trouble and struggle necessary to maintain one's state of being are simply the result of blind infatuation with things, of clinging to things.

If we were to give up trying to get or to be anything, how could we continue to exist? This is bound to be a major source of scepticism for anyone who has not given much thought to the matter. The words "getting" and "being" as used here refer to getting and being based on mental defilements, on craving, on the idea of "worth getting, worth being," so that the mind does get and be in real earnest. This is bound to lead to depression, anxiety, distress and upset, or at least a heavy burden on the mind, right from beginning to end. Knowing this truth, we shall be constantly on the alert, keeping watch over the mind to see that it doesn't fall slave to getting and being through the influence of grasping and clinging. Aware that in reality things are just not worth getting or being, we shall be smart enough to stay aloof from them.

If, however, we are not yet in a position to withdraw completely from having and being, we must be mindful and wide awake, so that when we do get or become something, we do so without emotional upset. We must not be like those people who, turning a blind eye and a deaf ear, go ahead brainlessly and inexpertly getting or becoming, with the result that they fall right into the pit of their own stupidity and attachment, and end up having to commit suicide.

The world and all things have the property of impermanence, of worthlessness and of not belonging to anyone. Any individual who grasps at and clings to anything will be hurt by it, in the very beginning when he first desires to get it or to be it, later while he is in the process of getting it and being it, and then again after he has got it or been it. All the time, before, during and after, when anyone grasps and clings with deaf ear and blind eye, he will receive his full measure of suffering, just as can be seen happening to all deluded worldlings. It is the same even with goodness, which everyone values highly. If anyone becomes involved with goodness in the wrong way and clings to it too much, he will derive just as much suffering from goodness as he would from evil. In becoming involved with goodness, we have to bear in mind that it possesses this property.

A sceptic may ask: "If nothing at all is worth getting or being, does it follow that nobody ought to do any work or build up wealth, position and property?" Anyone who comprehends this subject can see that a person equipped with right knowledge and understanding is actually in a far better position to carry out any task than one who is subject to strong desires,

foolish, and lacking in understanding. Very briefly, in becoming involved in things, we must do so mindfully; our actions must not be motivated by craving. The result will follow accordingly.

The Buddha and all the other arahants were completely free of desire, yet succeeded in doing many things far more useful than what any of us are capable of. If we look at accounts of how the Buddha spent his day, we find that he slept for only four hours and spent all the rest of the time working. We spend more than four hours a day just amusing ourselves. If the defilements responsible for the desire to be and get things had been completely eliminated, what was the force that motivated the Buddha and all Arahants to do all this? They were motivated by discrimination coupled with goodwill *(mettā)*. Even actions based on natural bodily wants such as receiving and eating alms food were motivated by discrimination. They were free of defilements, free of all desire to keep on living in order to be this or to get that, but they did have the ability to discriminate between what was worthwhile and what was not as the motivating force that sent their bodies out to find food. If they found food, well and good; if not, never mind. When they were suffering with fever, they knew how to treat it and did so as well as possible on the basis of this knowledge. If the fever was quite overpowering and they were not strong, they recalled that to die is natural. Whether they lived or died was of no significance to them; they were of equal value in their eyes.

If one is to be completely free of suffering, this is the very best attitude to have. There need not be any self as master of the body. Discrimination alone enables the body to carry

on by its natural power. The example of the Buddha shows that the power of pure discrimination and pure goodwill alone is sufficient to keep an arahant living in the world, and, what is more, doing far more good for others than people still subject to craving. Defiled people are likely to do only what benefits themselves since they act out of selfishness. By contrast, the deeds of arahants are entirely selfless and so are perfectly pure. In desiring to get and be, one is acting quite inappropriately, one is mistaking evil for good, not knowing what is what. Let us all, then, go about things intelligently, always bearing in mind that, in reality, nothing is worth getting or being, nothing is worth becoming infatuated with, nothing is worth clinging to. Let us act in a manner in keeping with the knowledge that things are by their very nature not worth getting or being. If we do have to become involved in things, then let us go about it the right way, acting appropriately. This is the way to keep the mind always pure, unobscured, tranquil and cool. It allows us to become involved in the world, in things, without doing ourselves any harm in the process.

When the ordinary worldly man hears that nothing is worth getting or being, he is not convinced, he doesn't believe it. But anyone who understands the real meaning of this statement becomes emboldened and cheered by it. His mind becomes master of things and independent of them. He becomes capable of going after things sure in the knowledge that he will not become enslaved by them. His actions are not motivated by desire and he is not so blind with passion that he comes to be a slave to things. In getting anything or being anything, let us always be aware that we are getting or being something which, in terms of absolute truth, we cannot get or be

at all, because there is nothing that we can really get or be as we might wish. All things are transient and unsatisfactory and can never belong to us; and yet we go foolishly ahead, grasping at them and craving for them. In other words, we act inappropriately, or in a way which does not accord with the true nature of things, simply because we become involved in them while ignorant of their true nature. The result is bound to be all manner of suffering and trouble. The reason a person is incapable of doing his job perfectly, faultlessly, is that he is always far too concerned with getting something and being something, always motivated entirely by his own desires. As a result, he is not master of himself and cannot be consistently good, honest and fair. In every case of failure and ruin, the root cause is slavery to desire.

To come to know the true nature of things is the true objective of every Buddhist. It is the means by which we can liberate ourselves. Regardless of whether we are hoping for worldly benefits, such as wealth, position and fame; or for benefits in the next world, such as heaven; or for the supra-mundane benefit, the Fruit of the Path, Nirvana — whatever we are hoping for, the only way to achieve it is by means of this right knowledge and insight. We thrive on insight. In the Texts it is said that we may become purified through insight and not by any other means. Our path to freedom lies in having the insight, the clear vision, that in all things there neither is nor has ever been anything at all that is worth grasping at or clinging to, worth getting or being, worth risking life and limb for. We have things and are things only in terms of worldly, relative truth. In worldly language, we say we are this or that, just because in any society it is expedient to recognize by names

and occupations. But we mustn't go believing that we really are this or that, as is assumed at the level of relative truth. To do so is to behave like the crickets, which, when their faces become covered with dirt, become disoriented and muddled, and proceed to bite each other until they die. We humans, when our faces become covered in dirt, when we are subject to all sorts of delusions, become so bewildered and disoriented that we do things no human being could ever do under ordinary circumstances — killing for instance. So let us not go blindly clinging to relative truths; rather let us be aware that they are just relative truths, essential in a society but nothing more. We have to be aware of what this body and mind really is, what its true nature is. In particular, we have to be aware of its impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non selfhood, and make sure we always remain independent of it.

As for the wealth, position and so on, which we can't do without, let us regard these too as relative truths so that we can break free from the existing custom of saying, for instance: "This belongs to So - and - so. That belongs to Such - and - such." The law watches over ownership rights for us; there is no need for us to cling to the idea of "mine." We ought to possess things purely and simply for the sake of convenience and ease, and not so that they can be master over our minds. When we have this clear knowledge, things will become our servants and slaves and we shall remain on top of them. If our thoughts go the way of craving and attachment, so that we become conscious of having such - and - such and being so - and - so, clinging firmly to these ideas, things will get on top of us, and we shall be the servants and slaves, under their control instead. The tables can quite easily be turned in

this way, so we have to be careful. We have to arrange things in such a way that we are sure of staying independent and on top of things. If we don't, we may find ourselves in a most pitiable position and feel very sorry for ourselves indeed.

When we have really come to perceive clearly that nothing is worth getting or being, disenchantment *(nibbidā)* develops in proportion to the intensity of the insight. It is a sign that the clinging has become less firm and is starting to give way. It is a sign that we have been slaves for so long that the idea of trying to escape has at last occurred to us. This is the onset of disenchantment and disillusionment, when one becomes fed up with one's own stupidity in grasping at and clinging to things, believing things to be worth having and being. As soon as disenchantment has set in, there is bound to come about a natural, automatic process of disentanglement *(virāga),* as if a rope with which one had been tightly bound were being untied; or a rinsing out, as when the dye that had been firmly fixed in a piece of cloth is washed out by soaking it in the appropriate substances. This process whereby clinging gives way to a breaking free from, or a dissolving out from the world, or from the objects of that clinging, was called by the Buddha emancipation *(vimutti).* This state is most important. Though not the final stage, it is a most important step towards complete liberation. When one has broken free to this extent, complete liberation from suffering is assured.

Once broken free from slavery, one need never again be a slave to the world. One becomes pure and uncontaminated whereas previously one was defiled in every way. To be enslaved to things is to be defiled in body, speech and thought. To break

free from slavery to the delightful tastes of the world is to achieve the pure condition and never be defiled again. This real purity *(Visuddhi),* once it has been attained, will give rise to a genuine calm and coolness free from all turbulence, strife and torment. This state of freedom from oppression and turbulence was called by the Buddha simply peace *(Santi),* that is, stillness, coolness in all situations, which is virtually the same thing as Nirvana.

"Nirvana" has been translated as "absence of any instrument of torture." Taken another way, it means "extinction without remainder." So the word "Nirvana" has two very important meanings; firstly, absence of any source of torment and burning, freedom from all forms of bondage and constraint and secondly, extinction, with no fuel for the further arising of suffering. The combination of these meanings indicates a condition of complete freedom from suffering. There are several other useful meanings for the word "Nirvana." It can be taken to mean the extinction of suffering, or the complete elimination of defilements, or the state, realm, or condition that is the cessation of all suffering, all defilements and all karmic activity. Though the word "Nirvana" is used by numerous different sects, the sense in which they use it is often not the same at all. For instance, one group takes it to mean simply calm and coolness, because they identify Nirvana with deep concentration. Other groups even consider total absorption in sensuality as Nirvana.

The Buddha defined Nirvana as simply that condition of freedom from bondage, torment and suffering which results from seeing the true nature of the worldly condition and

all things, and so being able to give up all clinging to them. It is essential, then, that we recognize the very great value of insight into the true nature of things and endeavour to cultivate this insight by one means or another. Using one method, we simply encourage it to come about of its own accord, naturally, by developing, day and night, the joy that results from mental purity, until the qualities we have described gradually come about. The other method consits in developing mental power by following an organized system of concentration and insight practice. This latter technique is appropriate for people with a certain kind of disposition, who may make rapid progress with it if conditions are right. But we can practise the development of insight by the nature method in all circumstances and at all times just by making our own way of daily living so pure and honest that there arise in succession spiritual joy *(piti and pamoda)*, calm *(passaddhi)*, insight into the true nature of things *(yathābhūtañānadassana)*, disenchantment *(nibbidā)*, withdrawal *(virāga)*, escape *(vimutti)*, purification from defilements *(visuddhi)*, and coolness *(santi)*, so that we come to get a taste of freedom from suffering *(nibbāna)*—steadily, naturally, day by day, month by month, year by year, gradually approaching closer and closer to Nirvana.

Summing up, natural concentration and insight, which enable a person to attain the Path and the Fruit, consist in verifying all day and every day the truth of the statement that nothing is worth getting or being. Anyone who wishes to get this result must strive to purify himself and to develop exemplary personal qualities, so that he can find perpetual spiritual joy in work and leisure. That very joy induces clarity and freshness, mental calm and stillness, and serves, naturally and au-

tomatically, to give the mind ability to think and introspect. With the insight that nothing is worth getting or being constanly present, the mind loses all desire for the things it once used to grasp at and cling to. It is able to break free from the things it used to regard as "me and mine," and all blind craving for things ceases. Suffering, which no longer has anywhere to lodge, dwindles right away, and the job of eliminating suffering is done. This is the reward, and it can be gained by any one of us.

INSIGHT, BY ORGANIZED TRAINING

Now we shall deal with the organized systems of insight training, which were not taught by the Buddha but were developed by later teachers. This kind of practice is suitable for people at a fairly undeveloped stage, who still cannot perceive the unsatisfactoriness of worldly existence with their own eyes, naturally. This doesn't mean, however, that the results obtained by these systems have any special qualities not obtainable by the nature method, because when we examine the Tipitaka closely, we find the nature method is the only one mentioned. Some people consider, however, that natural insight can be developed only by someone who has become so remarkably virtuous, or has such a suitable disposition, that for him to come to a full understanding of things is just child's play. What is a person to do who lacks transcendent virtues and the appropriate disposition? For such people, teachers laid down ordered systems of practice, concise courses which start from scratch and have to be followed through thoroughly and systematically.

These systems of practice for developing insight are now known by the technical term *"Vipassanā - dhura." Vipassanā -*

dhura is contrasted with Study *(Gantha - dhura),* the two being considered nowadays complementary aspects of training. Vipassanā - dhura is study done within; it is strictly mental training, having nothing to do with textbooks. Neither the term Study (Gantha - dhura) nor Vipassanā - dhura is mentioned in the Tipitaka, both appearing only in later books; but Vipassanā - dhura is nevertheless a genuine Buddhist practice, designed for people intent on eliminating suffering. It is based directly on sustained, concentrated introspection. In order to explain Vipassanā to people, teachers in former ages considered it in terms of the following questions:

What is the basis, the foundation of Vipassanā?

What are the characteristics by which we may know that this is Vipassanā?

Just what is the activity called Vipassanā?

What should be the ultimate result of Vipassanā?

Asked what is the basis, the foundation of Vipassanā, we answer: morality and concentration. "Vipassanā" means "clear insight," and refers to the unobscured vision that may arise when a person's mind is full of joy and devoid of any defilement. Joy develops when there is Moral Purity (Sila-*visuddhi);* morality is a prerequisite. This is stated in the texts *(Rathavinītasutta, Majjhima - nikāya, 24),* where the practice is described as proceeding in a series of stages called the Seven Purifications, and culminating in the Path and the Fruit. Teachers regard the attainment of Moral Purity as the first of the Seven Purifications. It consists of faultless behaviour and is prerequisite to purification of the mind *(Citta - visuddhi).* Purification of the mind, achieved when the mind has been rendered free of any contamination, is conducive to *purification*

of Views (Ditthi - visuddhi) or freedom from misunderstanding. Freedom from misunderstanding leads to purity by freedom from doubt *(Kaṅkhāvitarana - visuddhi),* and this conduces in its turn to the arising of purity by knowledge and vision of what is the true path to be followed and what is not the path *(Magga - magga - Nāṇadassana - visuddhi).* This knowledge of the path to be followed leads to the purity by knowledge and vision of the progress along the path *Patipadā - Nānadassana - visuddhi).* This finally leads to the last stage of full intuitive insight or purity of knowledge and vision *(Nānadassana - visuddhi),* which is the perfection of the very Noble Path. Because the Fruit of the Path arises automatically once the Path is established, the attainment of the Path is regarded as the culmination of the practice.

Moral purity is faultless behaviour by way of body and speech. As long as any imperfection in body or speech remains, morality in the true sense is lacking. When it has been perfected, that is, when tranquillity of bodily activities and speech has been achieved, the result is bound to be mental tranquillity, conducive in its turn to the further stages of purification: freedom from misunderstanding, freedom from doubt, knowledge as to what is the Path to be followed and what is not, knowledge and vision of the progress along the Path and finally full intuitive insight. These last five stages constitute vipassanā proper. Purification of conduct and mind are merely the entrance into the path of vipassanā.

THE SEVEN PURIFICATIONS, THE FIVE STAGES IN VIPASSANĀ, AND THE NINE STEPS IN THE PERFECTION OF KNOWLEDGE

I Moral purity
II Mental purity
III (1) Freedom from false views
IV (2) Freedom from doubt
V (3) Knowledge and vision of what is the true Path
VI (4) Knowledge and vision of the progress along the Path
(a) Knowledge of arising and passing away
(b) Knowledge of passing away
(c) Awareness of fearsomeness
(d) Awareness of danger
(e) Disenchantment
(f) Desire for freedom
(g) Struggle to escape
(h) Imperturbability
(i) Readiness to perceive the Four Noble Truths
VII (5) Full Intuitive Insight
VII (5) Full Intuitive Insight

The Purification consisting of freedom from misunderstanding implies the elimination of all false views, both inborn and acquired. It covers the whole range from irrational belief in magic to false ideas as to the true nature of things — for instance, regarding this body and mind as something enduring, something worthwhile, a self; seeing it as animal, human being, celestial being, or god, or as something magical or sacred; failing to perceive that it consists of just the four elements, or of just body plus mind, and regarding it instead as a self, as possessing a soul or spirit, which enters and leaves it; failing to see it as consisting of the five aggregates: body, feeling, perception, active thinking and consciousness; failing to see it as just a mass of perceptions received by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. False views lead to belief in magic and sacred objects, and so give rise to fear. Rites and rituals are then performed to neutralize the fear, and the end result is firm attachment to rites and rituals — all on account of false views. Such a situation indicates views that are not as yet faultless. To have given up false views is to have attained what was originally called the third Purification, and what later teachers classed the first stage in *Vipassanā*.

The Purification consisting of freedom from doubt is brought about by introspection into causes. With freedom from false views, one sees oneself as just body plus mind. Freedom from doubt consists in perceiving the nature of the causes responsible for the coming into existence of the body-mind complex. One sees penetratingly and in fine detail the coming into existence and the interaction of ignorance, desire, grasping and clinging, karma, "nutriment," and so on, to form body and mind. Freedom from doubt results simply from this

clear knowledge of the causes and effects of all things. In the vipassanā system, teachers recognize twenty or thirty kinds of doubt, but summed up they all amount to doubt as to whether or not "one's self" exists, whether or not "one's self" existed previously, whether or not "one's self" will continue to exist in the future and, if so, in what form. The only way doubt can be completely dispelled is to realize that there is no "I," but only elements, aggregates, a nervous system together with such causes as ignorance, craving and attachment, karma, "nutriment," and so on. Because no real "I" is involved at all, one starts giving up the foolish idea: "I am, I have been, I shall be." With the complete eradication of doubt, the second stage in vipassanā has been achieved. This does not mean that the "I"-conceit has been given up for good and all; fine vestiges are still present. Adequate understanding of the mode of interaction of causes has resulted in the dispelling of doubt and has made it possible to give up the idea of "I" in its grossest forms.

When doubt has been transcended, it becomes possible to bring about the Purification consisting of perfect knowledge as to what is the right path to follow and what is not. There exist several obstacles to this further progress, which usually arise in the course of vipassanā practice. While the mind is in a concentrated state, there are likely to arise various strange phenomena with which the meditator may become overawed, such as wonderful impressive auras seen in the mind's eye (the physical eyes being shut). If these effects are purposely encouraged, they can become highly developed; and if the meditator jumps to the conclusion that "this is the Fruit of vipassanā practice," or congratulates himself saying, "This is something

supernatural; this will do me!" and the like, the arising of these phenomena is liable to bar the way to the true Path and Fruit. Consequently, teachers consider it a side track, a blind alley. Another example is the arising of feelings of joy and contentment which continually overflow the mind to such an extent that it becomes incapable of any further introspection, or jumps to the conclusion that "this is Nirvana, right here and now," so that the way becomes blocked and further progress is impossible. This is another obstruction to insight. Teachers say, furthermore, that even insight into the nature of body and mind may sometimes lead to self satisfaction and the delusion that the meditator has a remarkable degree of spiritual insight, so that he becomes over - confident. This too is an obstacle to progress in vipassanā. Occasionally the meditator may make use of the mental power he has developed to make his body go rigid, with the result that he loses the awareness necessary for further introspection. This is a stubborn obstacle in the path to further progress, yet meditators usually approve of it, regarding it as a supernatural faculty, or even as the Fruit of the Path. Anyone who becomes so pleased with and infatuated by the attainment of deep concentration, this sitting with body rigid and devoid of all sensation, that he is unable to progress further in vipassanā, is in a most pitiable position.

Another condition that may very easily come about is a blissful rapture the like of which the meditator has never encountered before. Once arisen it induces wonder and amazement and unjustified self satisfaction. While the rapture lasts, the body and the mind experience extreme bliss and all problems vanish. Things that formerly were liked or disliked are

liked or disliked no longer when recalled to mind. Things the meditator had formerly feared and dreaded or worried and fretted over no longer induce those reactions, so that he gets the false idea that he has already *attained* liberation, freedom from all defilements; because for as long as he is in that condition he has all the characteristics of a genuinely perfected individual. Should satifaction arise with respect to this condition, it acts as an obstacle to further progress in vipassanā. And in time the condition will fade away so that things formerly liked or disliked will be liked or disliked again just as before, or even more so.

Yet another kind of obstacle involves faith. Faith or confidence never felt before becomes firmly established, for example confidence in the Threefold Gem, Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, or in theories the meditator thinks out for himself. There may even come about a most intense satisfaction in Dhamma. The ability to remain unmoved by anything becomes so strongly developed that it may even delude the meditator into believing he has already attained the Fruit of the Path and Nirvana itself. These things are a great difficulty for anyone encountering them for the first time. As you can see they constitute a barrier in the way of vipassanā. The meditator, however, is likely to regard them as highly desirable until such time as he develops the unobscured knowledge that these things are in fact obstacles and succeeds in cutting out these finer defilements completely. This knowledge of what is the right path and what is not constiutes the third stage in vipassanā and the fifth Purification.

Until such time as the aspirant has developed this knowledge of what really constitutes the right path, he has to be

always steering himself away from the various side tracks. Once this knowledge of the path to be followed has become fully established, however, any further knowledge will automatically develop along the right line. It will progress step by step, bringing perfectly clear understanding of the true nature of things and ultimately perfect freedom from, and non - involvement in things. The mind, equipped with this right understanding, is all set to attain insight into the Four Noble Truths, and is said to have attained the Purity by Knowledge and Vision of the progress along the Path. This is counted as the fourth stage in vipassanā and the sixth Purification. The Tipitaka contains no detailed explanation of the stages in this Knowledge and Vision of the progress along the Path, but later teachers recognized in it nine steps, as follows:

a) *Vipassanā* has progressed properly, and the birth, ageing, pain and death of phenomena have been thoroughly scrutinized. The arising and passing away of phenomena has been perceived in all clarity. All phenomenal existence is seen to consist of just an endless process of arising and ceasing like the glittering dazzle on the surface of the sea, or like the forming and bursting of the foamy crests of waves. This is known as knowledge of arising and passing away *(Udayabbayānupassanā - ñāna)*. It is brought about by concentrated introspection so clear, and sustained for so long a time that the knowledge becomes firmly established, like a dye absorbed by the mind, powerful enough to make the meditator become disenchanted with things and give up clinging to them. This is the first step in the Knowledge and Vision of the Progress along the Path.

b) Arising and passing away, if observed simultaneously, cannot be perceived with such clarity as they can if either one is concentrated on separately. At this stage, the meditator gives up watching one of the two, namely arising, and concentrates exclusively on the passing away. This permits him to see the process of disintegration and decay in such depth and intensity that he comes to realize that decay and perishing are universally evident no matter where in the world one looks. A mind dwelling in this knowledge is said to be equipped with knowledge of decay and dissolution *(Bhaṅgānupassanā - ñāna)*. This is the second step in the developing of knowledge.

c) Knowledge of decay and dissolution, when sufficiently well developed, gives rise next to the awareness that all things are to be feared. All phenomenal existence, whether in the sensual realm, in the form realm, or in the formless realm, is seen as inherently fearsome. All spheres of existence are seen as thoroughly fearsome because the decay and dissolution of all phenomena is perceived in every conscious moment. Thus an intense apprehension arises in the mind of one possessing this awareness and becomes established as a genuine fear. This awareness sees nothing but fearsomeness, like poison, or deadly weapons, or vicious armed bandits, completely filling the three spheres of phenomenal existence — nothing but fearsomeness. This awareness of the fearsomeness *(Bhayatupatthāna - ñāna)* of all phenomenal existence is reckoned as the third step.

d) When awareness of the completely fearsome nature of all phenomenal existence has been fully developed, there will arise in its turn awareness that all things are inherently dangerous. To become invovled in things is not safe. They are like a forest

full of dangerous beasts, and anyone seeking diversion in that forest finds nothing pleasing there. This awareness of the danger *(Adinavān-upassanā - ñāna)* inherent in all phenomenal existence is the fourth step.

e) When all things are seen to be in every way full of danger, this gives rise to disenchantment. Things are seen as resembling a burnt-out house of which nothing remains but ashes and a skeleton, uttery unattractive. This disenchantment *(Nibbidānupassanaā - ñāna)* with having to be associated with conditioned things is the fifth step in the developing of knowledge.

f) When genuine disenchantment has become established, there arises a desire to become really free from those things. This is quite unlike our ordinary desire for freedom, which, lacking the power of concentration or insight to boost it up, is not a real desire for freedom. The disenchantment arising out of vipassanā insight involves the entire mind; and the desire for freedom is as great as the disenchantment, so is very real and genuine. This desire to escape from the unsatisfactoriness of phenomenal existence is as great as the desire for freedom of a frog struggling to escape from a snake's jaws, or the desire for freedom of a deer or bird struggling to break loose from a snare. This real desire to escape *(Muñcitukamyatā - ñāna)* from unsatisfactoriness is the sixth step.

g) Now with the full development of the desire to escape, there arises a feeling of an intense struggling to find a way out, an everpresent feeling that, phenomenal existence being as it is, one has to escape from it. Introspecting, one perceives the clinging and one perceives the defilements that are the cause of the mind's bondage, the fetters binding it securely to that

conditon. Consequently one seeks for ways of weakening the defilements. Then seeing the defilements weakened, one sets about destroying them completely.

This weakening of the defilements is illustrated by means of a simile. A man goes to his fish trap and pulls out a snake thinking it to be a fish. When told it is a snake, he doesn't believe it, at least not until he meets a wise, benevolent and sympathetic teacher, who guides and instructs him so that he comes to realize that it is in fact a snake. He then becomes afraid and searches about for a means of killing it. He grabs the snake by the neck and, lifting it above his head, swings it in a circle until it is worn out and falls down dead. This simile illustrates the arising of the knowledge that the defilements are the cause of people's bondage to a condition much to be feared and dreaded.

If one has no technique for reducing the force of the defilements day by day, eradicating them is bound to be impossible. The power of the defilements far exceeds that of the still meagre knowledge to be used in destroying them; hence knowledge must be developed and increased, and the suffering produced by the defilements will simultaneously diminish. Always maintaining and developing the knowledge that all things are transient, worthless and devoid of selfhood, that they are not worth getting or being, serves to cut off the food supply to the defilements, weakening them day by day. It behoves us to build ourselves up, develop, become more skillful and ingenious. By this means, we can conquer defilements the size of mountains, small though we may be. Our situation can be compared to that of a small mouse faced with the job

of killing several tigers. We have to be really steadfast and always on the look out for means appropriate to a small mouse. If we get nowhere, we must use all sorts of devices and techniques to weaken those tigers day by day rather than trying to kill them outright. This intense search for a way of escape *(Patisankhānupassanā - ñāna)* constitutes the seventh step in the Knowledge and Vision of the Progress along the Path.

h) This weakening of the defilements serves to make us progressively more and more independent of and oblivious to things. So this next step in the developing of right understanding, which results in imperturbability with respect to all things, consists in seeing all phenomena as empty, as devoid of essence, as devoid of status such as "animal" or "person," devoid of substance or real permanence, devoid of worth because they are thoroughly unsatisfactory, and devoid of all attraction because they are thoroughly disenchanting. Ultimately the mind becomes independent of and unperturbed by anything in any realm of existence. Things formerly likable, desirable and infatuating, come to be seen as lumps of rock and earth.

This too has been explained by means of a simile. A man who has always loved a certain woman may one day experience a change of heart and stop loving her. For instance, he will stop loving his wife if she is unfaithful. Once divorced, however, he is free to go ahead and do as he pleases; his mind can be unperturbed. And at this level of knowledge, conditions hitherto delightful, each in its own way, are recognized as devoid of substance, so that one can be independent of them and unperturbed by them in all circumstances, just like the man who

becomes independent on divorcing his wife. This indifference to all phenomena *(Sankhārupekkhā - ñāna)* is the eighth step.

i) The mind thus independent of and unmoved by all phenomenal existence is ready to perfect the Path and know the Four Noble Truths *(Saccānulomika* - ñāna). At this stage one is all set to overcome the defilements, to break the fetters binding one to the world, and become an ariyan of one degree or another. This is the ninth step in the process of Knowledge and Vision of the Progress along the Path.

When this stepwise developing of knowledge, from knowledge of arising and passing away up to the state of readiness to perceive the Four Noble Truths, has been carried through to completion, one is said to have achieved the fourth state in vipassanā, or the sixth Purification. The pure and perfect knowledge it yields is an instrument that reveals to the meditator the path by which he has come, and can lead on to the perfect intuitive insight that will destroy the defilements.

This perfect intuitive insight, or Purity of Knowledge and Vision, the seventh Purification, is the insight that arises out of the perfected Path. It is the goal, the Fruit of vipassanā practice. This insight that arises out of the perfected Path is the fifth and final stage in vipassanā.

In between the state of readiness to perceive the Noble Truths and this perfect intuitive insight comes "qualifying" knowledge *(Gotrabhū - ñāna),* which marks the point of transition from the ordinary defiled individual to the *Ariyan.* But this qualifying knowledge lasts only an instant. It is the culmination of the progressive perfection of knowledge and is

still at the level of good karma, still in the sensual realm.

To sum up, then, vipassanā has as its foundation morality and concentration. What do we examine? The answer is: We examine all things, or to use other terms, the world, or phenomenal existence, or conditioned things, or the five aggregates, since all phenomenal existence consists of nothing apart from the five aggregates. What do we aim at seeing as a result of this scrutiny? We aim at seeing the transience, the unsatisfactoriness, the non-selfhood inherent in all things in the world. We observe them arising, persisting and ceasing until we come to perceive them as absolutely fearsome and disenchanting, and realize that nothing is worth getting or being. These are the conditions that ought to arise in vipassanā practice. What is the objective of vipassanā? The immediate objective of vipassanā is to reduce delusion, the meaning of "vipassanā" being "clear vision." What is the fruit of vipassanā? The fruit is the arising of clear intuitive insight, clear and enduring insight into the nature of all things, which ultimately will reduce the defilements to nothing. With the defilements gone, there is just perfection, enlightenment, peace. Nothing remains to bind the mind to any worldly condition. As a result, there comes about a slipping free from the world, this place of slavery to sensuality. The mind is freed of suffering because it's freed for good of all craving or desire. The Buddha called this the attainment of the cessation of suffering, the attainment of the Fruit of the Path, *Nirvana*. To have achieved this is to have carried out to completion the task Buddhism has set for us.

This shows us the path of insight that has to be walked.

There are seven stages of Purification which must be integrated in this way, and nine steps in the process of developing knowledge of the world. These taken together are known as vipassanā. In the Texts it is set out as an ordered system. The finer details can be found in the books written by later teachers. There is one important thing that must be realized, however, in order to avoid misunderstanding. It so happens that even in the field of Dhamma practice, the highest aspect of Buddhism, there are misguided people. At the present time there are many who have got hold of things that are not vipassanā at all and are presenting them as being the real thing. They have made vipassanā practice their means of livelihood. They win people over in order to get classes together, then proceed to certify them as noble ones *(Ariyapuggala)*, modern style, all of which is most despicable and regrettable.

EMANCIPATION FROM THE WORLD

Vipassanā meditation is mental training aimed at raising the mind to such a level that it is no longer subject to suffering. The mind breaks free from suffering by virtue of the clear knowledge that nothing is worth grasping at or clinging to. This knowledge deprives worldly things of their ability to lead the mind into further thoughtless liking or disliking. Having this knowledge, the mind transcends the worldly condition and attains the level known as the Supramundane Plane *(Lokuttara-bhūmi).*

In order to comprehend clearly the supramundane plane, we have to know first about its opposite, the mundane plane *(Lokiya-bhūmi).* The mundane plane comprises those levels at which the things of the world have control over the mind. Very briefly, three levels are recognized in the mundane plane, namely: the sensual level *(Kāmāvacara-bhūmi),* or the level of a mind still content with pleasures of every kind; the level of forms *(Rūpāvacara-bhūmi),* the condition of a mind uninterested in sensual objects, but finding satisfaction in the various stages of concentration on forms as objects; and lastly the formless level *(Arūpāvacara-bhūmi),* the yet higher level

of a mind finding satisfaction in the bliss and peace of concentration on objects other than forms. These three levels in the worldly plane are the mental levels of beings in general. Regardless of whether we presume to call them human beings, celestial being, gods, beasts, or denizens of hell, they are all included within the three worldly levels. The mind of a worldling can at any particular time exist in any one of these three. It is not impossible. It is quite normal. As a rule, though, it will tend to fall back naturally to the unconcentrated sensual level; the human mind normally falls under the influence of the delightful in colours and shapes, sounds, odours, tastes and tactile objects. Only on certain occasions is it able to escape from the influence of these seductive things and experience the tranquillity and bliss which comes from practising concentration on forms or other objects. It all depends on concentration.

At certain times, then, a person's mind may be located in any of these levels of concentration. In India at the time of the Buddha this must have been fairly common, because people who had gone in search of the tranquillity and bliss associated with the various levels of concentration were to be found living in forests all over the country. At the present time such people are few, but it is nevertheless possible for the ordinary man to attain these levels. If someone in this world is in the process of experiencing the bliss of full concentration on a form, then for him "the world" consists of just that form, because he is aware of nothing else. At that time and for that person, "the world" is equivalent to just that one form, and it remains so until such time as his mental condition changes.

Even though a person dwelling in any of these three levels

may have gained such bliss and calm tranquillity that he has come to resemble a rock, a lump of earth, or a log of wood, yet grasping and clinging to selfhood are still present. Also present are various kinds of desire, albeit of the finest and most tenuous sort, such as dissatisfaction with the state in which he finds himself, which prompts him to go in search of a new state. That desire for change constitutes karma, so such a person has not yet transcended the worldly state. He is not yet in the supramundane plane.

A mind dwelling in the supramundane plane has transcended the world. It views the worldly state as devoid of essence, self, or substance, and will have nothing of it. Dwellers in this supramundane plane can be further classified into grades. There are four levels of Path and Fruit, namely the levels of the Stream enterer *(Sotāpanna)*, the Once returner *(Skidāgāmi)*, the Never returner *(Anāgāmi)*, and the completely Perfected individual or *Arahant*. The condition of these four kinds of noble individuals or *Ariyans* is the supramundane condition. "Supramundane" means "above the world," and refers to the mind, not the body. The body can be anywhere at all as long as living conditions are adequate. "Supramundane" simply describes a mind dwelling above the world. As for the nether worlds such as hell, purgatory, or the places of suffering, torment and bondage, these are out of the question for the Ariyans.

The criteria for recognizing these four levels in the supramundane plane are the various mental impurities which are in the course of being eliminated. The Buddha divided the impurities in this group into ten kinds. He called them the

Fetters *(Samyojana).* These ten fetters bind man and all beings to the world, keeping people in the mundane plane. If a person starts to cut through these fetters and break loose, his mind gradually and progressively becomes freed from the worldly condition; and when he manages to cut through them completely, his mind becomes completely free, transcends the world for good and comes to dwell permanently in the supramundane plane.

Of these ten kinds of subtle mental impurities that bind us, the first is the Self belief *(Sakkāya-ditthi),* the view that the body and mind is "my self." It is a misunderstanding or misconception based on clinging to the idea "I am." Because the average person is not aware of the true nature of the body and the mind, he unthinkingly regards these two as his "self." He assumes that body and mind is his "self," his "I." This instinctive idea that there is an "I" and a "mine" is so firmly ingrained that normally nobody ever doubts their existence. True, the self instinct is what makes life possible, being the basis of self preservation, the search for food and propagation of the species, but in this case, what we are calling the self belief is to be taken only in its most basic sense as the root cause of selfishness. This is considered to be the first of the fetters, to be done away with before anything else.

The second fetter is Doubt *(Vicikicchā),* the cause of wavering and uncertainty. Most importantly it is doubt concerning the practice leading to liberation from suffering — doubt due to inadequate knowledge, doubt as to what this subject is really all about, doubt as to whether this practice for breaking free from suffering is really the right thing for one, whether

one is really capable of carrying it through, whether it is really better than other things, whether or not it really does any good, whether the Buddha really did attain enlightenment, whether he really did achieve liberation from suffering, whether the Buddha's teaching and the practical method based on his teaching really do lead to liberation from suffering, whether it is really possible for a bhikkhu in the Sangha to attain liberation from suffering.

The root cause of hesitancy is ignorance. A fish that has always lived in the water, if told about life on dry land, would be sure to believe none of it, or at most only half of it. We, immersed as we are in sensuality, are as habituated to sensuality as is the fish to water, so that when someone speaks of transcending sensuality, transcending the world, we can't understand. And that which we can understand to some extent we are hesitant about. It is natural for us to think on this lower level; to think on the high level produces a new picture. The conflict between the high level thinking and the low level thinking is what constitutes wavering. If mental energy is insufficient, the low level thinking will triumph. Doubt and wavering with regard to goodness is something chronically present in everyone right from birth. In a person who has been brought up wrongly, it may be a very common complaint. We have to introspect and note the bad consequences of this wavering, which is present to such an extent in our work and our everyday living that we become sceptical about goodness, truth and liberation from suffering.

The third fetter is Superstition *(Silabbataprarāmāsa)* or attachment to rules and rituals based on a misunderstanding

of their real purpose. Essentially it is a misguided attachment to certain things one does. Usually it has to do with doctrines and ceremonies. An example of this is belief in magic and magical practices, which is blatantly just superstition and occurs even among Buddhists. Practice based on the belief that it will produce magical abilities, psychic powers and protective forces is founded on false hopes and is irrational. Another example is the undertaking of moral precepts (Five Precepts, etc.) or virtuous conduct. The real purpose of this is to eliminate mental defilements; but if we believe that it will give rise to miraculous powers which we shall then be able to use to eradicate the defilements, we are in fact grasping and clinging, and so defeating our original purpose. The practice is quite correct in itself, but if we misunderstand it and cling to it irrationally, regrading it as something magical or sacred, then it becomes pure superstition. Even taking upon oneself the moral precepts, if done in the belief that it will lead to rebirth as a celestial being, is without a doubt an example of attachment to rules and rituals and goes contrary to Buddhist aims. Such beliefs contaminate otherwise virtuous conduct. The objective of the Buddhist discipline is the elimination of the cruder defilements of body and speech as a foundation for the progressive development of concentration and insight. The objective is not rebirth in heaven. To have such false motives is to soil and contaminate one's own morals with grasping and clinging, with false ideas. Charity, or adherence to moral precepts, or meditation practice, if carried out with a mistaken idea of their true objective, inevitaby will stray from the Buddhist path.

Do understand that even Buddhist practice, associated

with misunderstanding because craving has come in and taken over, bringing the expectation of mystical powers, becomes superstition instead. This applies to even the very small and trivial things that most of us like to indulge in, such as ritual chanting, merit making and the like. The ceremony of placing rice and trays of sweets before the Buddha's image, if performed in the belief that it is an offering to the Buddha's "spirit" and that he will be able to partake of it, is 100 percent certain to produce effects precisely the opposite of what the devotee is hoping for. Behaviour that defeats its own true purpose is generally quite common in Buddhist circles. It is foolish and irrational and results in practices originally worthwhile and attractive becoming contaminated with the stupidity and ignorance of the people performing them. This is what is meant by superstition. As we can see, this defilement has its origins in delusion and misunderstanding. Most of us have our own ingrown beliefs in mystical powers as a result of having been misinformed and led astray by others. We need not go into any more detail here; but though it may be rather distrubing, everyone ought to do some critical self examination along these lines.

When these first three defilements, namely self belief, doubt and superstition, have been completely given up, one is said to have attained the lowest level in the supramundane plane, that is, to have become a Stream enterer. To give up completely these three defilements is not difficult at all, because they are just primitive qualities possessed by primitive, underdeveloped people. In anyone who has studied well and made progress, these three elements should not be present; and if they are, then that person's mind should be considered still

primitive. Anyone ought to be able to give up these three defilements and become an *Ariyan*. If he can't he is still a foolish and deluded person, or, to use the best term, a worlding *(Puthujjana)*, someone with a thick blindfold covering the eye of insight.

When any individual has managed to give up these defilements, his mind is freed from bondage to the world. These three are ignorance and delusion obscuring the truth and are fetters binding the mind to the world. Giving them up is like rendering ineffective three kinds of bondage or three blindfolds, then slipping free and rising above and beyond the world, into the first supramundane level. This is what it is to become an *Ariyan* of the first degree, to attain the first level in the supramundane plane. Such an individual is called a Stream enterer, one who has attained for the first time the Stream that flows on to Nirvana. In other words an individual at this stage is certain to attain Nirvana at some time in the future. What he has attained is only the Stream of Nirvana, not Nirvana itself. This Stream is a course that flows right on to Nirvana, inclining towards Nirvana just as the water-course of a river slopes down towards the sea. Though it may still take some time, a mind which has once entered the Stream is certain to achieve Nirvana eventually.

Attaining the second level in the supramundane plane implies giving up the three fetters just mentioned, and further, being able to attenuate certain types of craving, aversion and delusion to such a degree that the mind becomes elevated and only very feebly attached to sensuality. It is traditionally held that an individual who achieves this level will return to this

world at most only once more, hence he is known as a Once returner. A Once - returner is closer to Nirvana than a Stream enterer, there remaining in him no more than a trace of worldliness. Should he return to the sensual human world, he will do so not more than once, because craving, aversion and delusion, though not completely eliminated, have become exceedingly attenuated.

The third stage is that of the Never - returner. This grade of *Ariyan*, besides having succeeded in giving up the defilements to the extent necessary for becoming a Once - returner, has also managed to give up the fourth and fifth fetters. The Fourth fetter is sensual desire and the fifth is ill will. Neither the Stream - enterer nor the Once - returner has completely given up sensual desire. In both of them there is still a remnant of satisfaction in alluring and desirable objects. Even though they have managed to give up self belief, doubt and superstition, they are still unable to relinquish completely their attachment to sensuality of which some traces remain. But an *Ariyan* at the third stage, a Never - returner, has succeeded in giving it up completely, so that not a trace remains. The defilement called ill will, which includes all feelings of anger or resentment, has been washed out to a large extent by the Once - returner so that there remains only a trace of ill humour to obstruct his mind; but the Never - returner has got rid of it altogether. Thus the Never - returner has thrown off both sensual desire and ill will.

This sensual desire or attachment to and satisfaction in sensuality was explained adequately in the section on sensual attachment. It is a chronic defilement, firmly fixed in the mind

as if it were a very part of it, of the same substance. For the ordinary man, it is hard to understand and hard to eradicate. Anything at all can serve as an object for desire: colours and shapes, sounds, odours, tastes and tactile objects of any sort, kind and description. These are sensual objects *(Kāma),* and the state of mental attachment which takes the form of satisfaction in these desirable objects is sensual desire *(Kāma - rāga).*

What we call ill will is the reaction of a mind that feels dissatisfaction. If there is satisfaction, there is sensual desire; if dissatisfaction, ill will. Most people's minds are subject to these two states. There may arise ill will towards even inanimate objects, and what is more, one can even be dissatisfied with the things one has produced oneself, the things that arise in one's own mind. Where there is actual hatred and anger towards an object, ill will has become too fierce. An *Ariyan* at a stage below the Non - returner has given it up to a degree appropriate to his station. The ill will that remains for the third grade of Ariyan to relinquish is just a mental reaction so subtle that possibly no outward evidence of it appears. It is an inner perturbation not revealed by any facial expression, yet present inwardly as dissatisfaction, as irritation or annoyance at some person or thing that does not conform to expectation. Imagine a person completely devoid of every form of ill will : consider what a very exceptional individual he would be, and how worthy of respect.

The five defilements we have just been discussing were grouped together by the Buddha as the first to be given up. Self belief, doubt, superstition, sensual desire and ill will have all been given up by an ariyan at the third level. Because

there remains no sensual desire, this grade of ariyan never again returns to the sensual state of existence. This is why he gets the name "Never - returner," one who will never come back. For him there is only movement forward and upward to Arahantship and Nirvana, in a state having nothing to do with sensuality, a supreme, divine condition. As for the five remaining defilements, these only the Arahant, the fourth grade of ariyan, succeeds in relinquishing completely.

The next defilement, the sixth of the fetters, is desire for the bliss associated with the various stages of concentration on forms *(rūpa - rāga)*. The first three grades of ariyan are still not capable of giving up attachment to the bliss and tranquillity obtainable by concentrating deeply on forms, but they will succeed in doing so when they move up to the last stage, that of the Arahant. The fully concentrated state has a captivating flavour, which can be described as a foretaste of Nirvana. Though it differs from real Nirvana, it has more or less the same flavour. While one is fully concentrated, the defilements are dormant; but they have not evaporated away entirely, and will reappear as soon as concentration is lost. As long as they are dormant, however, the mind is empty, clear, free, and knows the flavour of real Nirvana. Consequently this state can also become a cause of attachment.

The seventh subtle defilement is desire for the bliss associated with full concentration on objects other than forms *(arūpa - rāga)*. It resembles the sixth fetter, but is one degree more subtle and attenuated. Concentration on an object such as space or emptiness yields a tranquillity and quiescence more profound than concentration on a form, with the result that

one becomes attached to that state. No Arahant could ever become fascinated by any state of pleasant feeling whatsoever, regardless of where it originated, because an Arahant is automatically aware of the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non selfhood of every state of feeling. Other hermits and mystics practising concentration in the forest do not perceive the hidden danger in these blissful states and so become fascinated by and attached to the flavour of them just as immature people become attached to the flavour of sensual objects. For this reason the Buddha used the same word "desire" for both cases. If you think this subject over and really come to understand it, you will be full of admiration and respect for these individuals called ariyans.

The eighth fetter binding a man to the world is awareness of superiority or inferiority *(māna).* It is the delusion of having this or that status relative to another. It consists in the thought: "I am not as good as he is. I am just as good as he is. I am better or higher than he is." Thinking "I am not as good as...," one feels inferior; thinking "I am better than...," one feels puffed up; and thinking "I am just as good as...," one thinks along competitive lines or in terms of getting ahead of the other fellow. It is not pride or conceit. Not to think automatically of oneself as better or worse than the other fellow in this fashion is bound to be very difficult. The placing of this defilement as number eight is probably meant to indicate that it is hard to give up and so belongs near the end of the list. Only the highest grade of ariyan can relinquish it. The likes of us naturally can't give it up. This idea that one is better than, or on a par with, or not as good as the other fellow, comes from a certain kind of attachment. As long as the mind is still in-

volved in good and bad, the awareness of inferiority, superiority, or equality with respect to others remains to disturb it; but when it has completely transcended good and bad, such ideas cannot exist. As long as such ideas do remain, real bliss and tranquility are lacking.

The ninth fetter is Agitation *(Uddhacca)*, that is, mental unrest, distraction, lack of peace and quiet. This is the feeling of agitation that arises when something interesting comes by. We all have certain chronic wishes, particularly a desire to get, to be, not to get, or not to be, one thing or another. When something comes by, via the eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body, which fits in with one of our tendencies, there is likely to come about the mental reaction, pro or con, which we call interest. If we see something new and strange, wavering and curiosity are bound to arise, because there are still things that we want and things that we fear and mistrust. So the mind cannot resist, it has to be interested in the various things that come by — at least that is how it is with an ordinary person. If the object in question happens to coincide with a desire of his, he finds it hard to resist. He is likely to become interested to the point of becoming involved, pleased to the point of forgetting himself. If it is an undersirable object, the mind becomes depressed so that his gratification comes to an end. This is the nature of Agitation.

The first three grades of ariyan still have curiosity and inquisitiveness about things, but the Arahant has none at all. His mind has abolished all desire for anything whatsoever:

mind is free. Nothing can provoke or lure him, and arouse inquisitiveness or curiosity, simply because he has abolished partiality. It should be realized that the existence or arising of agitation in any situation is a consequence of some form of desire, even including the desire for knowledge. When desire has been done away with through realizing the impermanence, worthlessness and non selfhood of all things, nothing is any longer seen as worth getting or being, and so there is no curiosity about anything. If a bolt of lightning were to strike right beside an Arahant, he would not be interested, because he has no fear of death, or craving for continued existence, or anything of that sort. Even if something dangerous came along, or if something brand new were discovered in the world, he would know no inquisitiveness or curiosity, because such things have no significance for him. He has no wish to know about anything from the point of view of what it may have to offer him. Because there is nothing that he longs for, he has no curiosity of any kind, and his mind has a purity, a tranquillity such as we ordinary folk have never attained.

The tenth and last defilement is Ignorance. This covers every kind of defilement not yet mentioned. The word "ignorance" refers to a condition of lack of knowledge, and in this case "knowledge" means real knowledge, correct knowledge. Naturally no creature can exist without having some knowledge, but if that knowledge is false, it has the same value as no knowledge. Most people suffer from chronic ignorance or false knowledge; most of us are benighted. The most important questions for human beings are those that ask: "What is suffering, really?," "What is the real cause of the arising

of suffering?," "What is real freedom from suffering?" and "What is the real way to attain freedom from suffering?" If some individual has real knowledge, if he is free of ignorance, he is reckoned as enlightened. The totality of human knowledge is of untold extent, but the Buddha classed most of it as not essential. The Buddha's enlightenment encompassed only what need be known. The Buddha knew all that need be known. The word "omniscient" or "all - knowing" means knowing just as much as need be known: it does not include anything non-essential.

Ignorance causes people to misidentify suffering as pleasure, to such an extent that they just swim around in circles in a sea of suffering. It also causes them to misidentify the cause of suffering, so that they go blaming the wrong things, spirits, celestial beings, or anything at all as the cause of their pain and misfortune, instead of rectifying the situation by the right means. The making of vows to these spirits and celestial beings is a manifestation of the lowest level of ignorance regarding the complete elimination of suffering by means of eliminating the craving which is its direct cause. The mistaken assumption that the bliss and tranquillity or unawareness brought about by deep concentration is the complete extinction of suffering was common in the Buddha's time, and is still promoted in the present day. Certain schools of thought have even come to regard sensuality as an instrument for extinguishing suffering, so that sects with shameful, obscene practices have arisen right in the temples. They firmly believe that sensuality is something quite essential, a kind of vital nourishment. Not content with just the four necessities of life, namely food, clothing, shelter and medicine, they add an extra one, sen-

suality, making five necessities.

A person ignorant about the Path that leads to the extinction of suffering is liable to act foolishly and be motivated by his own desires, for instance naively relying on physical things, or on spirits and celestial beings, just as if he had no religion at all. Such a person, though he may be a Buddhist by birth, is able to go to such foolish lengths simply because the power of ignorance prevents his being content with extinguishing suffering by way of the Noble Eightfold Path. Instead he goes about extinguishing suffering by lighting incense and candles, and making pledges to supposedly supernatural things.

Every normal person wishes to gain knowledge; but if the "knowledge" he gains is false, then the more he "knows," the more deluded he becomes. Thus more kinds of knowledge can blind the eyes. We have to be careful with this word "enlightenment." The "Light" may be the glare of ignorance, which blinds and deludes the eye and gives rise to overconfidence. Blinded by the glare of ignorance, we are unable to think straight and so are in no position to defeat suffering. We waste our time with trivialities, nonessential things unworthy of our respect. We become infatuated with sensuality, taking it to be something excellent and essential for human beings, something which every man ought to get his share of before he dies, and making the excuse that we are doing it for the sake of some quite different ideal. The hope for rebirth in heaven is founded on sensuality. Attachment to anything whatsoever, particularly sensuality, comes about because ignorance has enveloped the mind cutting off all means of escape.

At several places in the Texts, ignorance is compared to a thick shell covering the whole world and preventing people from seeing the real light.

The Buddha placed ignorance last in the list of the ten fetters. When a person becomes an Arahant, the highest grade of ariyan, he completely eliminates the five remaining fetters or defilements. He eliminates desire for forms, desire for objects other than forms, status consciousness, agitation and ignorance. The four kinds of ariyan, Stream - enterer, Once - returner, Never - returner and Arahant, dwell in the Supramundane plane. The Supramundane can be recognized as having nine aspects. The condition of the Stream - enterer while he is in the process of cutting out the defilements is called the Path of Stream entry, and that when he has succeeded in cutting them out is called the Fruit of Stream entry. Likewise there are the following pairs: Path and Fruit of Once returning, Path and Fruit of Never returning and Path and Fruit of Arahantship, in all four pairs. These together with Nirvana make up the nine aspects of the Supramundane. For an individual in the supramundane plane, suffering is diminished in accordance with his status until ultimately he is completely free of it. When a person once succeeds in attaining unobscured and perfect insight into the true nature of things so that he is able to stop desiring anything whatsoever, he has attained the supramundane plane, his mind has transcended the worldly condition. And when he has completely and utterly relinquished all the mental defilements, his mind is rendered permanently free of all those worldly things which formerly it liked and disliked.

Nirvana is a condition not in any way comparable to any other. It is unlike any worldly condition. In fact, it is the very negation of the worldly condition. Given all the characteristics of the worldly condition, of phenomenal existence, the result of completely cancelling out all those characteristics is Nirvana. That is to say, Nirvana is that which is in every respect precisely the opposite of the worldly condition. Nirvana neither creates nor is created, being the cessation of all creating. Speaking in terms of benefits, Nirvana is complete freedom from hellfire, scourging, torture, bondage, subjection and thralldom, because the attainment of Nirvana presupposes the complete elimination of the defilements, which are the cause of all unsatisfactory mental states. Nirvana lies beyond the limitations of space and time. It is unique, unlike anything in the world. Rather it is the extinction of the worldly condition. Speaking metaphorically, the Buddha called it the realm where all conditional things cease to be *(Saṅkhāra - samatho).* Hence it is the condition of freedom, of freedom from fetters. It is the end of torment and buffeting, stabbing and chafing, from any source whatsoever. This is the nature of the Supramundane, the ulimate. It is the Buddhist goal and destination. It is the final fruit of Buddhist practice.

In the foregoing pages we have explained systematically the principles of Buddhism. We have presented it as an organized practical system designed to bring knowledge of the true nature of things. In reality things are impermanent, unsatisfactory and not selves; but all creatures are attracted by things and become attached to them simply through misunderstanding. The Buddhist practice, based on Morality *(Sīla),*

Concentration *(Samādhi),* and Insight *(Paññā),* is a tool to be used for completely cutting out grasping and clinging. The objects of our clinging are the five aggregates: body, feeling, perception, active thinking and consciousness. When we have come to know the true nature of the five aggregates, we understand all things so well that desire gives way to disenchantment, and we no longer cling to any of them.

What we have to do is lead the kind of life described as Right Living *(Sammā Vihareyyum),* and be full day and night with the joy that arises out of conduct that is consistently good, beautiful and right. This limits aimless wandering of the thoughts and makes it possible to concentrate and to have clear insight at all times. Then if conditions are right, the result is disenchantment, struggle to break loose, slipping free, or even complete Nirvana. If we wish to hurry and gain quick results, then there is the line of practice called *Vipassanā,* which begins with moral purity and mental purity and carries right through to perfect and unobscured intuitive insight. By this means we can completely cut through the fetters that bind us fast to this world, and attain the final Fruit of the Path.

This is a brief account of the whole of Buddha-Dhamma from beginning to end, including both theoretical and practical principles, and covering the entire subject right from the first steps to the final Fruit. The whole story ends with Nirvana. As the Buddha said: "All Buddhas recognize Nirvana as the highest good." So it behoves us to practise in order to realize and attain that which should be realized and attained. Doing this, we shall deserve to be called Buddhists; we shall gain insight and penetrate to the real essence of Buddha-Dhamma. If we

don't practise Buddha-Dhamma, we shall only know about it and shall lack any true insight. It rests with each of us to practise introspection, observe and understand his own imperfections, and then try to root them out completely. Even if one is only half successful, some clear understanding will result. As the defilements are progressively eliminated, their place is taken by purity, insight and peace.

So I advise and beseech you to approach the subject in this fashion. You may then succeed in penetrating to the real Buddha-Dhamma. Don't waste the advantages of having been born a human being and having encountered the Buddha's teaching. Don't miss this chance to be a perfect human being.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Rod Bucknell first became seriously interested in Buddhism in the mid-1960's, when, during a visit to Thailand, he was introduced to the techniques of insight meditation. After spending a year in various Thai meditation centres 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 Sangha, 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 a lecturer in the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland, Australia.

SUGGESTED READING

Other books by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu:

Mindfulness With Breathing: Unveiling The Secrets Of Life
Buddha - Dhamma for Students.
Keys To Natural Truth
Heartwood From The Bo Tree
Dhammic Socialism
(and new translations in preparation).

The occassional journal *Evolution/Liberation* contains translations from Ajahn Buddhadāsa.

For information please contact:

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(The Dhamma Stady & Practice Group)
P.O. box 26, Nonthaburi
Nonthaburi 11000
Thailand

The Buddhadāsa Foundation
Wat Cholapratan Rangsarit
Pak Kred
Nontaburi 11200 Thailand

The Dhamma Study & Practice Group

As a guide for newcomers to the Buddha-Dhamma (the Truth which the Buddha awakened to and subsequently taught), this book is an invaluable guide. In it are contained the essential teachings of Buddhism. The "Handbook" is especially useful for those who approach Buddha's teaching, not as a subject scholarly study, but as a means to understand and ennoble their lives.

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