Basic Buddhist Concepts

Henri van Zeyst

Basic Buddhist Concepts

Henry van Zeyst

1980

Contents

Introduction

This book wishes to cover all the basic and essential doctrines of Buddhism in one volume. Many aspects have been dealt with earlier in separate booklets, such as the four noble truths, karma, rebirth and evolution. Many other aspects, equally important, such as contemplation and Nibbāna, have also found their place in this single volume. But, even the subjects dealt with earlier have not been merely repeated, but are presented with afresh approach, although not deviating doctrinally.

Thus, this book is as new as it is old, presenting a doctrine of 25 centuries ago, in a setting which belongs psychologically to the century of to-day. New views may provide easier access and clearer understanding, which is the basic concept which gave birth to this book.

The Life of the Buddha

Ancestry and Birth

Close upon the Himalayas in the north of India and about 160km to the north of Varanasi (Benares) was living in the 7th century before Christ a Sakyan clan, ruled over at that time by the caste of professional warriors, called Kshatriyas. The name of the chief ruler and his family was Gotama, a name derived from one of their ancestors who lived many centuries earlier. The ruler of the clan at the time when our story begins was known as Suddhodana and he lived in Kapilavatthu. The Rāja was married to a close relation of his, Maya Devi, who was the daughter of the ruling chief of a nearby township, called Devadaha, also known as Koli. That Koliyan Rāja's name was Anjana.

Maya Devi, the chief consort of King Suddhodana, and better known as Mahā Māyā, had one night a dream that a white elephant had entered her womb. This dream of hers was interpreted by some sages that in due time a son would be born to her who would be a worthy descendant of the royal clan. When in the course of time she felt that the day was drawing near that she should bring forth a child, she wished to visit her parents in Devadaha. King Suddhodana, her husband, willingly granted permission to do so. On the way between Kapilavatthu and Devadaha one had to pass a park, known as, the Lumbinī Gardens, situated in modern Nepal. Wishing to enjoy the cool shade of the park and to relax a while before continuing the journey, the

party which accompanied queen Mahā Māyā entered the gardens. Then unexpectedly her time was full and seeking shelter under the low hanging branches of some Sal trees, she brought forth a son.

Many years later, the great Indian emperor Asoka had a pillar erected on the very spot. On the pillar was carved an inscription commemorating the event and identifying the place of birth. This column was discovered by Dr. Fuhrer on the 1st of Dec. 1926. Its size is about nine feet above the ground, though the upper part is broken off. It is still standing on the original spot, thus proving beyond doubt the truth of this historical birth. For the child which was born here was not to live in this world as so many other princes who lived and died, and whose very names we have forgotten. This child when grown up would be a light to the whole world even to this day.

After having given birth to her child, queen Mahā Māyā and her party did not travel on to Devadaha but returned to Kapilavatthu, where the happy news had spread already through the town and where all were received with great rejoicings.

First Events After Birth

Near the town was living an old hermit who was highly respected by all, even by the king. This hermit—Asita was his name—was informed of the royal birth, and he too had come to the palace to see the little prince. The king had such a high regard for Asita, the hermit, that he wished to show his respect even when introducing him to the royal baby. And thus he presented the child with its head turned towards the hermit. But Asita did not allow this to be done. Not the child, he said, but he had to bow his head. And touching the little feet of the child with his forehead, he indicated its great future. While he was thus lost in thought for a moment, he became sad and began to weep. King Suddhodana, fearing that the sage saw some evil omen lurking over the child's future,

asked whether something wrong would befall his son. But Asita the hermit assured the king that no evil would come to the child. The reason of his sorrow was, he said, that he himself, being an old man already, would not live to see the future greatness of the new-born prince.

On the fifth day after the birth of queen Mahā Māyā's son, some learned men were called to cast the horoscope, to read the lines in the palms of his hands and on the soles of his feet, to explain other marks on the body and to fix his name. They found in all thirty-two characteristic marks, all indicating his future greatness, but their opinion was divided as to the nature of that greatness. Most thought that he would become a great ruler or wise teacher. Only one excluded the possibility of a worldly career and said the prince would certainly become a great religious reformer. Finally the name was chosen, and henceforth he was called prince Siddhattha, which name means "successful in the accomplishment of his task". To this name is usually added the name of Gotama, which was the name of the royal family and clan.

Queen Mahā Māyā had never been well since she had given birth to her child and on the seventh day after the happy events at Lumbinī she died, leaving the care for the education of her son, prince Siddhattha, to her younger sister Mahāpajāpatī, who thus became the foster mother of the future Buddha.

All this happened in the year 623 before the birth of Christ according to the traditional way of counting, but from historical research some doubts have arisen about this calculation, which is based on a fundamental date, a treaty of Chandragupta with the Greek Seleucus Nicator, which date however is not quite certain. Even the indication of years before or after Christ is not to be fixed with historical certainty, as there is probably a discrepancy of several years in the date of his birth. Recent historians place the birth of prince Siddhattha about the year 563 B.C.

Early Youth

When prince Siddhattha was old enough to walk about, he was allowed on a certain day to accompany his father, King Suddhodana, who had to perform the ceremonial ploughing, an equivalent to our modern cutting of the first sod. As the ceremony with the subsequent rejoicings would last a considerable time, the young prince was placed in the shadow of a rose-apple tree. There in the cool shade, away from the noisy crowd of merrymakers, without sensual desires and without evil ideas, he attained the first stage of mental absorption (*jhāna*), a state of happiness arising from seclusion and freedom from sensuous and worldly ideas, leaving his heart serene, pure and imperturbable. It was the remembrance of this fact, which many years later made him give up his austerities.

This aloofness seems to have been characteristic in the young prince, so much so that his father, king Suddhodana, thought it necessary to provide him special care, for his health was excessively delicate—and with extraordinary luxury to distract his mind from his frequent pensive moods. The three seasons of the year, winter, summer and rain-season were spent in different places, where amusements were provided according the time of the year. But his delicacy was such that neighbouring chiefs were reluctant to send their daughters, till prince Siddhattha proved in public performance not only his fitness to handle the bow, but even his superiority over all his rivals in the contest.

At the age of sixteen he was married to princess Yasodhara, a daughter of his mother's brother Suppabuddha and his father's sister Pamita. They were of exactly the same age, having been born on the same day. Little is recorded about her life at home and private happiness, but the description of the luxury in which they lived, of the care wherewith the king had surrounded them, makes one feel that nothing could be lacking in the completion of their bliss.

Yet, prince Siddhattha was not satisfied. He soon realized

that even pleasures produce disgust when prolonged too much. To escape from the monotony of the pleasures of his palaces, to learn about the conditions of living of other human beings, a great desire arose in him to come in contact with the world. And so, one day he went forth, being driven in his chariot through the decorated town by his faithful charioteer Channa. Notwithstanding all precautions to the contrary, his eyes met with some sights which left a deep impression on his mind. An old man, an ill man, a corpse taught him the lessons, which had been kept hidden from him, that all are subject to old age, decay and death. The sight of a recluse, whose peace of mind seemed to have raised him above the sorrows of the world, made the prince wonder, whether not there would lie the solution of life's problem, the mystery of sorrow and conflict.

Renunciation

While the plan ripened in his mind to leave his luxury and to experience poverty, privation and misery, so as to understand them better and to find a solution of the difficulties of others, on a certain day the message was brought to him that the princess, his wife, had given birth to a son. Realizing that this child would be a fetter which would bind him tightly to the home-life, he named him Rāhula, which means fetter. Seeing that he would not be able even to start on his self-imposed mission, if he would let this new affection take roots in his heart, he left palace and possessions, father, wife and child that very night. Channa, his charioteer, led him out on his horse Kanthaka. Then the prince assumed the garb of an ascetic, returning his ornaments with Channa.

Having thus retired from the world he began the usual ascetic's life. He went on foot and begged his food from house to house in the town Rājagaha. He learned the art of mind-concentration from ascetic teachers as Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. They were to teach him mind-concentration up to

the third and fourth stage of formless ecstasy (*arūpa-jhāna*) but not beyond. And so he left them dissatisfied.

With five companions, Kondañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma and Assajī, he began that life of austerity, the mere reading of which makes one shudder. The satisfaction of all the wishes had not brought the solution of life's problem; it had only accentuated it. Therefore, he would set out on the opposite route: the denial of all demands of the body. For, "where the senses are present, where sense-objects are present, where consciousness is present, there is Māra and the play of Māra." The body felt the need of company: he sought the loneliness of the woods. The body felt the need of food: he starved himself till utter weakness made him faint. The body felt the need of being cared for: he neglected not only his health, but with the severest ascetic practices he reduced his body systematically to a wreck. The mind felt the need of wandering: he concentrated it without release on the problem he was intent to solve.

Thus he lived and spent his young manhood in extreme asceticism for full six years. Physical exhaustion to the point of a complete breakdown made it impossible for the mind to apply its keenness to psychological truths. Finally he had to admit: "Never did these dire austerities bring me to the ennobling gifts of superhuman knowledge and insight, because none lead to that noble understanding which, when won, leads on to deliverance and guides him who lives up to it onward to the utter extinction of all ill[1]". Coming to the decision that austerities are not the way to enlightenment, he again resorted to the taking of normal food, much to the disappointment of his five companions, who deserted him.

[1] Majjh. N. 12.

Enlightenment

Once the bodhisatta had regained his strength and was able once more to concentrate his mind on the problem of conflict, he went to Uruvela in the district of Magadha, close to the town which is now known as Gaya. There, in a pleasant forest grove, he strove with spiritual exertion, recalling to his mind the pleasant experience he had as a child under the rose-apple tree during the royal ploughing festival. While he was thus enjoying again that peace of mind, he was observed by a pious lady, named Sujāta, and her servant, who in their excitement mistook him for a deity to whom they made their offering of milk-rice, seated at the foot of a banyan tree. "May your wishes prosper like mine own", she whispered and withdrew.

After having taken his bath in the river nearby, he partook of the food and threw the bowl into the water which was caught in a counter-current, went thus a little up-stream and sank in the whirlpool. Taking this as a good omen, he sat himself in the evening at the foot of a fig-tree with the strong determination: "Let my skin, sinews and bones shrivel and wither, let my flesh and blood dry up, rather than from this seat I will stir until I have attained that supreme and absolute insight." But Māra, the personification of lust in the senses, tempted him to abandon the struggle. His mind must have been tortured with the thoughts of doubt and discouragement, while the bodily senses clamoured for satisfaction with lust, indolence and pride. All these depravities, however, were put to shame by the remembrance of the ten perfections (*pāramī*) he had practised so faithfully.

Thus, with a mind stilled, purified, cleansed, spotless, with the defilements gone, supple, dexterous, firm and undisturbed, he directed his mind to the passing away and rebirth of beings, to the destruction of mental corruptions. Thus he realized the truth of universal suffering, the truth of craving being the cause of conflict, the truth of the cessation of sorrow through the overcoming of craving, the truth of the way that leads to the overcoming of

craving and conflict. In the world of luxury he had tried to satisfy the "self" and thus attain freedom from desire. When he failed there, he tried to kill that "self" by mortification. But when he failed again, he began to understand that the world of desire and self is only in the mind and is thus entirely subjective. Thus, by the realization of non-self (*anatta*), by avoiding both extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, he found the middle path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) and the peace of heart and mind he had been looking for so long.

Since that Wesak full-moon night prince Siddhattha Gotama is called the Buddha, which means the Awakened One, the Enlightened One. That night, at the foot of the bodhi-tree he realized the truth, not through inspiration or revelation, but by his own understanding and insight, through himself and in himself, the real nature of all things as impermanent, sorrow-fraught and soulless (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*). In that realization all selfishness and craving had been conquered, and hence all rebirth and conflict brought to an end. "Architect, I see thee! Never a house shalt thou build again ...Achieved is the cessation of craving's thirst[2]".

First Events after Enlightenment

Seven weeks the Buddha spent under and near the Bodhi-tree, now absorbed in meditation and enjoying the bliss of emancipation, then formulating the law of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), tracing the fact of conflict in life to ignorance of the nature of self; sometimes answering questions of passers by, informing a brahman that only he who is free from lust and hate and pride, who is pure, restrained and self-controlled is a true brahman, at other times receiving the pious gifts of simple people. But even in this all-pervading peace there arose in his mind an indecisive thought: This truth which he now realized after so

[2]Dhammapada v. I 54.

much struggle, which was certainly sublime but also abstruse, would it serve any purpose to propose that teaching to people in the world who were solely devoted to the attachments and pleasures of the senses? But then also came the thought to him that there would be beings whose sight was only slightly blurred and covered with some dust of worldliness, who would go to ruin if they were not taught the truth, and who might become knowers of the truth on hearing it. His compassionate heart gave him the lead, and he decided to spend the rest of his life in the service of the propagation of his newly found doctrine.

Thinking first of his erstwhile teachers Āḷāra and Uddaka, he found out that they had deceased already. And thus he set out for Benares to meet his five companions in the ascetic life. Though they had discarded him as one unfaithful to their austere practices, yet the peace of mind visible on his countenance and the conviction of his utterances made them listen with respect. There in the Deer Park at Isipatana in Sarnath near Benares the Buddha delivered his first discourse and set thus arolling the Wheel of Truth (*Dhamma-cakkappavattana Sutta*). There he spoke to them about the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification which are both useless and leading to no good. There he taught them the middle path which is the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*) of right action with mind control, the way he had found after the realization of sorrow, its cause and its cessation. One of those five then realized for himself that whatsoever is of the nature of arising that is also subject to cessation. Thereby he entered the stream (*sotāpanna*) which finally leads to Nibbāna and he was henceforth known as Kondañña who attained insight: Añña Koṇḍañña. The second discourse of the Master which brought the full enlightenment of arahantship to all his five followers was on the most essential characteristic of his teaching, the doctrine of soullessness (*anatta*). In the Anatta-lakkhaṇa Sutta all views about a permanent soul or self or substance are utterly discarded, and the analysis of mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) shows but the rolling on of ever-changing and passing phenom-

ena. It is the necessary corollary of the Buddha's teaching of impermanence (*anicca*), which, if misunderstood, leads to conflict (*dukkha*), but if rightly grasped leads to Nibbāna, the deliverance of the delusion of self.

Spreading the Doctrine

The Order of Monks *(saṅgha)* was thus established. The first layman to take his refuge in the Triple Gem (Buddha-Dhamma-saṅgha) was Yasa, who, disgusted with the fleeting pleasures of the world, sought ordination under the Buddha. He in his turn persuaded some of his friends, first four, later fifty more, to follow his example. They all renounced the world and after having been instructed by the Buddha for some time, they all became arahants. Then the Buddha sent his sixty disciples to preach the newly realized truth, instructing them not to go with two in the same directions. They made many converts and out of those converts so many desired to renounce the world that the Buddha allowed his monks to admit them into the Order themselves by making them recite the threefold refuge. Young men playing games together with their wives were converted and ordained on the spot. Many ascetics with their disciples were convinced of the futility of their penances and joined the Order forthwith. King Bimbisāra who ruled at Rājagaha was so pleased with the new doctrine and the monks, that he donated to the Buddha and the Order a bamboo-grove (Veluvana) to establish there a residence. It was here within the first year after the enlightenment that the two friends Upatissa and Kolita, attracted by the recollected deportment of the arahant Assajī, were won over to the new teaching and became the two chief disciples of the Buddha, Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna. Just as the Buddha by founding the kingdom of righteousness became the king of the truth (*dhammarāja*), so his chief disciple Sāriputta became the general of the truth (*dhammasenāpati*). On several occasions he preached on instruction and in the presence

of the Buddha, who praised him as chief among those endowed with insight. Mahā Moggallāna was eminent in psychic powers (*iddhi*) and both in their diverse ways contributed much to the spreading of the doctrine.

As the Buddha's teaching is a doctrine of renunciation, the number of monks was growing steadily, so that the people of Magadha became alarmed and even averse for some time, accusing the Buddha of bringing the country to ruin through the breaking up of families, producing childlessness and widowhood.

Having spent the winter months in Rājagaha, the Buddha received there the invitation of his father, king Suddhodana to return to his town Kapilavatthu. This he did and took lodging with his monks in the banyan park. Not having received an invitation from anyone to partake of the next day's noon-meal, they all went begging for their food from house to house. When the king came to hear of it that his own son was thus begging in his own town, he became perturbed in his mind; but, when the Buddha explained that this was the custom to throw off all sloth in the practice of the Dhamma, king Suddhodana became a stream-enterer *(sotāpanna).* Princess Yasodhara had not come forward to receive her Lord, but the Buddha condescended to go with his chief disciples to her apartments, where he allowed her to do reverence according to her desire. A later Sanskrit work, the Mahāvastu, says that when she heard that the Buddha lived on one meal a day, slept on a low couch, did not use any ornaments, but dressed in a yellow robe, she did likewise. And now when the Buddha came to her, she clasped his ankles, touched his feet with her forehead and did reverence according to her desire. And the Buddha did not blame her.

It was during that same visit to Kapilavatthu that the wedding feast was arranged for prince Nanda, the son of Mahāpajāpatī, the Buddha's foster mother. The Buddha came to the palace for alms, gave the bowl to prince Nanda and left immediately. Prince Nanda, not knowing what to do with the bowl, followed the Buddha who returned to the banyan park. Out of respect and

reverence prince Nanda did not dare to refuse when the Buddha asked him whether he did not wish to renounce the world. No wonder that shortly after he was ordained, he had great desires to go back home again. But the Buddha spoke to him about a heavenly reward in a life to come so vividly that Nanda decided to persevere. Only when other monks scoffed at him for leading the holy life like a hireling for the sake of remuneration, his mind took a different attitude and he attained the highest perfection.

Thus, under the royal protection of king Suddhodana and king Bimbisāra the Order grew rapidly and the new teaching spread. Even Rāhula, the Buddha's son, was ordained, for that was the real inheritance the Buddha could give him after having renounced all worldly wealth.

Some Outstanding Events

It was especially during the first twenty years after his enlightenment that the Buddha spent the most active part of his life, from 35 to 55 years of age, by preaching and travelling as far west as Kosambi. When he was 40 years old, king Suddhodana, his father, died, after which Mahāpajāpatī decided to renounce the world. But the Buddha repeatedly refused to give permission. Only on the intervention of his disciple and personal attendant Ānanda the Buddha consented while he was staying at Vesāli if Mahāpajāpatī would take upon herself eight strict additional rules. She consented eagerly and many noble ladies renounced the world with her.

In the tenth year after his enlightenment we hear of a quarrel among the monks, which even the Buddha was not able to settle. Thus he left them to themselves for three months which he spent in solitude in the Parileyya forest. When at the end of three months the quarrelsome monks found that the support of the lay people was waning, they reconciled and obtained the Buddha's pardon.

The Buddha's compassion showed itself in many different ways. A poor farmer of Āḷavi had lost his ox and in searching for it he came late for the discourse to be delivered by the Buddha. But the Master had waited for him, and when the man finally arrived, the Buddha wanted him first to be served with some food so that his mind would be tranquil. A weaver's daughter had for three years practised the Buddha's advice to meditate on death. When after that period the Buddha came again to that village she was prevented from going on time, owing to pressing work. But again the Buddha had waited, and on further instruction she entered the path of holiness *(sotāpanna)*. On her way home she was killed by accident. On another occasion, he washed with his own hands the wounds of a monk called Putigata Tissa, who was neglected by his brethren because of his loathsome disease. Refreshed in body, calmed in mind, he attained arahantship and died.

Compassion of a higher kind the Buddha showed with Kisā Gotamī, who came to him to have her dead child cured. By sending her to fetch some mustard seed from a house where none had died—a thing which she found impossible—she understood the universality of sorrow, became a stream-enterer and a nun, and attained later arahantship. The Buddha had not restored the child to life, but he had cured the mother from the cause of all sorrow and death, i.e., from craving.

During the last 25 years of his life, from 55 to 80, the Buddha spent most of his time in Sāvatthī in the residence built by Anāthapiṇḍika; in the grove of prince Jeta (Jetavanārāma), where the good Ānanda was his personal attendant. In Sāvatthī was also residing the wealthy lady Visakha who built a monastery in the Eastern Park (Pubbārāma) and bestowed her generous gifts on the Buddha and his monks, who considered her as their mother.

The Last Day

Knowing that he would not live longer than three months, the Buddha made Ānanda gather the monks at Vesāli to whom he gave a final discourse before leaving them. Travelling on through different villages they reached Pava, where Cunda, the smith, provided them with food in his mango-grove. The meal was served with *sukara-maddava* which means "pig's soft food", but it is not clear whether it was food made of pig's flesh, or some sort of truffles, which is the food eaten by pigs. Anyhow, it made the Master suffer greatly from dysentery with evacuation of blood (*lohita-pakkandika*). But still he continued his journey to Kusināra, on the way taking a river-bath. Reaching a grove of *sal*-trees near the town, the Buddha laid down on his right side with his head to the north. Ānanda, realizing that he was only a learner, while his Master was passing away, began to weep, but the Buddha consoled him, pointing out the impermanence of all things, and giving him the doctrine as his teacher. Subhadda came to settle some doubts and was converted by the Buddha, the last in his long missionary career.

Finally, the Buddha invited the monks to ask anything if they had some doubts to clear; but all remained silent as even the youngest monk present there had entered the stream of holiness. After this the Buddha spoke his last words: "Well then O monks, I exhort you: component things are subject to decay. Strive on with earnestness" (*handa dāni bhikkhave āmantayāmi vo; vaya-dhammā sankhārā. Appamādena sampadetha*), Then, for a moment he attained to cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā-vedayita nirodha*). But returning from his trance to normal consciousness, he passed finally away.

Buddhist History

The First Council

When the news of the Buddha's passing away was brought to the arahant Mahā Kassapa, the most senior of the brotherhood, it is said that one of the monks, Subhadda, who had joined the Order lately and at an advanced age, showed his satisfaction that now they would be free to do what they liked. Owing to this incident, Mahā Kassapa, the arahant, proposed that there should be a recital of the Dhamma and Vinaya. The council was held under the patronage of king Ajātasattu on one of the live hills of Rājagaha, called Yobhara, in the Sattapanni Cave. Mahā Kassapa chose the monks who should attend. Ānanda Thera who had been the faithful disciple and attendant of the Buddha for the last twenty-five years, and who was to recite the discourses and sayings as he had heard them (*sutta*), became an arahant the night before the commencement, so that the total number of arahants present was five hundred. The venerable Kassapa presided, the venerable Upāli recited the Vinaya rules for monastic behaviour, and the venerable Ānanda recited the Suttas, all of which begin with the words "Thus have I heard" (*evaṁ me sutaṁ*). It was said that the Buddha had given permission to the saṅgha to revoke the lesser rules of discipline. But as Ānanda had not asked which were these minor rules (for which neglect he was rebuked), the saṅgha decided to retain and observe them all. There is a report that the venerable Mahā Kassapa himself recited the Abhidhamma,

but this detail is not found in the relation of the Cullavagga. It is possible, however, that the Abhidhamma at this time was not treated as a separate *piṭaka*, especially as Buddhaghosa, the great commentator of some later century, gives a classification where the Abhidhamma is included in the Khuddaka Nikāya. The convocation lasted for seven months and began with the rain-season (*vassana*) after the Buddha's demise.

The Second Council

The sixth king who succeeded Ajātasattu was called Kāḷasoka. When he had reigned ten years, one hundred years had passed since the Buddha's Parinibbāna. The Thera Yasa, who had personally been converted by the Buddha and who was now more than 165 years old, while going one day for aims (*pindapata*) in the town of Vesāli, saw that the monks there asked and collected from the people money which they received in a bowl filled with water. They resented his admonition and wanted to excommunicate him. They even obtained the support of king Kāḷasoka for some time, but after the king had been informed by his sister who was a nun and arahant, a council was convened at Vesāli to decide on the ten points, for which reason it is called the Council of the Vinaya. The venerable Revata presided and the ten lax rules of the Vajjian monks were condemned. They had maintained among other that it was permissible to eat food when the shadow of the sun had passed beyond noon two fingers' breadth; that gold and silver might be made use of, etc. Though this convocation consisted of seven hundred arahants, the corrupted Vajjian monks did not submit and about ten thousand were excommunicated. But they constituted themselves into what they called the Mahasaṅghika school. They broke up the sense and the doctrine contained in the discourses (Sutta-piṭaka). It is from this time that originate the eighteen schools, seventeen of which were schismatic.

Dharmāsoka

During the next 118 years king Kāḷasoka was succeeded by twenty-one kings. Chandragupta, who worked his way up from a robber-chief to the royal throne, was the founder of the Mauriyan dynasty ruling in Magadha. He defeated Seleukos Nikator, the Greek invader of India, towards the end of the fourth century B.C., thus adding all the provinces west of the Indus (present-day Afghanistan) to his kingdom. Pāṭaliputta was his capital, which is modern Patna. His son extended the new empire, but it is especially his grandson Asoka whom we have to know a little more. His elder brother, the Viceroy at Takkasila in the Punjab, naturally claimed his father's throne, but was opposed by Asoka, who was Viceroy at Ujjeni. After a severe struggle in which the elder brother lost his life, Asoka made his way to the throne. He was formally anointed only four years after his father's death, from which coronation date all further dates are deduced. This is given as 218 after the Buddha's Parinibbāna, which would correspond to 265 B.C. In the ninth year of Asoka's reign war broke out between Magadha and Kalinga, the then most powerful kingdom in India, on the east coast of the sub-continent. Being successful, Asoka's empire there included part of what is now known as Afghanistan and Baluchistan in the north-west, bordering on the Syrian empire of Antiochus II, while to the south the Cholas and Pandyas at the end of the peninsula were included.

Where conquest usually leads to thirst for more, the emperor Asoka—alone among conquerors—bitterly regretted the horrors of war. The peaceful teaching of Buddhism must have greatly attracted him and from this time onward, Buddhism enters the field of world-history. The missionary zeal of the emperor was great. All this is known from the so-called rock-edicts which are a set of fourteen rock-inscriptions, six pillar-edicts and some minor carvings, found from the extreme north-west of the empire to as far south as Mysore. He must have spent enormous sums, in the erection of monuments and other religious buildings, for which

reason he is often referred to as Dharmāsoka. His propagation of the Buddha's doctrine is mostly on ethical points. No animal may be slaughtered for sacrifice; medical treatment must be given to man and to animals; wells were dug and trees were planted along the roads for the enjoyment of man and beast. Docility to parents, liberality to friends, economy and the avoidance of disputes are praised. Toleration of other sects was also laid down as a law.

This tolerance, however, did not make the emperor less zealous in his effort to keep the Buddha's teaching and his Order of monks pure. Asoka's protection of the Order of monks (*saṅgha*) had attracted also may heretics. Therefore, in the seventeenth year of his reign the emperor Asoka convened a council of monks at Patna under the Thera Moggaliputta Tissa. 60,000 monks who did not hold the view that the, Buddha was a teacher of the doctrine of analysis (*vibhajjavada*) were expelled as heretics. It seems that in this council which is called the Convocation of the True Doctrine (*saddhammasaṅgaha*) was recited that book of the Abhidhamma, known as the, Points of Controversy (*Kathāvatthu*). This third council was completed by one thousand monks in nine months in the year 247 B.C.

But Asoka's interests went further still. Though he had given up all ideas of conquest of land, he showed his religious zeal in his effort to conquer other nations for the truth. For that purpose he did not use any force or compulsion, but sent missionaries to spread the noble teaching of the Buddha to the regions of the Himalayas, Syria, Egypt and Macedonia, while Sri Lanka (the island of Ceylon) had the unique privilege of receiving a mission headed by the emperor's own and only son Mahinda, who was ordained as a Buddhist monk and had attained arahantship. For the maintenance of religious discipline he had special ministers appointed at the court to superintend the propagation of the Dhamma and to regulate the affairs of the Order, with special jurisdiction, apart from the ordinary magistrates. In his old age the emperor became more and more generous towards his religion. He even used to send his precious vessels to the temple, used for

the royal table. When finally nearing his end a myrobolan fruit was given him as medicine, he sent the half of it to the monks to partake of.

Although Asoka was far in advance of his age in many aspects, yet he failed to make his work survive. Favoured by his patronage and strong only through his support, the internal weakness of his religious reign became apparent as soon as he had passed away. And thus his empire disintegrated all the quicker as he left no son to succeed him, no organisation to continue his work. His empire was his personality and they vanished together. Before another hundred years had elapsed his great reign was but a memory, Buddhism had been undermined by brahman influences and Hindu cults—and if not for the mission of Mahinda, Asoka's son to Sri Lanka, Buddhism would have been submerged in the ocean from where it took its origin.

Mahinda and his Mission

About 250 years after the passing away of the Buddha and more than 300 years before the birth of Christ, Sri Lanka (Ceylon) was ruled over by its third king in Anuradhapura, king Devānampiya Tissa. One year on the full-moon day of Poson the king was celebrating a great feast, with an elk-hunt as one of its outstanding features. The royal hunt was conducted about eight miles from the town, when in the course of the pursuit the king had become separated from his retinue. When therefore, all of a sudden he heard someone calling him by his name Tissa, he was startled, all the more when he noticed on the summit of a rock in the jungle a monk who spoke to him. It was Mahinda, the son of emperor Asoka, sent by him in the ninth year of his reign after his conversion to Buddhism. Mahinda had renounced the world as a Buddhist monk and had attained the highest perfection of arahantship. He had come to Sri Lanka to establish there too the new religion of the Buddha, together with four other ara-

hants and a lay disciple. When Mahinda saw from the king's answers that he was an intelligent person and capable of understanding a deep doctrine, he preached to him and the king's retinue who meanwhile had joined him. At the conclusion, the king invited the saintly monk to come with them to the capital Anuradhapura, where subsequently the king dedicated the great park Mahāmegha to the saṅgha.

The new religion had a phenomenal growth in the island, mainly due to the personality of the apostle, who through his holiness of life and conviction of word made many converts. The enthusiastic support of the king had also to play a great part therein, so that in a short time the whole island had embraced Buddhism and many had entered the Order as monks.

The Sacred Bodhi Tree

Many women there were also anxious to be ordained as nuns, and among them was princess Anula, the king's younger brother's wife. As monks cannot give ordination to females, Mahinda arahant told the king to send delegates to India requesting the emperor Asoka to send his daughter Saṅghamitta who was already ordained as a bhikkhuni, together with others. The king's minister Ariṭṭha was sent, but the emperor was at first reluctant, to send his daughter. Only on the insistence of the Therī Saṅghamitta herself, the emperor consented and sent her together with eleven other ones with the right branch of the sacred bodhi tree under the shade of which prince Siddhattha had attained enlightenment. When the ship arrived at Dambakola Patuna, king Devānampiya Tissa himself, wading neck-deep into the sea, brought the sacred branch raised on his head to the shore. In procession it was later taken to Anuradhapura and planted in the Mahāmegha Park in the 281st year after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha. There the same tree still grows, famous all over the world as the oldest historical tree in the world, venerated by all

Buddhists throughout more than twenty-two centuries, as the symbol of the true religion and teaching of the Buddha.

Early History in Sri Lanka

While king Devānampiya Tissa was reigning at Anuradhapura, his younger brother Mahānāga was ruling over Ruhunu district with Māgama as capital. King Tissa was succeeded in Aunuradhapura by other brothers of his, called Uttiya, Mahasiva and Suratissa, all of whom were protecting and practising the teaching of the Buddha. But the observance of the five precepts of Buddhism forbids killing and considers the profession of a soldier as wrong livelihood. Very soon therefore, the higher places in the army were occupied by foreigners; and two of them killed king Suratissa and seized the throne. Though they were not allowed to live long in their wrongfully assumed dignity, yet it set an example to others; and soon Eḷāra, a Tamil prince from India, invaded the country with a great force and ruled in Anuradhapura. It must be admitted that he was just and made the country prosper; and so one may admire him as a ruler, but one cannot love him as a robber. He did not conquer the Ruhunu province, however, i.e., south and east of the Kaluganga and the Mahaveliganga.

At that time the ruler in Māgama in Ruhuna was Kavan Tissa, the third in descent from Mahānāga. His queen Vihāra Mahā Devi gave him two sons, Gamini and Tissa. "Shut in on one side by the Tamils beyond the river, and by the ocean on the other, how can I lie down with limbs outstretched?" was the restless thought of prince Gamini. When grown up he gathered an army defeating one by one the Tamil chiefs till he met Eḷāra in single combat outside the gates of Anuradhapura and slew him too (161 B.C.). Thus the Sinhala dynasty was restored and Lanka united under one monarch. Gami, after his victories felt remorse on account of all the suffering caused by his wars, so king Dutugemunu to regain his peace of mind became the protector of the Buddha's

teaching, the patron of the Buddhist monks, building temples and hospitals, constructing irrigation tanks and channels, which even in their ruined state call for the admiration of our modern civilisation.

Mirissaveti Dagoba was built over the spot where the king's spear, containing a relic, had got stuck in the ground. It was done as a penance for his neglect to share some chillies with the monks, as he had vowed. The great Brazen Palace (Lova Mahā Paya) with its 1600 granite pillars and nine storeys, roofed with sheets of brass, gave lodging and comfort to the Buddhist monks. But his greatest work, the building of Ruanwali Dagoba, containing the greatest treasures of relics and precious gifts, he could not live to see completed. To gratify the king's last wishes a bamboo spire was erected and the whole covered with white cloth. Gazing at the dagoba the great king died piously, his last thought being gladdened not by his wonderful achievements, but by the remembrance of two offerings of some food made by him when he was himself in distress. He passed away in 77 B.C.

King Dutugemunu was succeeded by his brother Saddha Tissa, who reigned peacefully and piously for eighteen years till 59 B.C. With the death of these two brothers the most glorious period of Ceylon history comes to an end. Together with the history of the country also the history of Buddhism begins to wane, for history and religion in Sri Lanka go always hand in hand, for better or for worse.

King Saddha Tissa's three sons quarrelled and fought about the throne, the eldest reigning only for one month and ten days. The second brother was careless about his religion at least in the beginning of his reign of nine years. The third brother was better, more pious, but a weakling, so that he was driven from his throne after six years by his own general. He was revenged, however, by a still younger brother, Saddha Tissa's fourth son, Vattagāminī, who ascended the throne thirty-three years after Dutugemunu's death.

Within a few months, however, the country was invaded

again by South Indians who ruled in Anuradhapura, while rebellion in Ruhuna prevented Vattagāminī to retire across the rivers. Thus he lived in hiding mostly in caves, the most famous of which are the rock-temples at Dambulla, for fourteen years. But in the year 29 B.C. he succeeded in winning back his throne and reigned in prosperity for twelve more years. Grateful for his deliverance he built amongst others the Abhayagiri Vihāra in Anuradhapura, (now miscalled Jetavanārāma). King Vattagāminī is also known under the name Valagamba. Where other kings had bestowed personal gifts on the Order of monks, king Vattagāminī, while in hiding, was unable to do so; and thus he began to dedicate lands to the saṅgha. During his reign also appear the first signs of a schism. The Mahā Vihāra was a foundation of king Dutugemunu, while Abhayagiri Vihāra was Vattagāminī's work, enjoying his privileged protection. When a monk, censured by the Mahā Vihāra monks, was admitted by the monks of the Abhayagiri Vihāra, all relations were broken off forthwith. When now the Abhayagiri monks gradually developed a new form of teaching, appearing to disagree with tradition, and as the old traditional teachings up to now had only been handed down orally, it was decided to put them in writing in order to prevent heresies from spreading.

Thus in the cave temple of Aluvihāra near Matale five hundred monk-arahants met, recited and wrote down the entire collection of the doctrine and its commentaries, as they had been upheld by the three great convocations and handed down in succession from Upāli the arahant. This happened about the year 26 B.C.

The Tipiṭaka and Commentaries

Although the various disputes about the Discipline (*vinaya*) and the Doctrine (*dhamma*) had been settled by the different councils of Rājagaha, Vesāli and Pāṭaliputta, yet it was done merely by a rehearsal (*saṅgāyana*) of the sayings of the Buddha. Those say-

ings naturally fell into two classes, the disciplinary rules and the doctrinal discourses. In those rules of discipline, however, is also mentioned a learned monk "who knows the doctrine, the discipline and the tabulated summary" (*dhammadharo, vinayadharo, mātikadharo*: Mahāvagga II. 20). This tabulated summary are the condensed contents of the philosophical parts, which could not properly be classified either as rules or as discourses. These are the subjects discussed in the Abhidhamma, so that the final compilation forms three collections (*ti-piṭaka*): Vinaya-piṭaka, Sutta-piṭaka and Abhidhamma-piṭaka.

The Vinaya-piṭaka chiefly deals with the rules of discipline for monks and nuns, each rule together with an account of the incident which led to the promulgation of that rule. This occupies two volumes, dealing with the major offences (*parājikā*) and the minor offences (*pacittiya*). The third volume called Mahāvagga gives the early history of the saṅgha, special rules about the observances of the full and new moon days on which the rules of restraint (*patimokkha*) have to be recited (*uposatha*), rules for the residence of the rain-season (*vassana*). The fourth volume, called Cullavagga, gives many detailed rules for bathing, dressing, dwelling, etc. and contains the history of the first two councils of Rājagaha and Vesāli. The fifth volume is an "appendix" (*parivara*), containing summaries of the rules.

The Sutta-piṭaka is the collection of discourses grouped together according to their length or contents in five groups: Long Discourses (Dīgha Nikāya): 34 suttas in three volumes; Middle-length Discourses (Majjhima Nikāya): 152 suttas in 15 chapters; Kindred Sayings (Saṁyutta Nikāya): 7762 suttas, grouped according to their contents; Numerical Sayings (Aṅguttara Nikāya): 9557 suttas in eleven sections increasing their number from one to eleven; Division of Minor Works (Khuddaka Nikāya): this group contains fifteen smaller works of which the best known are: the Path of Truth (Dhammapada), Collection of Verse Suttas (Sutta Nipāta), Verses of Elder Monks and Nuns (Thera-gāthā, Therī-gāthā), Birth Stories (Jātaka), etc.

The Abhidhamma-Piṭaka contains the Buddhist philosophy as the ultimate doctrine of analysis, in seven books: Enumeration of mental phenomena (Dhammasanganī); the Classification (Vibhaṅga); Points of Controversy (Kathāvatthu); Designation of Human Types (Puggala Paññatti); Discussion of Mental Elements (Dhātukathā); Book of Pairs on Applied Logic (Yamaka); Book of Relations (Paṭṭhāna).

As the mode of instruction in olden times was not through the written but through the spoken word, the texts (Pāḷi) were handed down together with their commentaries, which were compiled and taught in the dialect of the district where the teaching was conducted. In the early part of the fifth century after Christ, the commentaries thus handed down in the schools had already been written down in the local dialects, Then came to Sri Lanka a brahman from North India, the venerable Buddhaghosa, who reconstructed and translated the different materials available in this country in the now classical language of the canonical texts, as handed down in Sinhala at the Mahā Vihāra at Anuradhapura. To prove his efficiency as compiler and translator, he was asked to compose an essay on a stanza of four lines. This resulted in his writing that momentous treatise: the Path of Purity (Visuddhi Magga) in three volumes, on virtuous conduct (*sīla*), concentration, (*samādhi*) and insight (*paññā*). His commentatorial translations have thus not only the value of elucidations of the original texts, but are also a mine of historic interest about the places where different incidents related by him occurred.

The Dhamma

Thus far we have considered the simple and unadorned facts of the life of prince Siddhattha who became Gotama, the Buddha. We have also seen the history of Buddhism in its early developments, till the doctrine became firmly established in that mighty collection of texts, known as the Tipiṭaka, the three collections of monastic rules, religious discourses and philosophic treatises.

Now we turn to the doctrine itself, contained in those many volumes; and we shall consider the main aspects in the following chapters. There is first of all the fundamental teaching contained in the Buddha's first sermon on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. Equally important are the three characteristics, repeated so often throughout the texts, which form the essence of all that is to be known, the three marks of distinction: impermanence, conflict and soullessness. This last one in particular is exclusively found in the Buddha's teachings, and it formed rightly the subject of the Buddha's Second Sermon on soullessness, which gave insight where there was formerly only knowledge.

In the light of this new approach, the earlier teachings about re-incarnation had to be revised by the Buddha in his doctrine of action (*karma*) and rebirth, of causation and effect in dependent origination. That naturally has its moral implications which will be considered in some detail, together with the psychological approach to the concept of Nibbāna.

The First Sermon—The four Noble Truths

It is typical that in the beginning of the Buddha's doctrine there is no basis of a supernatural origin, such as inspiration or revelation, which require an implicit faith, submission of the intellect and acceptance of authority. Truth as expounded by the Buddha is not an eternal or divine truth, but a mere and clear statement of fact which nobody needs to believe, and which everyone can test for himself. Here is no truth about a creation, a beginning in the past, or about an infinity or eternity to come, but just a simple statement about the present, about a fact in everybody's daily life. Yet, that simple statement is so deep in meaning and application, that it required the enlightenment of a Buddha to discover it, a truth which everybody can see and learn and know, and which yet cannot be fully understood, unless it is experienced with insight. And that is the truth of disharmony, of sorrow, of suffering, of dissatisfaction, of conflict (*dukkha*).

It was the subject of the first discourse after his enlightenment, presented by the Buddha to his former companions in his life of asceticism in search of truth. And thus it forms the true basis of his teaching, chronologically as well as psychologically, fundamentally as well as structurally. This truth is not dependent on its promulgation by the Buddha, for it is not a law which needs the authority of its creator for its sanction. It is factual truth, not even dependent on the knowledge thereof, for it is so universal that it applies to all things that are transient. And what is there that is not transient? Thus, the first statement of truth is a statement of a universal fact of conflict (*dukkha-sacca*): that all component things are in conflict, just because they are component.

Now, what is conflict? It may be sorrow which is the result of some loss of relations, of property, of position, of health; it may be on the other hand the association under undesirable circumstances with undesirable people. There is also physical pain of illness, discomfort, hunger and thirst, or contact with

things which are not pleasing to the senses, such as bad smells, strident noises, disagreeable tastes, ugly sights. There may be regret over a thing which one has done, or perhaps has not done although it was one's duty. It can be also some sort of sympathy which one feels over the misfortunes of others, when one feels as if it happened to oneself. Sometimes things go so badly that a feeling of despair is experienced, especially when there is also a feeling of responsibility for the well-being of others, one's wife and children, and when there is no hope of improvement of conditions. Then there is the ultimate sorrow which is the anticipation of death, the dissolution of all expectations. There are, of course, great joys in life in the experiencing of beauty, of love, of truth. But these joys are not only short-lived, but they are so full of uncertainty when they are not understood, that one grasps at them in fear that they may not be real. And so there is even a factor of disharmony in satisfaction itself. Looking for a common factor in all these manifold experiences of disharmony and suffering, of sorrow and conflict, of hope and fear, it would appear that they have all one thing in common, that they all happen to *me* as the subject. The sorrow of others may call for sympathy, but even there the feeling of suffering is felt as a loss to me, when it happens to people known to me, associated with me, to people who in a way are an extension of my own being. Many times one may pass a funeral procession on its way to the cemetery without even a thought of enquiry, leave alone one of sympathy. The unknown is not part of myself. It is, therefore, only when I am personally involved that there is a sense of loss. This loss may not be an actual separation, it may equally well be an association with something disagreeable to myself; that too, in a way, is a loss to self-satisfaction, self-esteem, prestige, to my feeling of security.

And so one arrives, naturally, that is not by revelation, at the discovery that all this suffering is attached to the subject psychologically, even when there is some physical pain involved. For that reason, the Buddha stated that every component thing

is basically a source of sorrow, whether it is pleasure or pain, because, being composed, it is naturally decomposable. Nothing is made which cannot be unmade. The most solid rocks crumble in an earth-quake; the hardest metal can be molten; the hottest fire can be quenched; the greatest joy is perishable. Whatever has arisen is also subject to ending, not only in matter, but more so in mind, where there is nothing substantial enough to last even a few moments.

Then, if this impermanence of change and decay is so universal and without exception so as to be an inherent and essential quality of everything that is composed, why should that impermanence be felt as a sense of loss to me? We have seen already that the sense of loss is only experienced when I am involved. It is therefore, this attachment of myself to whatever is impermanent, which is the cause of this sense of loss to me whenever the composed becomes decomposed, although that is the most natural thing in the world. A child breaks its doll and is grieved, not because of the doll, but on account of her loss. Likewise a mother grieves over her child's death, because the child was her own, her self.

Thus the Buddha stated in his second Noble Truth that the origin of sorrow (*dukkha-samudaya*), the origin of conflict, is to be found in craving, in attachment, which has made the object part of the subject: this is my self, this is my own. This subject-object relationship, simple as it appears, goes much deeper; and we shall go into that aspect more fully in subsequent chapters. Being a truly fundamental truth, it will show up again and again under different aspects. For the moment, having seen that craving is the cause of conflict, the question arises: What is this craving?

The Buddha distinguishes three kinds of craving, namely, desire for sense-pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*), clinging to the i.e. of a permanent existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) and craving for extinction (*vibhava-taṇhā*). The desire for sense-pleasures is the desire for self-gratification in its many forms of seeking satisfaction for the senses of the body as well as satisfaction for the mind. It is

a desire for the accumulation of property and learning, for it is through the possession of property and of knowledge that one builds up a fortification in self-defence. If, therefore, such craving is not fulfilled, it is felt as a loss of security, which is conflict. More intense than the momentary desire for sense-pleasures is the clinging to the i.e. of self-continuance, so that there should be not only satisfaction in the present, but also in the future. It is craving (*bhava-taṇhā*) for becoming more in power, longer in duration, greater in extension; and, if such clinging to a concept of an ideal future is not fulfilled, there can be no enjoyment in the pleasures of the fleeting moment; and that too is a source of conflict. Then there is the craving for extinction (*vibhava-taṇhā*) which is a craving for escape from sorrow, which also can take on many forms and disguises. Although it is a contradiction and hence a conflict to have craving (*taṇhā*) for unbecoming (*vibhava*), it is an attempt at escaping from oneself, from responsibility, from consequences, which is the deepest inner conflict and cause of more sorrow.

As a bodhisatta, prince Siddhattha had gone through this entire process during his luxurious stay at home and during his life of penance in the jungle. And so he knew what he was talking about when he called his doctrine the middle path between self-indulgence and self-mortification. Whatever the goal of striving, and whatever the means thereto, it is always the seeking of self, even if that is disguised as a search for truth. Desire, craving or clinging then is the cause of conflict (*duhkha-samudaya*) as expressed in the second Noble Truth. It is not a conclusion of induction from many isolated facts of suffering, for the Noble Truths are of universal application. It is through deduction after analysing the real nature of the world of events as compounds (*saṅkhāra*) and hence as decomposable (*anicca*), that the discovery of the universality of conflict was made in the first Noble Truth (*dukhha-sacca*). Then the second Noble Truth has laid bare the origin of this conflict (*dukkha-samudaya*) as the inane craving for impermanent things.

And hence follows the third Noble Truth, that the cessation of this craving will necessarily lead to the cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha*).

It is good to point out at this first opportunity the constant use of the negative approach in the teaching of the Buddha. It is as a thread throughout the fabric, the leading theme throughout the symphony of thought, which gives his doctrine a most distinctive set-up, which will be seen hereafter over and over again, till the final realisation of Nibbāna. In his logic, his ethics, his metaphysics, it is always the negative approach wherewith the Buddha reveals the truth. His metaphysics is based on the negation of a permanent soul, or substance (*anatta*); his ethics are a series of refrains and abstinences (*veramaṇī*); the virtues are negations of vices (*alobha, adosa, amoha*); emancipation is freedom from lust and delusion (*nirvāṇa*). And so here too, the third Noble Truth speaks of the cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha*), which is the logical outcome of the earlier basic truth: if all conflict is caused by craving, then the cessation of craving will naturally produce a cessation of conflict. No positive happiness is here envisaged, but just the ending of conflict. Thus, the goal cannot be visualised and idealised or personified; for that would be just another kind of craving leading to a more subtle kind of conflict. It is only the ending of conflict which is kept in view, just as the cure of a disease is the aim of all medicine. Removing the cause will remove the root condition, when the effect of conflict cannot repeat itself. So, the Buddha's teaching does not encourage happy feelings and emotions, not even the ecstatic joys of mental concentration, which may make one forget for a moment life's sorrow, without eradicating its root, Yet, there is a bliss in attainment, the bliss of laying down the burden, the bliss of freedom and emancipation, of being no more deluded by false hopes and empty fears, all of which is not the goal of striving, but the end of conflict.

The Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika magga*) is shown as the path leading to the end of conflict (*dukkhanirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*) and as such it is the last of the four Noble Truths. Now, it must not be forgotten that the Buddha's first discourse, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, dealing with the four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, was preached to his erstwhile companions in the ascetic life, who had turned away from him when he began to discard a life of extremes. They were, therefore, at this stage not even beginners, but rather unbelievers, even though they gave him a polite hearing. The Buddha had found the middle path only after parting company, and his new words were still received with doubt. The sincerity, however, with which the Buddha spoke and the supernatural peace which reflected from his entire being made them his first followers, even though conviction of the truth was not forthcoming. Only one of the five disciples, Kondañña, understood enough to make him enter the stream of holiness as a sotāpanna, but this initial exposition led none to the perfection of arahantship. What the Buddha taught in that first discourse was undoubtedly a noble path, but not the path of perfection. This perfection of arahantship came to all five disciples only after listening to the second discourse, dealing with the teaching of soullessness (*anatta*), explaining that all phenomena, physical and mental compositions and even the uncomposed and unconditioned Nibbāna, have no substance, no soul, no abiding entity or noumenon. It was this comprehension, this supreme insight (*sammā-ñāṇa*) into the real nature of things which set them absolutely free (*sammā-vimutti*) in the deliverance of arahantship, which made them perfect.

If we now compare this knowledge of a historical fact with an apparent omission or the Noble Eightfold Path from the Book of Eights (Aṭṭhakata Nipāta) in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, together with its re-appearance in the Book of Tens (Dasaka Nipāta) with the addition of insight (*ñāṇa*) and deliverance (*vimutti*), we may

conclude that the Noble Eightfold Path is the path for beginners (*aṭṭhaṅga-samannāgata-sekha-paṭipadā*), whereas the Noble Tenfold Path is that of perfection and attainment (*dasanga-sammanagata-araha hoti*), the one leading to discipleship, the other to sainthood.

As the fourth and final Noble Truth, the Noble Eightfold Path should be seen and understood as part of the whole. Together, as a whole, these four truths constitute an admirable piece of ordered thinking, which finds a counter-part in the Aditta-pariyaya Sutta, the so-called Fire Sermon, the third recorded discourse of the Buddha (Mahāvagga of the Vinaya Piṭaka). First the subject is stated and analysed in all particulars, then the nature of the cause is explained; action to be taken in this respect is detailed; and finally, the method and the results of such action are shown. The subject under discussion is the universal conflict (*dukkha*) which expresses itself in many forms of physical pain, emotional distress, mental disturbance, social insecurity, etc. The cause of this conflict is diagnosed as desire for well-being, attachment to possessions, need for social stability, craving for security, etc., which are all expressions of the one single basic greed for continuation, for self-existence in the many fields of self-activity, self-expression, self-expansion, causing contrast, obstruction, defiance and conflict in general, but, all-and-one, based on the centre of this activity, the "self". It is the understanding of "no-self" (*anatta*) alone which can do away with the cause of the conflict and thus bring about a cessation of this expansionist activity of the "self" and thereby lead to a cessation of conflict all round.

In the Noble Eightfold Path a method is detailed, how to bring about this understanding, under the three sections of virtue, concentration and insight (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*). Already from this conventional order in which the eight limbs of this path are always referred to, it is clear that no order of succession is indicated. For here, there is an unfolding of insight even before there is a development of virtue. As a path or a method it is one, and on that one path every word, deed or thought, that is one's entire life,

ought to be rightly inspired, performed with correct attention and concentration, based on proper understanding and guided by good intention. It is not a road on which the traveller can mark his progress, step by step, mile by mile, as it were, for, "the road is there, but no walker thereon" (*maggaṁ atthi, gāmako na vijjhati*). The path and the traveller are one in the one action of living. On the path of love, in the act of love, the lover does not think of self; and in that unity of comprehension there is no conflict possible. It is thus that the noble path leads to the cessation of conflict. But that is not a goal or destination of achievement, for the noble path is not a method towards the acquisition of nobility of virtue, or of wisdom, or of power over self or others. It is a road to freedom and ultimate deliverance, which cannot be reached by striving and accumulation, and hence cannot be marked by progress. Here is no goal of idealism, as held forth in the lofty theories of supernatural religions, in the sublime promises of political idealism, in the grandiose abstractions of philosophical speculations. Here is no goal of satisfied achievement in improved economic conditions in a classless society, no final comfort and leisure in a materialistic individual security. All these remain modes of living, fashions, measures, guides, which ultimately keep their followers enslaved in their very methods.

It is the nature of our present-day conflicts that we are not searching for a solution, but for a method to solve our problems. And as there are at least twice as many methods as there are problems, the actual conflict is entrenched in the search for a method. Problems can be reduced to very few, possibly even to one single problem, how to achieve self-satisfaction. Every political view of extreme right and extreme left, and all the moderate views of the middle, have the same aim, purpose or goal of bringing satisfaction to all. But they cannot unite in this because they differ in their methods. And so the goal is forgotten, where methods rule supreme in conflict and in chaos.

It is precisely here that the Buddha's path of perfection is different, for it is not a method leading to satisfaction. Happiness

is here not the goal of striving. And thus the path is not progressive but instantaneous. From whatever angle one approaches the teaching of the Buddha, whether one takes the analytical aspect of his philosophy or the synthetic aspect of his morality, the conditionality of existence, the insubstatiality of all phenomena, the interdependence of all relationship, or the soullessness of the mental process—whether the search is for an absolute truth or for the ultimate good—one always comes to that central theme of *anatta*, the doctrine of the absence of any kind of entity of an abiding nature. For, the good is only relative; the truth is conditioned; the origination is dependent; a goal of achievement is non-existent, because the "self" is delusion. Thus, a search for happiness or satisfaction is bound to fail, and likewise a search for truth. A search, any search, becomes possible at all, if the object of the search is known. A search for the unknown cannot take place in either reason or intellect. For, when we try to convince ourselves that we are searching for the truth, we are only looking for an image, a reflection, an extension of a self-deluded mind. And so, the path is foremost one of understanding, not an intellectual grasp, not a logical conclusion, not an emotional conviction, but a direct and comprehensive understanding through completely seeing a thing as it is (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*), the right as right, and the false as false. This understanding which is a perfect comprehension, is the key to awakening and enlightenment to sainthood and arahantship. Without this, all virtue (*sīla*) is but puritanism, all concentration (*samādhi*) is but self-hypnosis, all insight (*paññā*) is but inspiration or imagination.

Right Understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)

Understanding is placed first on the path, so that one would know what it is all about. Right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is the knowledge of good and evil, the roots thereof, the arising, cause and cessation of sorrow and conflict, the way to deliverance. Unless the path is known, progress thereon cannot be possible. If

the goal is self-seeking, the path will naturally be understood in terms of "self"; and self-delusion or the misconception of individuality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) will then form its first and most decisive step.

But, right understanding is insight (*paññā*) in the real nature of the goal, of the progress, of the path and of the walker on the path. The goal must be understood as deliverance from all delusion, which is the realisation of the truth of the complex nature of existence, of the unreality of the phenomenal world, of the actuality of the mental world, of the conditionality of events, of the fact, origin and cessation of all conflict. By the complex nature of existence should be understood the dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) of all things without a supernatural cause, creation or absolute beginning. By the unreality of the, phenomenal world should be understood its insubstantiality, i.e., the total absence of any kind of substance or entity, underlying the constantly changing phenomena. By the actuality of the mental world should be understood the mind as action of thought and not as a faculty of thinking, is only actual thought without a potential thinker. By conditionality of events should be understood their origination in dependence on conditions, which offer the opportunity for the arising of an effect without causing the event by necessity. Finally, the understanding of the fact, the origin and the cessation of all conflict, is of the first, second and third Noble Truths, is necessary for the realisation of the fourth Noble Truth, as the disease and its cause must be known before a curative can be applied.

All this is right understanding of the goal, which is deliverance from all delusion. It is the first kind of knowledge, called the general knowledge of things as composite (*sammāsana-ñāṇa*), and it includes the understanding of the three characteristics or distinguishing marks (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) of impermanence, conflict and soullessness (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*). They have to be seen as one, for he who perceives sorrow but not the intrinsic transiency of conflict, has nothing but the pain without hope of deliverance.

From the realisation of the true nature of things, right understanding will develop insight into the process of nature. The knowledge of composite things as waning and waxing (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) is not a mere observation of growth and decay in nature; but it is the right understanding that here is nothing but a process of becoming, which is the understanding that becoming is ceasing (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). Though this step should follow quite logically, yet it is a difficult one for many who in the very fact of becoming find all their delight. But, if becoming and ceasing are seen as two aspects of one process, then the realisation of insight into what is to be feared (*bhaya-ñāṇa*) will arise naturally. Fear should lead to understanding of the danger (*ādīnava-ñāṇa*) inherent in clinging to more processes of cessation, and to understanding of the reasons to be disgusted with such an empty show (*nibidda-ñāṇa*).

With this is reached insight into the real nature of the path, for now theoretical knowledge is producing the fruit of practical understanding, which is necessary to proceed on the path. A desire to be set free and the knowledge thereof (*muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*) will grow out into re-contemplation (*paṭisaṅkhana-ñāṇa*), that is, contemplation of the same three characteristics of transiency, conflict and soullessness, but with the increased insight as if seen from a higher plane. With the original view of the general goal they constituted more general knowledge, but with a view on the path to the goal they become more specific. Insight of indifference to the activities of this life (*saṅkhār'upekkhā-ñāṇa*) will be a natural consequence of this disgust and deeper understanding, where even-mindedness (*upekkhā*) is not due to lack of interest, but to lack of self-interest.

Now is reached insight into the real nature of the "walker" on the path, namely, the delusive nature of action.

For, though there is a road, there is no traveller. It is the knowledge which qualifies for the path of holiness (*anuloma-ñāṇa*); for, with this understanding is broken the first fetter of self-delusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), which transforms the worldling

into a noble one (*ariya*), the average person into a winner of the stream (*sotāpanna*), the stream of holiness, which finally leads to the ocean of Nibbāna. With the narrowing down of the object of understanding from the vaguely perceived goal and the broadly viewed process of nature, to a close inspection of the path and its final acme of no-self, knowledge too has become sharper till it reaches the summit of insight, which expels delusion by eradicating its chief root: the misconception of "self".

Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*)

Right intention turns the mind away from worldly pursuits; it purifies and directs the mind on the noble path.

Understanding and misunderstanding, morality and immorality, approval and disapproval in general, depend largely on the angle from which they are being looked at. It is the view one takes, otherwise called the intention, which makes the difference. Actions in themselves are neutral and largely mechanical; but the intention of an action makes it good or bad.

There is a difference between purpose and intention, and it is that difference which makes it possible to have right intentions, while the same cannot be said about purpose. For, a purpose is always the desired effect or expected result. In other words, a purpose is always something in the future, and that makes it non-actual. And what is not actual cannot be said to be good. But intentions are not outward views but inward bendings of the mind. Purpose and intention, therefore, differ both in the action and the object. A purpose is set up beforehand, while an intention may be spontaneously arising, according to the mind's inclination, thereby leaving the action untainted by craving. That is what is called a pure action (*kriyā*).

After having developed right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), thoughts must be properly co-ordinated and directed by right intentions (*sammā-saṅkappa*). Co-ordinated thinking is the real meaning of the term *saṅkappa*; that means, harmonious think-

ing without isolated or selfish thought. Intention is the driving force, which, if evil, will make an act evil, if good, it will make an act good, while without it there would be merely mechanical reactions. Intentions, therefore, have a creative power in them, which may be for good or for bad. Hence not all intentions, but only the right ones find a place in the Noble Eightfold Path. A rightly co-ordinated intention is one without selfish views which would make it isolated, narrow and not in harmony with the full process of nature and with progress on the path to the goal as realised by right understanding. It is, therefore an individual disinterestedness with regard to particular actions, as the view is taken of the whole. Hence the Buddha spoke of right intentions, as views of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*), views of-good-will (*avyāpada-saṅkappa*) and views of harmlessness (*avihiṁsa-saṅkappa*). Only a detached view therefore, can be a right intention, which turns the mind away from worldly pursuits and selfish purposes, and directs it on the noble path.

Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*)

Right speech is not only the abstinence from lies, slander, harsh and vain talk, but the speaking of truthful, gentle, useful words. It is the control of the tongue which has been compared to a rudder of a ship. He who can control his language will have his whole person under control. But right speech requires also the utterance of the proper word at the proper time, words of admonition and correction, if this is one's duty, words of encouragement in any good work, words of loving kindness, compassion or sympathy, as the case might require.

Right speech is placed first of the section classified under right conduct (*sīla*), for if the tongue is well controlled, all conduct will be curbed. It is first of all the observance of the fourth precept which a Buddhist undertakes to observe, namely, to abstain in the fullest sense from lying words (*musāvāda veramaṇī*). That includes not only lies, but all efforts made to injure the

good name of somebody else (*pisuṇa-vācā*) by circulating bad reports through slander, by openly advancing some serious, untrue charges through defamation, or by maliciously misrepresenting another's words or deeds through calumny. It includes further all kinds of harsh language (*pharusa-vācā*), vulgar, abusive, quarrelsome or invective language. But reproachful words, directed to persons deserving reproach, and used by persons whose duty it is to correct them, would not be harsh language, as long as it is consistent with decency and propriety of speech. Wrongful language includes finally even vain talk or gossip (*samphappalāpa*) in connection with which the Buddha admonished his monks: "When you meet, either speak of the Dhamma, or observe noble silence."

But the abstinence of all this is only the negative aspect of right speech; it is only the refraining from wrong speech. Still, it is much already for many to be sincere in this negative way. Some are not truthful, because they do not know the truth. In their wrong belief and constant refusal to be enlightened they miss the goal because they refuse to see the path. Their ignorance is blindness through delusion. Few are not truthful, because they do not want to be true. That, of course, is sheer wickedness. It is intentional untruthfulness of which the Buddha said that he who can tell a deliberate lie is capable of committing any crime. A bodhisatta in all the many lives of his preparation for the highest enlightenment may commit all kinds of evil deeds, but he will never utter a deliberate lie; for, that would make him turn his back to the goal in his search for truth. Many there are who are not truthful because they do not know how to be true. It is their ignorance of the path, while conventional life in the world is so hypocritical that they are not even aware of the insincere lives they are living. For many of them untruth has become a necessity for living.

But one who walks on the path "speaks the truth, is devoted to the truth, reliable and worthy of confidence …He never knowingly speaks a lie, neither for the sake of his own advantage, nor

for the sake of another person's profit, nor for the sake of any gain whatsoever. What he has heard here, he does not repeat there, so as to cause dissension there ...Thus he unites those that are divided; and those that are united he encourages. Concord gladdens him, he delights and rejoices in concord; and it is concord that he spreads by his words. He avoids harsh language and speaks such words as are gentle, soothing to the ear, loving, going to the heart, courteous, dear and agreeable to many. He avoids vain talk and speaks at the right time, in accordance with facts, speaks what is useful, speaks about the Dhamma and the Discipline; his speech is like a treasure, at the right moment accompanied by arguments, moderate and full of sense. His is called right speech[3]".

To be able to speak always not only with sincerity but with truthfulness, one has to live the truth for oneself. For then alone is one able to declare from one's own experience: "so it is!", without relying on the fickle and fallible authority of others. Right speech of this kind leaves a deep mark of conviction on a susceptible audience. The effect may he of the nature of a shock, but it will be a salutary awakening, for "the tongue of the wise is health."

Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*)

In the purest sense there is only one kind of action deserving the name of right action (*sammā-kammanta*), and that is the kind of action which does not deviate from the right path with secondary or ulterior motives. An action which is done with a purpose of obtaining something to which that act is only related in the same way as an instrument is associated with the material which it is going to shape, such an action is a means to an end. Whether there are ends *and* means, or whether ends *are* means, is largely dependent on the misinterpretation of action. There are causal conditions (*paccaya-hetu*) which are efficient in producing a force through their own action. An instrumental cause on the other

[3] Ang. Nik. X, 176.

hand is only a supporting condition (*nissaya*), such as the eye, which does not see but is the organ or instrument for sight. It is not operative directly by its own action, but only co-operating under another's directive. An instrumental cause, therefore, is a incomplete efficient cause, for it is not productive in its own proper action.

From this we can take a clue for distinguishing the different kinds of action. An action which is operative under a predominantly motivated control is not a an action and is not efficient in itself, as it serves another's purpose. Any such action, which may be good (*kusala*) or evil (*akusala*) from a utilitarian viewpoint, is a reproductive action (*janaka kamma*) with a willed effect (*vipāka*). It is a means to an end, and therefore not complete in itself. It is the end in view, which gave the impetus and which became identified with the means. In this sense the end was the means, i.e., the condition which made the action reproductive. But this is not so, if considered from another viewpoint. The means is instrumental to the effect but does not cause it. It is fertilising, so to say but not productive. A means, therefore, is just as the worker-bee which is asexual and hence not productive, and yet instrumental to the fertilisation of flowers by carrying the pollen of one stamen to the pistil of another flower although entirely unintentionally and incidentally, as the purpose of the bee's visit is the collecting of nectar. Here, the means and the end are not identical in any way. Such is an action which is done in a mechanical and purely reactionary way. Thus, actions in which the end is the motive of their arising, i.e., when ends *are* means such actions are incomplete in themselves, as they at projected into the future by purposeful striving. On the other hand, actions in which the end is dissociated from the means in a purely reactionary way, are mechanical actions. Neither of them can be called right action.

There is still another possible combination in which the means becomes the end, e.g. in people who make of the act of eating, which is a means of preserving life, the chief purpose of existence: they live to eat, instead of eating to live. They confuse the in-

strumental conditions (*nissaya*) with the chief condition (*uttama hetu*). It does not require any explanation to understand that this too cannot be called right action. And yet it is this wrong action which is most frequently indulged in. Slaughter of cattle for the sake of enjoying their flesh, theft of another's property to increase one's own, violation of another's marital rights to satisfy one's own passions, are all misfitting means towards a wrong end. Abstinence from those wrong actions is then in a certain sense right action. Thus, meritorious actions (*puñña kamma*) are good to some extent; but, as they lead to and are intended to lead to rebirth which is a continuation of conflict in Saṁsāra, they are means to an end, and therefore incomplete in themselves.

A right action in the fullest sense is beyond merit and sin, and it has in it so little of what is usually meant by activity, that it can only be conceived and observed in negations: abstinence from killing (*pāṇātipāta veramaṇī*), abstinence from stealing (*adinnādāna veramaṇī*), abstinence from wrong gratification of the senses (*kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī*). For the tightness of an action does not depend on the activity itself, but on the mental attitude. Any action which is done for the purpose of acquiring merit, may be a good action (*kusala kamma*), and under the proper conditions it may produce a good effect (*kusala vipāka*), but that does not make it a right action (*sammā kammanta*). An action which is done for the purpose of acquiring merit, for the sake of obtaining a happy rebirth, is not a true or right action at all, but a reaction to a desire; for the view of the expected reward was the motive and the driving force, to which stimulus the good deed was a reaction. In itself, therefore, such a meritorious action is not a true action, and it can only be called "good" in so far a it is skilful (*kusala*) in the production of the desired effect. Meritorious actions are not true actions, because they are not complete: physically they are performed in the present, but mentally they are enacted in the future. Hence they are not completely actual; and an act which is not actual cannot be a perfect or a right action.

As long as one is seeking or even expecting a result, thoughts cannot be complete.

Good actions, therefore, like evil actions, are reproductive. Their effects are called good and evil respectively; but as any continuation of the process of self-delusion is at the same time continuing the conflict, the difference between good and evil is only one of degree. "Not only evil deeds, but also good deeds must be left behind", said the Buddha, when he compared a man's actions with a raft wherewith to cross a stream; having reached the other shore, the raft is left behind, however useful it has been.

A right action, then, must be a pure, a perfect, a complete action, an action performed entirely in the present, physically and mentally, and thus a fully actual action. That is an action not done for a further purpose or motive which is not in the act itself. To give alms to the poor in order to obtain a celestial reward is a good action, because the poor are benefited and heaven may, possibly, be obtained; but it is also a selfish action, an act of exploitation which makes profit out of another man's need. It is like profiteering in the black market: it may be good for some, but it cannot be called right. One, who abstains from killing because there is a commandment "Thou shalt not kill", or who abstains from stealing because there is a law against it, and because transgression will be punished and observance will be rewarded—such a person, though fulfilling the precept and hence doing a good action, does not perform a right or perfect action. He might have done the killing or stealing or any other evil, if there had been no commandment, no law, no punishment, no reward.

On the other hand, to abstain from killing out of respect for life, to abstain from stealing out of respect for property, to abstain from gratification of the senses beyond their physical needs, out of understanding that they will develop a psychological greed if indulged in beyond that limit—those are right actions, for they have the fullness of motive and fleet in themselves. Hence they do not project themselves into a further process (*vipāka*), as they

are not mere means but ends, as they are not reactions but intelligent actions. Such right actions are pure actions which do not lead to conflict, because in their simplicity they are not complex; they do not lead to rebirth, because they are non-causal (*kriyā*). They may be called inoperative, as they have neither moral (*kusala*) nor immoral (*akusala*) significance; hence they are also called indeterminate (*avyākata*) and actions of mere doing (*karanamatta*). As all other actions have the tendency of reproductivity and therefore may lead to rebirth if other conditions are agree-able, this is the only action which, spontaneous in its arising from the understanding of a deed, will completely solve the problem, and thus lead along the Noble Eightfold Path to the final deliverance of Nibbāna.

Right Living (*sammā-ājīva*)

The right way of living is to earn one's livelihood by no wrong means. By "wrong means" one should not understand wrong actions like theft. For they have been dealt with in the previous section on right action (*sammā-kammanta*). But there are actions, such as buying and selling, which are perfectly justified in themselves, and which yet become wrong means of livelihood, if the articles to be sold are going to be harmful. Thus, the living by the sale of deadly weapons, of meat and fish, of intoxicants, of poison, of contraceptives, of pornographic literature and obscene pictures, of white slavery for the purpose of prostitution, or any kind of exploitation—which is living on the labour of others while withholding from them a decent living wage—cannot be called right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). And that is about all the average man knows of this very important and practical part of the Noble Eightfold Path. We should, however, enquire deeper to find out what has brought about these wrong means of livelihood. Why do people sell meat and liquor? Is it not because there is a demand for them? Shops and markets are not charity institutions; they are run for the purpose of making profit. But profit can

only be expected by catering for the demand. Thus the root of wrong livelihood does not lie with the salesman, who takes his opportunity together with the risk, but with his customers. Why do people buy a gun, if not to shoot with it? Why do people buy meat and liquor, if not to satisfy their tastes? If some do the slaughtering, it is because others want the meat. If some women are prepared, frequently constrained by circumstances, to offer their body indiscriminately for hire as prostitutes, is it not because there are so many men who want the sexual satisfaction without the bondage of a married life? Or is it not perhaps because a hypocritical society has outlawed the unfortunate girl for a mishap in her inexperienced youth? Wrong livelihood, then, is conditioned by wrong living. It is greed, lust, selfishness, desire for power in many, which stimulates the acquisitiveness in a few who make a profit by wrong livelihood. Our inner demands, therefore, have created the outer market.

Right living is, therefore, not only a life which is harmless, but a life which is free from greed and selfishness, which is not isolating itself in self-satisfaction, which is not opposing itself to others by comparison, or placing itself above others by judgement. Right living is a life of simplicity, which, however, is not the same as renunciation. Not the fewness of possessions make a life simple, but the freedom from possessions. True simplicity does not necessarily give up all possessions, but it is not possessed by them. Right living is a life without acquisitiveness, without specialisation, without rights and privileges, which are all expressions of self-deluded isolation. And when there are no rights, there are no duties either.

Duty is a word which conveys the i.e. of opposition, frequently of inferiority. Thus, my left hand has no duty or obligation to my right hand, for both are in one individual. With the understanding that every complex is a conflict, that all opposition is a delusion, there arises also the comprehension of the simplicity of right living. With that understanding comes also contentment, happiness and fullness of life. Then, life does not mean any more

the means of living; then life is not any longer a toy thrown about by the ups and downs of circumstances; for then it will have transcended all pettiness, all phenomenality, all misery and conflict, all isolation and delusion. And that indeed is right living on the Noble Eightfold Path.

Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*)

Energy and effort, though frequently interchanged, have a very different meaning basically. Energy is the capacity to produce force; it is the inner work (en-ergy), mostly a latent ability which requires a suitable environment, such as an impelling condition, to become an active operation. It is not activity itself, but the power to work. Hence one can speak of static and latent energy, which, however, is merely potential and not actual. Only when it operates actually, it obtains value. It is like an account in a bank from which money can be withdrawn for actual purchase purposes. Energy, therefore, is more of the nature of a characteristic, and as such it is classified as a mental factor (*viriya cetasikā*).

Effort (*vāyāma*), on the other hand, is an outgoing strength (*ex-fors*). It is the actual calling forth of the inner force (*energy*). It appears to be as a means to an end, for effort is required in an attempt to reach the goal. The endeavour to reach the end of the Noble Eightfold Path can be hindered by positive obstacles as well as by the lack of progressive means. And right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) will therefore, naturally fall in those two different categories, when trying to remove those obstacles which have arisen (*pahānappadhāna*), or better still when preventing them from arising (*saṁvarappadhāna*), when trying to bring about favourable conditions (*bhavanāppadhāna*), or to improve the same (*anurakkhapadhāna*).

Obstacles which will have to be removed are attachments to sense pleasures and antagonistic dispositions, which each in their own way make the mind selfish and isolated. Evil sources which should be prevented to pollute the pure atmosphere on the

Noble Path are the different forms of evil company. This may be in the form of so-called friends who with their wrong example might exercise an evil influence; or in the form of pictures, books, films and songs, which produce an evil effect on the mind. Even certain tastes and smells have a tendency of weakening a person's determination. All of these should, therefore, be avoided with right effort.

Favourable conditions, on the other hand, which may be a help on the path and which, therefore, should be brought about with right effort are the cultivation of mindfulness and awareness (*sati*), the spirit of investigation of the truth (*dhamma vicaya*), inner energy (*viriya*) and interest (*pīti*), peacefulness of mind (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*) and a balanced disposition of even-mindedness (*upekkhā*) in the vicissitudes of life, which are called the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta-sambojhaṅga*). And if those conditions have already been brought about, they should with right effort be furthered and promoted. This can be done through recognition (*saññā*), which is not merely the reactionary perception, but an awareness of the real or imaginary characteristics of things, of phenomena or mental states, so that fancy can be separated from actuality through deeper understanding.

It should be noted that in all these forms, the four kinds of supreme effort (*mahappadhāna*) there is nothing of purposeful striving. All right effort is entirely directed on the present moment to solve the problem of the actual conflict. Purposeful striving may have the appearance of effort and attempt to reach a goal; but that goal is not present, and hence, the problem is not actual. These attempts are more in the sphere of trials and experiments. But right effort has nothing vague or experimental about it; hence, there is no doubt, indecision, wavering, hesitation or perplexity (*vicikiccha*). But neither is there any self-conceited security, which acts with precipitation and agitation (*uddhacca*), hastening towards the goal of its purpose. "The purpose of the holy life is neither gifts, nor honours, nor a good name, which

are like leafy twig in a tree; neither is it excellence in regulated behaviour, which may be compared with a branch in that tree; neither the bliss of concentration, which is equal to the bark; not yet penetrating insight, which is like green wood. The purpose of the holy life, its heart and its goal, which is like the heart-wood of a tree, is the fixed and unalterable deliverance of the mind[4]". Such is the actual goal of right effort which must be based on intelligent living, which is right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). In right understanding, the goal is always present, and right effort will always be actual.

Very much energy is misdirected and hence wasted by communal striving. For it is thought by many that striving in common with other will be more intense and will have, therefore, more chance of success. They group them elves together in organisations, where with united effort they work for the same end. This grouping together and striving in common is due to man's desire for security. It is the rationalisation of the herd-instinct. But, the defects of organisation in general are that they require a great amount of work and energy which is not directed towards a goal, bit which is necessary for keeping the organisation functioning. Taking an example from worldly affairs which cannot be run in modern society without organisation, we find that usually 85% to 95% of its regular income is spent on the payment of its officers, workmen, house-rent, etc., while only a very small portion can be devoted to the proper aims of the society. It is worse than the man who is reported to have said that he gave the half of his food away to his wife, in order to get the other half cooked. Thus, methodical effort becomes a hindrance, because more energy is lost in the method than ever may be hoped to reach the goal.

A problem which causes a conflict is always actual and individual; and no amount of organised or methodical effort can solve it. A conflict is individual because it arises from selfish isolation and deluded opposition. Right effort, therefore, must

[4]Mahā Saropama Sutta, Majjh. N. 29.

be directed to the breaking of that opposition by dissolving the opposition, the isolation, and delusion of the individual. "Right effort consists in thought-feeling freeing itself from this conflict of merit and de-merit, the becoming and the not-becoming[5]".

Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*)

Mindfulness is the most efficacious instrument to success in any sphere of work, because mindfulness means awareness and attention. It is not an instrument which helps directly in the performance of an action, for an instrument is employed for a certain purpose. Thus, a hammer is an instrument for beating, a pail for carrying liquids, a pen for writing or drawing. Thus, an instrument has a specific purpose though it cannot work by itself. Mindfulness, however, has no specific purpose, but it assists any action to be performed with greater accuracy and thereby it helps indirectly towards success. Thus it can be applied to any action, physical or mental, moral or immoral. Awareness and attention will focus the thought on the work at hand and prevent distraction, which is the usual cause of misapplication of energy, of accidents and failure. By focussing the thought on the work at hand, it is fully actual. Yet, only if that work is a right action, one can speak of right mindfulness.

Right mindfulness is a kind of direct experience; and in its perfection, it needs the spirit of an adventurer, keen on exploring even the smallest opportunity which may be an avenue to a new world. Mindfulness does not rely on thoughts and feelings of another person, or of tradition, or of conventional society. It is an understanding of the component parts of an action, its motives, its agencies, its constituents, its material, its background, its foundation, even the source of its origination. For, all that together forms the action which is the "I". Right mindfulness is not concerned with the outer world as such; for the outer world as the world of experience is only a reflected world. It is in

[5] J. Krishnamurti: 1944 Talks, p. 53.

one's own action that one has to solve the conflict arising from contact and sensation. The complete understanding, therefore, of contact and sensation will at one glance show the point of friction. Thus, the Buddha's way of meditation is not a method of filling a certain period of the day with beautiful thoughts, emotional sentiments or inspiring sayings. His method is the method of analysis (*vibhajja*) through mindfulness (*sati-paṭṭhāna*), about which he said that it is "the only path which leads to purity of life, to the complete overcoming of anxiety and complaint, to the annihilation of conflict and sorrow, to the attainment of the goal, the realisation of Nibbāna[6]".

This right-mindfulness-method is fourfold. It is to be mindful of the body's action, such as breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*), of its reactions (*sati-sampajanna*), its postures as a whole (*catuririyapāṭha*), its formation of parts (*paṭikkula manasīkāra*), its composition of material qualities (*dhātu-manasikara*), and its stages of corruptibility (*nava sivathikaya*). It is to be mindful of feelings and sensations (*vedanānupassana*), to be aware of their arising, reflecting on them as just feelings without attachment to the pleasant ones, without aversion for the unpleasant ones, without neglecting the neutral ones. It is to be independent from them, whether they originate from an external condition or an inner disposition. It is to be mindful of thoughts (*cittanupassana*), to see their roots of lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), detachment (*vīta-rāga*), placidity (*vīta-dosa*), or comprehension (*vīta-moha*); to see their nature as recollected or distracted, attentive or fugitive, lofty or lowly, liberated or fettered; and to consider them one and all as just thought (*atthi cittaṁ*). It is to be mindful of mental states (*dhammanupassanā*), associated with the five hindrances, (*pañca nīvaraṇāni*) of sensuality, ill-will, sloth, agitation and perplexity; to be aware of the arising of those mental states, of their continuance and of their ceasing. It is to be mindful of the mental states connected with the five factors of clinging to existence

[6]Majjh. N. 10.

(*panc'upaddhakkhandha*), i.e., matter, sensations, perception, differentiation and consciousness; or belonging to the six spheres of sense-organs and senses objects (*saḷāyatana*); or to the seven factors of wisdom (*satta sambojjhaṅga*), namely, mindfulness, investigation, energy, rapture, repose, concentration and equanimity; or belonging to the four noble truths, always reflecting according to the actual nature of events and experiences: This is conflict, and this is its cause, thus it ceases, and this is the path that leads to its solution.

It is said that whoever would practise those four methods of mindfulness for seven days, in him is to be expected one of these two fruits: the perfect insight of arahantship in this life itself, or at least the state of no-more-return to this world (*anāgamī*).

Right mindfulness, then, leads to insight, because it is awareness of the true nature of an action. Awareness is knowledge without assertion or comparison, without denial or acceptance; for all these judgements are the expressions of the reflecting "self", which distorts the view of understanding in isolating itself from the conditioning environment. It is the delusion of self which approves or disapproves of certain feelings. But by mere attentiveness, watchfulness, awareness and mindfulness, those feelings will be perceived as sensuous reactions to the environment. The understanding of this action-reaction process (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) will overcome all misconceptions about individuality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), whereby the root-cause of the conflict will have been removed. Then no thoughts will arise like: I feel pain or pleasure; but simply: this is feeling (*atthi-vedanā*); no thoughts like: I am freed; but simply: This is a liberated thought (*atthi vimuttan cittan*); no thoughts like: This is my body; but simply: such is matter, its origin, its dissolution (*iti rūpaṁ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthagamo*). Thus, right mindfulness solves the problem of conflict, just because it has no purpose of its own. For it is through purposeful volition that opposites are created, which is the cause of all conflict. Pure mindfulness avoids all complications by merely seeing things as they are.

Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*)

There is usually a great deal of confusion about the words meditation, concentration and contemplation. The last word "contemplation" is associated etymologically and actually with "temple", for it was originally used for the observations of the Roman augurs, who from certain consecrated places watched the phenomena in the sky to predict from them some future events. Contemplation as watchfulness would, therefore, not differ much from mindfulness, as both are essentially kinds of observation.

Concentration (*samādhi*) is a form of reflection. Hence the different forms of spiritual exercises (*kammaṭṭhāna*), such as the recollection of the virtues of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), reflection on death (*maraṇanussati*), analysis of the four elements (*catudhātu vavathāna*), or contemplation of a device such as a clay disk (*paṭhavi-kasiṇa-maṇḍala*), are forms of mental culture (*bhāvanā*). When they have passed their preliminary stage (*parikamma*), they will cease to be exercises and then approach to concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*). It is thus through the preliminary mental culture that one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) develops into mind-concentration.

In its undeveloped state concentration is present in any thought as the mental factor of one-pointedness (*citt'ekaggatā*), but then it is a mere intellectual element without any ethical significance; it is the germ of concentration. Both one pointedness and concentration have, therefore, something in common, viz. the bringing together of the powers of attention to one central point. Concentration, then, may be called "the power of individualising, developed practice[7]". Concentration is individualising in so far as it focusses the attention on one point. And by doing so it follows naturally that distracting influences are kept at a distance. This is the inhibition of the five hindrances (*pañca nivarani*). It

[7] Shwe Zan Aung.

is then that full ecstasy (*jhāna*) may occur, which is truly right concentration (*sammā samādhi*).[8]

The path which leads to the different states of mental absorption (*jhāna*) and the inhibition of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) is called the path of tranquillity (*samatha*). The path which leads to the overcoming and uprooting of all hindrances, fetters, obstacles, is the path of insight (*vipassanā*). This mental culture with insight (vipassanā-bhāvana) has only three contemplations, through each of which emancipation may be achieved. These three contemplations or meditations are characterised according to the essential characteristics of all component things (*ti-lakkhaṇa*), namely the mark of impermanence (*anicca*), of disharmony or conflict (*dukkha*) and of soullessness (*anatta*). The characteristic mark of impermanence indicates the nature of all things as a process which is not only fluctuating, but is actually nothing but change. The characteristic mark of disharmony or conflict is the consequence of seeking satisfaction in such a changing environment, i.e., of seeking permanence in the impermanent. The characteristic mark of soullessness indicates the insubstantiality of all things, which are merely changing phenomena without any abiding entity, substance or soul. These three characteristics are so united that they cannot really be separated. They form only different aspects, and each aspect implies the other two. But according to the prominence given to anyone of these three aspects the process of emancipation (*vimokkha*) is named emancipation by the concept of the void (*suññatā*), of the signless (*animitta*) and of the undesired (*appanihita*), which are the three gateways (*mukha*) through which release or emancipation is effected. Release through the gateway of the void (*suññatā*) means the emancipation of mind through the contemplation of the insubstantiality (*anatta*) of all things, of the soullessness of all beings, of the emptiness of all phenomena. Release through the channel of the signless (*animitta*) means the emancipation of mind through the abandonment of the

[8] See "Agony and Ecstasy" by the present author.

sign of hallucination (*vipallāsa*). The hallucination meant here is the perception (*saññā*), the concept (*citta*) and the opinion (*diṭṭhi*), which erroneously discern impermanent things (*anicca*) as lasting. The "sign" (*nimitta*) then is the appearance of permanence, which is a hallucination abandoned in emancipation. Release through the avenue of the undesired (*apānikita*) is the emancipation of heart and mind, brought about by not hankering after things as a result of the contemplation of the conflict (*dukkha*), which arises from craving.

What is required for true meditation is an awareness of what is. To think of something and concentrate one's thought on that is not meditation, is not contemplation. In concentration there is the introduction of an object of thought, an idea, a concept, which may be a very lofty thought, a very abstract idea, a very noble concept, but it is still a thought which was introduced, that is, selected and chosen in preference to other thoughts and ideas. Concentration, then, becomes an exercise of exclusion, in which thought is centred and focussed on a noble idea, in which the mind gets lost in sublime feelings and thoughts, in which the hindrances to noble living are by-passed and perhaps even trance-like visions are experienced. But it is still thought, exclusive thought, sublime thought, thoughts of love and compassion, thoughts of infinity and boundless space; but it is still thought, concentrated thought, wilful thought, thought in isolation and hence in opposition. This may for the moment, for a duration in time, by-pass the conflict within and without, but it has not solved the conflict in opposition.

Meditation is aware of that. It sees things as they are, without trying to make them as they are thought that they should be. Thus, meditation does not introduce thoughts, but sees, contemplates and understands them as they try to continue, as they struggle to survive, as they fight for supremacy, as they cease to make way for others. In that awareness there is no reference to standards of nobility, but just silent contemplation of those thoughts, of their nature of exclusion and opposition, of their assertion and motivation. In this insight of the nature of things and events

there is understanding of the voidness of their effort to become, to maintain, to expand. And in the understanding of that void there is freedom, there is the cessation of striving, the end of desire to become, the stilling of thought. Thus, without motive and without goal there is the end to conflict in the cessation of becoming, of thought, of memory, of ideal.

This is truly right insight (*vipassanā*) with right knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*), leading to right deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*), to emergence (*vutthāna-gāminī*), because it invariably leads to the path of holiness, the stream of deliverance (*sotāpatti*), ending in the emancipation of Nibbāna.

It is in this Noble Eightfold Path that lies the way to bring about an end to conflict. It is a path of understanding and practice, whereby the truth can become known (*sacca-ñāṇa*), its function understood (*kicca-ñāṇa*), so that its accomplishment may be realised (*kata-ñāṇa*).

The Three Characteristics

Impermanence (*anicca*)

Impermanence (*anicca*) can be viewed from three aspects, one negative aspect of change in the sense of losing its earlier character, one positive aspect of formation in the sense of becoming or acquiring another character, and one general aspect of conditionality that is of its arising being dependent on cessation, and vice versa.

In its negative aspect of change, impermanence is the absence of permanence. Although impermanence as change is always present in everything, it is not always immediately evident and perceptible, as the process of change may be too slow for measurement. Thus, the dissolution of a world cycle will not be evident within a single life-span. Yet the findings of pre-historic remains in deeper strata of this world, the extinction of volcanoes, of animal species, of petrified plant-life in coal mines, however, provide sufficient evidence of the constant and total process of change in which earlier species have given way to newer evolutions. Outside this earth we have the evidence of extinct astral bodies or planets, showing us the way our own planet is heading together with the entire solar system which we are part of.

This wearing-away process[9] is easier recognisable in the day-to-day occurrences when material phenomena prove to be dis-

[9] S. IV. 52.

connected "as if they were iron darts".[10] What is joined becomes separated in parts, what is wholesome loses its vitality, what appears to be continuous becomes disrupted, whatever grows is subject to decay. And the general characteristic of impermanence applies to everything that is composed, so that the Buddha said:

"Whatever is composed is decomposible" (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*).

Thus, to understand this negative aspect of impermanence, namely the decomposibility of all that is composed, one has first to understand the nature of composition (*saṅkhāra*). A composition is whatever is united or put together (*saṅkhāra*). Now, whatever is put together in nature or by artificial means is subject to decomposition. Thus the various chemical elements, however closely united they are in forming a component quite different from their original nature, such as oxygen and hydrogen forming water, can be separated again. The process of decay observable in all that lives and moves is but such a dissolution of a union and a return to earlier conditions.

What happens in the material world at large, and in the microscopic world of the individual body, that same process of dissolution, separation, decay, disappearance, can be observed in all the faculties of the mind as well, in its functions of the senses of the sense-organs (*vedanā*) as well as in the process of perception (*saṅkhāra*) in which the past is brought into contact with a new experience, in which the new experience is compared with the memory of the old. When ideas are stored away as memories, it is felt as impermanence in the sense of dissolution, for in memory the actual present loses its vitality. It is in this separation that the absence of comfort and support is experienced; but instead of taking this as a starting point for lust to fade out and be liberated,[11] this feeling of loss is set aside by preserving that experience in memory which is the "I"-maker (*ahaṁkāra*).

[10] Vism. A. 824.

[11] A. IV. 100.

Memory is then used as a means for preserving what has already been dissolved in the actual present.

***

And so the question arises: What is memory?

Memory is the process of grasping the past (*atītaggahaṇa*), the fading away process of the more active imagination or image-making. It is a representative cognition, grasping the past as a thing of the past and calling it back in a process of recollection. In the ultimate sense it is dependent on sensuous impressions, and more immediately on the mental reception thereof, that is, the mental attitude of image forming, which is the imagination at the time the sense-impressions were formed. The depth and quality of memory, therefore, are dependent not so much on the external object, but on the mental assimilation thereof. And so, memory is a result of association of ideas. It needs an object of the past, and this object has to be introduced in present thinking. When this object was introduced for the first time, there were already a host of other thoughts with which it became associated.

Now, whenever one of those other ideas recurs, the associate i.e. might come along. If memory were a faculty developed and improved upon utilitarian lines (as it is possible to a certain extent), a thing of the past would be liable to be recalled whenever wanted, just as a reference book in a library. But memory is not only some storing-up faculty, but rather a special kind of systematised association. Thus, people have a good memory for facts connected with their profession, because such facts have the greatest chance and frequency of recurrence. Memory is not improved by learning many things by heart, but by finding logical, i.e., rational connections. This is the method of science, where numerous facts are reduced to a simple law which then can be applied to individual cases.

There remain, of course, the very important questions of how the past has come up to the present, or, how do associate ideas persist, and how do they re-associate themselves again, when

their former leader recurs? The ordinary psychological explanation would have us believe that every event after its occurrence leaves behind an impression in the unconscious, which is usually understood as a lower level of submerged consciousness, another plane of thought, which does not necessarily run parallel with active thinking. But, apart from the fact that the existence of such a plane cannot be proved but only surmised, it would logically lead to the belief in some entity, having the capacity of storing up past experiences, as in an archive. This storing entity, which in later developed schools of Buddhism has been given the name of *ālaya-viññāṇa*, would in reality not be different from a permanent soul, which i.e. is most categorically denied in the Buddha's teaching of non-entity (*anatta*). It is from this store-house of the unconscious that long-forgotten events are called back.

The objection to this theory of the Yogacārā school and of the Sārvastivāda, though largely adopted later by Mahāyana Buddhism and certain modern psychologists, is of course, that it leaves entirely unexplained in what those past images of memory exist and persist. Even if one could be made to believe in their persistence as impressions in soft wax, there still remains the unsolved problem of how they answer the call of a recurring associate idea. For, if the new i.e. knows its similarity with the old idea, it is not memory, i.e., a remembrance of the past, because both would be present. If, on the other hand, the old i.e. senses the presence of a new similar idea, and if it rises from its unconscious sleep for the sake of making its acquaintance, it cannot be called memory either, for then the present would not call back the past, but the past would be calling upon the present.

It is suggested sometimes that—just as a deep wound when healed will leave in the body a scar which will remain even though the tissues are for ever changing and all material in the body will have been within seven years—in a similar way, sensations, perceived by the sense-organs and communicated to the brain, will not be entirely effaced during the many changes, but leave some trace in the living tissue of the brain.

Then, when a similar impression recurs, the same sense-organ will communicate to the same department of the brain with which it is connected by the nervous system. Thus that first impression will receive a second imprint. The preservation of form is then believed to account for the continuity of memory. The objection to this physiological theory is that it only leaves room for memory through the recurrence of the original experience, so that pain would be remembered only by the repetition of that particular pain. It Is clearly evident, however, that the memory recalls the past without repeating the experience. And thus the problem still stands unsolved, whether considered from a psychological and idealistic viewpoint of a storing in the unconscious or from a physiological and materialistic point of view, of a physical impression in the brain tissue. Briefly stated, the problem is that memory is an act of remembering, i.e., thinking about past events; but thinking is always in the present. How then does the past event come into the present thought, if there is no continuous entity which preserves the impression for future reference?

Memory seems to be a reproduction of a past event or thought, for it is not the identical event which comes up from the past, but a reflection (and frequently a distortion) thereof in a new thought. A thought of remembrance is, therefore, not a thought in the past, but a revival of the past in the present. It is essentially one single process: the recognition of the past taking place in the present, for thinking is always present. And thus, in memory the past must be in the present. Memory is not a thought of the past, neither is it a thought in the past. There is no reflection in the sense of bending back to the past, but it is a continuation of experience, of a process started in the past, and continuing to live in the present. Only in this sense is recognition possible, for if the mind could go back into the past, recognition ought to have taken place already before the process of remembering began. How otherwise would a thought know how far to return into the past, and to which particular event? One cannot go looking

for something which one does not know. If it is known, it is no longer past, for it is present in the knowing mind.

Now, by considering the process of thought and the process of the unconscious as two individual processes, this difficulty is indeed unsurmountable, for still the question remains: How does the thought in the upper stream find the thought sunk in the lower current, which might not even flow in the same direction? Recognition is the conviction that an event has occurred already previously and such recognition must take place in the present thought-process. The element of the past must be in the present, therefore, as an essential part of the process. It cannot be an old thought stored away, for, if thoughts could be stored, they would cease to be thoughts, because thought is thinking in action; and action is never stagnant. Thus, when in Buddhism we speak of the subconscious stream (*bhavaṅga sota*), we do not understand by that term an undercurrent of thought which runs its own course independently from the process of active thought, but the same process of actual thinking, which continues its natural, logical course, till interfered with (*bhavaṅga-cālana*) and interrupted (*bhavaṅga'upaccheda*) by a new challenge and then changes its course in the new direction, marked by a turning to that particular organ of the five sense-doors (*pañca-dvāravajjana*) where the disturbance was received and perceived. When it then is conceived in full consciousness, the whole of the subconscious and the unconscious is in that stream of thought.

Each thought has grown from experiences of the past, embedded in the previous thought, together with the external influences and challenges which conditioned it in the present. And thus, each thought, while passing by and passing away, has also been passing on to its successor the tendency by which it was produced itself, modified, intensified or weakened. And thus every thought contains the experiences of all previous events which built it up and which, therefore, are present in the current thought, in a way similar to that in which every step we make, every letter we write, every word we speak, contains all the efforts of our childhood,

all our failures and successes, all the past in the present. Memory, then, is the recognition of actual effects and of the causes which produced them, in an understanding of their simultaneous association. Memory as an act of remembering should therefore not be confused with the final moments of identification and registration (*tad-ārammaṇa*) of a complete unit of thought. Memory is a phase in the thought-process which does not meet a challenge at any of the five physical sense-doors or organs, but which enters purely and simply through the mind-door (*suddhika-manodvāra-vīthi*).

Considering that daily thousands and thousands of ideas supervene each other, it should cause no surprise to realise that most thoughts are individually lost for ever, although theoretically it would be possible to retrace all past thoughts merely by analysing one single present thought. For, rejecting the theory that a concept is a thing, an entity which can be stored up as an individual item, memory can only be understood as a process of thought, in which one i.e. has grown into the next one, handing down its characteristics while losing its individuality.

From this one can draw the startling conclusion that a good memory is a sign of a shallow mind. Only he who thinks little will easily remember trifles. "Only shallow people require years to get rid of an emotion[12]". But not only is memory a sign of a shallow mind, of narrow-mindedness, it is also an ideal form of craving on which the "ego" individuality is based. If not for memory, man's only knowledge would be the ever new beginning "now". He might have momentary desires, but not that clinging to desires and possessions which is proper to man, and hardly found in beasts. Likes and dislikes arise as in a flash; it is memory which makes them grow into love and hate. Yet it is not love or hate which is remembered, but only the situation, the occasion, on which there was a concrete experience, causing a sensible impression to be remembered and to be reproduced. In a certain

[12]Oscar Wilde.

sense then we may say that it is the memory which makes the "I", for only by memory are past experiences remembered as "mine".

Memory as the "I" maker then is the instrument of greed through which the "I" tries to continue as an entity. But when the fulfilment of need does not amount to greed, memory does not function where instinct suffices for the continuation of the species. Nature merely strives for satisfaction or fulfilment of its needs as a reflex action to a simple necessity. Then there is no wilful response to a challenge, but a mere reaction to a stimulus which reverts to type when left alone. Thus the whole of nature in its millions of years of evolution has adapted itself to changing conditions, but has not been able to produce one comfortable arm-chair, such as an ordinary carpenter can do in a day's work. Instinct does not act with any conscious effort; it arises from a certain awareness of natural physical needs. This awareness, and the instinctive reaction thereto is not an act of memory, for sometimes the instinct is used only once in a lifetime as e.g. in the case of caterpillars making their cocoon with great skill and precision, which does not admit the possibility of acquired learning. Instinctive action, therefore, is not guided by an i.e. of result or of object.

***

In Buddhist psychology instinct would be best rendered by an individual's "natural disposition" (*sabhāva-dhammatā*), which will differ in degree but not in kind from the instinctive tendencies of others. And so it will happen that inhuman instincts remain the same, even when human characters and habits differ.

The chief instincts are those which are classified as the roots of all evil: lust, hate and delusion (*loba, dosa, moha*). We may even say that these are the roots of life itself in so far as these three having been overcome, rebirth will not come to pass any more. They are inborn tendencies (*anusaya*), the inheritance from past actions. Before reason will be sufficiently developed to become a decisive and responsible factor with regard to volitional activity,

those proclivities are already at work. For there is in the functioning of the mind something else besides its rationality, existing together with it and even before it, stronger than any reason or argument, inborn and not cultivated. They are the latent dispositions (*anusaya*), or proclivities, dormant tendencies, or biases, usually enumerated as sensual passion (*kāmarāga*), lust for life (*bhavarāga*), aversion (*paṭigha*), conceit (*māna*), erroneous views (*diṭṭhi*), perplexity (*vicikicchā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). Sometimes, obstinacy (*adhiṭṭhāna*) and prejudice (*abhinivesa*) are also classed as dormant tendencies. It will be seen that all these can easily be reduced to the chief roots of evil inclinations: greed, hate and delusion. All are the experiences of some need, a need to obtain, a need to get rid of, a need of external help, of security. The need to obtain corresponds to Freud's sex-instinct; the need to get rid of corresponds to his ego-instinct; the need of security to the inferiority complex.

More elaborated and detailed classifications, which have superseded the pioneer's grouping, still show the unmistakable characteristics of the Buddha's analysis. Thus, in the most recent system of correlating instinct and emotion, we find the following five instincts to be rooted in greed: the protective instinct as expressed in maternal care, love and tender devotion; the pairing instinct, bending towards mating and reproduction, expressing itself in lustful excitement, sometimes mistaken for love; the food-seeking instinct or appetite, bending towards material sustenance and nourishment in the narrower sense, expressing itself in playing and hunting; the hoarding instinct, following that of acquisition, expressing itself in protection of property, arising from the need of storing food and of sheltering; and the creative instinct, resulting from the need and urge to be productive. According to the same system the following three instincts are rooted in hate: the instinct of escape, of self-preservation or the danger-instinct with its emotions of fear, terror and fright; the instinct of combat and aggression, expressing itself in anger, annoyance, irritation, in plays and sports, in rivalry and competi-

tion; and the instinct of repugnance, expressing itself in feelings and finally there are the following six instincts which are rooted in ignorance or delusion: the instinct to appeal for support, which is expressed in a feeling of distress and helplessness; the instinct of curiosity brought about by the need of investigating the unknown, calling up a feeling of mystery; the instinct of submission, which leads to devotion and self-abasement, a feeling of subjection and inferiority; the instinct of assertion, expressing itself in an elated feeling of superiority and pride; the social or herd instinct, reducing nostalgia in loneliness and isolation, expressing self in imitation; and finally, the instinct of laughter, following the need of relaxation, an expression of carelessness.

From these primary instincts will result many complexes of instinctive impulses, just as an act of conceit may result from a complex of the creative emotions in the instinct of greed together with feelings of assertion in the deluded tendency of inferiority-awareness. Awe is fear plus devotion, which is aversion plus delusion. Hope and despair spring from the facilitation or obstruction, respectively, of the basic needs, growing out into greed or hate.

Instinct is thus not a substitute for reason, it is not brought about by remembrance and repetition of previous acts, but it is a dormant, innate tendency, which is fundamental, not only in animals, but also in men. Without these tendencies man simply could not exist, for reason would never perceive the primary wants, on the satisfaction of which the very functioning of life is dependent, just as much as a practical, normal life becomes impossible, when a total loss of memory interrupts the smooth continuance of activity which is based on learning, practice and habit.

It is the instinct which predisposes the mind; it is memory which can check the mind in experience; but it is the intellect which should see and understand the way and give guidance to sane living. Thus we see how both memory and instinct have a function to perform which is essential from a biological view-

point. Memory is essential to ensure a smooth continuance of action, for without memory there is no yesterday, no background, no foundation. Without yesterday there is no history to continue; without background there is no name to resort to; without foundation there is nothing to build on for progress. In other words, without memory there is no past, no present and no future. Instinct is essential to ensure the satisfaction of basic requirements, for without instinct there will be no spontaneous action, no reflex action, no reaction. Without spontaneous action there can be only motivated action; without reflex action there can be only wilful action; without reaction there will be no response to any stimulus. Thus, from a biological viewpoint, the absence of memory and instinct will spell certain death; for, the mind (as reason) cannot act without motive, cause or justification. And in an emergency, when direct action is essential, any argument, however logical, will be fatal.

But from a psychological viewpoint, memory is the faculty which clings to the past, which ignores the present, which craves for the future. Memory is the creator of "I" and "mine", the cause of conflict, the motive in rebirth. Again, from a psychological viewpoint, instinct is the instrument of grasping, the innate disposition of character, the inheritance of past karma. Both are psychological necessities for the origination and continuation of the "self", as much as they are biological necessities for the continuation of life. But that is taking for granted that the continuation of "self" is a psychological necessity. It is this issue which will be considered in full in the later section on "Sorrow and Conflict", the essential characteristic of the Buddha's teaching on soullessness (*anatta*). In this present section on "Impermanence" it suffices to say that existence is not a psychological necessity, even though the mind in memory has made it so.

This lengthy digression on memory and instinct was considered necessary at this stage, because it is through memory that the mind endeavours to obtain a permanence for itself, which has no place in the universal perception of impermanence (*an-*

icca saññā). It is this search for permanence in the impermanent which is the cause of conflict. Existence is phenomenal and impermanent; and if those phenomena are understood as such, life will not appear as the possession of an individual, as the property of an entity. If this process is seen and understood as a rising and ceasing event in the present, dependent on the cravings of instinct and the clingings of memory, then life can become free from those biases and tendencies.

***

So far we have seen impermanence (*anicca*) from a negative aspect. But if it is seen as a positive process of becoming, it is not actually different from its process of cessation. For, whether the arising or the cessation is in evidence, it is always a process of change. The change observed in a growing plant is as much growth as it is decay. The seed has to burst for the tap-root to find its way into the soil. There the roots absorb the nourishment needed for growth from the nitrogen in the soil. The sprouting leaves draw in the carbon-dioxide from the air, and both are converted into the chlorophyll which is the essential colouring matter in the plant component. Even a simple oil-lamp can continue to give light in a positive way only by consuming the oil, by burning the wick, by drawing oxygen from the air, and it is only in the burning-up process of combustion that light can be produced. Thus everywhere the process of change, of alteration, can be seen as becoming and as ceasing.

This process can be observed equally in the process of thought, where in contact with a sensible object sensation (*vedanā*) arises, to become perception (*saññā*); this perception in turn lays hold of the object in a psychological way by comparing it with past experiences in memory, thereby forming a concept (*saṅkhāra*) which is a composite picture, part reflection, part projection, with clinging to the past and craving for the future, resulting in a thought of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This arising of the new thought is not new at all in the sense of creativeness, for it is

based on memory of a decaying past, it is fed by ideals of volition (*cetanā*) and is thus a reaction rather than action. The resulting knowledge is not a new understanding but a reflection of the old mind, a picture formed by clinging to decayed thoughts of memory. This apparently positive process of acquiring knowledge is the food which keeps thought alive, one of the four kinds of nutrition (*āhāra*) on which this process of change depends.

Impermanence is indeed a process of nutrition in its three aspects of intake (*uppāda*), of relish (*ṭhiti*) and of passing (*bhaṅga*), more literally arising, stabilising, ceasing; the three moments (*khaṇa*) of every unit of impermanent existence. If the Abhidhamma[13] and the Vibhaṅga Commentary further dissect each such moment into seventeen moments of cognisance, it is only to show the constancy of impermanence. Whether one walks with long strides or with short steps, the distance covered by walking is not different; and as long as there is the process of walking, the division of the distance covered in miles or kilometres is only one of measuring, of comparing and judging, but does not alter the process of movement and change. What is evident, therefore, is neither the origination or the cessation in the process, because in becoming there also ceasing, and in cessation there is also origination. "Only the alteration of what is present is evident[14]".

***

This leads us to the third aspect of impermanence. If there is neither origination nor cessation in a static way, then what is this impermanence in itself? Such is the question which can only be put in ignorance, for it presupposes the existence of something which changes which is impermanent. It is precisely the misunderstanding of impermanence which leads to the great delusion of a substance, an "ego" underlying these changing phenomena of arising and ceasing. And so, it is not impermanence (*anicca*)

[13] Yamaka, II, 13–14.
[14] A I. 152.

which can lead to emancipation, but the perception of impermanence (*anicca saññā*). Impermanence is there, whether it is seen and observed or not. The hours pass and the night becomes day, but it is not the night which becomes enlightened. It is the perception (*saññā*), the intelligent awareness without the composite reflection and distortion of a wilful mind, which in seeing can understand. In seeing impermanence there is no seeing of an underlying permanent substance, and hence there can be no understanding as long as there is seeing of what is not. In seeing impermanence it is only the conditional arising and cessation which can be understood. The Buddha has not told us what there is underneath the phenomena, but only that phenomena arise in dependence on other phenomena. There is birth, because there is decay. There is death because there is birth. "When this does not arise, that cannot become. This will cease with the cessation of that[15]".

It is the understanding of the conditionality of the process of origination and cessation, which is the process of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), which provides the clue to the problem. It was this understanding that whatever arises, is arising in dependence on conditions, and that whatever ceases, is ceasing because of the cessation of those conditions which made it arise—it was that understanding which enlightened the bodhisatta in that night of insight, when he ceased the search for self-satisfaction through sense-pleasures and denial, and found the middle path of understanding, the true nature of impermanence, the impermanent nature of conflict and the nature of conflict in the attempts of escaping impermanence. When impermanence is seen and understood to be the nature of composition, and not just a qualifying aspect; when it is seen and understood that every composition must be decomposible just because it is a composition; when it is seen and understood that impermanence is not an added qualification to a mode of existence, but that it

[15]M. I. 262.

is the essential nature of existing, and that there is no existence possible without being impermanent, just as a river must flow in order to be a river, and as fire must burn in order to be fire at all—then a search for permanent existence becomes impossible. It is therefore in the understanding of the nature of existence to be naturally impermanent just because it is composed. It is in that understanding that a search for the permanent will cease spontaneously.

It is that search which is conflict; and that is the second characteristic mark in the teaching of the Buddha. It is then conflict (*dukkha*) which must be understood, so that impermanence (*anicca*) will cease to be a problem. For, with the cessation of conflict, there is no more problem.

Sorrow and conflict (*dukkha*)

What is dukkha? It is the basis of the Buddha's, teaching, the knowledge of sorrow and to be free from it:

> One thing only do I teach,
> Woe, and how its end to reach
>
> *Dukkhañceva paññāpemi*
> *Dukkhassa ca nirodhaṁ*

Sorrow (*soka*) is suffering resulting from loss (*vayagama*). It is lamentation (*parideva*) expressing itself in weeping and crying; it is pain because of bodily discomfort (*kāyikā asatā*); it is grief (*domanassa*) in mental disagreement, (*cetasikā asāta*); it is despair (*upāyāsa*) in mental unrest (*upāyāsitatta*). And so, birth (*jāti*) is suffering as the manifestation of composition (*kandhānaṁ pātubhavaṁ*) as the conditioning cause of all misery, and also as the evil result of past dissatisfaction. Decay (*jarā*) is suffering as the dwindling of vitality (*āyuno saññaṁ*). Death (*maraṇa*) is suffering as the dissolution of composing aggregates (*khandānaṁ*

bheda). "To be associated with things one dislikes, to be separated from things one likes, not to get what one wishes—that is also suffering", said the Buddha. But this suffering must be comprehended (*pariññeyya*) for its cause to be eradicated (*pahātabba*) and its cessation to be realised (*sacchikātabba*).

Then what is suffering, what is sorrow, what is grief, what is despair?

When we speak of sorrow, it is the experience of an inner conflict within the individual. And that is always subjective, even if one feels grieved over the misfortune of others, for it is by way of substitution that one experiences a vicarious sorrow in one's relationship. But this conflict is felt not only in relationship with others, but also and mainly in oneself. More than that, it is practically felt exclusively in oneself, for even relationship which causes conflict is caused by the misunderstanding thereof which has the "ego" as its centre of attraction, of protection, and hence of opposition which is conflict.

Physical discomfort, as disease, may be a lack of ease, and this was experienced by the Buddha himself and his arahants on many occasions. The Buddha, when tired, would ask his faithful disciple Ānanda to fold his outer robe and spread it on the ground for him to rest a while. He was once wounded in his foot by a stone thrown by Devadatta. Sāriputta, the chief disciple and arahant, experienced thirst, and asked for some water to be given to him. Mahā Moggallāna, the other chief disciple and arahant, who in a previous life had been the cause of the death of his parents, was ultimately set upon and clubbed to death by a gang of rebels. But none of those physical sufferings experienced by these perfect ones could amount to conflict which is always the outcome of a distorted mind. If physical discomfort then becomes a source of sorrow, it is not the disease of the body but the conflict in the mind, in the distorted mind; it is the wrong approach of a diseased mind which causes the conflict.

There may be pain, loss and even death; but such suffering is not conflict when there is no opposition. From where does this

opposition arise, and why? Life, property, possessions, relations, achievements, qualifications are all means through which the "ego" acts; and without any of those, the "ego" has no name, no fame, no influence, no connection, no existence. All these make the "I"; and therefore, any kind of loss in any of these relationships is experienced as a loss of "self". It is not just property, but my property which has to be insured. And so the "I" lives in that relationship, and in fact the "I" is that relationship. Living, as a process of becoming, is also a process of cessation, but that impermanence is not experienced as conflict until the process which is my life is ceasing. Grief is experienced when it concerns *my* loss, of *my* relations.

Thus, suffering which is conflict is entirely self-centred, self-based, self-focussed. And this conflict exists only in impermanence (*anicca-dukkha*) when that is seen but not wanted. But that also means that the mind when it has understood conflict, is also free from it. Why then is impermanence not wanted? Why is it not understood? Why is there conflict? Why does the mind not want to be free? Why does the mind see only in distorted images, in misshapen reflections? This is the crucial question: Why does the mind not see that it is in conflict?

Let us begin at the beginning. What is the position of the mind, of thought, when coming in contact with impermanence? There will be an immediate reaction of opposition, which is created by the mere fact of seeing the impermanent as an opposite. This sense of opposition is caused by the approach of the mind. Whenever there is a new contact in the senses, a thought is flashed back to find out whether anything is known about it already. This happens every time one is introduced to a new situation, person or event. There is a naming of category or family, in which the new acquaintance is framed to see whether it or he fits. A misfit would be disturbing. The thought now is concentrated on a possible familiarity which will enable the mind to place the new in the cadre of the old. The old is fixed and the new is fitted, shaped, adjusted, accommodated according to the plan already there. The

old is the past, is memory, is thought, the thought of "self"; and with that fixture a comparison is made of the new within that framework. A name will bring up the memory of an earlier association, and with that conditioned thought there is a confrontation with the new. But there is no attempt at understanding the new. The only action is that of thought trying to accommodate the new into the old; the unknown remains unknown, and the distorted view is classified with the old.

Now, the old is the remembrance of earlier experiences, which have been stored up in memory to form, to build, to strengthen the "ego". The "ego" has nothing else but these memories; the "I" is memory trying to continue by preserving and enriching those memories, to continue thereby into an ideal future. Memory is the resistance to impermanence. Thought, therefore, when contacting the new, sees only itself and tries to bring the new into line therewith. If that can be done, the new will be acceptable, for it will strengthen the old i.e. and the new ideal; if it cannot be done, the new will be opposed as being dangerous to the projection into the future, and harmful to the continuation of the old. And so, there has been really no contact of understanding at all, but only a contact of grasping through the process of cognition, the process of the mental aggregates of grasping (*upādānakkhandha*) in reception (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*) and conception (*saṅkhāra*), which then constitute a thought of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). There has been no understanding, because there has been no approach with an open mind, sincere, unbiased and unconditioned. There was only an approach of grasping and assimilation into the already conditioned framework of past memory, which is the "I".

As we have seen already, that conditioned framework is the fixture of the "I", without which there could be no "I". The "self", in order to be at all, has to continue, has to project its memory as an image into the ideal, has to make itself permanent. Permanency, endurance, continuance, is essential to the existence of "self". And thus, when this ideal is confronted with the impermanent,

there is bound to be a clash of opposition, of rejection, of conflict, in the attempt to bring the impermanent into the framework of the ideal permanent.

The permanent is the ideal, the hope of continuity, the expectation of security of that which has been built up in the past to form the "I". This "I" is not what appears now as transient phenomena, but what it has been made to appear as its ideal. It actually is the sum-total of the influences of society and education, the conditionings of culture and tradition, the fears and hopes instilled by religious beliefs and morals, the associations with political and philosophic views, the learning and practice of books and rules, the belonging to a race, the feelings of nationality, the adherence to a creed, the acceptance of authority, the membership of institutions with varying interests, the dependence on the views of others, the fear of public opinion, the attachment to family, relations and friends with similar views and interests, dependence on property, inherited or acquired, on qualifications of learning or experience, dependence on the esteem of others, on their flattering agreement, on their recognition, on a job or income. To realise what all that means, just think for a moment, what "I" would be without all that. It is no more a question whether the "I" can endure without all this; for it simply is all this. And without it there just is no "I".

Can such a "self" which is built for security and endurance ever meet impermanence without condemnation or rejection? And can such meeting in opposition ever be in understanding with an open and unconditioned mind? Every thought is impregnated with the greed for self-protection, fully biased in hope and fear; can such thought ever see anything direct and not distorted, free and unconditioned?

Well, that is conflict which is the fear of loss (*vyāsana*), which is the pain of disagreement (*asāta*), which is the despair of unrest (*upāyāsitatta*): to see the unwanted, to feel the insecurity, to sense the void of "self". It is the fear of self-knowledge which prevents self-understanding. The "I" just cannot afford to look at itself,

in fear of dissolution. And yet, that "self" has to go on, has to continue in all its pretence and hypocrisy, or die in truth. And so there is no way to a gradual ending of that "self": either one sees, or one refuses to see. There is no solution to this problem, which would be a compromise and an escape. There is only the dissolution which is the ending of this conflict, the ending of a distorted vision of a deluded mind. Why does the mind not see? Because it does not want to see. It is the fear of finding that there is no hope of escape.

Conflict exists only when impermanence is seen, but not wanted. The mind which has understood conflict in impermanence (*anicca-dukkha saññā*) is free from it.

For this understanding, which does not come about through logic which is thought, not through striving which is desire, not through concentration which is an escape—for such understanding it is necessary to have direct insight. But insight which is direct perception is prevented by the distortions of desire, of prejudice, of conclusions, of clinging, of conditioning in the anxiety for security. There must be direct and open understanding of those distortions as distortions, as misshapen reflections in a curved mirror. For, in understanding there is no fear; and without fear there is no conflict. Fear is not of the unknown; it is the dread of losing all that which constitutes the "I", all its images and pretensions; it is fear to acknowledge the fact that without this entire build-up there is no "self" to continue, to become, to be secure, to be permanent. It is fear of an image, of losing that image.

And what happens when that image is gone? With it go all those distortions and prejudices, all hopes and fears, all conclusions and conditionings, all dictates and anxieties. It is to be free and without conflict. Only then can impermanence be seen as impermanence, which is a fresh awakening every moment with the impossibility of clinging to it, just because it is impermanent, and because there is no "self" to turn it into an image to worship

and to possess. That is the joy of creation, of living without fear and without conflict.

Soullessness (*anatta*)

We have been speaking of understanding which does not come through learning from books, but which comes through seeing, direct seeing, unbiased seeing, seeing without projection, without ideal, without background. That kind of seeing is insight which alone is understanding. Such understanding comes as a destructive flash of lightning. And one is afraid of destruction; and so one avoids it, one makes secure against it and the conflict continues without understanding.

There is much gratification in life, even though it is not lasting and cannot give security. It makes one forget, for a moment or two, and then again the hankering comes for more, and the search for security is on again. It is not the gratification one wants, but the temporary forgetting and the security it provides, as an escape, from the ever recurring conflict. One searches for an escape, but the escape itself is the conflict between the actual and the idea. One cannot let the ideal go, because it is the only thing which makes the "I" continue. Understanding, therefore, is dangerous to relationship and to the entire course of living, thinking and acting. Understanding is dangerous to the "I". And so one has to choose, and is afraid to choose.

To be is to act; but every act is a choice (*cetanā*) and in choice there is conflict (*dukkha*). Existence is not possible without conflict, as long as there is choice. Is it possible to live without choice and hence without conflict? We have seen what conflict is, conflict in impermanence (*anicca-dukkha*); we have seen that conflict is in the approach of the mind to the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), in its choice of the concept of permanence, the ideal. It is then this concept of permanence, this ideal of continuance, which has to be perceived and understood in its place in the

approach to the problem of conflict. It is in this understanding that the unity of the three essentials will become most clear, for when the concept of permanence is understood and disposed of in the void of non-entity (*anatta*), the problem of conflict will be solved also in that same understanding of the unsubstantiality of conflict (*dukkha-anatta, saññā*).

What is then this substance, believed to support the phenomena; what is this entity which holds together all appearances; what is this soul which binds together all material and spiritual qualities; what is this essence which is the backbone of all existence; what is this abstract form which gives shape to all concrete expression; what is this "self" which stands aloof from all others; what is this individual which is distinct in personality, in action, in thought; what is this thinker, this actor, apart from thought and action; what is this permanent entity which remains unaffected by universal change and impermanence; what is this being which is not subject to becoming and ceasing? Who is this watcher who can remain aloof from his choice? Why is there choice?

Choice is the mechanical response to memory, which is the accumulated selection of past experiences. In the present moment of experiencing, in the fullness of that moment of being, there is no thought about an experiencer who can stand aloof and watch. If that were so, the experiencer is a watcher and is not involved in the experience at all. And yet, to retain that experience of the moment and continue in it, the experience has to be preserved by mind in thought, in memory. Thus is created the onlooker, the spectator, the knower of the memory of the experience; but that is not the experiencer; that is only the memory which tries to continue, when the actual experiencing is no more. It is that memory which selects what is favourable for continuance, flattering for existence, gratifying for sense-satisfaction. Thus it is memory which creates the "self", the onlooker, the storekeeper, who selects, who chooses, who is the cause of conflict; for, existence is not possible without conflict, as long as there is choice. Choice becomes necessary when conflict is felt in opposition

without understanding. The conflict of opposition is destructive to continued existence, and thus opposition must be eliminated by suppression or sublimation, by conquest or submission, as long as there is continued existence. And so, choice in opposition becomes necessary for existence. Such striving for continuation is, however, only the striving for an ideal, a concept, which is the choice made by mind in the face of opposition. It is the mind, in need of continuance, being a "self" in opposition to non-self, which has created this ideal of an entity, which remains permanently as a substance underlying the changing phenomena, as an essence in abstraction, supporting the actual existence which is fleeting, as a soul which will live on for ever after discarding its instrument, the body.

In making this "self" secure, the mind has invented an elaborate system of religion, of philosophy, of theology, to prove the existence of this essence, to convince itself that there is an ultimate security, an eternal rest after striving, an attainable goal of achievement. To see and understand this process of "self"-making is to dissolve its arguments and basis, so that there is no food for thought, no feeding the emotions, so that the mind remains open and free to see what is. It is to see and understand the perception of that void of "self" (*anatta saññā*), and in that perception also see the void of conflict (*dukkha-anatta saññā*).

Self-knowledge has been advocated by a all great thinkers from the time of the beginning of analysis of thought by the ancient Greek philosophers, when they reduced all knowledge to that recurrent maxim: "Know thyself". It is the ultimate search for realisation in the still older vedic writings, the search for the *paramātman*, in delusion separated from the Brahman, as the relative separated from the absolute, ultimately to be re-united with its source. It is the basis of all religions, whose system of morality is founded on the salvation of an eternal soul through grace and through prayer with good works. It is the key-stone of the many systems of philosophy, especially the idealistic schools,

even when the search for "self" is camouflaged by a postulate of a substance or a categorical necessity, a divine essence in existence.

This search was on at full strength during the lifetime of the Buddha who, in the first sermon recorded in the Dīgha Nikāya, enumerates and classifies sixty-two different schools of thought, claiming to have discovered this essential entity in the various mental aggregates, a "self" possessing them or being possessed by them, independent of or depending on matter or mind, etc. Ultimately rejecting them all as so many wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), basing their opinions on phenomena without understanding them, thus being enmeshed in this net (*jāla*) of theories and wishful thinking. Still, it is the one question to be answered before anything else and on the answer of which depends the stability of the entire structure of traditional metaphysics. But, instead of analysing the concept of "self", instead of approaching the concept with an enquiring mind to find out why such a concept should have arisen at all, the many systems provide us with many proofs of the necessity of such an entity, of the existence thereof, of its function and nature. And so, argumentation has taken the place of analysis, and faith is trying to supersede understanding.

But logic in reasoning[16] cannot solve the problem, because it presupposes that which it is out to prove. Then logic becomes a sophism: *petitio principii*.

The first alleged proof is taken from external evidence, namely the opinion of all men; if all people agree upon one point, it is said to be the voice of nature which cannot err; it is said that all people at all times have been convinced of a continued existence after death. Now, this argument loses its very foundation, because not all men believe in a soul. One sixth of the world's population is Buddhist and denies the existence and the very i.e. of a soul;

[16]The following notes are extracts from Bhikkhu Dhammapāla's Broadcasts on Buddhism (July 1943) published under that title by the Y.M.B.A., Colombo in 1944, most of it reprinted without permission and without acknowledgement by G. P. Malalasekera in *Aspects of Reality* in Wheel Publication No. 127 in 1968.

further there are millions of atheists and scientific men who have lost all faith in God, soul and religion; who have turned completely materialists; who, even if some of them accept the existence of a substance underlying the phenomenal, will consider this to be of a purely material substance dependent on, and perishing together with, the co-existing form; further still, even the majority of the so-called believers are so only in name, for they contradict their faith by their deeds whenever they commit a "mortal" sin, that is condemning their souls to eternal damnation for the sake of a short lived satisfaction, which they certainly will never would do if they really believed in an eternal soul. Thus, there remains only a very small minority who truly and actually believe in their soul and the salvation thereof. And as their belief is based on emotion and devotion, they certainly cannot claim to echo the voice of nature. For their conviction is not even a natural growth of mental development, but rather a remnant of the childish submission in their youth to the dogmatic interpretation by ecclesiastical authorities. This kind of blind faith, which, enforced upon the child, remains sometimes a habit in uneducated adults, is in reality the crudest form of religion, hardly to be distinguished in degree from the superstitious practices of primitive tribes.

But, moreover, what is this voice of nature? It is nothing else but the collection of individual opinions, just as a nation is the collection of persons, born and living in the same country. If one individual can err, so can two or three or a thousand, or a million, and even all. Thus the fact of general opinion, even of the whole human race, should never be overestimated. In the past we have seen how the strongest convictions about the heavens and the earth have crumbled up, so that now they seem ridiculous to us. Yet in their days people have even made the sacrifice of their lives for convictions, generally disbelieved then, but now equally generally accepted; which is only another way of saying that general opinion has changed. Only 400 years ago the mass of civilized humanity laboured under the delusion that the sun goes round the earth; that this forms the centre of the

universe. Copernicus stood practically alone opposing not only what was then said to be common sense, but also divine revelation and the authority of the Bible. Galileo was jailed and by threat of torture compelled to disavow his former opinions because his telescope contradicted the sacred texts. Because Giordano Bruno dared to draw some inferences from the Copernican theory contrary to the Scholastic philosophy of the Church based on Aristotle, he was excommunicated and handed over to the secular authorities with a recommendation of a "punishment as merciful as possible and without shedding of blood", the atrocious formula for burning alive. He perished in the flames, turning his eyes away from the crucifix which was held up to him, the victim of theological stupidity and self-applauding intolerance, the martyr for freedom of thought. It was, and still is the common daily testimony of the sense of sight of every being, that the sun does move round the earth. And yet, that sense of sight, that common sense, that general opinion, that divine revelation, that biblical authority, were clearly mistaken and false. The same happens even nowadays, and might happen over and over again. What was only yesterday proved by science and tested in practice, is overthrown, today by some newer theories equally proved and tested and universally accepted, till tomorrow some more advanced theories are brought forward, explaining the same facts quite differently, but more logically and more according to the truth.

Thus it will be seen that a general, or even a universal agreement of opinion is no sign of proof of the truth. To say then that the voice of nature, if there would be any such thing, cannot err is neither induction, i.e., a conclusion from individual experience to a general truth or principle, nor deduction, i.e., an application of a universal characteristic to individual cases. It is merely bad logic based on sentiment rather than on reason. In this way then we have disposed of external evidence in favour of the soul—i.e. in two ways, namely in so far as we have shown that the existence of a soul is not the universal opinion, and even if it were

so, it would prove nothing. It may be true that all people at all times believe in existence after death; even Buddhists accept this doctrine; but existence after death does not involve a permanent existence after death, neither the existence of a permanent soul. Even the Hindus, who believe in transmigration of soul as opposed to a soulless rebirth as in Buddhism, do not really believe in individual, permanent souls; for, according to vedanta the soul after transmigration through many lives in Saṁsāra will be reunited, re-absorbed in Brahman from where it was emanated in the beginning of its wandering. There its individual existence will have come to an end.

***

External evidence thus having failed, we come to a whole series of arguments, alleged to be proofs from internal evidence. Internal evidence means evidence which manifests itself not directly in its existence, but only indirectly through the manifestation of action. Thus, when a car-tyre goes flat we may safely conclude that there must be a hole in the tube or a leak in the valve, even if we cannot discern it with the eye; for if there were no hole, the air would not have escaped. Similarly, from the working of the intellect we may draw some conclusions with regard to the nature of the intellect.

Now the mind is said to have universal or general ideas. Though John Locke, the English philosopher of the 17th century, in his doctrine of ideas maintained that universal ideas stand for individual objects, which are real in the context of experience, this would be a proof for the materiality of universals, rather than for anything else. There will be, however, few supporters of the soul-theory, if any, to support this opinion, for, if universal ideas stand for individual objects, they would cease to be universal. And that is exactly our point of view. Berkeley, though, a bishop of the Church of England, and an idealist in the fullest sense, thought rightly that all ideas are particular; things or objects as presented are individual; they are given together with the rela-

tions, each of which may be described by concrete reference to the presented object or event. Thus there is no such thing as shape. Apart from the objects possessing shape, nor colour apart from objects having colour, or any i.e. of motion except as bodies moving (Principles of Human Knowledge). The i.e. of a triangle is dependent on the knowledge of various types of triangles. The i.e. of colour has no reality, cannot be thought of except as red or blue or white, etc. And so, universality has no meaning apart from the relationship of particulars. An i.e. is general only in so far as it stands for particulars of the same kind. We speak of humanity. It is true, the i.e. maintains even though individuals die and are born, even though after a hundred years the whole human race has been renewed. But still the i.e. is only possible as a collective noun through knowledge of individuals. Thus the i.e. is based on, and derived from, material experience, and therefore cannot be said to be immaterial. A further proof that the so-called universal or general ideas are based on a material foundation can be obtained from the fact that, if the material experience is insufficient or wrong, the so-called general i.e. will suffer from the same deficiency. When experience grows, ideas become enlarged, so that the most general or universal i.e. is dependent on the largest amount of individual, particular experience, which is always material and impermanent.

If, therefore, universal ideas do not contain anything immaterial, the intellect itself cannot be said to be immaterial. Thus, even if there would be a soul, we might conclude from its material action that it too would be material. But material is composed, hence it is also decomposable or impermanent.

Once it is admitted that everything is received according to the nature of the receiver, it will have to be admitted also that as the mind has many times very material and materialistic ideas, thoughts of lust and hate, of profit and comfort, that those thoughts must come from a material source. If, therefore, the soul is said to be that source, it is a very material soul indeed;

decomposable also, because it is material and impermanent and no "soul" at all.

Another argument from internal evidence brought forward to prove the existence of an immaterial and permanent soul is taken from the fact that the mind seems to have immaterial concepts such as unity, truth, virtue, justice. Those concepts, however, are not truly immaterial as they have been derived from material experience. The i.e. of unity arose only when, after counting for a long time with beads or beans, we were able to substitute units for those objects. Unity is nothing but uniformity from a certain point of view, while the differences are intentionally overlooked. Even unity and order in nature, on which science has built its laws and axioms, have no real existence, but are based on experiment and observation, hence thoroughly material, and can easily be overturned by new observation and experiment. Even a thousand scientific experiments do not definitely prove that and make it a law, but one single experiment can upset the law and prove its invalidity.

Just as physical phenomena do not follow an absolutely rigorous necessity, but permit a contingency, incalculable as chance, so the mind does not follow any fixed law. Though conditioned and influenced, its choice cannot be predicted; and so, the alleged perfect regularity, uniformity, necessity of things is a mental fiction, a proof of the possibility of mental aberration in its lack in actuality, rather than of immateriality.

Likewise, truth, virtue, justice, etc. are only ideas resulting from the association of different experiences; they are dependent on education, and that is not even a sign of reason, still less of immateriality. For even a dog can learn to do many things and finally come to "understand" that, putting up his right paw means a piece of cake. Education, which is nothing but mental training, brings ideas together; and once they are associated, the point of connection might become hidden in the sub-conscious mind. The real connection being forgotten or suppressed, the mind will try to establish an artificial link, which is called rationalisation.

If ideas such as virtue and justice were really immaterial and permanent, they ought to remain the same unaltered in different times and climes.

But the association of ideas depends on acquired learning and cannot, therefore, be an inherent natural action of a permanent soul. Thus, a Christian who keeps two wives is guilty of bigamy and is considered as very immoral. But a Muslim can be very virtuous in the legal possession of even more than two. That morality changes is a truism. Not so very long ago slavery was deemed right, encouraged by the state, sanctioned by the Church; but that way of thinking has given place to a morality which judges slavery to be wrong, because it assigns higher values to human personality. A few hundred years ago any father had the right of life and death over his own children; nowadays we have even laws for the prevention of cruelty against animals. The moral laws which prevail here in kāmaloka, the sphere of the senses, do not hold good in the heavens of Brahmaloka. These few examples then show that abstract ideas, as virtue, justice, morality are very much impermanent and can, therefore, not he the expressions of a permanent soul.

But then, the mind can conceive essential ideas, it is said, expressing the intrinsic nature of things, such as definitions which comprise the common genus and the "specifying difference", which set forth the exact meaning, nature and class inherent in individual objects. These are said to be unchangeable and can therefore only be conceived by an unchangeable, permanent entity or soul. Definitions are said to have originated from Socrates, while Plato built up a system of eternal ideas. But definitions have as little reality about them as a mathematical problem. They may be useful and even necessary for logical distinction and classification, but they cannot be said to be either permanent or impermanent, because they are mere mental concepts, and have no existence outside the human brain.

Definitions, essential ideas, so-called eternal principles, are all based on material experience and exist only in particulars,

in individual thoughts. It is the very nature of essence to be particularised. It is true that we try to separate the i.e. of man, that is, mankind, from this or that individual. But at once we find it impossible for the essential i.e. to exist separately and equally impossible to unite it with the individual, as we do not see any relation. This unnatural and illogical position arises from the mistake of trying to separate the two: essence exists only in particulars, in existence which is individual and not general. Thus, they are not unchangeable in this sense that the objects to which they refer and on which they depend are changeable and impermanent. These particulars being material, so are, therefore, definitions and essences, abstractions and universals.

The last arrow on the bow of internal evidence from the intellectual powers is the reflex idea. In reflection, thought becomes the object of thought. And here certainly, say the upholders of the soul theory, is nothing material. According to Buddhism the mind is classed as a sense, the internal sense, and thus we have two sources of ideas: sensations which have come through the external sense-doors, eye for sight, year for sound, nose for odour, tongue for taste, and the whole body for touch, and sensations furnished by the mind of its own operations, which is reflection. Thus, reflection is the knowledge of perceived sensations. When sensations are material and are perceived in material sense-organs, how then can the knowledge thereof become at once immaterial? Reflex ideas are experienced also in animals; they too show to have memory, attachment, revenge. Yet, nobody will maintain that animals have an immortal soul, for never yet has a dog been baptised to save his soul from eternal damnation. But if animals can have reflections without a permanent soul, why should a soul be postulated in the case of humans?

Separate from the intellect there is another power in man, which is the subject of much controversy, and that is the will. The supporters of the soul-theory try to make the working of the powers of the will dependent on the soul they imagine; and just as they claimed for the power of the intellect, so they claim

for the will-power to be immaterial because it strives (they say) not only after material and particular good things, but for the absolute good. This, however, is not correct, because the absolute good cannot even be known; would it be known, it would cease to be absolute and become relative to the knower. What cannot be known, cannot be desired or willed, and such a general object cannot have any attractive power. No man can love the most beautiful woman in the world without knowing her, though even that is still rather material. One always strives for some particular good which is always material. "Immoral objects" do not exist. This is a mere phrase, meaningless in itself.

It is maintained, however, that some will-objects are unchangeable, e.g. it is always good to respect, one's parents. But if such respect would include even obedience with regard to evil, it would no longer be good and thus no fitting will-object. Whatever is good or bad is only so with respect to its good or bad effects. *Kamma* is only *kusala*, that is, skilful and wholesome, if there is a skilful effect (*kusala vipāka*). And as the effect or the result is always particular and a concrete instance, the action and volition must be of the same kind.

From this follows a last objection, namely the freedom of the will. In inorganic matter we see a rigid determinism towards a certain end, but in similar circumstances man remains free and master over his actions, which clearly shows his superiority over and independence from matter. Thus, if the will is free, that is, independent, it must be immaterial and then also permanent. But, this discussion on the freedom of will is usually opened from the wrong perspective. For, whether one accepts the freedom of the will or rejects its independence, in both cases the will is taken as an entity, as something existent, be it free or be it bound. Will, however, can neither be said to be free, nor bound, because it is non-existent. It merely arises, whenever there is a possibility of choice. If there is nothing to choose from, there can be no question of willing. On the other hand, the possibility of choosing shows the presence of two opposites or more. Their very

presence shows that there is an influence and that the choice is conditioned. The possibility to choose what is wrong, therefore, also shows that the action is conditioned and not free. Even if one chooses what one knows to be harmful in some respect, there will be also some motive which brought about that choice. Knowing, e.g., that association with certain people will bring one to excessive drinking, gambling and other actions which will cause financial difficulties, deterioration of health and the ruin of family-happiness, yet one might seek that company because one lacks the moral strength to break with them.

To show one's courage and to imagine one's independence are sufficient unconscious motives to influence and determine one's choice against the better dictates of reason and common sense. Even one's pride might not allow one to go back on a previous decision, even if that is seen as harmful. If there were no attraction, no inducement, no motive, equilibrium would have been established already and no choice would take place. Thus, volition arises only when a choice becomes possible. If there is the possibility of a choice, there will be attraction and repulsion which influence the choice and make it conditioned. If there is no choice, then, of course, there is no will at all. Real freedom then does not lie in the will, but in being without will.

***

Having thus disposed of all the so-called proofs in favour of a permanent soul, yet there are some Western scholars in oriental languages, though not in the teachings expressed therein, who venture to offer their criticism on this most essential and distinctive mark of the teaching of the Buddha. They have tried to explain "no-self" as "self" or "soul" in the following way: when the Buddha, speaking of the components of the aggregates of clinging (*pañc'ūpādānakkhandha*), said of each separately: "That does not belong to me; that am I not; that is not myself", what else could he mean but that the self or soul exists separate from them? To which we answer: Had the Buddha stated simply and

directly that there is no permanent ego-entity, he would have given the impression of siding with the Annihilationists against the Eternalists. Well, both schools were wrong and the Buddha wanted to show to both that they were wrong. Therefore, without saying that life comes to a complete end at death, which is the teaching of Annihilationism, he merely analysed the so-called "being", and whatever he found of matter or of mind, he did not find a soul there. And so he denied the opposite teaching of Eternalism as well. Could he have taught us the doctrine of no-self (*anatta*) more explicitly and more impressively? Whatever there be "that does not belong to me; that am I not; that is not my self" (*n'etaṁ mama, n'esoham-asmi, n'eso me atta*).

There is then no sound basis for the assertion that there is a soul distinct from body and mind. A human soul cannot be distinct from human life, and human life collapses together with the body. What remains is the influence of good and bad deeds, which will be the cause of good and bad in another life. But that is not my "self". There is no soul, there is no self, no permanent "I" or ego-entity. But there pulses on a flux, a process of life, of action and reaction, which rises and falls as the waves of the ocean. Those waves will come to rest and that process will come to a stop, when all desires are stifled, because "I" is an expression of selfishness, of craving. When craving has gone, no "I" will be left.

If the teaching of the Buddha is rightly said to be beyond sophistry (*atakkāvacāra*), it is never more so than with regard to the teaching of soullessness (*anatta*), because any reasoning, even the purest logic, will presuppose the "ego" in thinking, as Descartes did: "I think, therefore I am" (*cogito ergo sum*). The burden of proof is not on those who do not believe in a soul. And soullessness cannot be proved with reason, just as darkness cannot be seen by introducing a light. Darkness can be experienced only when all light is quenched. Likewise soullessness, the insubstantiality of phenomena, can only be realised when all selfishness is excluded. When the craving of "mine" and the pride

which says "I am" have vanished then the error of self-delusion (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*) cannot arise.

Now, having totally rejected the concept of an individual and permanent entity, in the sense of a physical substance or a spiritual soul, how does this negative knowledge fit into our scheme of thought? How does it affect our mode of thinking? how is it to be related and experienced in our approach to the problem of conflict? As long as this theory of no-soul remains an intellectual exercise, it may be interesting as a pass-time, it may be valuable as mental escape, but it certainly will not be that mark of distinction, singled out by the Buddha as the foundation of his teaching. And failing to do that, there is no essential difference between this and other systems of living and thinking.

This soullessness of everything, physical and mental, is indeed the very essence of the Buddha's doctrine. Impermanence is so obvious and universal, that theologians had to go out of their way to create a soul-concept for their desire for continuance to hang on to. This soul-theory is in a way more important in various religions than the concept of God as divine creator, a personal and individual absolute; for what possible use can there be for a divine existence, if the individual cannot continue, so as to be in a permanent relation thereto.

And so, there remain two points to be considered:

One, what is the relationship of this negative knowledge with the problem of conflict, as life has been seen to consist of? And how is this understanding of "no-self" an essential feature, a mark, a distinct doctrine of the highest importance, as a mere negation?

Two, why should there be this widespread emotional need for belief in a soul, when the intellect contradicts it?

Conflict is known at every level of our existence. In nature there is the struggle for the survival of the fittest. In the mind there is the conflict of becoming, a conflict between what is and what is desired. Conflict is a fact which cannot be denied, as it is there within and without. Man's very progress and advance in science, medicine and mode of living, has been made possible

through his struggle with his beliefs and outdated views. Conflict is a fact; but is it essential for living?

What is essential is an indispensable quality of intrinsic nature. And thus the question is: Is conflict indispensable to the intrinsic nature of living? We know by experience, by observation, by memory, that all life as we know it is conflict. Life as we know it is a bundle of material and mental factors. The mind is a bundle of sensations (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), ideations (*saṅkhāra*) and thoughts (*viññāṇa*); ideations are mental concepts and compositions of various forms of greed (*lobha*) and hate (*dosa*); thoughts are reflections based on those compounds and stored in memory which is dead knowledge or ignorance (*moha, avijjā*). All together they form that delusion of a "self", which cannot endure without projection, but which in itself is void (*anatta*).

Is all this indispensable to the intrinsic nature of living? Living is not the memory of a dead past; it is not a mental projection into an unborn future. Living is the actual meeting of a challenge, which has no value and cannot be met if not understood in the present. To see and understand the challenge is a direct perceiving without prejudice or condemnation. It is without conflict because it is not conditioned by thought, memory or idea; it is without conflict and without opposition, because there is no "self" in it intrinsically. Thus, essentially there is no conflict; if there is, it is introduced by thought. We have seen already, how this essence is not to be understood as a philosophical abstraction, as an absolute reality underlying the phenomena and supporting them. It is that which makes a thing what it is. It is as the perfume of a flower, the colour of the rainbow, the intelligent insight of the mind. Reason may give shape and value and all things which provide attraction. But reason changes with the fashions, so that good reasons cease to be the real reasons.

Essence is that which accounts for existence, it is the *raison d'etre*, the actuality of reality, the living of life. It is only insight which can see and understand this essence, while mere

thought, which is conditioned by memories and ideal, cannot see independently and be free. In conditioned thought there is no freedom of insight. Thus, when there is conflict, it is memory which compares and judges, condemns and rejects, according to the standards of the past, established by tradition and faith. It is thought projected as an ideal which strives to attain and to become. But there is no understanding of the actual conflict, as long as there is a rejection through comparison or a projection through desire. Yet it is in conflict that this process of rejection and projection can be observed. And thus it is conflict that contains the essence of insight (*dukkha-anatta saññā*).

Hence, instead of trying to escape from conflict, it should be welcomed as an opportunity to see life in action, mind in reaction, memory as clinging to the past, ideals as escapes into the future. A conflict is not a problem to be solved, but a misunderstanding to be understood. When thus a conflict reveals its very nature, its essence being a "self" wanting to become more "self", then the insight thereof releases the perfume of freedom. In that freedom, there can be action through understanding which is not conditioned by any thought of "self".

This, then, is the relationship between the conflict in impermanence (*anicca-dukkha*) and the perception of the non-entity, the voidness of this conflict (*dukkha-anatta saññā*). The conflict itself is meaningless because its basis of the resistance of an ideal "self" against the actuality of impermanence is the basis of voidness, of non-entity. Thus the conflict itself is not only impermanent, but it is essentially conceptual, conceived by, and existing in the mind only. This is made into an essential ingredient of living, because of the desire for continuity, because of the psychological necessity of the "I" to continue. Unless the "I" continues, there is nothing to strive for, even if striving means struggle and conflict. Struggle is the essence of self-continuity; and so, when continuance is made essential, the "I" too is made into the ideal of a permanent "soul" without which there can be no endurance.

In the realisation of this essentially characteristic mark of

distinction, of the non-existence of any permanent essence, there is also realised the non-existence of conflict. Conflict due to ignorance ceases to be with the arising of understanding. It is the dissolution of the problem, of all problems, based on misunderstanding, on the misconception of separateness, of opposition, of conflict.

It is significant that after listening to the Buddha's first sermon on the four Noble Truths and the path thereto, only one of the five disciples, Kondañña, was able just to enter that path. A further exposition by the Buddha on the mark of soullessness (*anatta-lakkhaṇa*) was necessary to make them all five realise that "beyond this there is no more".

> The load of life laid low,
> The precious price is paid;
> The waves of well and woe
> Of stormy stream are stayed.
> ! The direst duty's done,
> A ten-fold tiger tamed;
> The weary war is won,
> The timeless term obtained.

Dependent Origination

There has always been, and quite naturally so, considerable speculation as to what caused the Buddha's enlightenment. This kind of interest is mainly aroused by the fact or the manner in which the many founders of religions were affected at the outset of their new mission. It is usually a case of conversion from a worldly life to a spiritual outlook, conditioned by some sort of revelation or vision of the divine, which made an illiterate camel-driver into an inspired prophet, the son of a carpenter into a miracle worker, an unwilling man with a stammer into a leader of his nation out of slavery.

Such conversions have been witnessed by saints as Augustine of Hippo, by sinners as Mary of Magdalen, by intellectuals as Cardinal Newman, by mystics as John of the Cross, Francis of Assisi and Sri Ramakrishna, by reformers as Martin Luther, Calvin and Wesley, by men of vision as Krishnamurti and women of devotion as Mother Theresa, all of whom experienced a true conversion, that is a complete change of heart and mind, which made them renounce their worldly life and turn towards a "goal" of spiritual light, which some called God in many names, or truth, or love.

Such realisation often came in a sudden flash, as when Saul, on the way to Damascus to persecute the new Christian disciples, heard himself called by name, became physically blind, but attained a spiritual light which made him the apostle of Christianity for the gentiles. Not many have been able or have even tried, to

put into words that supreme experience; for, words are no longer an experience, but are at most a vague memory and reflection. But the lasting change of such conversion was truly a change of attitude, a turning to godliness, not necessarily God, a change not of mode, but a complete substitution and revolution, in which the old had fallen away to make room for new insight.

Then, such revelation carries with it the urge to communicate, to share, to impart, to transmit to others what seems a new discovery. And then there is born that zeal and earnestness to render service, so that others too may benefit, the spirit of the missionary, which sometimes in so intense and fanatic that conversions are made at the point of the sword, killing the body so as to save the soul.

Enlightenment

We have seen by now enough of the teaching of the Buddha and of the history of its propagation, to understand that all such zeal has to be excluded from what is usually termed the Buddha's enlightenment. Although in the vedic teachings, prevailing then as now, there are many personifications of the forces of nature which often are treated as individuals with natural and supernormal powers, there was and there is none who could impart enlightenment or realisation or inspiration or whatever term one would like to give to the experiencing of reality apart from actuality.

The enlightenment of prince Siddhartha which made him into a fully awakened Buddha was then not an inspiration or a revelation; there was no supernatural disclosure by some supreme deity; there was no divine influence under which his later teaching was promulgated. Although prince Siddhartha renounced his worldly life, which may be seen as a kind of conversion, that was not a final one, because that life of asceticism did not lead him to a goal of intended truth, but only served the purpose of

showing that neither the extreme of self-indulgence, nor that of self-mortification can lead to self-knowledge. Then, what was that enlightenment? What did he realise? It seems so very important to know that; for, it is not by merely following a teacher or accepting his authority, that there can be an individual experiencing which would be the discovery of the truth for oneself, which would be a true conversion from faith to understanding.

Faith is so easy as it is proved by the many thousands and millions of faithful who are ready to submit their reason and intellect as a supreme sacrifice of devotion. Faith is the easy way out in a surrender of will, when one can admit and submit to whatever one wants; and when one does not want that any more, one just changes one's faith, one's guru, one's god, for one who is more suitable to the needs of the moment. In faith one seeks the satisfaction of one's own concept, one seeks the external confirmation of one's own internal opinions and doubts, one seeks oneself in the guise of the authority of another till that one ceases to satisfy, when one may change the colour and the shape of one's monastic garb, but remain inwardly the same weakling who seeks support, who wants to lean on someone else, who wants to escape the responsibility of self-discovery.

Who has not been through that process of a search for an unknown goal, picking up a mantra here, an initiation there, baptism, circumcision, sitting with crossed legs, hoping for the arising of the *kundalini*, the mystic serpent in the tree of knowledge, searching for God without knowing oneself, bathing in holy waters of sacred rivers, protecting oneself with charms and amulets, prayers and offerings. But who has asked himself honestly and sincerely what he is searching for and why? And without that answer the truth will not come, because we have made already in advance an image or a concept of the "truth", as I want it to be, which is the ideal "self" which is now the object of all search.

What was that enlightenment which made Siddhartha the seeker speak to his companions with supreme confidence: "Now I know!" His first utterances to them are found in what is called the

Sutta in which he set arolling the wheel of truth (Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta), in which he outlined the four noble truths: the fact that there is conflict (*dukkha*) in the experience of impermanence (*anicca*), because that "self" which strives for continuance and security refuses to see that there is no "self" (*anatta*). But that is the formulation of his realisation; that is the essence of his first and second sermons which made his companions see what he had seen that night of light.

The four noble truths are a marvellous compact of irrefutable logic which goes far beyond the logic of thought. But logic does not convert the heart; it may set the mind thinking in a particular direction. But still, logic is a conclusion of a syllogism; it is not a solution of a problem. Logic may be accurate within the limits of thought; but, thought has its own limitations in memory and experience which have their individual conviction of the truth of fact, but which will always remain within that framework of thought, which is dependent on tradition and education, on conditions of environment from birth to death, which is based on the history of many ages with their superstitions and beliefs, race segregation and religions taboos of fear.

Thus, to see the truth of the four noble truths—not to accept their truth as one who is a born Buddhist—there must be a totally unconditioned state of mind which is not prejudiced either in favour or in rejection. There must be a mind in which thought has come to a stand-still. Thought which is a reference to authority is a reflection of past experiences, an attachment to what makes a search for security a necessity. When thought ceases to search for a solution of a problem, then there is no ideal of expectation, of hope, of salvation. As long as there is a search for an ideal, there is also the fear of non-attainment, however strong one's desire, however sincere one's endeavour. It is this fear which distorts and which therefore prevents a direct insight without expectation. Fear is a distortion, for it shrinks away from the obvious: it is an uneasy anticipation of a possible loss. Such loss may be purely imaginary, but it represents the loss of what is most precious. It

is not the loss of health, or property, or even of life, but it is the fear of losing what they stand for. For, what is the worth of life in sickness; what is the use of mere existence in poverty; what is life if there is no continuance after death? Death may be a certainty which we all have to accept; and when death comes, the body and the mind will probably be so weak that the passing away will not even be noticed. It is not that passing away which causes fear, but the fact that everything which had value and which constituted life, the fact that all that which made the "I" must go, the fact of total insecurity and lack of dependence, that causes fear of the loss of everything. Fear of being left unprotected, physically, mentally, spiritually naked, no body, nobody, no "self".

It is too much for a mind which has been nurtured throughout many ages, to let all that go without anxiety and without a feeling of insecurity. And so, that mind throughout the many ages has invented and conceived a mental image of security, a system of insurance, a concept of hope, in which there can be continuation of existence, where life as it is wanted can now be resumed, perhaps under more ideal conditions in spheres of endless happiness, but still a continuance which alone can give security in this universal impermanence.

That ideal is provided by religion with its hope of eternal life and salvation. That concept has penetrated for many centuries the thoughts of scientists and philosophers, not only in their mediaeval search for an elixir of life, Ambrosia, the food of the immortals, for the philosophers' stone which could change the substance of metal into gold, but which even new forms the basis of belief of a substance supporting the phenomena, of a soul as the immaterial and immortal part of man (though not of animal), as a vital principle of man's mental powers.

If such beliefs, though modified, still persist to this scientific age of space travel and surgical discoveries, how strong they would have been two or three thousand years ago, when man had nothing but his eyes to see, and the uncertainty of knowledge to rely on!

Then, what was it that prince Siddhartha saw and which made him into an all-enlightened Buddha? He had seen the valuelessness of property and left it all behind. He had seen the danger of family affections and broken off those ties. He had seen death to the point of starvation in self-mortification, till the conscious mind failed him to lead him further to the ideal, his ideal concept of truth. And when all those ideals failed to materialise, he saw his failure as failure; he saw his striving for the ideal of perfection as a desire for self-attainment; he even saw the uselessness of giving such a message to a world steeped in spirituality more than this twentieth century is steeped in materialism. He had to give up; and he did give up. He left his companions, he gave up the ascetic life, as he had renounced earlier his life of luxury. There was nothing any teacher could teach him, for he had reached the states of mental absorption where mind concentrates on nothingness and where perception itself becomes imperceptible.

There was nothing more to do. It was literally the end of the road. And so the Bodhisatta sat down at the foot of a tree. He ate a meal of milk-rice which was not meant for him but offered to him with the mistaken intention that he was a tree spirit. He bathed in the nearby river and threw the bowl into the river, where it got caught in an eddy, floated in that swirl a little upstream and then sank. Again the Bodhisatta sat down, obviously getting reconciled with the failure of his strivings. Whatever he had learned was the knowledge of information, what we would call book-knowledge now-a-days. And then he knew that he learned nothing! And he knew of no further road or method to obtain new learning.

But he had learned ignorance! It was the experiencing of not knowing, and at the same time the experience of the knowledge thereof. And in that experience he saw the whole panorama of a search for knowledge leading to a search for action. For mental action to achieve and obtain knowledge, the search for the satisfaction of that desire for knowledge without which the

process of thought cannot proceed, where desire has lost its object, where striving ceases because there is no goal.

Ignorance

It was not knowledge, but a lack of knowledge (*avijjā*) which opened a vista of insight which has no object, but which is seeing just what is. And with that insight he understood that his very search for knowledge was inspired by his lack of knowledge, that his search for knowledge which was ignorance was a search for action, action which was desire for attainment, desire for becoming, desire for escape. It was the beginning of his understanding of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), according to which the lack of knowledge produces a desire for becoming knowledgeable, in which the new becoming, as a new creation, can continue that which was not known (*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*); the thirst for knowledge had become the thirst to create, to produce, to continue; the simple not-knowing (*avijjā*) had become the opposite (*saṅkhāra*); being was becoming! It was insight in not-knowing, which gave enlightenment, an understanding of all that is.

An interesting, although perhaps fanciful, connection can be seen in the very designation the Buddha himself used in reference to himself. There is first of all the total absence of the term "I" when the Buddha refers to his liberated state after his enlightenment. It was the discovery of the absence of an "ego" which is the thread running through the four noble truths, the formulas of dependent origination, thereby making his non-self (*anatta*) doctrine the pivot of his teaching, the hub of the wheel of truth, the basic realisation of enlightenment and Nibbāna.

I refer, of course, to the designation of Tathāgata, which has been wisely left untranslated in modern versions of the suttas. From the very beginning, at the first meeting after his enlightenment, when the Buddha's former companions addressed him

as "comrade" (*āvuso*), a term which even now no junior monk would use in addressing his senior (*thera*) in the order, the Buddha pointed out the distinction in attainment and learning. It was not as an old friend and comrade that he should be hailed, because he had truly "gone the whole way"; he was a Tathāgata. The relation of comradeship, of searchers for a common goal, had gone: it had all gone! And so, when he now came to them with his newly discovered truth, there was in him no searcher any more; he had come, as one who had come as he was. Not only had he found the truth, but he was the truth, actually experiencing the true state of all things, actually seeing things as they are in the "thus-ness" of their ultimate reality. This "thusness" of being what one is, is without relationship. It is complete in itself, it is perfection, it is truth.

There is the *actual* life of experience, of conditionality, evolution and involution, seen as life and death, as individuality, as personality; the life of "self" in relationship. Then there is the *ideal* life of striving for realisation, for attainment, for becoming, a life of escape from the actual which is felt as a conflict: it is the life of a "self", transcending, sublimating, searching for the absolute. And then there is the real life, in which there is no more search for an ideal and no more escape from the actual; it is a life of "thusness" which cannot see and experience from the point of the little "self", which cannot project into a greater "Self" because there is the realisation that relationship is opposition, that in totality there can be no division of opposition, that without relation there cannot be exploitation, opposition or conflict. It is the real life which is thus, and in which there is no place for "self" or "Self".

What is, does not matter. It is neither good nor bad. It is not a goal; it has no purpose. For, all those things are the composites of ignorance. And when ignorance is gone, there is no search for wisdom. When ignorance is seen as ignorance, that is the truth. And when the search has ceased, there is no goal, no walker on the road. Then, all questioning as to "what then is?"

is seen as utterly futile; for, all compositions (*saṅkhāra*) are the decompositions of a, searcher, of a decaying mind. And when the searcher ceases to search, there is no search any more. And when there is no search, where is the searcher?

The opening statement of what has been accepted as the formula of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), that compositions arise in dependence on ignorance (*aviijā paccayā saṅkhārā*) deserves a little more attention to get at its full meaning. "*Saṅkhāra*" is whatever is composed, that is made or put together (*saṅkaroti*). Now, whatever is composed is of an artificial nature: a combination, a growth, a fabrication, an amalgamation, a formulation of what was not thus formed before. It may be a development, an evolutionary aspect, a joining of forces, a mechanical grouping, a union of labour, a syllogism of thought, a cooperation of action; it is always a formation which in its many parts gives the appearance of unity, of oneness, of single-mindedness. Its strength lies in this union which is its very existence, as the strength of an army lies in the co-ordination of its various units and without which unity there would be no strength, but only chaos. So it is with the physical body and its organs; thus it is with the mind with its memory, its views, its resolves, its dispositions, its emotions and volitions. It is only a well co-ordinated mind that has the strength of reason, as it is a well co-ordinated body that is healthy and active and able to respond.

Composition then is formation in action. And if there is a formation of action which is not co-ordinated in its composition, such action can only produce confusion, chaos and conflict. Now the question arises: is there any formation of action which is not composed for the purpose of achieving a result? In other words, is there any action, which is not bent upon its reaction?

But that would mean that any action which is formed, planned or executed for the achievement of a result is only a reaction; it is an action which is composed of many parts, not the least being its intention (*cetanā*) to obtain a result. The result may never

be obtained, the cause may never produce its intended effect, as there are so many conditions on whose active participation and coordination the success of an action depends. But the goal was there in the intention, the volition, the will, without which there would not have been a spur to action. That means, however, that such action as a composite of inner strength and ability would never have become active without that inducement of motive, goal, etc. And that means that such action is always reactive. A purposeful action is never free because it depends on its purpose.

Now, coming back to our first thesis that all compositions are dependent on the factors which compose it, the shining truth of this proposition that "formations arise in dependence on ignorance" (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*) acquires a completely new meaning, which is not a revelation, but an intelligent awakening of insight. Things, events, actions, intentions, in short all formed or arranged compositions, are what they are, because they are formed and composed; and they would not be what they are, that is, they would not have been formed, they would not have arisen, if not in ignorance, in not-knowing, in mis-direction, in mis-understanding, in the absence of insight (*avijjā*). Had there been insight, that is, a fully awakened intelligence of the nature of composition, of formation, of volition, there would not have been that reaction which is of ignorance tending towards a result.

Complexes

The second term in this series of dependent originations is then *saṅkhāra*, which literally means "formations". It is a very general term and that makes it all the more difficult to get at its precise meaning. But the early commentaries are here very helpful. Various other translations have been attempted, such as "synergies[17]" and "determinations",[18] to mention just a few of the more un-

[17] Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids.

[18] Nyanamoli Thera.

usual ones. The term "determination" was strongly upheld by Nyanamoli Thera in his contribution to an article on "*anicca*" (impermanence) for the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, and he showed quite some reluctance on his part before he finally agreed to drop this term in this connotation, reserving it for the more usual meaning of determination as decisiveness in the mental state of resolution (*adhimokkha*). Still, there was a rather sound basis for his choice, because these "*saṅkhāras*" determine in their composition, combination and other relationships the precise nature of the form of mental states.

Without going too deeply into the philosophic and analytic constitution of a thought-unit, as explained in great detail in the Abhidharma literature on the subject, I may just mention that there are 52 constituents, of which seven are always present, making up with many of the remaining factors (*cetasikā*) a great variety of thought, skilful or otherwise, with their basis on the fundamental "roots" of love, hate and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*). Originally—and with that I mean before our monk scholars introduced their interpretations—there was only the fourfold division of thought as sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), ideation (*saṅkhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). And even then, this general term "ideation" (*saṅkhāra*) seems to have been an interloper, a substitution for volition (*cetanā*). Thus we have the thought in its various degrees of development of reception (where a physical contact is sensed and thus received by the mind just being aroused from its unconscious stream or *bhavaṅgasota*), of perception (where the sense-doors were being opened and a faculty of recognition came into action without as yet apprehending the full impact of the contact), of conception (where an i.e. or concept was being formed and the resultant recognition was being accepted or rejected), even before a complete state of awareness could blossom out in full consciousness. It is this third stage of the growth of a thought, that is, after reception and perception (*vedanā, saññā*), that constitutes the act of formation (*saṅkhāra*) of a concept. This is the moment of grasping without understand-

ing. It is the element of volition (*cetanā*), which determines the character, which forms the nature, which constitutes the distinctive mark of a particular thought. With full consciousness such volition would be responsible for its reaction; and thus volition (*cetanā*) is equated by the Buddha unequivocally with *kamma*.

This one term, however, has been spun out, divided, analysed, classified, till the commentators of the middle ages (5th Century) had made it into 50 components (of which volition as *cetanā* was kept as one). These fifty components are the mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), which together with sensation (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*) now make up the list of 52 mental formations (*saṅkhāra*).

But, general as it may appear, this term is very much specialised in this context of thought-analysis. For, in its original meaning it stands for anything which is composed (*saṅkhata*), physical or mental. And that leaves out only one "element" (*dhātu*), that of Nibbāna which is the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*). Here then we discover a new sidelight on the term *saṅkhāra*, namely as the conditioned state of everything outside Nibbāna. And so, the "formed" become the "conditioned" without exception; and it is with this understanding that we can now proceed with the formulation of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), that "formations arise in dependence on ignorance" (*avijjā-paccayā-saṅkhāra*).

Ignorance is not the cause of formations, for ignorance is not a positive state, and it can only induce certain conditions, promoting their evolution by its presence, or providing an opportunity of involution by its absence. It is this relationship of conditionality which must be kept in mind throughout, as in this process there is no place for causation, creation, or independent spontaneous origination; for, whatever arises, arises in dependence on conditions, and it too will cease, in dependence on the cessation of those conditions.

The conditions of which we hear so much are obviously not the general compositions which constitute the many forms of

physical and biological existence. They are the compositions, the compounds of the many forms of inhibitions, the instinctive taboos, the induced restraints, which are the self-protective defences of a weak individual against an overbearing society; they are also the excesses, indulgences, outbursts of violence, intimidations, which are the expressions of that same "self", which fears in isolation, which withdraws in opposition, and which bursts its bonds to prove its strength in the united effort of the mass. Such are the complexes of mental sickness which cannot be cured in their effects, but which have to be understood in their conditioning source. It is thus the lack of understanding (*avijjā*) which conditions (*paccaya*) the arising of such complexes (*saṅkhāra*). These complexes are equated with karmic volitions, for the lack of understanding is not a mere absence of knowledge or ignorance, but a refusal to see, a fear to know, which in itself is another complex, preventing an awakening of intelligence which alone can bring about a pure understanding of insight.

It is also the link of these complexes with a subsequent mode of thinking which brings this process so far into a new perspective.

The Conscious Link

All complexes as thought-problems are not actual problems, but have arisen in ignorance, which is the non-understanding of the present moment. A complex arises with the passing away of an experience. Whereas an experiencing is an active movement of living in which there is only the experiencing without identification, in a way as a wave in the ocean has no separate existence, no discernible identity, no measurable quantity, no static individuality, but is just a process of rolling on, being formed, raised and dissolved in the action of evolution and involution, of becoming and ceasing, not as opposites but as different approaches—so experiencing in its intensity of the process does not discern an

experiencer as the producer or the owner, the substance or the soul of the experience. The experience may continue as a memory, but that is not experiencing. The experience may be remembered by the experiencer, but at that time of remembrance there is no experiencer, as there is no experiencing any more in the act of experiencing, too, there is no division between the subject and the object, and hence there is no opposition, no desire, no regret, no conflict. All that comes later, when experiencing has ceased and has become the memory of an experience, the property of an experiencer. Both, experience which is memory as object, and the experiencer who is the subject, have divided and split, so that the experiencer can continue in his experience. Thus, we live in our memory. It is memory which makes the subject, so that it can continue, retain the object and call it back at will.

This revival of a past memory of an experience gone by requires the active participation of an originator in the future, who must both have experienced in the past, remembered in the present and who then can continue the experience in the future. Thus, it is the will to continue, the will to become in the future, the will to possess the experience, which now creates a possessor, a personification of that will. It is this conscious will which produces the link of the past through the present with the future.

The past, as we have seen already, is mere ignorance; but it is in this formed ignorance that mental formations arise and now continue their complex activity, so as to constitute the conscious link (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*), sometimes called the rebirth-consciousness, the first thought in a new life, without which no continuation is possible.

This volition for continuity is the desire for rebirth, the linking up with an unborn future, the only activity possible for a self-projecting individuality, which now becomes the actor out of his own action. Thus, the actor is the reaction of ignorance, the result of conditioning complexes, the evolution of what has been involved.

This relinking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) then is dependent in its arising on the previous, conditioning complexes (*saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṁ*); and as such it has become the most difficult problem in this whole chain of dependent origination. It is the present, coming out of the past; the cause becoming effective; the first appearance of rebirth. That this has been misconceived and has caused many an abortion is not surprising. When there is but one desire, namely the will to continue, it is almost indispensable that there should arise a concept of an entity as the bearer of the consequences, a concept of a substance supporting throughout time the change of phenomena, a concept of a soul holding the responsibility for the actions of a fickle mind.

Thus we hear already in the early ages of developing Buddhism of a "subtle consciousness" to supply the persisting demand based on the earlier Upanishads. The Mahisasakas and the Sankrantis had already their early explanations in the face of the recognised basic teaching of *anatta*; but it was particularly Asanga in the 4th century, whose authority in the Yogacārā school proposed the existence of this non-dissolving (*ālaya*) consciousness, which could act as the continuing subject in the cycle of birth and death, the persisting element underneath the other kinds of consciousness, a basic consciousness which lasts to the end of saṁsāra (*saṁsārakotinishtha-skandha*). The difficulty of reconciliation with the original Theravāda doctrine of no-soul (*anatta*) was felt, however, throughout; and so we find apart from *ālaya* as non-dissolution, an *ālaya* or storing consciousness (*ālaya-viññāṇa*).

It is this storing consciousness then which forms the basis of all consciousness, being possessed of all seeds (*sarvabījaka*). And so, a distinction is made between a noumenal consciousness and a phenomenal consciousness, a distinction between *dharmatā* or true nature, and *tathatā* or actual nature, which last one develops itself into, and is known as, phenomenal.

In Theravāda Buddhism the main doctrine has always been that of insubstantiality (*anatta*); and any further views have to

be subject to this most essential of all characteristics (*lakkhaṇa*). Hence, the views of Asanga and Vasubandhu which found their developments in many later schools, each with their different doctrinal connotations, have never taken root in original Theravāda Buddhism as it is preserved in the Pāḷi suttas. But long before even the name of Mahayana was thought of, there were teachings in Sanskrit sutras, with their important commentaries, such as the Vijnaptimatrata-siddhi-sastra, giving further clarification of the characteristics of this consciousness. Still, the *anatta* doctrine held, even when the developing schools of early Buddhism became the corner stones of Mahayana many centuries later.

This relinking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) is only called thus, as it is the first conscious thought in a new life. But, the new life is never thought of as a continuation of the old, not as an effect created by a cause which is self-characteristic, but only as a result from conditions, on which it depended for its arising, although not for its production. This new thought in the new life is not different from other thoughts, as they are all dependent on conditions for their arising, and dependent on the cessation of those conditions for their disappearance. There is no universal presence in any of the forms of existence to create, maintain and dissolve them; and therefore they are in a way self-creative without determining either in principle or in cessation.

Where most religions and religious philosophies are a form of determinism in which a goal of striving is determined under many various forms of a creative principle: God in Christianity, the principle of truth (Tao) in Taoism, the Absolute in Brahmanism, there is no such ultimate principle found in Buddhism, where origination, as well as cessation, is not determined by a goal of achievement, but is dependent in its arising on conditions, and on the disappearance of which there follows also naturally the cessation of what had arisen.

This kind of indeterminism may be confused with a spontaneous creativeness of some internal or spiritual entity, which then would take over the functions of a god-creator. Such self-

creativeness is not known in Theravāda Buddhism, where the approach to origination is neither internal nor external, that is, where there is no ultimate creator as an eternal and absolute principle of creation, neither an internal self-creative principle of spontaneous combustion, such as an eternal soul, the *ātman* which has forgotten its source, the *paramātman.* But there is an approach to this self-creative principle, when the basis of all complexes is said to be found in ignorance (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*). This ignorance, however, as we have seen already, is not a principle of action and hence not creative, for it is the absence of insight. Just as darkness is the absence of light and thereby prevents the faculty of sight to function normally, and can therefore not be said to be the cause of blindness, but only the condition for not seeing correctly—so ignorance is not a creative principle of delusion, but rather a delusive principle or "creation". It is in the delusion of ignorance that complexes are formed, created which then naturally develop into conflicts. Ignorance remains a condition, but is never seen as a creator or absolute principle. It is not "in the beginning" that there was ignorance; there is ignorance throughout till there is insight; there is the delusion of "self" till there is the understanding of non-self (*anatta*). Then the little "self" is not transformed into a super "self" (*paramātman*), but is dissolved in understanding together with the ignorance from which it arose. With the cessation of ignorance, there is the cessation of complexes (*avijjā-nirodha saṅkhāra-nirodho*). Dependent on complexes is formed a link in consciousness, but that link to rebirth is never a substance, an entity, a soul; it remains a process of arising till it ceases in cessation. Once it has arisen, however, there is the natural process of conception leading to birth, and birth leading to death.

This process of ignorance (*avijjā*), forming itself (*sankhāra*) into thought (*viññāṇa*), in which the past is becoming the present, conditions producing their effects, memory projecting the ideal, is now repeated all over again in space and time. Thus, past conditions produce effects in the present; but those present effects

become vitalised and thereby become conditions by themselves in the present, which then will produce further effects in the future.

It is on this basis that Buddhaghosa divides the entire set-up of twelve links with their eleven propositions (of which we have seen so far three links with two propositions: *avijjā-paccayā saṅkhāra; saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṁ*) into twenty links, spread out in time and space over three life-durations of the past, the present and the future. Five conditions in the past produce five effects in the present; and these five effects in the present become five conditions in the present by present action; and then these five present conditions produce further five effects in the future. To arrive at this formula he equates the conditions of the past with the conditions in the present, and the effects of the present with the effects in the future, by putting them, as it were, in two parallel columns:

1	*avijjā*	—		5 conditions of the past
2	*saṅkhāra*	—		
	—	*taṇhā*	8	
	—	*upādāna*	9	
	—	*bhava*	10	
3	*viññāṇa*	—		5 effects in the present
4	*nāma-rūpa*	*jāti*	11	
5	*saḷāyatana*	—		
6	*phassa*	*jarā-maraṇa*	12	
7	*vedanā*	—		
8	*taṇhā*	—		5 conditions in the present
9	*upādāna*	—		
10	*bhava*	—		
	—	*avijjā*	1	
	—	*saṅkhāra*	2	
11	*jāti*	*viññāṇa*	3	5 effects for the future
12	*jarā-māraṇā*	*nāma-rūpa*	4	
	—	*saḷāyatana*	5	
	—	*phassa*	6	

—	*vedanā*	7	

Reactions

Having now arrived at relinking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*), which has become the present effect of past conditions, namely, ignorance and complexes, the new thought has to give form or name or identity (*nāma*) to matter (*rūpa*), by which process a material experience can be recognised and identified. It has to be so, because without this identification all past information would be useless. These mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) together with this relinking consciousness (*viññāṇa*) are truly a source of information, putting an experience into form, so that it can be recognised. It is the process of retention all over again, when thought as memory succeeds in retaining the past and producing it in the present. Thus, in dependence on consciousness arises mind in matter (*viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṁ*).

It is matter being judged and then classified as experience; and the experience being in-formed or shaped becomes now as material evidence or memory. There are no two identities as the mind and the body which act independently or interact one upon the other. They are treated here as a single unit of mentalised matter (*nāma-rūpaṁ*). Matter, as a material object, derives its psychological importance from the concept of the subject, the mind. It is the subjective approach of the "I" who wants to possess and retain an experience which makes the experiencing an object for retention in memory. Without this retention there is no possibility of continuance, for it is only in memory, that is in the frozen thought, that there is an "I", an actor, separate from action which is past. Thus, *nāma-rūpa* or conceptualised matter is equated with *jāti* or birth, in which there is the evolution of individuality through the sense-organs (*saḷāyatana*), contact (*phassa*) and sensation (*vedanā*).

This is the individuality group of five, which constitutes life

in physical action as the result of the *kamma*-formations in the previous life; and thus it is a chain of reaction, physical action put in form by mental action. It is the cycle of birth (*jāti*), or becoming, through decay (*jarā*) to death *maraṇa*, which is not just the cycle of a life-span of 70 years or so, but the cycle even of a single act of wilful and intentional thought. For, thought arises in the memory, it conditions the present and attempts to project its continuation into the future of a next thought.

The analysis and division of this group of five effects in the present: Consciousness + conceptualised matter + the six senses + contact + sensation = birth + death, is not very important and rather obvious. It is the new thought (*viññāṇa*) which informs or gives life to its mental reaction on matter (*nāma-rūpa*), where the subjective mind lays hold of the objective matter. This reaction is possible through the six senses (*saḷāyatana*), five of the body and the sixth being the mind, the internal organs of which act upon the external world of events through contact (*phassa*), which then results in sensation (*vedanā*).

Dependent on conscious thought (*viññāṇa-paccaya*) arises the relationship of mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*). Dependent on this psycho-physical relationship in thought (*nāma-rūpa-paccayā*) are brought into play the six senses (*saḷāyatana*): the eye and sight, the ear and sound, the tongue and taste, the nose and smell, the entire body and touch and the mind with thought. Thus thought produces the relationship of mind and matter; and it is also thought which is produced by the relationship of the internal and external sense-organs. This is contact. Dependent on the six senses arises contact (*saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso*); and on contact depends the arising of sensation (*phassa-paccayā vedanā*).

Re-activation

With this we have reached the most crucial juncture of the entire process; for, up to now we have been dealing with the five effects

in the present which resulted from the five conditions of the past. When those present effects are not re-vitalised, they will cease according to the same law of origination and cessation: Dependent on the ending of sensation, there is the non-arising of craving (*vedanā-nirodha taṇhā-nirodho*). When present effects are not reconditioned in the present, they will naturally cease without becoming new causes of craving, clinging and becoming (*taṇhā, upādāna, bhava*) with their equivalents of ignorance (*avijjā*) and *kamma*-formations (*saṅkhāra*). Then, when there is no more new *kamma*, there will be no more rebirth in the future.

But, when the effects of the past are re-vitalised, fertilised and planted out in the present, that is, when we sow the seeds of new *kamma* in this life, their effects may be expected in the future. And the whole wheel of Saṁsāra will take another turn before *kamma* will have exhausted its inborn energy of reproduction.

The chief question which now remains is: Can there be sensation (*vedanā*) which does not produce desire (*taṇhā*)? The formula of dependent origination merely states that desire arises in dependence on sense-activity (*vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*). This is not a law of causality, of creation, according to which all feelings must produce craving. Sensations are only the conditions without which there is no possibility for craving to arise. Sensations are the activities of the six senses through contact in the six sense-organs. It is in those six organs that sense-objects are received and perceived, that concepts are conceived; they are the instruments, the soil, the conditions which are necessary in the process of production or evolution, but which do not in themselves produce or cause the effects. And thus we hear of the Buddha being tired of the quarrelsome monks, which made him go to the solitude of the forest. He also experienced thirst and fatigue, as a result of which he requested Ānanda to give him some drinking water, and to spread his outer robe for him to rest a while. These were not acts of desire, which have a purpose in view beyond the immediate "now"; and so those actions did not project into a future beyond

the immediate need. In other words, his need did not grow out into greed.

Our problem is not how to overcome greed, but can the sensation of need be prevented to become reborn in greed? It is not in the resistance to greed by means of renunciation that greed can be overcome. In such activity one is not honestly looking for an understanding of the cause of greed, but merely searching for a means to get rid of the problem of greed. The desire to get rid of desire, in order to overcome rebirth, which is the result of desire, is not a serious quest. Either it is a mere playing with words, with semantics which can never result in clarity beyond the word; or more likely, it is an attempt to evade any enquiry.

It is the mind which constructs the hurdles, and then complains of obstruction. Thus, it is not in mere recognition of the fact that the mind is the cause of all confusion; for, that will still leave the seeking mind in confusion as to what to do about it all. It is the seeking itself which must cease. In stead of trying to remove the obstacles, let us see what they are. Sensations are not obstacles. Only craving for, and dependence on sensations cause clinging and becoming (*upādāna, bhava*). We cling to sensations, because in sensations we can continue. In continuance there is becoming which is rebirth. And that is the cause of sensations becoming craving. It is not the sensation which is to be shunned, but the motive of the senses, the motive of satisfaction, the motive of rebirth. Why do I want rebirth? Because that is the only way in which to continue the gratification of the senses. Because without rebirth there is no continuance, and hence no motive for action. Because without action there is no actor; without continuation there is no motive for a search; without search there is no searcher, no actor, no "self"! And so, clinging is necessary for self-continuance, as without "self" there is no motive for searching. Thus, this "I"-concept is the motive of desire, the object of clinging, the subject of becoming. "I" am all that; and all that is necessary for the upkeep of that "self"-concept.

Becoming

There is no escape possible when I am myself the spring-plank, the action, the motion and the motive. And thus any act of escaping is an act of ignorance, which conditions all craving, clinging and becoming. There is no possibility for an escape from these conditions as effects in the present, for they constitute life as we live it. But it is possible that they are not further used to become conditions themselves in the present. And then they will not be able to condition the future.

Removing the fruits of a tree will not prevent its growth and productivity. It is only at the root that must be found that which makes growth possible. And that root is the "I"-concept which wants to continue and thereby gets involved in becoming, which makes action into *kamma*, conditions into effects, life into conflict.

We have seen already what those effects in the future will be, for they are the same as the effects now in the present, from which we try to escape; they are the thought that binds the mind that forms the matter to which we cling, the senses which are the instruments of contact and sensation, which is life in becoming in conflict and in cessation. Any act towards cessation is only an act of becoming. It is in cessation that we must cease, not in becoming. But, any desire for cessation is still a desire; and that is an act of becoming.

Thus, there is no escape through striving. But when there is understanding that not all sensation must result in craving, only then is it possible to use the senses to see and feel and understand without purpose just what is. Then there is no further motive and hence no craving, no clinging, no becoming.

How to Cease?

It is in understanding things, events, ourselves as we are, that becoming ceases. Because, what am I? I am the reaction and the

projection, I am the past and I am the future, I am clinging and craving. Without all that there is no "I". Can there be a purpose to continue, if there is no "I"? And yet it is only the "I"-concept that wants to continue in the gratification of its senses. Seeing that the "I" is craving for becoming, is also seeing that the "I" is only a projection of a memory through which the past can become the future. Thus, the "I" is but a reaction to a memory of an experience, which is projected as an individual, in order to experience that continuation in the future. And, life as *actions of the past* with *reactions in the present*, which become conditions in the present to produce effects in the future—that life is but a chain of dependent origination from ignorance to volition, from becoming to cessation, a beginningless ending with a never-ending becoming.

There is no beginning in Saṁsāra and there is no end to Saṁsāra as long as Saṁsāra is seen as a continuous stream of lives in which there is rebirth, as long as there is "self"; for "I" am that Saṁsāra. But when it is seen that Saṁsāra is a misconception through ignorance, a complex of conflicts which link up with desire for a continuation of a delusion, then craving becomes impossible in sensation, then what is clung to is seen as false, as distorted, as meaningless. Then there is freedom and deliverance, understanding and insight.

> Without wanting it, there is cessation.
> Without seeking it, there is truth.
> Without knowing it, there is insight.

This is, of course, the solution of the problem of conflict when experienced in impermanence (*anicca-dukkhā saññā*), a solution through the discovery that the problem of conflict is dependent on the ignorance of self-delusion. It is in the perception that in the void of conflict (*dukkha-anatta saññā*) there is no "self" and hence no conflict, that there can be instantaneous enlightenment as experienced by the bodhisatta in the night of his contemplation, which brought him to Buddhahood. It is this insight (*vipassanā*)

into the nature of sense-experiences, when need does not become greed, which therefore brings an end to this continuous cycle of evolution, and involution, spontaneous because not volitional, immediate because without effort, final because there is no "self" to continue. It is this insight which gave realisation to the Bodhisatta, making him see things as they are (*yathā bhūta ñāṇa-dassana*), and to hundreds of his followers on the path of insight, which is meditation as contemplation (*vipassanā*). This was possible within the chain of dependent origination only at one stage, when the five effects in the present are not reconditioned to become conditional causes in the present for future effects, that is, when sensations do not become craving.

Craving is, of course, the result of sensations, the reactions in the six senses; but that does not mean that all sensations have to become craving. "In that case", said the Buddha, "a release from Saṁsāra would not be possible". But, because there is the possibility of being intelligently aware of the working of the senses, that not all sensation, which is an effect, must become a cause in itself. Only sensation which is not understood with insight may become the occasion for the arising of attachment through ignorance (*vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*).

But when there is no cessation of the grasping of the senses, when sensations of need are becoming a source of greed (*vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*), then this greed for becoming becomes the basis for holding (*taṇhā-paccayā upādānaṁ*), the holding on to the "I"-concept which wants to continue, which in fact must continue in ignorance, if it is not made to cease in understanding. Then the present effects become the conditions for rebirth (*upādāna-paccayā bhavo*), and the cycle of the wheel of Saṁsāra will roll on again and again. For, on this desire for becoming is dependent the new thought, the new life, the future succeeding the present, to-morrow, next life (*bhava-paccayā jāti*).

A short run over these twelve factors, each one conditioning the next step, may be helpful in obtaining a complete glance at

their inter-dependence in arising and ceasing, and of the totality of the process of evolution.

1. *Avijja* (ignorance) is the fundamental ignorance as found in universal energy, in repulsion and attraction, giving the illusion of substance in existence.
2. *Saṅkhāra* (formations) is the evolutional and blind will to exist, with its striving for survival as a group.
3. *Viññāṇa* (consciousness) is the reproductive energy to survive as an individual in its most primitive form.
4. *Nāma-rūpa* (mind-matter) is the functional need of formation, when energy becomes organised.
5. *Salāyatana* (six senses) is the sensational recognition in biological existence.
6. *Phassa* (contact) is the reactional distinction of individualism in action.
7. *Vedanā* (sensation) is the emotional distinction in individual feelings when action may become entangled with desire.
8. *Taṇhā* (craving) is the discriminative distinction between likes and dislikes.
9. *Upādāna* (clinging) is the egotistical attachment and rejection through reflection.
10. *Bhava* (becoming) is the emotional will to live passionately and the desire to reproduce.
11. *Jāti* (birth) is the conscious life awakening to, the intellect wanting to survive.
12. *Maraṇa* (death) is the problematic opposition to the impermanence of life when recognising its dissolution.

This is the traditional chain of conditionality (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), leading from ignorance and birth to sorrow, conflict and death. In the teaching of the Buddha, especially in the four noble truths, there is the first statement that all compositions are decomposable, that whatever is breakable will break, that every complex is a conflict (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā, sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*). It is the universal truth of conflict (*dukkha sacca*) which is founded on the composite nature of all that is formed. This

is followed immediately by the second noble truth about the cause of conflict (*dukkha-samudaya*), which has been enlarged into the doctrine of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), as this has been considered so far: whatever has arisen arises in dependence on conditions. It is the conditioned existence of all things, events, living beings in birth and death. This again is followed logically by the third noble truth about the cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha*): whatever ceases, does so in dependence on the cessation of those formations which conditioned their arising. This is the doctrine of dependent cessation: "with the cessation of ignorance, there is also the cessation of volitional activities, of karmic formations, of the will-to-become" (*avijjā-nirodha saṅkhāra-nirodho*), right down to the end which is the cessation of the entire complex of conflict (*evam-etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti*).

Now, if it is ignorance that has brought about the conflict, it will be naturally the cessation of ignorance alone which can solve the problem of conflict. The cessation of ignorance is understanding: and it is understanding alone which can see that conflict is no problem when there is insight into the nature of conflict. It must be understood then that this conflict has been brought about by a search for an ideal. It was the rejection of the actual, the impermanence of all, the search of an ideal, thought of as permanent, which was the basic cause of conflict. And so, the understanding of the motive of the search, and the understanding of the nature, composition and goal of the ideal, will lay bare the nature of the complex which became the conflict.

Thus, the process of cessation would have to begin with the fact that there is a conflict, whether it is wanted or not. In analysing conflict, its nature becomes clear, for it is a conflict between the real and the ideal, the real which I actually experience and reject in my search, and the ideal which is expected to provide a reason for living, a goal for striving, a purpose in life.

The nature of this conflict (as we are calling this psychological obsession) is described in the Pāli texts under the vari-

ous names of decay (*jarā*), death (*maraṇa*), sorrow (*soka*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*), despair (*upāyāsa*), dwindling in vitality (*ayuno saṇhāni*), dissolution of the aggregates (*khandhānaṁ bheda*), lamenting (*parideva*), bodily discomfort (*kāyikā asāta*), mental disagreement (*cetasikā asāta*). This list of assorted experiences covers a vast, and, probably, the entire field of pain, physical as well as mental; but a mere repetition thereof will not provide deeper insight. What then is the common factor, the essence, perhaps the source of all this disharmony? Watching them one by one closely to understand the true nature of disharmony (*saccā-ñāṇa*), its functioning (*kicca-ñāṇa*) and its accomplishment (*kata-ñāṇa*), what do we see, what do we understand of this process?

Whether the experience is physical or psychological, there is always the experiencing of loss (*vyasana*) in disharmony, in dissatisfaction, in non-attainment, in separation. It is the loss of property, of prestige, of health, of life, of confidence, of dependence, of hope, of prospects, covering the entire field of body and mind. What is this loss? What is lost? To whom does the loss occur? And why is it felt as a loss? It is always the loss of something or someone, which or who gave physical, mental, sentimental, political, religious support. If it did not, its disappearance would not be felt. If the disappearance would be of something or someone antagonistic to our way of living, it would not be felt as a loss, but rather as a gain: one obstacle less! Loss, therefore, is not of the object, such as possessions or relations; but it is a loss of something which is myself, with which I have identified myself, without which I feel unsupported, let down, lost. Then I am lost, because the child which died was my child, my hope, my continuation, my ambition, the goal of all my work, the purpose of all my striving, the only chance for survival of self. Thus, I am the loss, not the loser. As I am nothing but this striving and ambitious "I", there is a deep sense of conflict, which lies much deeper than frustration. The "I" must cling to support itself, and when the support breaks down, the "I" is lost. It is then

the "I" fighting to retain or to regain a lost "I". That is the conflict which is the base of all disharmony which is felt as loss.

What is lost?: Self. To whom does the loss occur?: Self. Why is it felt as a loss?: Because it is myself, my loss.

When this is seen clearly, there is no remedy, no repair, no substitute, for there is only one thing that is wanted and that is "self" which now feels it is lost. One can pray to God for grace, sacrifice to the Gods for help, turn to substitutes to forget; but there is no remedy for this loss to self. And this loss will remain as a conflict until the true source of the loss which is "self" is truly seen for what it is. When all substitutes are wiped off, there is a blank: How can there be any action for recovery, when there is no "self" either as actor, or as a goal? It is no more a problem, because there is no answer to an impossible question: How can I be cured when there is no "I", when the "I" is seen, understood and lost?

In this seeming despair, it is only the hopelessness of the future which causes the conflict as long as there remains an "I" who wants to become. But, if the loss is not seen as a loss of prospects in the future, but as a loss of a delusion in the present moment of realisation, then there is a sense of relief when the burden is taken away. Nobody can take this burden away, because there is no burden; it was only my own making, my own creation, my own ambition, my own "self". And when there is no need to worry about the future of such a delusion, there is a sense of relief which, metaphorically, allows me to raise my head and see. I can see that there is a possibility of seeing without distortion, without aiming, that I can be alive without being "I", that there may be an approach to understanding which is not the exploitation of learning, that there may be love which is not possessive, and which therefore can never be lost, can never become a conflict.

That gives confidence (*saddhā*) without expectation. That is not faith and hope. Faith is a belief in the impossible, but confidence is the beginning of a realisation of being on the right path; hope is a belief in attaining the unattained in some unknown

future, but confidence does not rely on the future when it begins to see that all conflict and its dissolution lie in the present moment.

Such confidence is given by the understanding of conflict in the light of the teaching of the Buddha. It is not the outcome of a search for an ideal. Any ideal, however noble and lofty, is still my concept of it. I may call it God, but it is still my thought about that idealistic concept. My God is only what I think. And what I think, I have created, even if such a creation was a categorical necessity (Kant), like a peg to hang my coat on.

Thus, step by step, I can retrace my projections to my desire to become what I am not. It is a bitter pill to find out in the end that this search for self, for continuity, for security, for well-being, for satisfaction, was just a search for filling in the gaps of an ideal "self". Such is the bitter pill offered by the Buddha. Following his teachings, his unrelenting logic, his penetrating insight, there is a natural development of confidence (*saddhā*). Confidence that truth is greater than bliss, and that there can be no truth as long as there is a search for bliss, can make one turn to the Buddha with the conviction that his teaching may show that here is a way to end all conflict. And thus, confidence may lead to understanding and truth, just as a search for bliss led to conflict.

It is knowledge (not necessarily insight) of the fact of sorrow in its many forms of physical and mental pain that makes one search for a remedy, for an ideal solution. Such a search will always be for an authority, an expert, a specialist. In physical pain one will consult a doctor, in financial difficulty or dispute a lawyer will be consulted; in spiritual trouble there will be a choice of as many solutions as there are trouble-makers. But a choice has to be made, and for that one has to rely on the authority of faith, of hear-say, repute, recommendations, etc. Here the common factor is confidence; one believes either in what one has heard, or in one's own judgement of results obtained so far. But it is always a trusting confidence which will make one adhere to the same physician and his medicine.

Thus it is sorrow in one form or another which may bring about confidence (*dukkh'upanisā saddhā*).

Hardly known, and still less quoted, there is a chain of conditionality, which seems as a continuation of this chain of conflict, a chain which starts with conflict (*dukkha*), yet leads to the deliverance thereof. That too is a chain of twelve links and it appears in the Suttas only once,[19] although how to get out of trouble seems to be so much more important than the knowledge of how we got into trouble.

Before going into a more detailed study of the interdependence of these twelve links, here are their names: confidence (*saddhā*), joy (*pamojja*), delight (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), well-being (*sukha*), concentration (*samādhi*), insight (*ñāṇa-dassana*), disgust (*nibbida*), dispassion (*virāga*), deliverance (*vimutti*), knowledge of extinction (*khaye ñāṇa*), destruction of all defilements (*āsavakkhaya*). Just as there are eleven stages building up from ignorance (*avijjā*) to the turbulence of conflict (*dukkha*) under the cloud of delusion (*moha*), so there are eleven stages to undo that work in the light of understanding (*paññā*) to reach the final rest of insight (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*).

As we have seen the actualisation of the will-to-live, being rebirth leading to the arising of conflict, so confidence (*saddhā*), leading away from conflict, indicates the birth of understanding. This first step in the right direction gives at the same time an experience of release, even though it is not final, in the first taste of happiness (*pamojja*). Although happiness is not a goal for striving (for that would be a set-back to craving and the will-to-become), yet it makes the task of undoing lighter, and may be experienced as a pleasant by-product, especially in the beginning of this process of deliverance.

It is this joyful experience which is so necessary to provide the courage even for a moment to stop and look. It is not a joy of expectation of an escape, but a joy which must grow out into

[19] S. II. xii. 23.

a delight (*pīti*), which elsewhere [20] has been described as one of the five stages of mental absorption (*jhāna*), where all reasoning (*vitakka-vicāra*) has ceased to be an obstacle. It is the theme of disburdening which seems to be the key-note in this harmonious symphony of thought, first as joy and delight in a foretaste of freedom, soon to be followed by disgust and dispassion, to find its apotheosis in deliverance.

The progress from joy to delight, and from there to tranquillity (*passaddhi*) indicates the path of peace in meditation (*samatha-bhāvana*), where ecstatic delight has to be abandoned for the deeper experience of inner well-being (*sukha*), which leads to concentration (*samādhi*) of one-pointedness and equanimity. But that is as far as mental absorption can lead. Peace is not the end of war, for there still remains the possibility of new conflict.

And so, the path of tranquil concentration, too, has to be abandoned, lest there be stagnation which can only block all further progress. Thus, from here on, concentration (*samādhi*) must give way to contemplation (*vipassanā*). It is interesting to note that in the sixth link in the chain of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) we found sensation (*vedanā*) standing at the cross-road, forking out, either to craving, rebirth and conflict, or without craving, leading to no-more-becoming. Likewise in this chain of conditioned release, the six links from confidence to concentration bring one again to a cross-road, forking out to the peace, of mental satisfaction, or without the satisfaction of peaceful concentration to the contemplation of what is (*yatha-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*).

"Seeing things as they are" is not a literal translation of the frequently used phrase *yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*, which means to see and understand the such-ness of things. Now, to see the suchness or the true nature of an event, e.g. death, is not merely the sight of a corpse, even if that were a completely detached view without any grief or attachment. For, death is not an isolated

[20] "Agony and Ecstasy" by the present author.

event; it is a part of the process of dependent origination and cessation. Thus, the Buddha said, a person does not die because of his karma (although that may affect the manner and time and other circumstances): one dies because one is born. There is dissolution, because there was composition (*jāti-paccayā jarā-maraṇaṁ*). Therefore, seeing the true nature or the suchness of death involves the seeing and understanding of birth. It is not so much the "how", but the "why" birth takes place, which may provide the true understanding, the seeing of things as they are. In seeing and understanding that birth is death, that growth is decay, that evolution is involution, there remains ultimately but one thing to understand, namely the process of change as the impermanent and non-substantial nature of everything that changes.

That in itself is not difficult to see, but the consequences of such understanding are so far reaching and so revolutionary that one prefers not to see, so that there would be no understanding. For, as long as there is no understanding, there is neither an experiencing of the need for action. Then, when the need for change is not experienced, the mind can go to sleep in the self-satisfaction of concentration, of a continuation in peaceful delusion. And that is just what happens when birth leads to death, and death leads to rebirth. The problem is seen with the intellect but not understood with insight; and thus there is conflict and an attempt at escaping from conflict, but no solution, because the "I" does not want to be solved: to be dissolved.

That is the meaning of Saṁsāra, the continuous round of existence, where ignorance brings forth the complex which is conflict, which is not understood and hence leads back to ignorance. It is not even a spiral staircase, providing perhaps a better view on the next round; it is just a merry-go-round, where one gets giddy and has to pay for that too!

As it might have been expected, where wrong grasping led to delusion and craving, there right comprehension, i.e., the understanding of the real nature of sense-experiences (*yathā-bhūta-*

ñāṇa-dassana) will give rise to weariness, repulsion, disgust (*nibbida*) with such a delusive world. This weariness, however, does not make a man a misanthrope, for he does not avoid human nature; but the wiliness of human society becomes repulsive on account of its artificiality, conventionality and hypocrisy. His detachment is not necessarily a life of renunciation in a monastic order; it is never a morbid asceticism which aims at mortification of the flesh or at subjection of the mind. It is as a detachment from any view which implies opposites as world and self, matter and mind, virtue and sin.

Thus, this weariness with all these particularities leads to dispassion (*virāga*), which is a process of loosening the fetters of delusion. And so this process of passionlessness restores to harmony the restlessly unfolding mind. Dispassion is not the absence of emotions, but a co-ordination of feeling and thinking. Pure rationality leads to pride and lack of love; pure emotion becomes sentimentality which is also subjective and which loves only for the sake of possession. Dispassionate thought-feeling leads to unbound action (*kriyā*), action which is pure because it arises spontaneously from the presently understood need. Such action is complete because it does not project itself into the future with a purpose. Such action, which is neither bound by craving, nor incomplete through striving, is truly free action, an act of deliverance. And so, dispassion (*virāga*) leads to freedom (*vimutti*).

The knowledge of that freedom is the knowledge of extinction (*khaye ñāṇa*) of all conflict and delusion. In this realisation of extinction of conflict in all its aspects there is the realisation of attainment of the highest stage on the path of saint-hood (*arahatta-magga*), immediately followed by the fruit of arahantship (*phala*), when all defilements are totally extinguished (*āsavakkhaya*), which is the final overcoming of ignorance, when no more craving can arise, and when no will can lead on further.

In this manner, then, can be brought about the dependent cessation of a dependent origination. The process is often long

and tedious. Many times failure will cause discouragement, and yet victory is so close at hand. The supreme act of realisation which sets free both mind and heart which have been enslaved for thousands of lives, is that of a single moment. The delay in realisation is mostly due to an anxiety to achieve which makes one search and escape from what is evident. But achievement there is none in the realisation of *anatta*. The freedom of deliverance is always there, but desire caused by delusion has confused the issue and made a problem when there was no conflict.

When it is seen that conflict has arisen in dependence on delusion, the very understanding thereof will comprehend the impossibility of any problem or conflict arising when there is no opposition, no "self". Delusion cannot be overcome. But it will cease, when it is seen as such. And that is enlightenment.

Looking Back

In looking back through the history of man's wrestling with thought, thinking, with mind and intelligence to arrive at truth, we have had the need of looking at the same problems which all have had to face, But we have the advantage that even if there was a search, the object had ceased to be the infinite, the answer to which could only be expected in the mind of God. Thus, the perspective with its "vanishing point" far on the horizon, and its starting point with the viewer on the spot, has completely changed not only the outlook, but particularly the approach to the problem.

Einstein wrote of Newton: "Nature to him was an open book, whose letters he could read without effort". We too have that same book open before us; and we could read as easily if only we would, or even easier, as we have the added advantage of the greatest teacher of all times telling us how to see and what. Up to now, we have been as boys playing with pebbles on the sea-shore, discarding one for a prettier looking shell; but we never

saw the ocean nor the little boy on the shore. And yet, it is in their relation that the truth can be seen.

There is no truth in conflict, and yet it is conflict which conditions and distorts our whole life. Obviously, we have to learn seeing things all over again, not in the perspective of a drawing, but in their relationship to a non-existing "ego", however paradoxical that may sound. A paradox, after all, is a well established fact, a truth, however absurd it may appear. The absurdity is the conflict which refuses to see the truth as it is, but prefers to distort it, in order to suit the convenience of the viewer who must be right at any price. Although time is a mental concept, invented to measure the duration of a thing which is nothing but change, still it is not too late to see even now: that our knowledge is ignorance (*avijjā*) in which all experience is conditioned (*saṅkhāra*), in which matter is mind, in which action is reaction, and being is becoming; in which there is only conflict because "I" am that conflict; and in the understanding of which there is neither ignorance, nor conflict, neither birth nor death in the cessation of "self".

Karma and Rebirth

Apart from the etymological explanation of the word karma meaning action, the most concise definition of the term is given by the Buddha himself: "Volition, O monks, is what I call action" (*cetanāhaṁ bhikkhave kammaṁ vadāmi*[21]), for through volition one performs the action, whether by body, speech or mind. Thus, correctly speaking, karma denotes only such action which is performed with will or intention, i.e., purposeful activity. Such action, having a goal in view, contains, therefore, the seed of reaction; for it is the purpose of the reaction that is intended in the action. The intended reaction then gives as it were colour and class to the act. Whether ultimately the desired effect is obtained or not, is immaterial to the nature of the deed. The law of karma is not a law of cause and effect, but of action and reaction. Further, it is not a law in the sense of a decree prescribed by authority, but a principle determining the sequence of events. Thus the teaching of karma is not fatalism, is not absolute causality, and does not require a supreme law-giver. It is a process of action and reaction, in which only the reaction is perceptible to the senses. If one would be interested only in reactions, this teaching would be reduced to the level of materialistic sciences and a mechanical interpretation of world-events. That would suffice to explain the working of the actual world. But there is more: there is the knowledge of all this, consciousness or mental life. This

[21] A. VI, 63.

mental life refuses to be included in a mechanical interpretation of strict causality, which is but a passive acceptance of actual forces. Mental life is a search, is a hunger, or as the Buddha calls it, a process of nutrition of will or intention and consciousness (*manosañcetanāhāra, viññāṇāhāra*[22]), not merely absorption, but actual craving, which presupposes the material nutriment and its contact. And that is the actuality of action, wilful action, with purpose and intention.

I-Concept

In order to understand the nature of karmic action one has first to grasp the full implications of intention. Both the English word intention and the Pāḷi word *cetanā* convey the i.e. of the mind bending itself towards the object, a determination to obtain or to achieve. It is, in other words, an extension or a projection from the actual into the ideal. It is immaterial, whether the ideal can be realised or not, for, as an extension of the actual, the main implication is that the actual present is made use of to become an ideal future. Hence the actual present is not seen as a result of past activity, but as a potential source of future acquisition. That means that the present is not seen as a conflict and as a result of past conflict, but as a means to strengthen the "I"-concept, which is the principal factor of the conflict between the impermanence of actuality and the striving for permanence in the delusion of an abiding "self". This striving for an extension of the actual into an ideal future is thus based on the misconception of an individual entity, substance or soul. All striving of this nature, therefore, is unreal, whether the purpose is good or evil, whether the action is skilful or not, whether the effect is wholesome or not.

Intention, thus, is a kind of mental grasping of an i.e. which will be always at variance with the actual, for if no difference were visualised there would be no object for striving, The intention,

[22] M. I. 261; D. III. 228.

therefore, which is an essential constituent of karmic action, is the germ of conflict (*dukkha*) leading to a renewal of the problem of existence, the collision between the impermanent actual and the permanent ideal.

If this point is well understood, all further divisions of karma are not very important and certainly not essential. Even a distinction between good and bad karma is not an essential one, but only a difference in degree. "Even good deeds should be eliminated", said the Buddha, "much more so, evil deeds" (*dhamma pi vo pahātabbā, pag-eva adhamma*[23]). Karma is likened to a raft (*kullapama*) which has to be abandoned when the river is crossed. It is useful (*kusala*) in its proper place, but it may become a burden, a hindrance and a fetter (*saṁyojana*) if one becomes attached to one's virtuous actions (*sīlabbatupādāna*).

Intention

As said already, it is the intended reaction that gives colour and class to the act. Karma is, therefore, classified in four groups of four kinds each; but every one of these sixteen types assumes its nature from the effect-to-be, which is psychologically quite correct, as the effect is more important than the cause, the future more significant than the past. Thus we have four classes in which actions are grouped according to their reproductivity, i.e., the objective discharge of their function (*kicca*), or according to their efficacy, i.e., the subjective intensity of their working (*pakadana*), or according to the time required for the effect to mature, or finally according to the conditions under which the effects mature.

Then, again from the standpoint of result, actions may be good and evil, dependent on the wholesomeness or otherwise of the effect. It is at this stage that the doctrine of karma approaches religious standards of morality, with the great and essential dif-

[23] Alagaddupama sutta M. I. 135, Sutta 22.

ference, of course, that theistic and animistic religions assume a supernatural basis, whereas in Buddhism morality is based on the understanding of mutual relationship in a common society and does not involve the acceptance of any belief. Its moral standards, therefore, are those of natural human relationship rather than a supernatural relationship with the divine. Although the term used for the ethical good: *kusala*, wholesome, skilful, gives an impression of utilitarianism, one cannot quite apply this to the Buddhist view of morality. As the tree is known by its fruits, so action (*kamma*) is known, distinguished and classified by its results (*vipāka*). An action is good or bad, if its result is good or bad, i.e., wholesome or unwholesome (*kusala-akusala*). Thus depending on whether an action produces a wholesome effect or not, such action will be classed as skilful or unskilful. But the effect (*vipāka*) is not to he looked for apart from the mental action (*kamma*). In other words, the *karmic* effect of a murder is not a corpse, but the unwholesome mental state of the murderer which will endeavour to express and expand itself in sub-human conditions of existence. Karma is a productive force which, like any purposeful action, has the intrinsic need of self-expression, self expansion, i.e., of reproduction, which is rebirth. An action is not considered good in proportion to its usefulness, which separates the cause from the effect and which would allow the use of an immoral means, justified by the end. Action and reaction are not separable. The reaction is not the physical effect, but the psychological reaction set up in the mind by the intentional act. Thus the unskilfulness of a murder is not in the effect that a man has lost his life, but in the thoughts of hate set up from the moment the murder was planned. The doctrine of action and reaction (*kamma-vipāka*) then is not a set of rules to stabilise society, but has in view the individual mind, to regularise it and set it free from all forms of bondage, the attachment to so-called meritorious actions being not the least of them.

Karma and Actuality

That every living being is wholly and entirely the embodiment of his karma is expressed by the Buddha in the word *anatta*. Man is nothing but karma. Karma is the reproductive force which generated this birth; it is his inheritance as well. It is karma which constitutes his individuality. And as karma is action and reaction, a process of actuality, the individual too is just a process of actuality without abiding entity substance or soul. It is this process of action becoming a reaction, which constitutes the basic i.e. of the doctrine of rebirth. Karma, then, although originally indicating action, may occasionally refer to the person who committed the deed, as actor and action are not to be differentiated in the doctrine of impersonality (*anatta*). The doer of the action, as identified therewith, assumes the character of the action and therewith the potentiality of a corresponding effect. Thus karma must be understood as the entire process of conditioned action and reaction, wherewith the doctrine of rebirth is essentially interlinked. The Buddha's teaching of rebirth breaks away from the common way of thinking of procreation. Even for those who accept a supernatural origin of intellectual life by a direct infusion of a soul by its creator at the moment of the conception of a new life, this supernatural formation is dependent on the physiological success of copulation, which makes divine intervention subordinate to a mere human effort. The Buddha with his rejection of the soul-theory does not for that reason accept the self-sufficiency of the act of parental union either, for it is clear that not every sexual conjunction finds its culmination in the conception of a new life. As it is not sufficient for a sound to strike the ear-drum to constitute hearing—as the physical contact must also be mentally conceived, and this mental conception cannot take, place without proper attunement or attention—so the physiological process of conception is not completed with

physical intercourse. In the *Mahā taṇhā-saṅkhāya sutta*[24] three factors are clearly distinguished, and all three have to coincide to produce the result of a new life: the coitus of the parents and the mother's season (*utu*) are the two factors which may be classed as the raw material contribution. But unless the igniting spark catches the kindling wood and the oxygen of the atmosphere, these materials will never fuse into an individual flame. Similarly the two material factors in procreation will remain for ever raw material, unless an exciting impulse not merely brings them together, but actually fuses them into a living process.

Previous Karma

Now this "exciting impulse[25]" is nothing but the force of previous karma, seeking suitable conditions for an outlet of its active force. It is the floodwater breaking the dyke at its weakest spot. The vulnerability in a defence line forms a natural attraction for the enemy to attack. Thus intentional or volitional action seeks fulfilment of its purpose by the very nature of its composition. If this composition is predominated by greed (*lobha*), the fulfilment of its activity will be sought in a correlation of inducement (*upanissaya-paccaya*) or of association (*sampayutta-paccaya*). If the predominant factor is one of aversion (*dosa*), its activity will naturally be restricted to conditions of dissociation (*vippayutta paccaya*), etc. When the atmosphere is charged as at the time of a thunderstorm, the lightning may be expected to strike at a spot where affinity is at its greatest, either through vicinity or through intensity. Such is the working of karma which is not a force acting by itself, but which requires suitable conditions in which to express its actuality. If such conditions are not available the resultant expression will either be imperfect and incomplete, or the action will die out in default of an opportunity for reaction.

[24] M. I. Sutta 38 p. 266 ff.

[25] The term is Dr. Paul Dahlke's.

Suitable Conditions

To come to a more detailed classification of karma, we have first the class of actions which are considered from the point of view of operation (*kicca*). The natural tendency of operation of any action is to produce a reaction, and thus the most apparent type of action will be reproductive: action (*janaka kamma*) thus called because it provides a resultant continuity,[26] which may be either profitable or not. In the chain of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) it provides the link for rebirth in the dying thought. With hardly any external influence or internal resistance, owing to the weakness of senses, such thought will naturally reproduce a thought of the same type. It is thus at this stage that the reproductive force of karma is most pronounced. The last thought-action becomes the parent (*janaka-janikā*) of the newly arising process of existence. The reproductivity of action is also explained as the arising of an opportunity at the moment when an action is complete. In other words, the occurrence of an event depends on the presence of suitable conditions, for even the most fertile seed will not germinate unless the proper heat and moisture are available.

But in the course of activity when all the senses and especially the faculty of the mind with all its likes and dislikes are functioning to full capacity, the influence and resistance due to varying conditions will be experienced all the time, thereby modifying the intensity of the will-to-act. A desire may not be strong enough to produce reaction by itself, but it may consolidate previous intentions and support preceding action. Such supporting karma (*upatthambaka kamma*) will have as its reaction an intensification of pleasure and pain, or a prolongation thereof. On the other hand, the influence may be a modification to the contrary, and cause a certain amount of obstruction, frustrating to some extent the reaction which could have been anticipated from a previous

[26] Pm. 771.

action. This frustrating karma (*upapīḷaka kamma*) will make a good effect less good and an evil effect less evil, lessening the intensity and duration of both pleasure and sorrow. Then again, this obstruction can become so complete, that it becomes destructive (*upaghātaka kamma*), cutting off, as it were, a weak reaction, making its own result arise, supplanting the activity of earlier action and usurping the opportunity to express its own reaction. Thus the opportunity created by one action will be appropriated by another. And the effects due from the weaker activity will be deprived of the chance of expressing themselves.

Thus, not only can action change the course of karma, but it can even fully obliterate it. From this it will be evident how far remote the doctrine of karma is from destiny with which it is sometimes superficially confused.

Karma is not Destiny

Another classification of karma is with respect to its efficacy (*pakadana*), for the inherent strength is different for every action, proportionate to the intensity of its volition. But here the distinction is based not so much on the inherent potency, as on the result to be expected from such wilful action.

There is first of all so-called weighty karma (*garuka*), the efficacy of which is so powerful, that the consequences cannot be avoided. These may be profitable or unprofitable. Five serious crimes are usually enumerated as being so weighty that no amount of counteraction will be able to annul their effect. The killing of one's own father, or mother, or an Arahant, the wounding of a Buddha and the breeding of a faction among the members of the order of monks are considered to belong to this type. Sometimes the attachment to heretical views is added to this list of actions which must become effective. It is interesting to note that in Christianity a similar deed, viz., blasphemy

against the Holy Ghost is a sin which cannot be forgiven.[27] The essential difference, of course, should also be noted at once, that in Buddhism evil is not a sin, and forgiveness does not apply: "Whatever wrong I have done, I have to suffer".[28] The reason for its weightiness, however, is identical: he who remains attached to the wrong view closes his mind, and cannot perceive what is right.

The operativeness of this very effective kind of karma is also to be experienced in a beneficial direction. Thus the fruition of four stages on the path of holiness are also immediately effective (*anantariya*) as these attainments are not due to discursive thinking but to a flash of insight (*vipassanā*) which transforms and ennobles one's nature for ever.

The second type in this class is called habitual action (*āciṇṇa kamma*) which as an individual act would not essentially differ from others. Its main characteristic and thereby its chief strength lie in the repetition of the act for good or for evil. It is the constant reiteration of an act which becomes a regular pattern of behaviour and a habit. Thus this habitual karma is usually the decisive factor in this and any subsequent life. The selfish and callous man is born, it is said, "as the immediate fruit of his evil, in a despised family, stupid and without enquiring tendency, as is the habit of dogs and the like; and such is his companionship[29]". A habit is determined by association of ideas, and thence characters of the lowest level are actuated in their behaviour by habit and routine. Bad habits should not be sublimated by good habits, for this is no sign of intelligence. Only in understanding the origin of one's habits through full conscious awareness of the arising and cessation of sensory reaction in body and mind can be achieved full control of action.

A third type of karma, weaker in respect of its efficacy, but very important, is the thought-process at the time of death

[27] Mt. xii, 31.
[28] A. V, 301.
[29] Sdhp. 90.

(*maraṇasaññā kamma*). This final mental presentation will often be the reflex of some previously performed action, not something which revives the memory thereof (*kammanimitta*). The memory itself will be either wholesome or unwholesome, depending on the right or wrong of the recorded action of the past. But the importance of this dying thought lies in its very weakness. Without the power of resistance such thought will be accepted as it is presented, and thus form the link to the following thought, the first one in the new life. The basis of the new existence is, therefore, laid on the expiring thought of the previous life which communicates its nature to the future for better or for worse. As a result of this doctrine, it is a custom in Buddhist families to recall to the mind of a dying person some outstanding good deeds performed by him in the course of his life, to arouse happy thoughts to take him across to a happy rebirth. It should not be confused with death-bed repentance.

In the absence of any of these three types of action at the moment before death, it is the stored-up karma (*katatta kamma*) which will produce rebirth. In commentaries[30] it is referred to as a development due to accumulation. It is the thread which links the isolated actions together in the process of becoming and ceasing. But perhaps the simile of a thread is not quite accurate, for each action pours itself out, together with the inheritance of past conditioning, into the origination of the next action, next life, and so on. This accumulative force of individual action places the doctrine of karma outside, the field of fate and predestination. It is one of the most important aspects of Buddhist ethics, for in this doctrine is involved the basis of moral responsibility; it is the building-up force of character, both for good and for evil, which makes the individual master of his future. As it allows thus for the building-up of a reserve fund to be utilised when necessity or opportunity requires, it leaves the door open for a retreat after wrong entry. There is no finality in Buddhist ethics.

[30] DhsA. p. 262.

Nature of Action

The problem arises: How is it possible to wipe off this accumulation, when every action merely increases the sum-total of merit and demerit? Fortunately, accumulative karma is but one of the sixteen types of volitional activity which keep the wheel of saṁsāra arolling. Thus apart from being accumulative and reproductive, action may be counter-active and destructive; or even it may be deprived of its reproductive force by a mere denial of opportunity.

In respect of the time element, i.e. the interval which may lapse before a reaction sets in, we find once more a fourfold classification. This time-element is not something controlled from outside, but depends on the composition of the different kinds of reproductive actions and on their superior or inferior strength and influence.

There is first of all volitional activity, the result of which is to be experienced in the same life-span (*diṭṭha-dhamma vedanīya*[31]). This, of course, shows the great efficacy of such karma which cannot be prevented by opposition, but which obtains the opportunity of expression by sheer force of action and will. Such immediate reactions, however, can seldom be indicated as individual events, as they more often make their presence felt in a change of character, a propensity. "That for which one has a bias, by that one is characterised, by that one gets a name".[32] Thus "If one cleave to the body, he is known as a materialist; if one cleave to feelings, he is known as a sensualist; if one cleave to perceptions, he is known as an extrovert; if one cleave to concepts, he is known as an idealist; if one cleave to consciousness, he is known as an introvert. He who does not cleave, has no name; and he is free". As one thinks, so one becomes.

Thus cruelty leads to sickness, stinginess to poverty, callous-

[31]Vism. XIX, 14, p. 601.
[32]S.111, p. 34.

ness to low birth; but kind feelings give a lovely complexion, etc. (so says the Commentator).

But even so, it is not altogether uncommon in this world to meet an individual who is generally known to be given over to evil actions with covetousness in his senses, malevolence in his heart and evil in his outlook (*abhijjāluṁ vyapannacittaṁ, micchadiṭṭhim*[33]) who might not stop even at murder and theft. And yet his evil actions do not appear to ripen. On the other hand one meets with virtue and charity, which have brought to the upright man nothing but misfortune and affliction. A conclusion therefrom to the inefficacy of all action, however, would not be justified, not even on the illogical grounds of an induction, Even in purely physical and chemical experiments a certain accumulation of energy is required before a reaction sets in. This delayed action has not only been measured, but can even be controlled.

Such a delayed reaction in the field of karma is either experienced on being reborn (*upapajja vedanīya*), i.e., in the course of the very next existence, or may become an experience in some subsequent existence (*aparapariya vedanīya*). The thought action which arises at the moment of expiry, and which is therefore called the death-proximate volition (*maraṇasaññā kamma*) produces its immediate reaction as the first thought in the new existence and belongs, therefore, to the first kind of karma experienced on rebirth.

But there seems to be no hard and fast rule as to the delay of most activity. The reason, of course, is that action is not the cause or creator of a reaction. A reaction requires, apart from its native source, the necessary conditions and environment to run its reactionary course. The arising of conditions is a separate process, which is not usually influenced by the necessity of volitional action wishing to express itself. Thus we read in the *Culla-kamma-vibhaṅga sutta*[34] that even killing with deliberate

[33] M. III, 210, Sutta 136.

[34] M. III, p. 203.

intention does not necessarily lead to misery, woe or hell after death; one may even escape all that and be reborn in a human life, although that will be short, whatever his station in that life would be.

In fact, the possibility is envisaged when no opportunity or suitable condition is available at any stage, in which case karmic action will become imperative and ineffective; it is karma that was (*ahosi kamma*), that is "lapsed karma of which must be said: there has been karma, but there has not been, is not, and will not be, any karma-result[35]".

The Buddha himself sums up these various possibilities of delayed reaction and inoperative action in the conclusion of the *Mahā-kamma-vibhaṅga sutta*[36]: "And so, Ānanda, there is karma which is impotent (*abhabba*) and appears to be so; there is karma which is actually inoperative, although it appears to be effective; then there is karma which is able (*bhabba*) and also capable in appearance; while finally there is karma which is procreative, although it does not appear so".

Spheres of Rebirth

The four kinds of karma, grouped together in respect of the place for working but its effects, naturally correspond to the four planes of existence (*bhūmi*) or spheres of rebirth, for existence is a coming-to-be resulting from procreation and volitional action.

There is unskilful action (*akusala kamma*) performed by means of the physical body, such as killing, stealing and unchastity; or by means of vocal expression, such as lying, slander, abusive language and idle talk; or in the mind with or without expression, such as covetousness, ill-will and clinging to wrong views. As such actions are not worthy of the lofty attainments

[35]Vism. XIX, 14, p. 601.

[36]M. III, p. 215, Sutta 136.

of the human intellect and understanding of mutual duties of human relationship, it is but natural that such inhuman actions will seek expression on a sub-human level, when the advantages of a human existence are lost. "If a tree bends and slopes towards the east or any other direction, it will fall that way when it is cut down[37]". These spheres of loss (*apāya*) have been graphically described according to the views on life prevailing at the time, the loss of the human touch, proportionately lessening with the intensity of inhumane activity.

There are first those who are called Asuras whose main characteristic seems to be the spirit of altercation. Those rowdies who delight in conflict, will take a long time to solve their problems. Lower down on the scale of culture are those who have departed (*peta*), not so much from physical existence but from the human level, who through their avarice do not bring joy into the lives of others and cannot themselves enjoy their own possessions; it is the misery of the miser. When all human sense is lost and the passions of the beast within are allowed free reign, one is said to have entered the womb of the animal kingdom (*tiracchāna yoni*). And beyond that there is only the plain hell (*niraya*) of living death, of frustrated ideals, of utter antagonism and misunderstanding, of consumption through the fires of lust and hate. Who has not met such evil ones in human form?

The skilful action (*kusala kamma*) which works out its effect in fortunate sense-experience (*kāma loka*) comprises apart from the realm of human beings (*manussa loka*), i.e., those truly human with compassion and understanding, also the superhuman spheres of authority (*catummahā rājikā*), of selective virtue (*tāvatiṁsa*), of self-restraint (*yam*), of contentment (*tusita*), of creativeness (*nimmaṇā rati*) and of appreciation (*paranimmita vasavatti*). The heavens are so full of humanity at its best. Or is it not rather that we would have a heaven on earth, if we, terrestrials, were only more human?

[37] S. V. 371.

Beyond these worlds of sense (*kāma loka*) are the mental spheres of those who lead a life of holiness (*brahmacārī*), where the bodily senses will not seek further satisfaction, but all striving is for the attainment of truth. These spheres of holiness (*brahmaloka*) are the effects of mental action only, i.e., karma of thought, and correspond to the spheres of mental concentration and absorption (*jhāna*), which can be experienced here on earth, states of mental absorption induced by material form (*rūpajjhāna*) in different degrees of mental application (*vitakka-vicāra*) of delightful interest (*pīti*), of mental well-being (*sukha*) and full concentration or one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*). If even form is transcended, mental life will be purer still (*arūpabrahmaloka*) in states of formless concentration and absorption (*arūpajhāna*), whom once more the spheres of rebirth correspond to the mental attainments here on earth: the spheres of infinite space (*ākāsānañca-*), infinite consciousness (*viññāṇānañca-*) nothingness (*ākiñcaññā-*) and imperceptible perception (*n'eva saññā-nasaññāyatana*).

> "And so our deeds
> Are all like seeds,
> And bring forth fruit in kind[38]".

Rebirth is Action

As regard these spheres of rebirth it must never be forgotten that it is not the manifestation of a result which is the effect of earlier activity. The manifestation is merely the seizure of an opportunity offering itself under various conditions. That a falling stone comes to rest is not the effect of gravitation or whatever other force made the stone fall. The coming to rest is an interruption of the process effected by other conditions. Similarly the sphere of rebirth, the locality, the womb, merely provide the opportunity

[38] J. II, No. 222, p. 202.

for action to come to rest or to roost. But the actual effect, or reaction of action, is the mental disposition, prompted by one or more of six radical conditions: greed, hate, ignorance, and their three opposites. These are the motives (*hetu*) or impelling conditions, which like a, meteor might move on and on towards disintegration in the infinity of space, unless the chance impact of resistance provides the opportunity of manifesting its reactionary force.

The doctrine of rebirth in Buddhism is then vastly different from the doctrine of transmigration, as understood in vedanta and the various schools of Hinduism. Transmigration presupposes an entity to migrate from one existence to another "as the caterpillar moves from leaf to leaf". Buddhism with its doctrine of no-soul (*anatta*) does not speak of transmigration, but of rebirth which would be understood so much better if it would be thought of, not as the change at the end of a life-span, but as the reaction set up by a volitional activity. This present endeavour to convey an i.e. is bound to have some sort of repercussion, either approval or disapproval, acceptance, rejection, doubt, not understanding, endeavour to understand, misunderstanding, etc., etc. Thus action is reborn as reaction, without a medium, without an entity passing over, without an individual dying here to be born elsewhere. Thus is the birth of an action, and its rebirth as a reaction.

The Psychology of Rebirth

All religions believe in rebirth, Buddhism and Hinduism explicitly, Christianity and Islam implicitly. Without the i.e. of rebirth, i.e., of a life after death, all religious striving, moral restraint, mental purification, etc., would be meaningless. This life is considered by all as a preparation for a future life—as a school of learning in which to qualify for perfect understanding and celestial bliss. However varied the many concepts of rebirth may be, it can basically be thought of only in terms of continuity. Some believe

in the continuity of an individual soul with personal immortality, others believe in the continuity of action, which (as in the case of causality) does not require a permanent entity to pass from state to state. This causality again may be thought of as a strict law of destiny in which self-surrender and fatalism can hardly be distinguished, or it may be viewed as mere conditionality, according to which a cause does not necessarily produce a definite effect, as there are so many other factors which by their influence tend to alter, strengthen, weaken or even destroy the expected result.

But whatever the shade of opinion in this regard may be, it contains essentially a preoccupation with death as a portal to a new life. While still living in the present, the mind is thus preoccupied with a life yet to come. And this life is considered not of another—except perhaps by a logical extension for the sake of argument—but it is one's own life with which one is personally concerned when thinking of the future.

We see then, that at the bottom of the problem lies the illusion of separation of self and others. It is this consciousness of individuality as a separate entity which is the cause of all our social struggle in this life, as well as of all our religious struggle to obtain a better future life. All questions about what will happen after death, which necessarily entail questions about what did happen before birth—e.g., why was I born, and how will I survive, how can I make myself better conditions of living in a next life, how can I secure now that future bliss? All these questions are ultimately rooted in the one single problem: how can I continue improved? And this problem, therefore, is the door, which will open to all other compartments which form a part of the extremely complicated structure, which is our present life with its social conventions, religious traditions, economic restrictions, national limitations, racial prejudices, philosophical assertions and theological dogmatism—and all the rest which follows in their wake.

Though we all believe in a life after death, in one form or

another, yet this belief has made no difference whatsoever to our present life. Some believe in the existence of a hell, but that does not prevent them from committing those very actions the penalty for which is ever-lasting hell-fire, according to their own doctrine and belief. Rebirth has not affected our life at all. And that shows that it is not really a conviction, but simply an escape for the mind, so as not to face the actual problem of discontinuance. We do not believe in rebirth (our actions show that), but we want rebirth, because we want to continue.

This apparently vast question about rebirth, then, is actually a very limited one, based on a desire for personal continuance. Now, this desire, like any other desire, could not arise if there were fulfilment; for, desire is a symptom of a deficiency, a need, a want. And so, this desire for continuation is an admission of the fact of discontinuity which I do not like. I do not like discontinuity, for there would be no "I". Thus, the "I"-i.e. contains the seed of all problems which are born from the fear of that "I", that it may not continue. It is this fear which prevents us from looking directly at the problem of rebirth, for in this state of fear in the mind there can be no understanding. Thought is influenced by outside motives which colour all relationship with the tinge of selfish emotion and isolation, which is separation. A narrow personal thought cannot but create further limitations, which are ignorance and misunderstanding of the whole process. For an understanding of the totality to be complete, thought must be integral. And the integrity of a thought requires first of all the knowledge of its own cause, its process and its conditioning. As long as this is not fully understood and realised, the thought is not free and will therefore express itself in an action which leads to further bondage. Thus intentional thought produces purposeful action, which will again produce a corresponding result.

That is rebirth. The intention of a thought and the purpose of an action are the expressions of a desire to continue. They are the projections of the "ego", which is thus reborn in the effect thereof.

The manifold projections of the "ego" are naturally according to one's characteristic inclinations. And thus they constitute at the same time the different spheres in which these self-projections are expressed, or to put it in the language of the ignorant, they form the heavens and hells in which different individuals are reborn.

It is the self-consciousness, (trying to continue under improved conditions), which has thereby created the distinction and the opposition of good and evil, other names for the pleasurable and the not pleasurable. In moral code language these are called virtue and sin. Virtue is that which gives strength (*virtus*) to the self, and sin is its opposite. Hence, virtue will give the desired continuance under improved conditions, and that is called heaven, while sin produces the opposite effect, which is called hell. It is typical of the deep roots of this desire for continuance, that the opposite of continued life in heaven is not the punishment of annihilation, but continuance under unfavourable conditions. The "ego" wants to continue anyhow. And so we all believe in rebirth in different spheres.

If we now try to look at the problem of rebirth with a detached view, we see first of all that—though all religious practices are meant to secure a happy rebirth—it is not rebirth at all that is wanted, but continuation of the "I". There can be rebirth only if there is death; and the "I" does not want to die. Hence it does not want to be reborn, but only to continue. That is the reason why people have standards of morality, systems of character-forming, methods of mind-control, organisations of spirituality—all of which will mould the mind and give it a definite shape according to a fixed pattern, so that it can continue securely, thereby preventing it to be made truly anew, to be reborn in the real sense.

Why do we not want to be reborn? And why is it necessary to be reborn? We do not want to be reborn, for that would mean death to all that constitutes the "I", just as the seed must die to itself completely in order to be reborn as a plant. All the

experiences of the past have been carefully stored up by the "I"-consciousness as memory, for each one of them contained something of the self. It is their accumulation which constitutes the "I". Without the past, i.e., without memory of previous experiences, the "I" concept cannot arise. Thus, the "I" is not of the present, but of the past; the "I" is a dead ghost. And yet, we cling to that mere apparition, because we are afraid of the present without a name, without a label, without a history, without experience, without security, without foundation, without a past, without continuance, without a future; for if there is no past, there cannot be a future either. In brief, in the present the "I" is not, and thus the dead past is made to continue to serve also in the future. Hence the shadow of the past, though really dead, is kept alive. And as long as that does not cease, the imagination of a deluded mind has something to feed upon, whereby it can continue from life to life. But that is not to be born again and anew!

When people are afraid to lose their life—and that is at the bottom of their desire for continuance—it signifies, that they have identified themselves with the body. For, if well understood, it is not life that they can love; there is not one life which possesses another life, and hence can lose it. Man has no life, but he is alive. Either life is lost and all is ended, or life cannot be lost. Fear of death, therefore, arises from attachment to and identification with the body and its sensate values. Rebirth in the true sense, which can and should take place at every moment, is the only way to be really alive at every moment. Every moment should be the end and the beginning of all our undertakings and hence of life itself. That might not make for a coherent life; but, let consistency take care of itself; it is stagnancy, a sign of senility and death.

When we face a challenge in life and meet it with the memory of past experiences, there can be no real meeting, for life and death have nothing in common. A new problem cannot be solved by an old solution; but every fresh problem must be met afresh

in full understanding. As long as the mind is filled with the accumulations of past memories and experiences, there cannot be fresh and full understanding of any new experience. For, then, what is new will be merely translated in terms of the old, at most an adaptation of a western classic in an oriental setting. It will be classified and judged according to the old system, but not understood in the present, not lived with, and loved.

Thus, in order to live fully and truly, constant rebirth is necessary, a constant letting go of the old, so that (in the words of Rabindranath Tagore) "the dust of dead words cannot cling to thee".

Life is the unknown, and that cannot be understood in terms of the known. The ever-new present, the unknown, can only be understood if we allow it to speak for itself. But if we keep giving all sorts of explanations and definitions, we shall never understand what the present has in store for us. In mental silence, passive alertness and watchfulness alone can comprehension arise. In the cessation of all intellectual safeguards true understanding can come about. In death alone can there be rebirth. And the more one dies in life, the greater is the good that naturally and spontaneously comes out of such a man for the benefit of others, i.e., for the whole. If a man employs his consciousness to cooperate with the law of evolution, then in his non-resistance to the process of change he survives. And not only does he survive, but he has secured freedom from struggle for life, as his conscious but effortless and selfless awareness has done spontaneously the work of natural selection.

But the kind of rebirth with which most people and all religions are concerned is a kind of transmigration in which the individual will have become greater, purer, more enlightened, not to speak of the carnal gratifications offered in some heavenly abodes, which are an insult to the human mind. It is expected that during many incarnations the individual will gather experience and thus slowly grow to truth. But truth is not something which can be developed: it cannot progress, and we cannot progress

towards it either. In its completeness and fullness it exists in everything, and thus accumulation of experience in different lives cannot bring the truth any nearer. Truth is not in the future, but here in the present. Accumulation of experience then merely strengthens the memory on which the "I" feeds. While desire for rebirth in its best form seeks for the realisation of truth elsewhere, the truth which is the living reality upholding everything as well as ourselves is ignored and overlooked where it is nearest at hand.

In ignorance we do not understand what it is in us that is immortal; and so, some attribute immortality to the body, to the senses, to the mind, to an individual ego, soul or spirit. Yet, in all these there is nothing of a static, permanent nature. But, just as in a river the waves and eddies pass away, and yet the river flows on for ever, so the process of life is everlasting, not as a static entity, but as a dynamic force manifesting itself ever anew in psychophysical combinations. Its very renewal from moment to moment constitutes its immortality. And thus, though the "ego" may die and individual life may cease, yet life is immortal and the isolated aspects thereof are but the delusion of the misconception of self (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*). It is that truth, partly forgotten and partly misunderstood, which causes in people this practical non-belief in death. But if they want to stand still, stop at one place and refuse to be constantly reborn, then of course, everything becomes confused and produces disharmony and conflict.

Now as regards the i.e. that rebirth is the opportunity for the continuance of the "I", though it is altogether mistaken to think of the I-process as some entity which can continue, yet there is some truth in the fact that the self is being reborn. For, every action which is a self-projection, i.e., an action performed with purpose and craving, every such action re-creates the self. The "I", the "self", does not exist by itself as an entity; it is but a bundle of sensations, perceptions, differentiations and ideations (*vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa*). It is identification with sensations, preserved in memory, with constitutes the "I", identification with the process of thinking in its different forms.

The mind is all the time occupied with the "I"-idea. Every experience is at once related to that concept, to find tout whether it will strengthen the "I" (and then it is accepted as good), or weaken it (and then it is condemned as evil). This self-consciousness depends on sensations; the mind is filled with craving for sensate values, trying to continue therein, grasping to grow, acquiring in order to establish security. Our whole life with all its economic, political and religious institutions with their tariff barriers, national frontiers, racial walls and ideological curtains, is thus based on this desire for continuance. And thus those actions create the "I", or rather give rebirth to the "I", for the church, the party, the country, the race are but extensions of the "I" which continuance is so much desired. Yet, this "I" is certainly a delusion, for no permanent entity can he dependent in its arising on impermanent phenomena. Yet, for all that the rebirth of a self is a delusion, it does continue as a process just as a hallucination may continue notwithstanding its unreality. The i.e. of continuity in rebirth as an entity is then caused by a mistaken identification (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*).

To understand rebirth in all its psychological implications all this should be thoroughly understood and realised. For then we shall also comprehend at once the significance of the different spheres of rebirth. Before consciousness loses completely its sense of isolation and separateness, i.e., before the cessation of the delusion of self consciousness as an individual entity, there are different stages to which people have given different names. As long as the mind is engrossed in sensate values, it remains the slave of the body, all the time concentrating on possessions, comfort, power, and imagining that happiness can be found in these sensations. In these spheres of sense (*kāmaloka*) there are again many different layers according to frustration to be suffered or ambition satisfied. Living for sense-satisfaction becomes more and more entangled in various activities procuring that satisfaction, frequently with the unavoidable consequences of disappointment. In creating contacts for further expansion of

satisfaction and ambition, there is also the burden of increasing liabilities and responsibilities. Once controlled by the senses, there is no time or liking for reflective thinking.

But, when satisfaction and disappointment are placed by the mind side by side, a more detached view of both can be obtained, when at least awareness of the impermanence and ultimate unreality of sense-pleasure may arise, when failings and disappointments do not only appear as mere consequences of success and expectation, but rather as the unavoidable goal of all striving for happiness.

Then one might begin to seek elsewhere the possibility of a more stable happiness; and from the worldly joys one will turn to spiritual joy, from emotional satisfaction to intellectual gratification, from a selfish search for the pleasures of the senses in sensual appetite to the more refined pleasures of knowledge in art and science. Thus, from a slave to the body one becomes a slave of the mind. Then the need of control and discipline will be felt, and man turns religious and moral. Such a life will henceforth be led in the spheres of form (*rūpaloka*) where character will be moulded according to examples given for imitation.

To the extent of the mind knowing the higher, it has ceased to care for the lower. And thus the mind will become absorbed in mental states of spiritual ecstasy of intense, sacred joy (*pīti*) or the bliss of well-being (*sukha*), or beyond it all in the rest of perfect equilibrium (*ekaggatā*). Those are the states of purity and holiness (*brahmaloka*), where desires for sense-pleasures cannot intrude, though even here is not yet found that perfect comprehension of ultimate deliverance.

Thoughts may rise higher still in further simplification of the process, when life begins to be natural, harmonious and free from form, free from entanglements which are due to striving, craving and clinging. In utter nakedness of mind and heart it is possible to reach those spheres where space does not restrict, where consciousness has no bounds, where unreality becomes fact and the very perception thereof becomes imperceptible. Such

are the formless spheres (*arūpaloka*) where time and space and individuality have no more meaning, where escapes are seen as self-deception, where conflicts vanish as delusion, where problems are understood as baseless, where effort, ceases as goalless, till the sudden dawn of realisation that rebirth is no more.

Morality—The Ten Perfections

The world as a whole and the overwhelming majority of the people in it are suffering nowadays from a deep sense of frustration. The first world-war 1914–18 was begun with some enthusiasm; it was thought to be a war to end all war. But within a few years it had proved a lost ideal to all. And when the second world-war became unavoidable in 1939, there was not even that shade of self-deception. Now that war too has ended, more than twenty-five years ago, and has been lost by all, leaving a tense of frustration hang over the world, heavier than ever before. Even the will for reconstruction is damped by the gloom and threat of an almost certain break-down once more, perhaps within our life-time.

Unless the rebuilding of society is undertaken in all its layers, to be placed upon a new foundation, it is bound to be mere patchwork. But the nations are not united in their isolated determination to see each one's individual advantage. And hence, there is not much chance that the conflict of opposites will be solved in peace. Even if all causes which produced war will be temporarily shelved, the same wants and fears continue to dominate the economic, political, social and even the intellectual life of the world and its individuals. And so, all striving to bring about a lasting and satisfactory settlement will fail; and thus, the sense of frustration is ever increased.

Perfection can of necessity not be attained in one single act.

There is so much to be cleared away, so much to be understood, so much to build up, before mere existence can become true life. A way will have to be walked, a way of purification, not as a method of self-purification, but a way of surrender (*dāna*), a growth of character (*sīla*), a going forth in the real sense (*nekkhamma*). When progress is made on that purifying path, the illuminating truth-will begin to spread its light in deeper insight in nature (*paññā*), while with inner strength (*viriya*) and pliability of thought (*khanti*) that truth will reveal itself in utter sincerity (*sacca*). Only then, the unifying life, stabilised (*adhiṭṭhāna*) and universalised in love (*mettā*), will give that bliss of equanimity (*upekkhā*) in fulfilment, for which the world has been hankering in vain.

It is an old doctrine, the ten perfections of a bodhisatta (*dasa pāramitā*), the doctrine of fulfilment in perfection. But, the way, truth and life do not know of time. They are eternal, because they are new every moment. That which is always new cannot crave for the future or cling to the past. And thus, in this eternally new present may be found the fulfilment and perfection which the world needs so much.

These are the ten perfections (*dasa pāramitā*), the virtues of morality which fill the life of a bodhisatta, till fulfilment in Buddhahood. It is the path of virtue, which is morality through understanding, rather than a code of precepts, which should be the light and life of everyone. Thus, we present here the essence of Buddhist morality as these ten perfections: the gift of self (liberality: *dāna*) growth of character (virtue: *sīla*), going forth (renunciation; *nekkhamma*), insight (wisdom: *paññā*), inner strength (energy: *viriya*), pliability (patience: *khanti*), sincerity (truth: *sacca*), stabilisation (determination: *adhiṭṭhāna*), universal love (loving kindness: *mettā*) and bliss (equanimity: *upekkhā*).

The Purifying Way

The Gift of Self (Liberality: *dāna*)

The great problems in the world are merely the extension of individual problems. Just as there is no army apart from individual soldiers, so there is no state apart from individual citizens; there are no political, no economic problems which are not related to individual conflicts and rooted in individuals. Thus, the solution of the world-problems must be sought through the solution of individual problems. By focussing all one's attention on the general world-questions, there is a tendency to overlook their real cause in the individual self. But, when this individual self is understood as a delusion, the individual conflict and the world problem will have been dissolved. Peace, then, will come only to the world when there is peace in the minds and in the hearts of men. The conflagration of lustful passions which led the events of the world from peace to war finds its cause in the little spark of egotism. If that spark can be choked before it can grasp around it and become a flame, all the misery of destruction can be prevented. That is the purpose of the gift of self. For the self is like an eddy in the river. While it does not form an entity which can exist separately by itself, but forms a mere part of the process of the flow of the river, yet its whirling presence obstructs the smooth movement, which cannot be helped forward better than by the dissolution of the counter-movement.

It is that counter-movement, a reaction to the natural flow of life, which imprisons the mind in the delusion of a separate individual self, or substance, or soul. But, when that same process of thinking is freed from that delusion which makes it turn around an imaginary centre and prevents all progress, when that whirling revolution has solved itself in a steady evolution, then truth reveals itself in real life, which knows neither stagnancy, nor repetition, but only an ever-new becoming which alone can give true freedom from self, real deliverance from all delusion.

The water bubble on the river by bursting loses nothing but its isolation, as its very existence was merely an empty and hollow pretension. Just as the flow of the water does not obstruct but constitutes the very progress of the river as long as there are in it no individual movements like counter-currents, eddies and whirlpools, so worldly work of any nature will not form an obstacle to progress as long as the feeling of "I work" does not set up a counter-wave of isolation and selfishness.

As long as action is dominated by interest in self, there is no true action, no pure action, no action of any real value, but more reaction, reflection, which sets up a retrogressive tendency.

The real problems of life are not poverty, crime, political dependence, illiteracy, exploitation of labour. These and similar defects are only the symptoms of a universal disease.

All the defects under which modern society ails are merely the reflection of individual anaemia. It is the selfish attitude towards life which causes in each individual the necessity of the struggle for existence. That struggle, starting in the individual, produces a spirit of exploitation in the whole of society, which in its criminal attitude towards life cannot but rear criminals.

And who is that society but you and I in relationship? As long as I cultivate that selfish aloofness which is not physical but mental, aloofness which feeds and lives at the expense of others by mental isolation—so long also am I exploiting and contributing to the spirit of exploitation in the world. Thus the problem can be solved only by the giving up of "self".

The root-cause of all evil in private, social, economic or spiritual life is always the seeking of self, which can only be done at the cost of others. All sorrow is ultimately dissatisfaction. And thus, as we saw earlier, such self-satisfaction leads to stagnation, and as we see now, to sorrow. Therefore, the only way to solve that conflict between the two opposites of satisfaction and dissatisfaction is the dissolution of "self", which is the veil which hides the vision of truth. Hence, the giving up of "self" is the first step towards realisation, which is the fulfilment of perfection. There

is, therefore, no greater service than the help to overcome that obstacle of delusion.

But, how can one assist others to become free from this fetter, as long as one is bound in ignorance about this process of the arising and maintenance of this "self"? The greatest service possible then is the freeing oneself of this obstruction, which will show the road to freedom.

It is the highest degree of sacrifice, compared with which the gift of possessions or even the gift of one's body in service to others are small donations and imperfect ones. This supreme gift does not point to effacement and annihilation, but it is rather the sacrifice of the flame, which burns in consuming itself. It does not consume itself towards destruction, but into a living flame which gives its light to all who seek its influence. The light does not shine in order to derive some benefit for itself, but its natural inclination is to burn; it is that tendency of unselfishness which constitutes its greatest value and service. Thus, by being "a lamp unto yourselves[39]", one can at the same time fulfil this perfection and virtue of giving to the highest degree; for, by being a light unto oneself, one does not cast a shadow across another's path.

Yet, for the solution of this conflicting problem of self and non-self, a mere giving up of self will not suffice. This process of "self" must be realised as a delusion; then its giving up will come spontaneously and necessarily. In the understanding of that delusive distinction the two opposites will disappear as such; and thereby alone can the world and its events be comprehended as one complete process of inter-dependence. The gift of self, therefore, must be based on the understanding of "self". Hence it is said that "self is the saviour of self[40]". It is only in the awareness of the delusion, inherent in the "I", that the conflict can be solved, as it is only the owner of the goods who can make a gift of them. The understanding of the transient process of the "I" is the giving

[39]Dīgha Nik.
[40]Dhp. 160.

up of "I" as an individual isolation, is the giving up of selfishness, is the giving up of a delusion for the sake of truth. And that indeed is the highest gift.[41]

The giving up of this delusive "self", therefore, will result in the breaking down of the prison bars. But that can be done only through the comprehension of the process of self-isolation. In clinging to the distortion of the individual view, even though enlarged in organisations, the wide world-view of life will never be discerned; for that can come only through the surrender of "self". As long as the "I" is asking for continuation there can be no fulfilment and no happiness. As long as the "I"-process is "self-inductive", i.e., producing volitional activities (*kamma*) from its own ignorance (*avijjā*), there will be the "alternating current" of the dual conflict, arising from the opposing poles of want and fear. But, when the "I"-process is understood, it will also be relinquished, and in that surrender will be found an opening up of life, a blossoming of the flower which is the beginning of its chance of fructification.

The Growth of Character (Moral Virtue: *sīla*)

There are two concepts of morality: to be good and to do good. The second one cannot be called morality in he true sense, as it is considered as a means to an end. It is true, one can do good in order to become good, but that is rare. People do good actions, which appear entirely altruistic, yet fundamentally they are egoistic, activated by acquisitiveness, desire for merit, reward, heaven, bliss, or motivated by fear to avoid punishment, purgatory, hell. This, however, is really immorality, because these so-called good actions were inspired by selfishness. The amount of "self" put into an action, therefore, will be the criteria of its morality.

Real morality is to be good, that is, to be in harmony with one's own and with the whole nature through the absence of

[41] Dhp. 353.

selfish motives, through the absence of isolation, through the absence of opposition. Then alone will virtue be pure and perfect by necessity, as it will be without limitation, restriction or bondage. Such virtue must grow naturally through the understanding of one's nature, through understanding of relationship, through an urge from within. Cultivated virtue, or virtue for a purpose is shop-keeping. And thus, true virtue is growth of character.

Righteousness is called *dhamma*, and unrighteousness is called *adhamma*, i.e., that which is or is not in harmony with the norm (*dhamma*), the ultimate nature of things. Further, that which is conducive towards that harmony is wholesome (*kusala*) in the sense of healthy; for, mental states are healthy, if they are free from the illness of the corruptions (*kilesa*). Harmonious actions are called skilful (*kusala*) in the sense of achievement by skill, for morality is not a wild growth; it requires understanding. It is good because it produces good effects (*kusala vipāka*).

But who will set the standard or the margin to right and wrong? Does the distinction between good and bad depend on intuition? Is the line of demarcation between skilful and unskilful drawn by reason? Or is it nature itself which gives the norm of good? Is it so absolutely evident that nature is good to all? The contrary seems to be true, rather. The universe is non-moral. And it is not intuition therefore in the goodness or badness of things, which constitutes morality. "Sin" does not consist in a transgression of a law, but in selfishness, in seeking self-satisfaction, even if this not at the expense of somebody else. "I must have pleasure", does not always imply: "You must have pain". But still there is a foundation of selfishness, even if it is not always understood as doing positive harm to others. Selfishness sets up an individual tendency which in its isolation and separateness indirectly deprives the rest of the community, that is, the whole of nature, of its rights. In this sense selfishness does always harm, and thus is always: "sin".

This is very rarely understood. Many there are who speak of absolute morality, believing that moral goodness at one time

will be morally good at all times and all places. But, even the very limited time of world-history as known to us, and the very restricted space of our universe which we can investigate, show marked changes of moral standards, which are almost as fickle as fashions. If we wish to search for ultimate moral values, we shall have to be content with a very few essential characteristics, without building on rules and regulations. Traditional morality has changed considerably with the evolution of world-culture and so-called civilisation, so that moral law cannot be called inflexible. To speak of a law of morality at all is a monstrosity, for goodness, like beauty, cannot be imposed from outside by legislation, but must grow from inner necessity as a part of nature itself. Commandments given by a supreme being can only inspire fear for punishment, and hence an inclination for secret violation. But, if morality is understood as nature itself, it will lead to a greater sense of responsibility.

If these principles are thoroughly grasped the correspondence between morally good (*kusala*) and artistically beautiful (*sobhana*) will easily be seen. Both are based on harmony, but harmony is sometimes misinterpreted as symmetry. Symmetry is objective, external, with physical proportions, material in balance. There is no symmetry in the starry sky at night, yet it is full of beauty because there is harmony. Harmony is subjective, internal, mental balance. The peaceful majesty of the firmament is not in the sky, but in the reflecting mind where it produces peace and rest and balance, which is harmony. The loss of that balance, mental unrest, disharmony, all that is conflict (*dukkha*) and evil (*akusala*) and ugly (*asobhana*).

Just as beauty and ugliness are harmony or disharmony, which do not change according to the surroundings, so goodness and moral evil do not change with evolution. Therefore, those moral aspects which have changed in the course of time are not essential to morality; they are mere accidentals. If killing is wrong, it is not so because it has been forbidden by some supreme being; it cannot be wrong in peace and right in war; it cannot

be permissible to kill an animal rather than a man. If killing is wrong, it is because life is the highest and the only real possession of a sentient seeing, without which no property is of any avail. Life is the expression of his "karma", the very process of his being, the only means to be, to grow, to continue towards perfection.

Most people are under the delusion of "self", and for them "good" is that which does not affect them adversely, of which they are not afraid; while "evil" is all that which inspires fear, which threatens one's sense of security. These are the originators of the hard and fast rules by which life is bound. This regimentation of thought becomes necessary, if the individual is nothing more than a social product, i.e., a product of a conflicting environment; for, then, discipline and coercion become essential. But all various aspects of virtue and morality spring really from the same root: the desire for self-protection in the midst of these opposites.

As long as the mind is caught in these secret desires, all its striving for perfection, though it may appear highly developed virtue, is nothing but a process of acquisition, a search for consolation, a seeking for comfort and protection. These conflicting tendencies of fear and want produce a sense of frustration, which under a misunderstood system of morality develops into a sense of guilt. This sense of guilt may ultimately be traced, directly or indirectly, to the fact of struggle for existence. For, the struggle for existence brings man directly in contact with conflicting elements, which must be avoided or overcome, if survival is to be effected.

But, if it is once recognised that morality with its sense of guilt finds its origin in the struggle for existence, we have at the same time discovered the discriminating factor between moral and immoral. For, the struggle for existence, psychologically, is disharmony and selfishness, like any other struggle.

To have real growth of character there must be a breaking down of all the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) which are self-protecting walls. Only in absolute freedom is growth and fulfilment possible. And that can be done only through constant alertness to each

action and reaction, whereby all opposition will be seen as a delusion, whereby all striving will be realised as an escape, whereby all restraint will be understood as an expression of fear.

The Going Forth (Renunciation: *nekkhamma*)

In identification lies always appropriation. It is through memory especially that identification of action is established. The constant process of change is a process of evolution and involution, of growth and decay. Because of this, the continuity of the process is misunderstood as a continuity of a person. If the change is more abrupt, as at the end of a life-span, this identification process will also be interrupted. It is the mental retention of past actions which leads to identification which is appropriation. The change is there, appearing to be something which came through earlier experiences to present action. It is this slow understanding, slow through grasping, which results in misunderstanding of the changing process for a permanent "self". True renunciation is the leaving behind of this misunderstanding.

It is not *in* sorrow, but *through* sorrow, through the understanding and the setting aside of sorrow and its cause, that happiness is met. But, as long as sorrow is accumulated in the form of attachment to things from which security and comfort are expected, that very desire for security will produce fear, and that desire for comfort will produce sorrow.

As long as renunciation is a denial, it is an opposition. But an opposition can arise only within a conflict. Hence, to deny evil tendencies is to create new tendencies, which may be different, but which will still be binding and, therefore, be an obstacle to freedom. Renunciation which is a denial of the world, is a denial of life, and therefore it is death. Renunciation does not consist in a life in the forest. As long as the mind creates the ideal of "self" as a forest-dweller, or the delusion of "self" as a householder, there will be attachment to that model of living. It is that attachment, that ideal, that delusion of "self" which

has to be renounced. It is the attitude of mind rather than the condition of living which must be altered. For, as long as the "ego" remains the source of inspiration, there may be a substitution of one method of living for another method, but that change of environment will not overcome the obstacles to freedom, for the fetter of misconception of "self" remains the same.

But, if the worldly life is understood as a way in which a delusive "I" tries to continue its existence through acquisitiveness, then there will not be another attempt at escape into some other delusion of an "over-self", of a "super-ego", of a world-soul, but the simple dissolution of the delusion, which is then a complete renunciation. It is only in understanding, that craving and ignorance and the resulting "self"-delusion can be overcome and totally renounced without creating an opposite. Renunciation should not be negative, as a denial, but a positive act of going forth without fear.

It certainly requires courage to renounce the support of age-long traditions which claim such marvellous culture.

When some people group themselves together in common striving under the inner urge to rise against certain anomalies, they meet and work in mutual understanding. But after some time, when others join without that same urge and understanding, it becomes necessary to form regulations and a constitution. With rules one tries to bind the future without knowing even what that future may hold in store. It is only in freeing oneself from all those narrowing restrictions that there can be a real issuing forth. Renunciation should be a going forth (*nekkhamma* = *nis+kamati*) but this going forth should not be a going out to a fixed destination, an ideal or a goal. If the stage is set beforehand, renunciation does not mean anything more than a change-over to something better. Then, renunciation is merely an act of acquisition of greater security. But then, the very thing which should have been left off, the cause of all conflict, viz. the misconception of "self", is only taken to a different sphere, where it will develop instead of wither.

People are striving for power, but that is possessiveness, acquisitiveness, selfishness, which makes man a slave to his own desires, to his own petty attachments, and to the means he has invented to satisfy those desires. But real power comes when man is able to rise above acquisitions; for there he will find real freedom in true renunciation. Having renounced all, he will possess all without being possessed by it.

Renunciation must be complete, if it would be a step on the purifying way. It must be a leaving behind of everything. The giving up of material things is easy enough, but that giving-up is not even essential. It is not the surrender of books which is renunciation, but the abandonment of the doctrines contained therein. As long as there is attachment to any particular doctrine or system, or school, a free going forth is impossible. It is not the leaving behind of friends and family, but it is the breaking of the bonds of attachment, which is necessary. As long as one is caught within the limitations and restrictions of society, association or family, they form a burden which prevents real progress. But if one were free from their fettering influences, the going-forth has taken place already. To leave home and to bind oneself with restrictions in a homeless life is to exchange one prison for another. Any mode of living may become a prison, if one considers that mode as a means of salvation, or deliverance. Freedom does not exist in methods, for methods are binding, however much support one may find in them.

Religions, politics, science and art belong all to that region of dreamland where we try to amuse ourselves, to make ourselves comfortable and secure, where we occupy ourselves, toying with life without living it. Then, of course, those things become all of vital importance, when with all one's life's energy those ambitions will be pursued for the good and welfare of society, it is thought. In reality it is for our own satisfaction that we have made society: it is for our own security that we have made religions; it is for our own comfort and enjoyment that we make progress in science and art. But thereby we bind ourselves to dogmas, to conventions,

to an artificial way of living and thus we block the way to freedom and perfection.

Renunciation is a going forth, a growing up, a leaving behind of toys, a becoming interested in life itself, a thing which "children" will never be able to understand. But, if this part of the purifying way has been passed through with understanding, it will naturally lead to progress and growth in the illuminating truth.

The Illuminating Truth

Insight into Nature (Wisdom: *passa*)

Knowledge is not the ultimate purpose of thought. This can only be realised if the process of thought is understood in its origination, development and dependence. The process of thinking is not consciousness as a passive mirror in which the external world is reflected, but it is a process of grasping, laying hold of the object by giving it a subjective interpretation. It is an active appropriation of what is misunderstood as an outer world, opposed to an inner "self". Thought has, therefore, developed into a means of craving. The object, sensed and perceived, becomes assimilated in knowledge, the process of mental grasping. Thus, knowledge is not the purpose of thought, but serves the purpose of craving, just as science has found its greatest stimulus not in man's need, but in his greed for additional comfort. Man's physical needs can be satisfied easily enough, but his greed to gain time for the sake of increased profit led him to invent machines and employ power to assist him in fighting his own nature in time and space.

The true action of the mind should, therefore, not be the gathering of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) which is a kind of craving, but creative insight without grasping, which is true understanding which is insight (*paññā*). The conception of thought finds its beginning in imagination; for, concepts are acts of grasping and therefore produce sorrow and conflict. But the culmination of a

conception which was without grasping will not come with the pains of childbirth, but with the joy of creation in the mind. That is not imagination leading to will, but the dawn of truth leading to insight.

A concept without grasping is only possible in simple awareness and watchfulness, without purposeful striving of attainment, without intentional desire of escaping from the conflict. It is in that awareness that understanding of a problem can grow, and that insight will dissolve a delusion.

Knowledge will try to satisfy one's curiosity and questions will arise like: How does rebirth take place? But, insight will go deeper and will investigate not the past fact of rebirth, but: why does the question about rebirth arise? For, that is the real problem.

The question about the possibility and the ways of rebirth is so fascinating, because it has behind it a desire for security. If this question about rebirth could be settled, then it would guarantee something definite for the future. In other words, the motive of the question was not a need for understanding, but the fear of uncertainty which causes the greed for knowledge. It is "self" which wants to find some solid ground in which to take root, in which to perpetuate itself.

Again: knowledge of the four noble truths will tell us that we must be detached, because craving or attachment is the cause of sorrow. But, insight will go deeper and find out whether this desire for detachment is not due to fear of sorrow rather than to the understanding of the conflict thereof. If conditioned by fear, detachment will be merely an escape, but not a solution of the conflict. For, the opposites of fear and want still remain.

Insight, therefore, will never ask for a method, but will ask for the cause. Knowledge answers the question: How? That is science. Ignorance looks for answer of its question: why not? That is the easy way out through satisfaction. Only insight answers the question: why? And that gives the true solution. Thus, the problem of the conflict between craving and detachment is

solved by the understanding of the cause which is always one and the same: "self". If that "self" is truly understood as a delusion, as a reaction to the environment, a result of education, tradition, society and religion, a result of a desire for continued existence, then both attachment and detachment will become impossible.

Thought has created its own environment, and has attached its own feelings to it. Then, in the ensuing conflict it has produced the opposition between an inner self and an external world. Whatever takes place in that world of fiction is seen as highly important, till in its self-contradictoriness the world of events appears one mass of conflict. Insight into the real nature of this process of delusion will understand from its cause the true, i.e., the fictitious, value of all its reactions. Feelings, whether inner or outer, which arose from a deluding distinction, from a fictitious "self" in opposition and in conflict with a fictitious environment, will be discarded as passing shadows which cannot truly darken the light of the sun, unable to leave a trace in their passing. This insight, therefore, will truly solve the problem of sorrow, the dissolution of conflict.

It is limited knowledge which perverts the truth. For, limited knowledge admits of a certain amount of misunderstanding. In that twilight it is most difficult to work, for a glimpse of truth convinces the mind that it has grasped the full truth; then its own mistaken distortion of the world is taken as an understanding thereof.

Any system which claims to have the truth is a deception, for truth is a living understanding which has to grow in each one individually, till all individuality will have been outgrown. Religions may contain some truths, they may be reminders of truth, but when they claim to be channels of truth and means of salvation, they are mere distortions, for then they prove to lack real insight into the inner nature of the mind. Just as the Buddha found enlightenment within himself by realising "non-self" (*anatta*), so each one has to discover the Buddha within himself and there worship him in the realisation of his own nature. If this understanding of one's nature is not able to break the bonds

which keep the "self" isolated and imprisoned, it is a clear sign that such understanding is not insight, but mere learning which has not developed beyond physiology and affiliated sciences.

The understanding that ignorance was the cause of earlier failings will produce greater alertness in the present conflict. It is the insight in our nature as a process of ignorance and delusion. If that insight is actual, the delusion will vanish at the same moment, just as the delusion of a man who in the dark mistook a rope for a serpent, will disappear and not arise again once the mistake is found out. Speculations about the nature of delusion will not bring about an actual solution of the same, for in speculation only imaginary cases are taken up for consideration. It is a scholarly work, perhaps, but not actual. Such speculations lead to suggestions which are merely temporary remedies. From those speculative solutions have arisen the different institutions, meant to organise social welfare, spiritual welfare, etc. And they certainly produce many good effects. But as they have not originated from the understanding of the problem, but only from the knowledge of its existence, those organisations cure the effects, but can do nothing to remedy the cause which they do not even try to understand. Thus, Christ restored life to the widow of Naim because he had compassion with the weeping mother; he had knowledge of her sorrow. The Buddha did not restore the life of the baby of Kisā Gotamī, because he had deeper compassion with the weeping mother: he had understanding of her sorrow which found its cause in her attachment. Curing her from the cause, he made her reach the state of insight which is beyond sorrow and conflict.

A rearrangement of causes will not solve a conflict, but merely produce a different one, while the opposition remains the same. Insight, however, will understand both opposites as delusions, and thereby reduce them and the conflict to nothing. With the perception of the conflict there should not be a desire for a solution even; for that would be an actual taking sides. A choiceless awareness alone will comprehend the necessity of solving the

conflict, for in awareness alone there is actuality, not based on experience of the past, not building on speculation in the future, but actually present like sorrow, like conflict. In this actual comprehension there is no separation possible between the world and self, for the conflict arises in the contact, in relationship misunderstood. When the two are seen as one single process all delusion, all conflict, all opposition comes naturally to an end, not by controlling, checking or overcoming it but by understanding it as a delusion.

Inner Strength (Energy: *viriya*)

Attainment, as we have seen, is not the reaching of a goal which is in another world; it is not the obtaining, the acquisition of something. It is rather an inner growth, proportionate to the decrease of self-delusion. Thus, the strength and energy, the vitality, which is the result of that growth, is not a power derived from reliance on external forces, but the vigour which spontaneously bursts forth from an inner source. It is energy in the true sense, for en-e.g. means in-force, the strength which grows from inner conviction and understanding, and not from reliance on authority, which is the experience of others. Only the word which is spoken with the strength of inner realisation has the power to move others, to wake others, and make them see the need to realise for themselves. For, it is only the word which comes from within, that has the sound of truth. Everything else is repetition and imitation, which may be beautiful as art, but is lifeless as stone.

All effort which is engendered without the understanding of its motive may appear as furthering the growth of character and development of virtue, but is in reality only strengthening the delusion of "self". The need for this effort, if properly understood, is the outcome of a feeling of inward poverty. But, that effort, based on desire, cannot eradicate that poverty, based as it is on a delusive opposition in which the "self" wants to possess the

world of its contacts, feelings and perceptions. It is an artificially created void which therefore cannot be filled, as it has no existence in reality, but only in misconception. Thus, all efforts like self-control, self-denial, self-mortification, though virtuous in appearance, are only different disguises under which the "I" hides itself.

True action and true energy are one, and they rise spontaneously from the understanding of a need. True energy does not need to be spurred on by argument, nor by expectations of reward; but it needs understanding. In the awakening of intelligence there will be the natural and spontaneous cessation of exertion which comes through craving and fear. For, exertion is not a proof of free will, but rather of a conditioned reflex; while the cessation of that exertion is freedom from conditioning.

Energy, which is inner strength, is not a reaction; it is spontaneous, self-acting energy, springing into life through understanding. And that is real virtue.

This energy, then, is not of a supernatural origin or quality, but it is a development of the unimpeded progress in a natural process of growth. Conflict will produce a tendency towards escape, but the understanding of the nature of the conflict will see that there is nothing to escape from, except the "I" in conflict. An escape is an action born of ignorance; energy is an action born of understanding. This understanding cannot be imparted from outside; and so it is really impossible to help somebody else. The very wish to become stronger through the support of others is destructive of intelligence, for, it is an expression of fear, an admission of defeat, a lack of comprehension. But, if in the understanding of the nature of the conflict, the two opposites are comprehended as delusions, fear will naturally disappear, and the conviction of inner strength will not need to be supported by external help.

In that fearless state there is no craving for security, because its inner strength lies in its non-identity, in its capacity to yield and rise. But, craving for security will express itself in the eco-

nomic sphere through exploitation of others, in the social sphere through running after distinctions, in the religious sphere through striving for virtue and merit. In all these kinds of energy, which are rather exertions to obtain security for one's "self", there is the seed of fear and competition, of opposition and sorrow, all of which would disappear, if real energy in a fearless life would not care for security, because there are no opposites. As long, however, as that fear remains, the process of thought itself will be divided through conflicting tendencies between a higher and a lower life. Then discipline will take the place of inner strength, and through drill and control one will try to bring about the harmony which was disturbed.

When, therefore, we have been speaking throughout of inner strength, this should not be misunderstood as forming an opposite to some outer strength, on which to rely it would be possible, though not advisable. The distinction between inner and outer is a delusion, as delusive as the distinction between self and others as separate entities. To deny the one and maintain the other is impossible, for, as long as one is kept intact, it will naturally form its opposite. Thus, where there is striving for happiness, there will be sorrow; in expectation there will be disappointment; in satisfaction there will be craving for more; in grasping for immortality there will be fear of death; in the love for some there will be hate for others; in self-control there will be uncontrolled pride; in the acceptance of faith there will be the seed of doubt.

Only in the realisation that both opposites are delusive, and that both have to cease, in that understanding is a cessation of exertion. And that will bring with it true peace, and the real victory of truth over all delusion, a strength which is absolute because it has no opponents and because it is unrelated, unconditioned.

Pliability (Patience: *khanti*)

It is the agitation in desire which causes frustration, for agitation particularises desire and hence limits the attainment. In this

limitation there is no liberation, so that the very desire for freedom produces nothing but further entanglements. Knowledge, in stead of expanding into understanding, merely becomes conceit and deceit.

Conceit with its basis of self-delusion leads to separation and isolation, and thus produces disappointment and sorrow in stead of satisfaction and peace. It is the desire to go out in search of truth, to fulfil the purpose of life, to satisfy the emptiness within, which makes one to be caught over and over again in the clutches of rebirth. It is this going out which is the cause of the delusive distinction, which perpetuates the deception of "self".

The calming down of such passionate desires is essential to the realisation of the truth, the attainment of perfection, the fulfilment of life. And that is exactly the function of patience as a step on this ladder of perfection. Patience is far from meekness or weakness, for it is in its yielding power that lies its very strength.

In adaptation to present conditions there should not be a craving to adapt the environment to ones liking; but, in the understanding of oneself as the result of the environment, to the conditions of life, tolerance will become affection, belief will become knowledge, ignorance will become insight.

But in man's striving there is no patience. One wants immediate results and solutions for the passing symptoms without trying to solve the real problem which lies within. Little joys and little sorrows preoccupy the mind so much that there is only confusion and doubt about details, which prevent the truth to be understood in its entirety, the basic problem in its foundation. As long as joys and sorrows are shallow they hang on and cast their shadows over man's life. But when sorrow is deep and love is great, they destroy all pettiness and make one realise the depth of life in true relationship in narrowness of mind there is limited apprehension and that shallowness is the cause of continued sorrow and conflict, because everything is seen against the background of the limited "self". But, when in understanding through watchfulness those limitations are seen as delusions, then there will

be a constant refitting into an always new environment. Such constant change and adaptation to the present make of sorrow the pin-prick of one moment without being dragged along in time by a delusive imagination. Thus, the agony of passion is overcome, not by endurance, but by living in and with this actual and momentary present. As the flame does not endure but arises anew at every moment, so the pain produced by it is new and lasts only for a single moment. Thus, in the pliability of adapting oneself to the true nature of things, all sorrow becomes bearable in the absence of conflict.

The main difficulty in seeing this truth lies in one's incapacity for thinking without being influenced. When thought is being guided by the misapprehension of life as separated and isolated entities with which the "self" and "others" are identified, the feeling of conceit becomes wounded in adversity. But, when life is understood as one process of action and reaction, the pliability of thought versus the environment will come spontaneously without producing any conflict. Patience towards all living creatures as well as with inorganic matter will greatly be helped by this understanding. Patience with oneself, however, is most essential, and this is only possible to the extent that the delusion of "self" is overcome. The more of "self", the less adaptation and, therefore, the greater conflict. Instead of using the power one may possess to alter the evil consequences of other people's actions, it would be better to alter the inner dispositions which is a reaction to those deeds. When stones on the road hurt our feet, not the stones should be blamed, while the fault lies in the sensitivity of our feet.

It is this yielding capacity which leads to comprehension. Comprehension is an act of taking in, of absorbing; and to do that effectively, there must be emptiness. As long as fear and craving delude the process of thought and fill the mind with ideas of past and future, so long also can there be no true discernment of the present, no full comprehension of the truth, no true fulfilment of life. But, when individuality is understood as a process of

thought itself, it will cease to be a reflection or a reaction, and it will emerge as pure and creative action.

Without environment no life is possible; and, therefore, to place the "self" opposite to the environment as a reaction to an action, is destructive of the process of life, and that is conflict, causing friction and an insoluble problem. The environment can be made harmonious by solving all opposition, by understanding the true relationship which constitutes the environment. For, it is not the surroundings themselves which influence, but the contact with and the reaction to them. If then this relationship is understood as one process, and not as a relation of two inter-dependent and co-existing factors, all opposition will disappear as imaginary, from which will ensue perfect harmony without self-protective desires.

When the opposition in relationship is seen as real, the mind in fear will naturally seek an escape from conflict. And thus, it is only in the full comprehension of the process of relationship that both fear and escape become impossible, because there is no more conflict; then only will it be possible, to have a truly harmonious living through pliability and adjustment without opposition in relationship.

The pliability of which we are speaking here is a patience of heart, a sensitivity of mind, a, vulnerability of emotion, which can instinctively sense and intellectually discern the non-identity in the movement of life, and which without stagnating can move on beyond all jay and sorrow, conflict and limitation, standards and values.

Sincerity (Truth: *sacca*)

Though there have been so many founders and reformers of religion, so many saints and seers, so many philosophers and theologians, still there are and there always will be more seekers of the truth. Does that not show that many are not satisfied with the findings of others? Life is sometimes so cruel, and always so

meaningless that people will ask themselves over and over again the same old questions. And they cannot be content with the answers of others, for each one has to find his own solution; each one has to find his own truth.

Faith puts the question aside and asks for submission of the intellect. Thus, faith is entirely unsatisfactory for those who think and want to understand. Many, however, have no question to put at all; for, when they dance through life in their shallow enjoyments, they see no problem whatsoever. Faith does not search for truth, and the world has no need of truth. And thus, the truth, though it reveals itself in every action in nature, remains unknown to man.

Truth is not a kind of philosophy; it is not even *the* philosophy. It is not something impersonal, something that exists or can exist in itself. And yet, that is what most religions want us to believe. Truth is proclaimed by them as dogma and revelation, the full acceptance of which is said to be necessary to the realisation of the truth. Those revelations, as they are found in the vedas, the Bible and the Quran, are said to be the only possible starting point, and they must be accepted in toto. For them, truth is something given from above.

But truth is more than that. Truth is not found in books, in words, in monuments. Truth is living as life itself, emotional as a passion, fiery as a flame. In truth there is no definition, no analysis, no theory, no distinction, no compromise, but completeness and comprehension; and hence it brings fulfilment. It is the necessary completion of the vacuum created by the gift of self and the going forth on the purifying way. It is insight, the knowledge of darkness, the understanding of nature, the understanding of delusion, which provides the light of truth. Truth will not only try to understand each individual reaction and each event in itself, but also—and that is most important—in relation to the whole. Men, beings and things are not mere objects; they are events. And as events in action they are known by their reaction. And that reaction is the subject, the most important aspect of

the entire process. To see a tree properly, one must see also the jungle in which it grows and the struggle it had for its existence, the competition with other plants, the soil from which it drew its nourishment, the sunlight, the rainfall, etc. In other words, one should not forget the wood for the trees. But in that full setting the individual is not lost; rather, each individual event has its special meaning. And that particular action of the event is its contribution to the whole process. It is the individual music of violins, clarinets, brass instruments, etc. which gives the sound effects of orchestral music. Each taken individually, the parts have little or no meaning; the understanding of the effect lies in the whole. And that means the action as seen in the objective event as well as the subjective reaction. Truth sees the whole, but does not forget the particulars. Truth is not something new, but a new viewpoint from which the whole receives as it were life, where formerly there was but death. It is the illuminating truth which is the approach and which opens the closed door of delusion.

Truth does not exist as an entity, as a supreme being or God to be visualised in beatific ecstasy. That is a perversion of the truth, based on the acquisitiveness of a deluded "self". Similarly, there is the usual misunderstanding of the concept of reality. Certainly, if truth is anything it must be real. It is in the realisation of the ultimate reality that is supposed to lie the deliverance from all delusion, a reality sought by many as some super-natural existence, an inner contradiction in subjective and objective relationship, a fiction of a soul, of a thing-in-itself.

Reality as an entity has thus to be abandoned as an impossibility. Reality as a relationship has equally been proved to be fallacious, as depending on false terms. Thus, the only reality is that stream of proceeding conditions and reactions, of sequences and co-activities, which is neither an entity or identity in itself, nor a relation between entities. It is not a meeting place of subject and object, but the flux of action which in its own movement produces the friction of opposition, resulting in the delusive dis-

tinction of "self" and "others" of subject and object, of substance and phenomena, of a material body and a spiritual soul. Concepts are not pictures of actuality, but they are actuality themselves; they form and constitute the process of reality. It is in them that the process proceeds. And it is the recognition of this process which constitutes truth.

Truth is found everywhere, not *in* everything; but everything is truth. Concepts about things, however, have given them a colouring which is delusive. Hence, to discover the truth, one has to uncover and divest nature of all one's subjective ideology which is vain speculation. Truth is the understanding of things as they are in themselves. But that seems impossible! For the very fact of knowing makes them an object of knowledge; and that is not what they are in themselves, but what they are to the knower. Neither is it possible in the ultimate sense to stand apart from things and from life to obtain an abstract idea. An artist may thus try to get at the "soul" of things, but what he is doing, actually is nothing but giving his own reverberations and reactions to the actions of life. The more he stands apart from things as events, the less contact he has with their true nature.

Love of truth implies an unreserved sincerity in actions, words and thoughts. Truthful actions are not those actions which thrust themselves ahead only because they are expedient when people believe in the moral worth of actions performed with belief in the practical value of an ideal of moral perfection, that is, when people accept actions as good because they are imitations of an imaginary archetype of perfection, they do not act according to truth, though their actions may have good results, and were therefore expedient, skilful.

Truthful actions may fail in their results and yet be true. Thus, self-sacrifice in the exercise of one's duty naturally results in the subjective failure and death of the individual, though the action was one of great sincerity and truth. Truth is therefore not to be measured by its outward success. It has its own intrinsic value. And as it is the victory over error and delusion, it will only

be found in the individual; for, delusion is only possible in the individual through his misapprehension in his way of life.

Truthfulness in relation to others will necessarily be proportioned to the degree of truth in oneself; This relationship of one to another is called duty. But, when people speak of duty to oneself, does that imply a relationship of oneself to oneself? That is clearly absurd. Duty, therefore, is not based on relationship. And this same applies, of course, to right. Duty is a moral fiction and right is a legal fiction. When there is full understanding, a right action will be performed spontaneously, and not out of a sense of duty. When the truth of the real nature of the process of life has been comprehended, no thought of right will arise, just as foot and eyes will never question the right of place of other organs in the body. The thought of right of individuality can arise only in a selfish mind, in a heart which is not sincerely tuned into the good of the whole.

What is needed most of all is sincerity of thought. Thought has to be true to itself. It has to dissociate itself from past experiences, to be independent from the thoughts of others, to be blind to and unconditioned by an advantageous future. A heart which is true cannot worship personalities, for they can mostly be reflections of the truth. It cannot be a follower of others, for, if the truth is in oneself, the following of others would be a betrayal of the truth. Dogmas, therefore, and institutions have nothing to do with the truth. To stand apart from those institutions and be true to oneself requires great courage. For, though labels have no value, yet it is the label only which is seen from the outside. To be without label and without distinction, to be simply nobody, and in sincerity of thought to follow no one but the dictates of one's own consciousness (sometimes called conscience!)—that is to live according to the truth.

That is the truth which kills all delusion, the truth which is beautiful only in its nakedness, which is comfortless, which offers no security. That will be a new creation, a new vision from the peak of the mountain, reaching over the clouds. But

to obtain such vision, much has to be left behind, for all petty acquisitiveness would only hinder in the climb. Truth has nothing to do with comfort or discomfort, with wealth or poverty, with joy or sorrow. Truth is understanding, and that alone gives fulfilment in life, where all opposites are mere negations of life.

The unifying Life

Stabilisation (Determination: *adhiṭṭhāna*)

When truth has illumined the mind with regard to the real nature of the process of life, the attitude towards life will have completely changed thereby. Once truth has been attained, striving finds no further scope. And therefore, the process of thinking will have become stabilised.

The first impression received from the word "stabilisation" is one of fixity. But, if this would convey the meaning of standardisation, it is very far from the mark. For, the beginning of a blissful life, resulting from the realisation of truth of the process of life, is far from stagnancy. The stabilisation mentioned in this connection is a complete assurance of truth, a total fading of all doubt, and hence a cessation of all further striving. But, even though the current may have taken a determined course, it does not thereby cease to be a process.

The difference is that formerly there was the possibility of alternatives, the delusion of opposites, reflected against a background of human experience. Now, truth has shed a new light on that background, which thereby dissolves into the thin air of reactions to convention, tradition, religion, fear and craving. With the disappearance of that background of "self", alternatives and oppositions have vanished also, and hence the process has become stabilised. This stabilisation process, therefore, has neither crystallised into a being or soul, nor dissolved itself into nothing. It is the pure process of becoming, of actuality.

Stability means the purity of action without the agitation

of a purpose, without the worry of a motive, without the fear of failure, without the desire of success, without the wish to escape, without the longing to attain. It is simplicity in living without being thrown off one's balance, without being attracted or repulsed this way or that. It is a purity of thought from which even the i.e. of purification has been washed off.

This determination is not the following of a plan with set purpose, but the holding on to what is, seen as truth. In a world of unreality it is truth alone which can give peace and true happiness in a stable mind. Stabilisation, therefore, does not mean the attainment of a fixed position, but the finding of one's proper place within the process of constant change.

Within that process of becoming there is not an identity of being; but the continuation of the process is the only individuality discernible. The complete realisation of this individuality as a process of action and reaction is the beginning of stabilisation. For, without this understanding there will be only reaction to other processes, i.e., the passive movement of a mechanism set in working by an external agency. It is this reaction without understanding which keeps the movement going on in fear and craving, in striving and escaping, in controlling and repressing, in the hope of attaining a fixed destiny of everlasting security.

Stabilisation, which is unification, is therefore more than balancing, which involves opposition. It is that factor of unification which has given to life its stability, not withstanding all the struggle for survival. Survival was attained finally not by extermination, which refers only to a species but not to life itself, but by assimilation of inorganic matter into the organs. It is that process of unification, which is the constant process of life, of living. It is in the organs that inorganic matter comes to life. And that is truly creative action. Thus, it is in "mind" that rebirth takes place and thus preserves the stability of the sum-total of matter and energy, on the physical as well as in the intellectual plane.

When speaking of "mind" in this connection outside the intellectual plane, we should not be understood to advocate a soul-

theory or conscious activity in inorganic matter. Mental activity is not always conscious. Even sensitivity (*vedanā*), reflex actions (*saññā*) and subconscious tendencies (*saṅkhāra*) form parts of the mental process (*nāma*), long before conscious awareness (*viññāṇa*) completes the process. In an undeveloped form (*paritta*) it will never attain completion intellectually. And because of its incompleteness it will roll on seeking its fulfilment. But in awareness of this process lies its completion and solution. As, however, all consciousness is not full awareness, mere intellectual grasping cannot solve the problem, but can only deepen it by emotional resistance. Only when intelligence and emotion are united in this process, all conflict will cease. It is through lack of understanding that the heart gropes in the dark for satisfaction; for stability, for security.

The individual is not real when considered only as such. For, he is a particular expression of the social, economic, educational and religious environment which produced him. Certainly, at birth he not only received the impressions of the new environment, but he brought along the inheritance of the past in the form of tendencies, likes and dislikes. But as those tendencies were shaped in contacts of earlier lives, we may say in truth that there is nothing in man which is not directly or indirectly influenced by environment. In that environment the individual is not standing by himself, but forms a part of that process. And as part of the process he influences the whole, as well as he is influenced by the whole. There is no individual apart from the entire process, and there is no process apart from those individual expressions. For an individual trying to obtain power over the environment is to become subject to a grave hallucination, as no man can make himself free from the environment by trying to overcome it. But, the limiting influences of the environment will disappear as soon as the individual finds his position within and as part of the environment, apart from which there is mere delusion.

Thus, there is stability only within the process; and there alone is the possibility of realising that stability in which there is

no transcending power of any individual, in which the individual problem is universal, and the world-problem is everybody's own. In this understanding, all striving for individual happiness becomes meaningless. Only when the individual tries to find his happiness in the happiness of all, only then can there be a stable society, free from strife and war. All striving to relieve individual distress is very temporary and can never solve a problem fully, as long as only the symptoms are treated and not the cause of the disease.

Thus, there is stability only within the process; and there alone is the possibility of realising such stability in which there is no transcending power of any individual, in which the individual problem is universal, and the world-problem is everybody's own. In this understanding, all striving for individual happiness becomes meaningless. Only when the individual tries to find his happiness in the happiness of all, only then can there be a stable society, free from strife and war. All striving to relieve individual distress is very temporary and can never solve a problem fully, as long as only the symptoms are treated and not the cause of the disease.

Morality then should be free from its bonds, which, however, is not the same as the libertinism of a permissive society. Morality should be a spontaneous action in the understanding of the need of the present moment. And the individual should be understood as an aspect of the process of life, from which he cannot be isolated. If these two "principles" would take the place of old-fashioned faith and individualism, life itself would be a steady and peaceful flow without conflict, in a harmony of truth and bliss.

Universal Love (Loving Kindness: *mettā*)

Love is like truth. It is a passion and it is life. And as truth makes no distinction, but comprehends the whole, so true love is not partial but universal. That which is partial is self-love, is

sentimentality, egotism, attachment and craving and clinging. But love which is universal cannot know any distinction, because it does not exclude anything.

This love is not the love of a philanthropist, not the love of men, but of man; not of living things, but of life. Hence, it cannot be bound by rules. It does not learn from imitation, but is always original, always new and always fresh as a flame. It is the solution of all problems, the answer to all questions, the key to all doubts. But, it is paradox, apparently absurd because it knows no reason. Because it unites all opposites in its self-contradiction. But it is not uniting in an ego-centric way, just because it knows no "ego" in its universality.

No wonder, therefore, that egotistic natures will consider this kind of love as eccentric, for it does not recognise any law or rule. There is no plan or purpose in love which cannot select because it chooses all. In such love there will a bewildering originality, which scientific consistency will easily take for madness. Love knows no respect, for it sees no difference. It will do the most unexpected, because it goes beyond reason. It cannot calculate, because it takes all; it cannot save, because it consumes all; it cannot desire, because it possesses all; it cannot renounce, because it has given all.

And yet, it is love alone that can renounce, or rather that has renounced; for, until there remains nothing behind, love is not complete. Love is the complete surrender of "self", and thereby it makes light all that was heavy. It bears evenly and gladly all suffering; it perseveres under all failures; it is free from all entanglements, estranged from all affections, un-elated in prosperity, not downhearted in adversity. It will attempt even the impossible ...and succeed.

There is in love no confusion, even if it does not reason; no exhaustion when tired and tried; no decrease when being consumed. Love enlarges the heart, till all individuality is dissolved and has spent itself in its own fire. That love is active and creative, because it contains nothing of "self". It is sincere, because

it has burst forth from truth. It cannot think of suffering, for sorrow belongs to the illusion of "self", and love therefore is bliss supreme.

There can be no love, as long as there is fear. For, fear arises from attachment, which is always attachment to the particular. That means choice and preference. But, preference means conversion towards one and aversion from another. Such love of attachment and preference is therefore not truly universal love, but selfish selection. It is the love of the unessential, which strengthens one's individualism and blocks the road to the essential, to living, For, the unessential is limited and therefore it prevents the understanding of the whole, whereby it becomes a source of delusion. Love of the unessential gives a disproportionate value to the simple needs of life, which do not require for their satisfaction the intensity of love, as man's natural instinct sees to their fulfilment.

The isolation of particular love has erected self-protecting walls which imprison the mind, even though they are given the beautiful names of virtue, free will, independence. In reality they are ambitions, egotistic tendencies, self-love, fear and craving, expressions of a deluded mind, ignorance of the process of life. Frequently, love is little more than crude self-interest craving for security which wants to establish itself through power. To hide these ugly motives, a sense of responsibility was invented, which would allow a domineering character to consider itself protecting the weaker ones, thereby increasing its own influence. Thus, although love is often described as sacrificing, it is more the other party who is sacrificed than "self". For, love which is particular is exacting and not accommodating. Love is idealistic, romantic, but not realistic, as long as it is self-centred. Particular love has for object personal happiness. In the pursuit of that object ambition will lead to exploitation; and thus, particular love will lead finally to hate.

Can there be love without passion? There are people who think that once the passion is dead, the remaining sentiment is

nothing but kindliness or communion of taste and interest. That may be the remainder of habit, but not of love. It shows that their opinion of love is entirely based on selfish possessiveness. Their love is desire. And when their desire fails to be satisfied, their love is gone. Such love is the natural consequence of the sexual instinct, but it is not a creative action, even if it results in procreation. Such love is destructive as hunger which out of love for food destroys that which supports it. To speak here of assimilation, transformation, sublimation, is only to circumvent the real issue. It is assimilation for the betterment of self. Unless love has conquered passion, it is not love but thrives on satisfaction. Passion is destructive, but love is creative, if it has no thought for "self".

Earlier we said that love is a passion; and now we say that love must conquer passion. Such is indeed the nature of a paradox. It is only in love, growing out into a universal passion, that the passions of lust and lasciviousness can cease. And in the cessation of those destructive passions is found the beginning of creative love, which does not wish for personal happiness. It is not the spirit of acquisition, for in love that embraces all there is nothing to be obtained by acquisition or accumulation.

When life is so full of love, it is not hard to do without human consolation, for that kind of comfort is rather a distraction than a help. Sometimes worldly pleasures are scorned, so as to reach for spiritual consolation. But, perfect love cannot be content with that either. It must embrace all, or it is not worthy of the name of love. Even when devotion is absent as a feeling, it will be all the purer devotion as a complete surrender and outpouring. Only in losing all, can all be saved. Then, love is the fulfilment of all perfections.

Without love, the gift even of self is that of an empty vessel. Without love, the practice of virtue is the controlling of a machine. Without love, renunciation is cold asceticism. Without love, there is no understanding but only the knowledge of science. Without love, all energy is egotistic self-love. Without love, endurance

is powerless and full of craving. Without love, sincerity is but hypocrisy. Without love, determination is fickle and dispersed. Without love, even equanimity is but stoic indifference. The sex-problem can arise only in love of the particular, for then love has been replaced by sensation. The sex-problem is not a reality but a delusion, for it is based on a distinction which is caused by a sensation of incompleteness in one's self. It is that sensation which makes one search for security, and which branches out further in the different layers of life, social, physical, intellectual, spiritual, political, cultural. This feeling of insufficiency is conditioned by an inner discontentment with the surroundings of daily life. But, this discontent finds its origin not in the surroundings but in a lack of one's understanding thereof. Then sensations grow and stretch their feelers to find something to fill some inner emptiness.

When, however, genuine love of a unifying and understanding nature does not unite with "self", but rather dissolves all delusions about "self", then it becomes an omnipresent experience, when all sensations of incompleteness make place for the reality of fulfilment, in which life as a whole can be understood in its completeness. Then, love is not dependent on sexual satisfaction, but is truly universal without selection, without exception, without separation, in the fullness and unity of living. When such love has become the basis of one's entire being, it becomes impossible to speak of affection, of love, in any particular direction. Then, love will be in every action, in every thought, even when surrounded by indifference. In the fullness of love there is no indifference, no preference, no motive, no effort in concentration, but the natural awareness that all distinction is a delusion.

Blissful Life (Equanimity: *upekkhā*)

Conflict should not merely be felt, but it should be understood as a part of the process of life, even if it is only a delusion. It is in the understanding of this misunderstanding that conflict

completely disappears. The process of life is constantly making itself, here with success, there with failure, growing towards its own perfection and fulfilment. Such growth is naturally not always an even flow, as obstacles have to be overcome, fetters broken, hindrances removed, tendencies straightened and ignorance enlightened. Thus, there is bound to be plenty of disharmony. The misunderstanding of this disharmony will be felt as sorrow. But in understanding, this disharmony will become a source of joy, which, of course, is entirely mental, as it does not bring any sense-satisfaction with it. But that bliss can be come so great, that even physical pain is joyfully endured and accepted; for that too plays a part in the purification of the mind in leading it nearer to enlightenment by truth.

Equanimity is not an ecstatic bliss of suspended awe, but a blissful life where everything is perfectly balanced. The worldling's view of the world is unbalanced. It is the worldling's mind, which is steeped in ignorance and craving, which is unhinged.

Equanimity is possible when insight is full-grown and thus extended to everything experienced. Only when there is nothing left out, can there be perfect even-mindedness which makes of life a real ecstasy. When virtue has not grown into perfection, when giving and renunciation have not been complete, the world will naturally be seen from the subjective viewpoint. But in perfect insight and stabilisation the mental outlook is changed. There is no subjective, no objective viewpoint any more. There is no viewpoint at all, for in the stream of life there is nothing but the process, while any viewpoint would but obstruct that stream. Then the world does not come into us, not on to us; then there is no escape from the world possible, nor meeting its demands, because all disposition will have disappeared. We do not come nearer to the goal, but the goal seems to have broadened itself constantly as a river overflowing its banks, till finally the whole country is inundated and neither land nor river can be distinguished. Thus, this going forth is not leading into a void,

but merely breaks the bonds of isolation. It is not light perceiving darkness, for wherever it shines there it brings its light.

Equanimity is far removed from indifference which is a stoic austerity, ignoring both pleasure and pain. Instead of ignoring, which is an attempt at escaping the conflict, equanimity is fully aware of the causes which place the deluded mind as an ego-entity in opposition to an imagined objective world. It is just in this awareness and understanding that the peace of even-mindedness can be maintained; for, in this awareness is comprehension. Not by warding off all influences but by grasping them without clinging, i.e., grasping by the mind in understanding to find out their true meaning, origin and value, can their problem be brought to a solution; but not by cultivation.

Cultivation is the purposeful setting out to obtain some definite result. We feel anger arising under certain provocation. In that state of anger we forget ourselves; and later, when we think the matter over, we realise what a poor figure we made, what a bad impression we gave. The result is that we become very angry with our anger. This last mental state is a reaction. In this resentment there is no pure action, for it is the experience that we did not live up to the expected standard. Then, from this reactionary resentment grows a desire to behave more self-controlled. Accordingly, strong resolutions are made, only to be broken at the very next opportunity.

Why do we fail to live up to our resolutions? That is the all-important question. Why can we not be good, when we want to be good? Because we make our resolutions means of escaping from the humiliating position in which our failures place us. Instead of finding out the cause of our anger, we create new anger, because we were angry. Thus we declare war on our vices which can never lead to peace.

To obtain real peace we must put the question: Why are we angry? It may be that some physical disposition or indisposition is the cause of this mental reaction. The humours in the body are known to have great influence on the way in which the un-

conscious differentiations make up their likes and dislikes. It may be that an undeserved humiliation, or even the leakage of a well-guarded secret weakness exposes our private lives in a new light, with the risk of the disapproval of public opinion. It may be that our social position is threatened through financial losses. Without knowing fully the reasons for our anger, and only trying to overcome our angry mood by making resolutions of not becoming angry, will clearly never solve the problem. But by the intelligent awareness of the causes it will be realised that there is no reasonable connection and proportion between our stomach and our mood, and that a mental upset cannot cure a financial loss. And yet it is the attitude to control one's anger which is taken as the characteristic of a cultured man. Culture and control, however, have nothing in common with the perfection of virtue.

Culture and civilisation cannot produce the equanimity which is bliss, just because it is without fear. Culture may balance external actions, but equanimity prevents opposition in thought. In this spirit of equanimity there will be complete disinterestedness of purpose, because every action will simply be performed for its own deserves. Life becomes then such a simple process that others who do not have the same simplicity of balance, will not be able to understand. Life, as it is being lived in society with all its restrictions and conventions, is so unnatural, so complicated and so purposeful, that guileless action and a life free from duplicity appear funny, if not idiotic.

There are many very confused ideas about the nature of emancipation. The most common is an expectation of transforming happiness, whereby the individual "self" becomes absorbed into the absolute. Even when the absolute is not crudely grasped as a personal deity, it remains always a difficult point to understand, how it can be happiness to lose one's individuality in an impersonal vagueness, called the infinite "Being, Intelligence and Bliss". People want to taste the sweetness of life; they cannot understand what it is to be the sweetness of life. But, tasting is an expression of egoism, till the last trace of "self" has been shed. People want

life as an object, they want to enjoy life, but they do not want to live truly. They want the actuality, but not the reality. They want joy, but not happiness. They want the ideal, but not the real. They want consolation and the satisfaction of desire, but not the freedom from desire. And because all their actions are motivated by a desire to obtain, which is acquisitiveness, or to attain, which is self-projection, not a single one of those actions is pure and simple and true, not a single one is creative, which is only in the present.

For them impermanence is sorrow, because they can only look towards the future. But, to him who lives fully in the present, impermanence is not frightening. Even if it be true that the fragrance and the beauty of flowers plucked in the morning have faded in the evening. It is also true that they were fragrant and beautiful in the morning. He who at morn looks toward the evening will meet only with disappointment because he overlooked the joy of life, when it was with him. If in foolishness one asks that joy of life to last, there is bound to be sorrow. But if this fleeting joy is understood as a part of the process of life, just as anything else, it will be seen that it can be enjoyed afresh at every moment.

Equanimity is the outcome of a perfectly harmonious life. It is not enough to try to be even-minded, for emotions and actions should be in harmony as well as thoughts. Actions will be in harmony with thought, if thought itself is not a constant looking-forward. When thought is merely searching for a reward, seeking for there is a tendency to harmonise thought with the result, thereby projecting thought with desire into a future, whereby action in the present with understanding becomes impossible. But, when there is full awareness of the problem of sensation, as it arises this very instant, then there will be spontaneous action, creative thinking, which will be in perfect harmony with the need of the moment.

That is the harmony, which brings peace to the mind, silence

to thought, balance to sensation, spontaneity to action, bliss to life, and Buddhahood to a Bodhisatta.

Meditation

The general name of meditation, which includes practice and methods, ways and objects, a path and a goal, indicates the cultivation of the mind or mind-culture (*bhāvanā*). Vaguely understood as mental exercise, it is generally confined to spiritual exercises, although as a pure mental exercise it would be better classified as yoga.

The term *bhāvanā* is derived from *bhava* (or *bhāveti*), to become, to make grow, to develop. And thus, in respect of the mind it is mental culture, though with a religious slant, and therefore, spiritual culture. Some cultivate the power of the mind for mundane purposes; others go beyond, in transcendental meditation. But there is always a purpose in this effort to become, to make the mind full, to achieve mindfulness. It is, therefore, frequently a deliberate cultivation of a mental attitude in order to achieve a set goal. The power of the mind is to be harnessed, so that in methodical practice the selected object can be attained. The entire exercise, then, is contained in this mind-culture, which thereby becomes a methodical training.

Now, what is the object of meditation, its purpose, its goal? As mind-culture it has as aim and object the cultivation, the development, the expansion of the power of the mind. The search for an increase of power, whether it is physical strength, willpower, energy, self-control, recollection, the faculty of reasoning, is meaningless in itself. It derives meaning from its purpose for

which it is intended. The purpose is the intention for its application, whether it is good, skilful, desirable, or their opposites.

Greater physical strength is needed when there is the need for a greater output of work; greater will-power is needed to overcome what has already become an established habit; greater recollection is needed when the work at hand is more complicated; greater knowledge is needed for the execution of specialised skill. Each of these powers can be applied for purposes which are poles apart: physical energy, mental penetration, undivided attention, for better or for worse, for healing or destruction. But they all refer to faculties which can be cultivated, increased, developed, each one with a specialised purpose in mind. Mind-culture, therefore, is neither good nor bad in itself as a mental exercise; but as a spiritual exercise its virtue depends on its scope.

Thus, understanding meditation to be mind-culture, the question arises: Why does one want to meditate? Why does one want to cultivate, to improve, to increase the faculty and the power of the mind?

The immediate answer to this question is that the mind wants culture, because it is not cultured, not controlled, has not enough power. And thus one wants more. But, why should one want more power? Why should one want power at all?

It is obvious that one wants more power and strength in the knowledge of weakness. This knowledge of being weak, however, has only arisen in experience of relationship. "I am weak" means "I am not as strong as he is". One is weak, because one cannot get what one wants. Thus, the knowledge is the outcome of comparison; and that is not understanding one's own strength. And so, one wants mind-culture, mind-control, mental power, not because there is an understanding of the mind, but because one wants that power for the "self", the mind, will, ego, "id", or whatever term is in vogue.

Now, let us understand that first; and well!

This whole business of mind-control (and meditation has become big business, with entrance fees, enrolment of membership,

subscription for attending classes, badges of the guru, uniform dress, and the whole set-up of the organisation behind it, all of which costs money, all of which means profit), the entire set-up in the mind, has only one purpose: to control the uncontrolled, to strengthen the weak, to acquire power to do that. And thus there is formed in the mind an ideal of the unattained for which to strive, an image in thought which is a reflection of a desire, a desire which has arisen from a vacuum, a vacuum which is painful, because it does not fulfil. And so there is striving to fulfil that ideal by the culture of the mind.

Is that going to be our meditation?

Then, mind-culture is synonymous with self-culture. That is readily admitted by those whose ideal of "self" is the super-"self", perfection, the super-soul, the absolute, in which the deluded little ego will merge as a drop of water in the ocean. Such culture will make the little "self" or the individual into the "super-self" of the absolute; it is the culture of the ego to become God! And there are many forms of meditation which have this specific aim of losing oneself to become united with the creator, with the universe, the cosmos. Then, striving for perfection, acquisition of virtue, subduing of passions, controlling of thought, sublimating the actual, replacing it with the ideal—they all become very important. And yet they are basically forms of thought, of the image-making mind, which wants to build up strength in its weakness, steadfastness in its wandering, light in the darkness.

One wants to dispel the darkness by bringing in light. But one cannot drive away darkness. The more light one brings, the less darkness can be seen; and if one cannot see darkness, how will light dispel it?

Did I hear somebody say: There is no darkness? If there is no darkness, then why did you bring in the light? Light is brought because one does not want to see the darkness. To see the darkness, one must be in the dark; one must experience darkness; one must be darkness. But we are not prepared to do that. Rather, the void has to be filled, weakness has to become strong, imperfection has

to be made perfect; and the means thereto are the weeding out of all evil tendencies, the resisting of all temptations, the avoidance of all that is sin! And so, virtue (*sīla*) becomes a stepping stone to mind-culture (*bhāvanā*), a preparation to concentration.

Concentration

There are two kinds of meditation, namely, concentration (*samādhi*) and contemplation (*vipassanā*). With the knowledge of what meditation is, we are standing at the forking of the roads, one path is the clearing of the obstacles which prevent the mind to see clearly, the other is seeing itself, insight. One therefore concentrates on methods, and that is concentration with knowledge; the other one is seeing what is and that is understanding, which is contemplation with insight.

One road does not lead to the other, and the other is, therefore, not a continuation of the earlier one. Then, why should one take the road to concentration first, if one has to come back to the fork to take the road of contemplation? There is no question really of should or should not. The road of concentration is the more promising one; one advances towards the promise, one sees results, one gets somewhere. And that is certainly an incentive, because it clears the road, it purifies vision. It leads to dispassion. Thus it is called the road of tranquillity (*samatha-bhāvana*). And while one is still at the forking of the roads in the neighbourhood of concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), there seems to be no choice, when one road leads to peace of mind (*samatha-bhāvanā*) and the other to dry-visioned insight (*suka-vipassanā*).

The bodhisatta in his last life (tradition tells us) went on that road which promises peace and tranquillity. He practised various forms of concentration for six years under renowned teachers, who brought him to the highest states of absorption (*jhāna*) and mental ecstasy in form and formless states of absorption. It was only when he understood that peace is not freedom, that

tranquillity is not deliverance, that heaven is not Nibbāna, only then he returned to the forking of the roads, and then took the turn of insight (*vipassannā*), which leads nowhere, but which gives the understanding that there is no one to go anywhere.

Traditionally, there are thirty-eight (Vimuttimagga) or forty (Visuddhimagga) subjects of meditation which is concentration. They all have this in common, that the meditator after selecting his chosen subject, or after having been given the advice of his teacher, centres his thoughts on that subject. The choice is not arbitrary, but should be made according to one's need, rather than one's preference. A person's need for a particular subject for focussing his thoughts is the need of his character. Thus, a person with an analytical mind, but with less devotional appeal might be advised to concentrate on the 32 parts of the body: hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, bones, etc., whereas a person with an aggressive nature would be better advised to concentrate on loving kindness or compassion; a person with an overdeveloped inclination or fastidiousness in respect of food might to his advantage follow with his thought the passage of that food through its various stages of digestion.

There is a method of concentration on one's breath, which is universally advocated, as it leads to an immediate calming of the mind whatever the cause of agitation may have been, and which seems suitable to all varieties of temperament.

There are concentration exercises on the advancing stages of corruption and decay of a corpse, which should not be advised to a person of a timid inclination, easily shrinking away in fear. In our modern times it would be also increasingly difficult to find such an object totally exposed for ten successive days, till only the skeleton remains.

Not all objects for concentration are equally effective; but that is a rather relative statement, because it all depends on what one expects to derive from such exercises. For, when all is said and done, they remain exercises and form part of this meditation-workshop (*kammmaṭṭhāna*). Some will lead only to the vicinity

of concentration (*upacāra samādhi*), others may lead the thought into a trance of ecstasy (*jhāna*) in which the mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are inhibited, although not permanently destroyed. Such trance may last perhaps for a few moments only, but should never be prolonged for several days, because of the physical harm done by neglect to the body in the mean time.

Concentration is compared to a fixed pole in the middle of a field to which a young calf is tied. There is a certain play in the rope, but it (the mind) is not allowed to go far away. There is fodder under its feet and after some tugging in search of freedom, it will become quiet and lie down near the post. That is the work of concentration, which prevents the mind to wander, and may lead it to one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*).

This teaching of concentration up to its very summit of mental absorption in ecstatic trance (*jhāna*), a Pāḷi term which in Sanskrit is transcribed as *dhyana*, and from which we have the Chinese term *chan*, and the Japanese *zen* is not exclusively Buddhistic. It formed already part of the training among pre-Buddhist ascetic schools. Thus, the bodhisatta Siddhatta Gotama, before his attainment of enlightened realisation, practised some of the highest methods under his teachers Alāra Kalama and Rāmaputta, who, however, were not able to lead him on and out.

The 40 objects for purpose of concentration are as follows: Ten devices (*kasiṇa*), which are contrivances adapted for the purpose of fixing the mind in concentration. A *kasiṇa* is thus a *maṇḍala*, that is a disk symbolising mystically a deeper meaning within its physical appearance. These ten devices are a disk of clay (*paṭhavi*), a pot of water (*āpo*), a ring of fire (*tejo*), a segment of the sky (*vayo*), a disk coloured blue (*nila*), yellow (*pita*), red (*lohita*) or white (*odata*). Two further control measures are added by different commentators, either unbounded space and consciousness (*ākāsa* and *viññāṇa*) or limited space and light (*paricchinākāsa* and *tiloka*).

Then follow ten objects of impurity in the various stages of decomposition of a corpse. But in the Suttas only five or six

stages are mentioned, and those without order of progressive decomposition, beginning with the skeleton. Thus, dithering from the commentaries, the primary purpose in the Suttas is not an actual analysis of the process of decay, but rather the cultivation of dispassion. Moreover, a further comparison of the corpse with his own body [42] suggests to the monk insight through the sign of impermanence in his own body. And that is no longer concentration on the foulness of the body, but contemplation on impermanence which is insight meditation (*vipassanā*), about which later.

Regarding the results which may be expected from the correct use of the various methods, there are ten exercises which do not lead beyond access-concentration, that means they are neither full concentration nor contemplation. They are the eight recollections (*anussati*) on the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, on virtue, liberality, on deities, death and peace; and two on the defining of the four elements and the perception of the repulsiveness of nutriment. The reason is obvious, for the first six have their base in devotion, while in the others it is the rational attitude which prevents full absorption.

Concentration on the foulness of a corpse will not take the mind beyond the first stage of absorption, whereas the development of loving kindness, compassion and sympathetic joy (*mettā, karuṇā, muditā*) would lead up to the third stage which is characterised by mental well- being (*sukha*). One-pointedness of mind (*citt'ekaggatā*), the fourth stage of absorption in the spheres of form, can be attained by the development of equanimity, while the four immaterials, which have the formless (*arūpa*) mental states as objects, would reach their respective stages of ecstasy in formless spheres (*arūpa-jhāna*) [43]

Now, concentration is of two kinds: access concentration (*up-*

[42] M. I. 58.

[43] An exposition of the forty exercises, following the commentaries of Dhammapāla in the Vimuttimagga and of Buddhaghosa in the Visuddhimagga can be found an a monograph "Meditation: Concentration and Contemplation"

acāra samādhi) and absorption concentration (*appanā samādhi*). This last one is so called "fixed" because this state does not move in the object. It is the fulfilment of the steady mind, now able to dwell on the object peacefully and long. It is the ecstatic state of mental absorption (*jhāna*) during which the hindrances are abandoned. There are five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) which are inhibited by the five stages of absorption. Thus, initial application of the ecstatic mind (*vitakka*) eliminates for the moment any feeling of perplexity (*vicikiccha*); sustained application (*vicāra*) avoids all indolence of body and mind (*thīna-middha*); rapturous delight (*pīti*), which is the third jhanic stage, will not admit any feeling of ill-will (*vyāpāda*); the trance of well-being (*sukha*) is entirely foreign to both agitation and worry (*uddhaca-kukkucca*); and the stability of even-mindedness (*upekkhā*) cannot admit any base desire for sense-desire (*kāmacchanda*).[44]

Each successive stage depends on the abandonment of that which characterised the earlier stage. Thus, the final stage of perfect equilibrium can be reached in the fading away of the happiness of satisfaction. For then alone can there be full awareness and mindfulness in which neither reason, nor feeling, intellectual or emotional, may cause a return to earlier states.

Truth is not to be discerned in satisfaction which is of "self", even if the object of love and compassion is world-wide and universal. Thus, freedom which is open-mindedness comes from abandonment of pleasure and pain, of joy and grief. It is in mindfulness, purified by equanimity, that thought will cease, that joy is seen as a toy, that well-being is dispassion. Thus, understanding the flaws in the lower stages of mental absorption, concentration itself may be abandoned, for there is no further development. In the abandonment of concentration (*samādhi*) the

by the present author, discussing the selection, preparation, development and the results of each object in detail.

[44]For a complete study of these interactions, see: "Agony and Ecstasy" by the present author.

way opens to contemplation (*vipassanā*), the path of tranquillity (*samatha*) being abandoned for the path of insight (*vipassanā*).

Then, what is there beyond meditation which is concentration?

See the working of the mind which even now is in search of a solution which may give lasting peace. It is peace we want, because we are in conflict. It is peace we seek, because we try to escape from that conflict. Peace has become the ideal, the goal of striving; but that ideal is a concept which is nothing but a thought trying to escape from the conflict which is disturbing all thought. To see all this is the work of meditation which is contemplation, which is insight (*vipassanā*).

Concentration is the focussing of thought on a centre; and this type of meditation is, therefore, purposeful. It is in steadying the mind on one object that distraction is avoided and one-pointedness may be gained. If the goal of such concentration is evil, such as house-breaking, that too is essential to success, just as concentration with the purpose of overcoming evil is essential for the avoiding of evil. It is the method of the culture of mind-control, the method of the culture of tranquillity (*samatha bhāvanā*).

Tranquillity, then, is the purpose and ultimate object, to which all other concentration objects are submitted. There is no doubt that this goal has been attained and can be attained still with appropriate and diligent effort, applied in the right direction of that goal. Whether that goal, that purpose, that aim, is correct, depends on right understanding of that goal. If one wants peace, here it is. For some, the price may be too high, for the joy of bliss is not the enjoyment in excitement, as agitation and escape. There is no joy in escape, but only fear. And fear cannot be excluded in a search which is escape, even if the goal of such search is bliss.

Thus, concentration may he the means of attaining a goal of tranquillity, but if tranquillity is the goal of a search which is an escape from unrest and conflict, then concentration will not have solved the problem. Even in states of ecstasy and mental

absorption, the mental hindrances are certainly suppressed, as anything else. But, as long as they are the symptoms of an inner conflict, they will be there when concentration ceases.

Contemplation

While concentration (*samādhi*) is a search for peace on the path of meditation through the cultivation of tranquillity (*samatha-bhāvanā*), there is another path, on which no traveller can be seen (*maggaṁ atthi, gāmiko na vijjati*). It is a path of mental alertness, meditative thoughtfulness, contemplative awareness, which is so different from the methods of concentration that there is no link-road between the two paths. There is a total branching off from the moment of approach to neighbourhood concentration (*upacāra samādhi*), where one path has a choice of methods with purpose and a goal, the other has no method, no means, no goal.

The path to peace along concentration has had its usefulness, even though it did not lead to understanding, to wisdom, to insight. That path of concentration may lead some to clairvoyance, to recollection of past lives, to thought-reading, to the power of transformation and transportation; but that is not wisdom; it does not lead to understanding which is insight, realisation and enlightenment.

What is wisdom? Wisdom is that which understands things as they are (*yathā bhūtaṁ pajānāti*[45]). It is a formula which very often occurs in the suttas, and which defines insight with such simplicity that it hardly requires explanation. What does it mean to see and understand things as they are (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇadassana*)?

An immediate implication would be that, as there is so little wisdom in the world, people usually do not see things as they are. Is that so?

[45] S. III 13.

Beginning with the physical world of the body and its contacts, our knowledge is derived from experience, from learning, from information, either direct or indirect. Indirect information is book-learning, based on the experience of others. This is not only useful, but even necessary, for without that knowledge one would have to repeat all over again the experiments which have produced such great results in making physical life more comfortable, more hygienic, more peaceful, as long as one does not get caught up in the rat-race. This kind of practical knowledge, how to operate a radio, how to drive a car, how to read a book for further information, is certainly not wisdom. It is acquired technology which is part of the process of evolution, and which in due course any monkey may develop. And yet, this kind of knowledge forms the basis of our living. We are quite satisfied to know that the many gadgets in the kitchen, in the office, in the bedroom are functioning; and that we can get hold of some mechanic to set them right as soon as they pack up. Not much wisdom there! But, even if we knew to bring about the necessary repairs ourselves, or to construct and to invent new gadgets, there would be still so much borrowed knowledge from which to proceed. All this is knowledge of techniques, not really different from the knowledge acquired through the methods of concentration, through which one can learn how to acquire peace and tranquillity of mind. But, we have not learned yet what peace is, because we have only been interested in the mechanics of concentration, how to become clairvoyant, how to remember past lives, etc. And that is why we shall continue monkeying with meditation without ever knowing and understanding what meditation is, it is the search for results which prevents the understanding of what is.

Knowledge, then, of how things work is quite different from understanding, which is wisdom, which is insight, which wants to see why it works …and why I want to know how it works. Wisdom (*paññā*) is so much more than knowledge (*ñāṇa*). For, where knowledge is the answer to the question: How?, wisdom is investigation of the truth thereof in answer to the question: Why?

Knowledge can answer a query about function, result, purpose; wisdom does not provide an answer, but is the understanding why such a question has arisen at all. And in that understanding of the question there is no search beyond, because insight has solved the problem, dissolved the conflict, and ended the search. Thus, where knowledge searches outside, wisdom is the understanding and insight into the question.

It is not, therefore, in scientific analysis, such as is found in concentration exercises on the 32 parts of the body, that insight can be developed; for, it is sight, seeing and understanding. And the object of seeing is not a device such as the hypnotic circles or a decomposing corpse, but seeing just what is.

Is that difficult? Yes, because one does not want to see. It is not a question of seeing or not seeing, but rather of seeing or not wanting to see. And that is the crux of the problem.

Does one see what is? There is anger in my mind, because someone who should know better has abused me in words which are not true. He was wrong; but why am I angry? Not his abuse, but my anger is what is now. Why am I hurt by a word which was not even true? Do I see and understand why I am angry? It is not the action of others which should be understood: but rather the effect in my mind, which is the reaction to all that. My own action I only know when it is too late; it is the knowledge which comes after the experience has gone. Can I know myself by analysing the body and the mind? 32 parts of the body of hair, skin and bones; 52 mental factors, some good, some bad, with love or hate and in delusion; 89 mental states, some skilful and some foolish; four stages of holiness: one quarter, half or three quarter of sainthood, and then the mind is free! And in the mean time I gather virtue, I practise concentration at fixed time in the early morning and at even-tide, I practise generosity and collect merit. Do I see and understand who I am? And why I am in the way I am? What makes me think and act the way I do? There is no pleasure in seeing this; and so I turn away and concentrate on the beauty of the heavens and the reward awaiting me there,

on the merit of the brotherhood, on universal loving kindness, on earth, water, fire and air in self-hypnosis. But do I see and understand myself? Why am I hurt by a word which was not even true? Do I see and understand why I am angry?

It is this search for endurance and security, for continuance and permanence which is the cause of love and hate and selfish isolation. I am angry and I don't want to be angry: that is the conflict. Thus without understanding that it is the "I" in opposition, in conflict, which is anger, I now try to become non-anger.

But without that anger, there would be no "I". Then, what do I want?

It is in the understanding of all activity as reaction to this searching desire of "self", for "self" and by "self"; it is in seeing that this search has only one object, the "self"; it is seeing and understanding that this object has been given this artificial character of duration, because without duration there can be no continuance, and without continuance there is no future, and without future the present is meaningless—it is in seeing all this clearly that a search for a solution of the conflict becomes impossible.

It is the constant move of giving meaning to the present, giving significance to that which is only the outcome of the reaction to the past, which has to be understood. It is only through insight, that the meaninglessness of this reactionary move can be seen, a movement which gives power of resistance and attraction to the simple facts of living, making life a complex and a conflict. It is the distortion of views which has to be seen as distortion; it is the coloration of images which has to be seen as colour without being mesmerised by either yellow, red, blue or white, physically, mentally or politically. It is this thought-projection which has to be understood as covering up for the moment the ugliness of a former thought, but which is still a thought-projection, notwithstanding.

This covering up is done even in meditation during concentration of the mind, when the undesirable is excluded and sublimated by the introduction of a beautiful and desirable mental concept, a

form of self-hypnosis. But, unless they are understood, the original states and conditions remain unaltered below the covering. Only insight, that is perception which can see through the covering, can see black as black, hate as hate, desire as desire, without a wish to alter, to make become, to strive, to improve, which is to deny a fact. To see hate as hate is a fact and is truth, whereas to convert hate into love is a projection of a mental picture, an after-image, a striving to make become what is not, and which therefore is not a fact, is not truth.

What happens when hate or lust is seen as hate or lust? Without acceptance or rejection there is no escape, no search for an ideal opposite; and there is no conflict between what is and what should be. There is no acceptance and hence no "self"; there is no rejection and hence no conflict. But, in the full awareness of the emotion, when all movement is seen as a drawing away, there is only an experiencing without an experiencer. And when there is no "self", how can there be hate or love, or lust or conflict?

Death cannot be seen in a corpse in its ten stages of putrefaction. Death must be seen in the process of living. To know what is death, one must know what is life. And to know what is life, one must know what is death, not a dead body, but dying. The two are not separate as entities or as opposing states; but it requires insight and understanding to see that life is not existence, for even a rock exists; and so, death is not non-existence. Life is rather a process of dying. Life as living must be new every moment, just as a river must go on flowing. As soon as the flow stagnates there is no river any more, but there is a lake in the making. Similarly, life must be always a process of living, which is new every moment with a fresh meeting of a new challenge in an open mind. When that meeting is not there, or when the mind is not open, there is no living either. The physical process may continue, but even that process must proceed and renew itself all the time, renewing the body's tissues and blood cells. When that process of renewal ceases there is decay which is death. But even for the renewal of its tissues and blood cells there must be a

discarding of the old ones. Thus, renewal which is life can take place only when there is a discarding which is death.

Living, then, is dying. And the mind which refuses to die to its attachment to possessions, which continues its past through preserving its memories, which cannot meet a new challenge because it has already formed its own ideas and ideals for the future as moulds in which to continue from the past—such a mind is already decayed and dead.

Death is, therefore, a refusal to be born, to be alive, in an alertness from moment to moment. It is the incapacity to let go, by clinging to dead memories, traditions, dogmas, hopes and fears, the incapacity to let go of a "self" which is but a concept, a projection from the past on the screen of the future, based on clinging to what is dead. And so, in the same way as living is a process of dying, so death or dying is the only sane and healthy way of living, intelligent living, creative living, living with understanding and with love, which is ever new, a rebirth, but not of "self".

In our search for the meaning of death, and of life thereafter, it is not truth we want, but gratification through continuation. We want to know about death, but we refuse to accept it. And so the search is on, not for the meaning of death, but for means to conquer death, in other words, for continuity.

There is no continuity in the fleeting experience of the moment, and so the mind has given it a label whereby it can be recognised in memory. This storing-up process with its selection and rejection has been going on for many centuries, and our entire civilisation with its religious and political set-up is the product of that process in history; and the "I" is the conditioned outcome thereof, living and continuing, in memory and protection. Thus, searching for the meaning of death, we are not even aware that we are already dead, psychologically. But, in our craving for continuity, this naturally has created a conflict, and in that movement of opposition we feel, we imagine to be alive.

We refuse to believe that death could be the end, and thus

even before the end comes we prepare for continuance in a life to come. All religions have that as their object, as their goal of striving, when they would make of this life a preparation for the next one. The fact is: we do not want to die; we do not even dare to imagine what would happen if thought ceases with the stoppage of the heart. And thus, we believe in a resurrection, in transmigration, in rebirth, in anything as long as death is not the end of everything, the end of life.

But we have not understood life; we do not know what living is; we only hope and fear, hope for the best and fear the worst. And between those two there is living, a reflection of one, a projection of the other. Is that living now? Or isn't that rather death, which ignores the present in abuse and exploitation, in self-love and hate of others, in ignorance preferred to understanding, in clinging to memory and craving for an ideal? Is that living with understanding?

How can we ever understand death, unless we invite death in stead of pushing it away in fear and ignorance? We rather think of immortality, of supernatural bliss, of even though all that is still and always will be mere thought. To find out what death is, it must be brought close, so that we can live with it, as a mother with her child. It is not by keeping a skull on one's writing desk (I have done that too!), but by loving death as one's own child. Death is myself; death is my child; because I live in death. I live in isolation, in opposition, in sorrow, in conflict. They are all my own creations. But do I recognise them as my children? Do I really look at them and know them for what they are? Only then can I know and understand what is death; only then can I be free of fear. For, then I can see and understand and love death every moment; for in death there is a falling away of all that thought has ever made. But that is not a loss; and I cannot be a loser, if I thus die to-day, now.

All these are mere samples, or rather attempts at seeing things as they are without making them as I would like them to be. One

might continue on these lines indefinitely.[46] But isn't there a skeleton-key which can open all those locked doors and shut windows?

Well, that is insight which is the understanding that the door is not really looked at all. It is not just sight (*darśana*), but seeing through (*vi-darśana, vipassanā*) as with X rays, which can show up the real obstacles, allowing them to be removed, if necessary. The main thing is not the surgery, but the diagnosis. Here we face the problem of impermanence (*anicca*) and we try to overcome that by preparing for permanence. But, why is impermanence a problem? Why is it a source of pain and conflict? It is a pain because I do not like it, I do not want it. And why do I not like it? Because it breaks down my peace of mind, my satisfaction, my security, my ideal of everlasting joy. It is then my ideal which is disturbed by the actual. I do not like impermanence, because in the impermanent there is no room for an everlasting "self". Thus, we have the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), and we now realise that this perception clashes with our ideal; and so, we perceive now also the conflict in that perception of the impermanent (*anicca-dukkha saññā*). It is then not the impermanent which is painful, but my perception of its clashing with my ideal of permanence.

The real clash or conflict is then not in the impermanent but in my perception thereof. In other words, the conflict is there because of my approach. The stinging hairs of nettles only produce a rash when touched by hand. So, the conflict of the actual and the ideal is there, because of the ideal approach to the actual.

And what is that ideal approach? It is the "self" which wants permanence, continuance, maintenance, all of which it needs so as to remain in existence. But the ideal of that "self" is only an idea, a concept, a thought without validity. Without that concept

[46] That is exactly what the author is doing in his four-volumed work "In Search of Truth", which in alphabetical order deals with 1001 problems, to be dissolved, rather than solved.

(which is then no-self or *anatta*), there is still impermanence, but it will not be a conflict, for there is no "self", dependent on continuance. Hence, in the seeing and the perception of the emptiness of this conflict (*dukkha-anatta saññā*), there is no more conflict and no more problem.

The understanding of these three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), conflict (*dukkha*) and non-entity (*anatta*) is the key of insight which is contemplation (*vipassanā*).

For this contemplation there is no method, not even an application of mindfulness, directing one's awareness to a specified object as in concentration exercises.

The objects for contemplation are always there and are always around us; we have only to open our eyes and see. But, that is also the greatest difficulty, because we mostly refuse to see. Although the conflict is perceived, there is no attempt at seeing through it, at understanding it, at comprehending it. The knowledge of conflict does not lead to the insight that all is conflict, because of the refusal to see the cause of it in ourselves. There is a refusal to see, because this insight will see through the artificial barriers put up for the sake of protecting, defending and perpetuating that "self" without which there is no projection, no hope, no ideal possible.

Thus, for the sake of protecting that ideal, one refuses to see and understand the conflict as a result thereof. Conflict is perceived as sorrow, pain, suffering; and we can deal with those through a search for consolation, satisfaction and forgetfulness. But we refuse to see conflict as the result of our striving to retain that "self" in permanence, in opposition to the universal impermanence of nature, of life, of experience. It is the thought of "self", which as desire clings to the continuation of the ideal which is thus causing the conflict.

Insight into this truth, that is, seeing that the ideal is not real, and thus false, that is contemplation which beyond time and space, without method and striving, can set free immediately

and spontaneously anyone who is honest enough not to be a hypocrite to himself.

This is Buddhism at its best, while the many methods of concentration may be found elsewhere, as they were practised earlier by the bodhisatta without producing the expected result of enlightened realisation. Enlightenment came to the bodhisatta and changed him into a Buddha, when he discarded the path of tranquillity (*samatha*) and turned to insight (*vipassanā*), the only way to see things as they are, the false as false, the impermanent as unsubstantial, all conflict as void.

> May clinging be seen as fear,
> May craving be seen as hope,
> May change be seen as passing,
> May conflict be seen as void.

For that is truth, that is truth!

Nibbāna

Realisation can be considered as a concept, though that, of course, is very far from realisation. As a conceptualisation it would be converted from an i.e. into an ideal. Still, it deserves consideration, if that would lead, even negatively, to better understanding.

There is first of all the ethical aspect, for Nibbāna implies the destruction of evil propensities (*āsavā*), the removal of moral hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), the freeing from all fetters (*saṁyojana*). In view of these removals, Nibbāna is called deliverance (*vimutti*). Where Nibbāna cannot be aimed at as a positive goal—for, "not by striving can world's end be reached" (*gāmanena na pattabbo lokass' anto kudācanaṁ*[47])—striving becomes possible in the overcoming of the hindrances and obstacles.

Then there is the aspect which is more mental than moral, because it is the culmination of an evolution in the process of comprehension. It is the gradual development through the four stages of sainthood, from learner to adept (*asekha*), from stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) to arahant. And as this process is not one of acquisition of learning or virtue, but is leading rather to no more becoming, it may be labelled a process of cessation (*nirodhā*), with Nibbāna as the ending of becoming (*bhava nirodhā*).

And finally, there is the philosophical and metaphysical aspect, which lends the concept a kind of positive character, even though most of its synonyms are negative. As such, Nibbāna is

[47] Ang. N. IV.

viewed as the deathless (*amata*), the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), the *summum bonum* (*parama sukha*). It is the one absolute in which there is no relativity and hence no distinction or division of "self" and "non-self", no opposition and no conflict. As such, it is not made, not caused, not created, not conditioned (*asaṅkhata*).

Thus, Nibbāna is understood as deliverance from evil, cessation of becoming and unconditioned in causation. As goal it is negative, as an end it has no means, as achievement it is freedom. But, there is never a "self", or a soul, which achieves or attains or begets. Inconceivable, yet it is to be experienced, not through striving and practice, but in understanding, experiencing and living in truth. Once the truth is seen, no more hallucination can occur, because the sources which produced this misconception, namely craving and self-seeking, have dried up.

It is with great diffidence, a modesty arising from self-distrust, that the subject is being approached apart from those textual references. Yet, it cannot be left untouched, as no book on Buddhism would be complete, even in a most rudimentary form, unless the final emancipation and realisation of Nibbāna were at least hinted at, as the solution of all life's problems, sorrows and conflicts.

The avowed aim of the Buddha's teaching, to use his own words, is the ending of sorrow: "One thing only do I teach, woe and how its end to reach[48]". It is the ending of woe, that is, of suffering which is conflict in the mind, which is the end of the Buddha's teaching. And thus we may make free by equating the ending of conflict with Nibbāna. For that, too, we have the Buddha's word that Nibbāna is the ending of becoming[49]; for, in becoming which is dependent on craving and clinging (*upādāna paccayā bhavo*) is found also the source of birth, sorrow, decay and death.

The aim of the Buddha's teaching being the ending of conflict, and conflict being caused by craving, it is therefore the ending of

[48] *Dukkhañc'eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṁ*: Majjh. Nik.
[49] *Bhava-nirodho Nibbānaṁ*: S. II-117.

craving which can provide the solution of sorrow as conflict. And that is called Nibbāna, the ending of craving, (*nirvāṇa*). "Whereas becoming originates in craving, it is in Nibbāna that it ends[50]".

The end of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) is just to be what one is. Can one strive to become what one is? All striving to become is an escape from what is. All striving for attainment is only another step towards securing that self-concept whose ideal is the delusion of attainment. To see the muddle-headedness of the entire process is the cessation of that process. And the cessation of that process is the end of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*).

To be what one is! What great courage is required and what pure insight! Does one ever dare to see what one is? One has become what one wants to be. It is this desire for becoming and this clinging to the object of one's desire, which formed the origin of becoming (*taṇhā-upādāna-paccayā bhavo*); and it is, therefore, in the cessation of this clinging that there can be a cessation of becoming, of the will-to-become, of volitional activity, of rebirth, of conflict, of death. And that is the end of Saṁsāra.

So, the immediate need is the ending of desire, and in that, all effort flounders. Staggering in one's attempt to get on, one plunges deeper in the mud of ignorance, of confusion. Seeing the need to end desire, one makes desirelessness the ideal object of one's striving. But, that too is desire; it is the will to become desireless, to become free, to become enlightened, to attain Nibbāna. As long as this point is not seen and understood, there will be continued striving even if the goal is idealised as no-more-striving. It is exactly in the confusion of this contradiction that there is discouragement and postponement. Saṁsāra as the process of evolution and involution is beginningless; then, how can that be brought to an end? If this process of becoming in rebirth cannot be seen as having an ultimate beginning as creation, how can one ever hope for its ending in this life-span? Thus, the ideal is fading off, and attainment is put away for some other time, when per-

[50] *Taṇhā samudayo bhave, nirodho nāma Nibbānaṁ*: Abh. Sang, 509.

haps conditions will be more favourable. Perhaps, one may feel that we shall need another Buddha who will talk less of conflict and more of love. For, it is not possible to put the clock back and solve in a day what has been building up for many centuries and many lives. And thus one continues playing with building blocks, increasing one's desire for continuance, still vaguely hoping that all will be well in the end.

But there is a refusal to see the end as an ideal, as long as there is a refusal to see what there is now. Must one build up a Saṁsāra of virtue to overcome a Saṁsāra of evil? Can hate be overcome by love when the source of hate is left untouched, when there is opposition because the "self" isolates itself in virtue?

As long as there is the concept of a "self" to be liberated, there will be the effort towards that ideal, which is a concept of the "self" to become free. It is not freedom as the goal, but the continuance of the "self" in the ideal of freedom. And that is happening all the time, and every time when the pious wish is uttered: May you attain Nibbāna! The "self" is building up its interests and holding its shares in that enterprise with the ultimate hope and expectation of attainment: May I attain!

It is with that end in view (not in this life perhaps, but in some other time, in some other place) that perfection is sought in giving and renouncing, in patience and in love, in virtue and in wisdom. But can wisdom be acquired? One may grow in knowledge and forbearance, but there is still the growth of "self". The very question "How?" is the basic standard of all progress. It is the search for the means, the method for acquisition in the most subtle layers of the mind.

It is that very search which must cease.

Of course, it is absurd to ask: How to cease? For that will still be the search for the attainment of cessation.

It is so easy to lose track of the path in the jungle of one's achievements. Absolute freedom is the image of the goal set by the mind. And then, thought begins to experiment! First, in renunciation, cutting oneself off from all impediments of the world.

Then, in seclusion, cutting oneself off from all the impediments of the environment in which one lives. Then still further, in concentration, disciplining the mind to fix itself only on selected topics, cutting off mental distractions from within.

And then come the results. In reducing one's wants life has become simplified; and there is neither worry nor agitation even about the necessities of life, in the procuring of food and shelter. In limiting one's contacts and relationship, there is less friction and no waste of time, otherwise spent in frivolous or polite conversation. In fixing one's thoughts there is concentration which may lead to one-pointedness, the object of one's striving. In that one-pointedness there is restriction or distraction.

Now the mind seems free and loses itself in the infinity of space, in universal love and compassion, in boundless consciousness, even in the perception that nothing is, no "thing"! And there the search for absolute freedom seems to have come to an end, as thought is freed from need and greed. In that state of liberation the mind is so completely cut off from all experience, that even perception becomes imperceptible. But there is thought; there is the remembrance of states of absorption in ecstasy; there is the urge to dwell within that seclusion. And that means that there is still the "I" who wants to become, who wants to remain, who wants to experience. Even in the remembrance of achievement, there is the thought which says "I am".

That is the moment when concentration exercise can be seen as exercise, as an endeavour to reach a state of mind-control. But, mind-control is self-control and has still the thought of "self". With that object as a goal, there is no freedom. The more complete one's concentration, the greater also is the withdrawal of that "self" in formless spheres of mental absorption, which will provide the purest delight in ecstatic joy and bliss and equanimity. When the mind feels ready and purified and standing on the brink of enlightenment and realisation it is only the realisation of one's own achievement, the pride which says "I am" (*asmi-māna*),

even when the fetter of individuality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) was seen, understood and broken long ago.

It is the thought of "self" which must cease; and that cannot be done by suppression. The more effort in full concentration, the deeper also grows the root of attainment, that is of "self". Thought can only cease in: understanding. What is thought? It is the relationship with the past, for thought is dependent on memory, thought is the reaction to the experience of yesterday, and thought wants to project that image into the future, in order to exist, to continue, to renew the past, to keep the "self" alive. Thought is a reference to the past and is never in the present. In the present there is selection, comparison, storage, keeping the old for use in the future. All that is reaction; and the knowledge thereof is the "I".

Can this be experienced? Why! It is all here to see, to experience, to realise; but not to know, to analyse, to describe, to retain. Experiencing is not knowledge; for, whereas in knowing there is a knower who stores his knowledge, in experiencing there is no thought about an experience and hence no experiencer who knows. A thought about an experience can arise, when the actual experiencing is made into an object of reflection by a subject, the experiencer, the thinker, the "I". But in experiencing there is no knowledge thereof, no analysis, no memory, no name-giving, and so there is no "I".

Thought is the last stand of the "I" in reaction, in effort, in striving for results, in trying to attain, to become; the "I" is the essence of individual existence, the essence of conflict.

Experiencing is not concentration on a choice object, but it is contemplation on what is. And what is? What is there in experiencing? The beauty of the mountains is. Not in the mountains or in the light-effects thereon, but in the mind's reaction thereto. The hurt caused by an angry word is not in the word, nor in the angry person but in the reaction thereto within the mind. The beauty may have faded in the evening, the angry words will have passed away with the winds, but the reaction is here and now

in me. I am that reaction, even though there is no action, and hence no actor. The past experience has gone, the future result has not come yet. But what is, is the reaction which is neither action nor actor. And that is now being experienced as reaction. In seeing the void of this reaction, there is the understanding of its non-entity, the non-entity of beauty and of anger—and of "self". Such is the awareness in contemplation.

In that awareness there is no effort and anxiety to attain, for there is no goal. It is all here in this moment.

Not having to attain, there is the release from thought. Not having to work out one's own salvation, one is saved already from that "self". It is not the fire of lust and desire of the "ego" which has been extinguished, but the "ego" itself has evaporated, is seen as having never existed but in the opposition within conflict in ignorance. That extinction is called *nirvāṇa* when the conflict (*dukkha*) of resistance against impermanence (*anicca*) is seen and understood as void, because there is no self (*anatta*) to resist. It is only in ignorance that there is conflict which is caused by an ideal "self" unable to maintain its own delusion. It is in emptying the mind that lies real freedom.

Nibbāna is not a state of being of an entity, but a moment of experiencing. In that moment there is no memory and no desire, no past and no future. And thus that moment cannot be remembered, cannot be called back, cannot be retained. Then how could it be described?

It is the moment when thought ceases, thought as conditioned by the past, by memory and tradition, thought as conditioned by the future by anticipation and desire. In that moment there is no thought, no thinking which is reflection, but just the experiencing of being unconditioned, of being free, of not being. In that moment there is no recognition, no recording, no comparing. Thought has ceased; thoughts which claim "I am", thoughts which find security in the past, thoughts which seek continuity in the future, the thought which says "I am now".

In experiencing the egolessness, the non-entity in the imper-

manent flow of life, there is no resistance and no striving for unification; and thus there is no conflict. It is the "I" which is the conflict; and in experiencing the non-identity in the absence of that "I" there is no conflict either. In experiencing the silence which is the cessation of thought-formations, there is nothing, no "thing", no "I", which in opposition can produce the conflict of becoming.

Such experiencing is from moment to moment without the involvement of time, without the transmission of succession, without the logic of sequence. And so there is nothing to prepare the mind for, nothing upon which to focus the thought, nothing to concentrate upon or to renounce. It is seeing in actuality without hope or fear, without expectation of result, without establishment of security. That seeing is the one single moment of experiencing without an "I" as the experiencer, without thought of the experience. And that is now.

The Buddha's teaching is not a doctrine of annihilation. Life cannot be annihilated or destroyed; it is only some aspects of living that change as the current of a river. Life is not something separate which can be isolated and broken off. Life is the constant arising, the constant creation, the constant emerging, which cannot take place if life were a point in history, in the beginning before which there was only the "word".

It is not the "word" that made the world, but it is thought that makes the word out of its own idea. The word is conceived by thought; and in the word there is the term, the label, the name by which the thought can continue, by which the i.e. can become the ideal, by which a dead past conceives the object of its own still-born image. Thus, that object, that ideal, that creation, is as dead as the memory of the past which wants to live in the future. But that is not life; it is death which is preserved, which is worshipped and made into a "self" as the image of a self-created God. Such is the delusion of Saṁsāra, of identity, of permanence, of "self".

A delusion cannot be suppressed, for the simple reason that

it is a delusion, which means that it is non-existent. And hence, it cannot be overcome or put aside. It just does not exist. What is experienced is a self-created image, an i.e. which is an ideal, because it holds the promise of continuance, of security, of the future. To see that this i.e. of "self" is only a projection of a desire to continue, is to see also that it has no existence in the present apart from being an image, a concept, a thought. When that is seen, the i.e. of "self" is soon as a delusion, as a non-entity, and hence as non existent. In that understanding there is no need for suppressing, no need for effort to overcome, no need for concentration. It is just the understanding and the realisation that there is no entity to be identified with action.

This understanding can come through the understanding of action, which is always in the present. Seeing an action being performed with a purpose in the future, is also seeing that such is not an action at all, but rather a reaction to a desire to obtain the future. When there is understanding of the immediate need of action, then there is no projection in the future, no desire for continuance, no thought of "self"; and hence no isolation, no desire, no conflict.

Thus, understanding of the real lies in the understanding of the actual. And realisation of the permanent lies in the realisation of the impermanent. But, as long as the real, the permanent, Nibbāna, is an object for striving, for grasping (emotionally or intellectually), there can be neither understanding nor realisation.

But understanding that in the impermanent there is neither subject nor object, understanding that action is neither actor nor result, is also the understanding of the delusion of isolation, of opposition, of "self". The understanding of this delusion sees a delusion as actual, sees the actual as non-ideal, sees the non-ideal as void of conflict and void of "self". Thus in the understanding of the actual there is the cessation of the ideal, of the delusion, of the concept of continuance of a non-entity.

In that cessation of the ideal lies the reality of the actual, the

truth of what is. It is the cessation of becoming in the realisation that truth is.

When there is understanding with insight, it does not mean that there are no more emotions, no more feelings, no more perceptions. But they will have ceased to be interruptions. There may be pain, but no more sorrow; there may be knowledge, but no misunderstanding; there may be loss, but no more grief; there may be action, but no more reaction; there may be wounds, but no more scars; there may be energy, but no more effort; there may be seeing, but no more hankering; there may be sensations, but no more attachment; there may be perceptions, but no more formations; there may be ideas, but no more ideals; there may be awareness, but no more projections; there may be need, but no more greed; there may be experiencing, but no more gathering; there may he love, but no more hate; there may be peace, but no more "self"; there may he life, but no more death and no more birth.

For, when the "self" is gone with insight, then the struggle is over, the burden is lifted, the fetters are broken, the path is there without obstacles and hindrances; and there is freedom. The path is there and there is freedom to walk, but the path does not lead to a goal; for, the path which is freedom is the goal. And there is no walker, no purpose, no subject, no object, but just the freedom to walk, the freedom to live, the freedom to be free, now!

In watching that freedom there is an awareness of what has been missed out all along; there is a joy in leaving out all what has been felt as pleasure; there is the awareness that all is good and right, while leaving aside all satisfaction; there is an even-mindedness which is no longer a balancing between "should" and "should not", but which understands only this single moment of experiencing what is, without distortion, without fixation, without aspiration, without reference to past or future, without knowledge of "self".

Is Nibbāna then only negation, annihilation?

Negation has the role of breaking down concepts, of ridding

the mind of discrimination, of penetrating all preconceived ideas. Truth is not the object of its search, but truth will stand revealed once all concepts are destroyed. Negation, therefore, is not a kind of dialectic aiming at an exposition of truth. Negation has no aim apart from negating the false. That is bound to produce a crisis; but it is a crisis in which action must follow. Whether such action follows faith, dogma and authority, or accepts the discoveries of reason and intellect, it is still only a reaction which is the positive search for an answer, a solution, a goal. And whether that goal is called truth, or god, or self, it is all the same, for it is at projection of thought which wants to attain, to achieve, to become.

This cannot be argued away; for the argument can only provide a substitute: the super-Self, the absolute, in which the "self" is absorbed, i.e., static concentration, in retirement from the world, or in a modern totalitarian state. Thus, negation of all concepts will leave the mind blank, in the void of which there is no thought possible. And in the absence of the movement of thought, in that negation of all positive contribution to an ideal, there is the absolute negation of both being and becoming.

It does not make sense, because it is not logical thought. It is not to be aimed at, because there is no knowledge of the path which is freedom. Without walker, the path cannot be known, cannot be shown, cannot be walked. And yet it is a path which does not move, which does not lead, which does not end.

It is a path of creative understanding; every moment a new creation, a new realisation, a new discovery, as a river which must flow and is always new even though its course is ancient as the ages—as a fire which must burn and is always alight in consuming and burning itself up. The river flows, not with a purpose, but because it is a river; the fire burns, not with a goal, but it would not be a fire if it did not burn.

Thus, the path of understanding is a path of insight from moment to moment, but not with an aim of comprehension. Insight must see what is, and what is not, and why it is thus. It is the nature of seeing, of understanding, of insight. It has no object

of sight, it is sight, seeing what is, choiceless, without volition, without selection, without intention. Thus, it is a path of negative understanding in seeing what is actual and ideal, and thereby understanding what is real. In that understanding actuality ceases to evoke reaction, the ideal ceases to provoke desire; and in the absence of reaction and projection, of memory and desire, there is neither past nor future, neither being nor becoming.

Are these mere words? Semantics? They certainly have no meaning beyond experiencing. They certainly hold out no hope for satisfaction, no security in stabilisation, no continuity in existence. And thus, they cannot form a basis for effort and striving. And yet, in this total negation there is a freedom from conceiving, which is a freedom from becoming, from rebirth, from the continuance of a miserable "self"-concept, of a misconceived isolation of an "ego", of a distortion of thought in opposition, in chaos and in hate.

Is such negation not deliverance? And is such actuality not real?

In the actual, one can face oneself just as one is. And what does one see? A past identity with over-education, a tenseness because one is trying too hard, an attempt to escape from the circumstances of this life-time in which one is born. And what am I doing about it? And what am I thinking of doing about it? It is this doing things, acting and thinking which make the true "I". In thinking, there is reflection, there is a building up of more ideals, a strengthening of the "I" in opposition and isolation which is conflict. To see that clearly, there must be great sincerity and open-mindedness; and that involves doubts about what I have been doing so far, doubts about the intention of my efforts, doubts about the truth of my striving, doubts about the image of my goal, doubts about the reality of my achievements, doubts about all my actions to see whether they are actions at all or mere reactions to a desire to escape, to become, to attain, to be my ideal "self".

And when I see all that truly, there is understanding. And in

that understanding there is the ending of striving, of desire to attain, of the will-to-become. In that understanding there is no further question of right or wrong, of self or no-self, no thought of achievement or attainment. There is just the ceasing of becoming, the ending of conflict, the "no-more" of all delusion. That understanding is wisdom, is insight which comes with contemplation (*vipassanā*). Contemplation is not concentration. By concentrating on conflict one can only isolate it and thereby intensify it. To end conflict one must understand conflict, and that cannot be done by suppressing it forcibly.

Conflict, to end, must yield itself up; and a natural yielding is never done through violence. There may be submission as a result of violence, a result of conquest. But, that is not ending. Yielding spontaneously can come about only through understanding. Understanding what?

The nature of conflict is the process of clinging to what has no substantiality, no identity, no reality. It is only an ideal one clings to, the ideal of a "self" becoming secure, a problem being solved. The ideal solution has no reality; and it is that fact which has to be uncovered. Then there will be no search for the ideal. And in the cessation of searching, there is the cessation of the ideal; and in the cessation of the ideal, there is the actual, which is the real truth.

Is there enlightenment in stages? Just as knowledge (*ñāṇa*) is not understanding (*paññā*), just as seeing (*dassana*) is not insight (*vipassanā*), so the entering of the stream (*sotāpatti*) is not the experiencing of the fruit of emancipation (*arahatta-phala*).

Even when there is a discarding of beliefs in God or soul (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), even when there are no doubts (*vicikicchā*) about interdependent relationship in actuality, even when there are no more beliefs in the efficacy of prayers and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), there would be still enough scope for desire for the satisfaction of the senses (*kāmacchanda*) and antagonistic feelings (*vyāpada*), for the desire to become (*rūpa-rāga, arūpa-rāga*), for the agitation in the search for achievement (*uddhacca-kukucca*),

all of which are steeped in the conceit which says "I am" (*asmi-māna*) and in the delusion which is ignorance (*avijjā*).

Only in the final realisation that the "I" is a delusion of identity, can there be no concentration of effort to eliminate that non-entity.

There may be the reaction of that delusion in which the "self" asserted itself. Such reaction can be seen and understood; and in the clear and complete recognition of that fact (that is of the reaction as such), there can be freedom of insight that such reaction is a delusion. The reaction is there as a remnant (*sa-upādisesa*), but it can no more project and procreate. Thus, this insight is the liberation from, although not the annihilation of, the reaction.

Then there is perfection which is not an attainment to which nothing more can be added, but rather a perfection from which nothing more can be eliminated as false.

It is the truth which can set free. And when finally at the death of an arahant, when the results of past actions have been outlived, when even the reactions of clinging are broken up (*anupādisesa*), then truly Nibbāna may be called freedom (*mokkha*), the great release (*vimutti*), deliverance.

It is not the goal of action of one who is in bondage. For, that would be merely an ideal. But one who recognises the nature of bondage, that it is the pursuit of gratification of the "self" which causes one to escape from what is, an escape towards an ideal made by "self", made by thought, made by desire—one who recognises that, such a one will cease the pursuit of pleasure and discover the pure and creative joy of freedom in every moment, in every experience, in which there is no striving, no "self", no opposition, no conflict. Such freedom is not an achievement, but rather the discovery of being without acquisition, without property of body or of mind, the discovery of having "laid down the burden", the discovery of not being bound by concepts and ideals. It is not a freedom of the "self", but rather the freedom from "self", the realisation that there is no "self" to be or to become free.

It is not the arrival at journey's end, but the ending of all journeys, of all travel, of all search, of all restlessness and agitation, of all striving to become, of all wanting to be or not to be.

And with this the last word has been said; for, where craving has ceased, the process of becoming which is grasping has ceased also. Where there is no more becoming, there is no more rebirth and all its consequences of sorrow, decay and death. And thus, Nibbāna is the only deliverance, the only freedom surpassing all understanding, above all emotion, beyond all striving, unconditioned, uncreated, indestructible through the overcoming of greed, hate and delusion, through insight and realisation in the deliverance from "self".

About the Author

Henri van Zeyst was born in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 1905. Educated throughout in Catholic schools and colleges, he spent his final years of studies in philosophy and theology and the first year of his priestly ordination in an Italian monastery near Florence. At the age of 31 he was sent to London to be in charge of a new foundation of his Order, where he was also teaching Dogmatic Theology to the scholastics of Christus Rex Priory in North London. An intensive course of comparative religion brought him in contact with Buddhism. Within a year of his coming to Sri Lanka he was ordained a Buddhist monk there in 1938 under the name of Bhikkhu Dhammapāla. From 1956 to 1968 he worked at the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism at the University of Ceylon in Peradeniya of which he was in the final years of that period the Senior Assistant Editor and Administrative Officer. During the last stages of his life he was residing in a meditation centre at Nilambe, Kandy, giving instructions to those who came to him for guidance on meditation.

He died on September 15th in 1988.