

# BUDDHISM - A LIVING EXPERIENCE



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<b>Foreword</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Living in Conflict</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>The Birth of Conflict</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>An Escape from Conflict</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>The Timeless Path</b>	<b>85</b>
Conduct . . . . .	86
Culture . . . . .	99
Insight . . . . .	111



# Foreword

It seems that no book is complete without a foreword, although that is usually the last part to be written by the author himself, or an introduction written by someone else who has not even seen the book. It certainly provides opportunity to air a few unrelated views, with the result that it is skipped by many readers (including myself) who prefer to get on with the job in hand. That is really a pity, for there may be several points of general interest, which could not be dealt with in the body of the work.

In this foreword I take the opportunity of offering an explanation of the title: Buddhism, a Living Experience. The book itself will present an opportunity for experiencing.

There used to be a time when the world of thought was divided between idealists and materialists, between searchers and researchers, between theoreticians and practitioners. But thought is not much thought of these days, notwithstanding our various ideologies. Ideas are no good unless they produce results, and ideals are just the stuff dreams are made of.

This is the age of technology, which is the knowledge of applied science, of the know-how, which is interested in the working of things. It is the age of the instrument, which maybe as sophisticated as an electronic computer, but which is for most people still restricted to the bottle-opener and a screwdriver, for opening and closing respectively.

It reflects a sad lack in education when people are not even interested in what is beyond physics, in what Aristotle used to call metaphysics. However, things which technology cannot reach are for that reason not less factual. It is sad indeed, when it is noticed (if it is noted at all), that the most important instrument at any conference or seminar is the bottle-opener. But what is really sad in this is the technological approach to the problems of life. A psychological problem is the bottled-up energy of a schizophrenic; and our only approach to a solution is to find a release of this energy, the technique of the bottle-opener. But there is no understanding of that energy, or of what we consider to be energy, of the reasons and motives which make that energy function at all.

It is true that we are always searching for a solution of some problem. But search is not a research; it is only an attempt at finding the correct key which fits the lock to open the door. But have we ever paused to realise that he who has made the lock has also made the key to open it? If I understand the lock, I have also the understanding to open and to close; in understanding then there; is no problem. There is only lack of understanding. This is not mysticism; it is not a revelation; it is just factual reality. It is not scientific technology; it is not religious idealism; it is just seeing things as they are.

Buddhism has been approached as a philosophy, as a religion, as a system of moral principles and tenets. It has been analysed, opened up, displayed as a system of psychology, of logic, of natural ethics, of deduction and inference. But as a way of life it is more than that. We have the noble eight-fold path of a learner, the ten-fold path of the arahant; we have even the four stages of sainthood and their fourfold fruits. Yet, all that is far from the actual eating of that fruit. Hence it is suggested to focus attention not so much on the philosophic divisions and psychological classifications of a later Abhidhamma, but on the actual experiencing in oneself, step by step as we go along. Then one step may suffice to understand the



whole of Buddhism; for it is not in learning, but in actual experiencing, that observation ceases to be knowledge and becomes alive. Then Buddhism will cease to be a method for attainment and be an experiencing of truth, here and now.

It was already during the lifetime of the Buddha (now over 2500 years ago) that one of his chief disciples, the great Kassapa, had the occasion to remark that many monks were renowned for their learning. Even though they failed in the practice thereof, with the result that 'now there are more precepts and fewer Arahants', 'that they were devoid of the qualities necessary for the higher life'<sup>1</sup>.

Conditions have certainly not improved, when most precepts are ignored, and Arahants unknown. We have with us the teaching of the Buddha, in texts and commentaries, in the original suttas and developed doctrines. We do not lack in books, written with scholarly dissection on minute differences of opinion, regarding terms and technicalities. Schools have been founded on views, sects have separated over explanations, claims and counter-claims are established about methods and applications. But, where is the experience which is Buddhism? We may repeat with Ānanda: 'Thus have I heard'; but who is there to say: 'Thus have I experienced: thus I know'.

It is in terms of experiencing that the following pages have been written, as a living experience of the truth which has come to us in the first discourses of the Buddha. It is true that even the first discourse, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta did not succeed in making Arahants of that band of five ascetics. No teaching can make a saint! But there was an experiencing, a sharing of truth, an opening of mind, which was so profound and so shocking that the very foundations of ignorance were laid bare, when that field of knowledge was ploughed up, when the knowledge of conflict and its origin, its removal and the way thereto were shown.

Thus it was possible to receive and to view with dispassion that most essential doctrine of no-self, of non-identity, of non-entity,

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<sup>1</sup>S. 276 ff. 287; M 11, 87.

which not only revolutionised the mind into sainthood, but truly turned the wheel of truth from a self-seeking salvation into an emancipation from all previous knowledge and tradition. That was not learning, but experiencing. That is living Buddhism.

There is a saying of the Buddha, recorded in the Majjhima Nikāya, the collection of middle length sayings, which sums up his entire teaching in two lines:

One thing only do I teach  
Woe and show its end to reach.

That is exactly what he did in his first discourse entitled the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the discourse in which he set rolling the Wheel of righteousness. This discourse on the four noble truths (*cattāri ariya saccani*) is not only the foundation of the doctrine, but it is so comprehensive, that it was sufficient to convert his erstwhile followers in asceticism to become followers of the middle path. Thus, it would appear possible to bring all aspects of Buddhism under one or other of these noble truths. And that has become the general layout of this book.

Moreover, the foundations were laid for the second course, the anatta-lakkhaṇa Sutta, the discourse on the mark of non-entity, the distinguishing mark which is not to be found outside the teaching of the Buddha. The good work begun by the first discourse in the conversion of the five ascetics was completed by this second one, when all five disciples attained arahantship in full realisation of the truth and emancipation of mind.

Making these four noble truths then the basic structure of the doctrine of the Buddha, we have arrived at the following schedule:

1. The truth of conflict (*dukkha-sacca*) reveals the act that everything is in chaos, that every complex is a conflict. Thus this first truth reveals the nature of existence. To arrive at the understanding of this truth, there is the analysis of individual existence in

the five aggregates of body and mind (*pañcakkhandha*), as matter, sensation, perception, ideation and consciousness; there is the further analysis of matter in its chief elements of extension and cohesion, of calorificity and oscillation, of its derived qualities of colour, shape, taste and its existence in space and time; its integration, continuance and change; the analysis of the mental formations and states of consciousness; all leading up to the one conclusion that the entire process of development of thought is essentially a process of conflict (*sañkhāra dukkha*).

2. The truth of the origin of conflict (*dukkha-samudaya-sacca*) leads one to the discovery that conflict is born from a misapprehension of impermanence (*anicca-dukkha saññā*). This perception is elaborated in the doctrine of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), on which are based the two doctrines of kamma and rebirth. This naturally brings one to the problem of what is re-born and its solution in the characteristic teaching of soullessness (*anatta*).
3. The truth of cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha-sacca*) involves an understanding that there can be no conflict, when there is no self. But, this process of ceasing cannot be the outcome of a desire for cessation, as any desire can create only more problems and further conflicts. Hence, a re-examination of striving and escaping, of being and becoming, of action and reaction, of the real nature of ignorance and experience, of seeing things as they are, may bring about a cessation of the thought that makes the 'I'. And that would be the cessation of conflict.
4. The truth of the method which can bring about this cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-pañipadā-sacca*) is also called the noble path (*ariya magga*), an eightfold path for learners, a tenfold path for adepts (*asekha*); a timeless path of conduct (*sīla*) in speech, action and living; a path of mind-culture (*samādhi*) in effort, mindfulness and concentration, a path of insight, (*paññā*) in understanding perspective, with wisdom leading to deliverance.

It is a timeless path, because it is in the ultimate sense not a path of progress, because there is no walker on that path. And yet, the path is there with its hindrances and obstacles, fetters and intoxicants; for, delights can obstruct as much as absorptions can delay.

And at the end there is the ending, which is not a goal of striving, of attainment, of achievement, because there is no self (*anatta*) to reap the fruits of action. But there is the deliverance from craving, enlightenment from ignorance, the cessation of striving, the ending of becoming, which is Nibbāna.

# Living in Conflict

This an attempt to present the entire teaching of the Buddha, as contained in the four noble truths (*ariya sacca*) which formed the subject of his first discourse, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, in which he set a rolling the wheel of righteousness. His audience consisted of only five ascetics, who had shared with him his earlier ascetic practices, but who had left him when the bodhisatta (as he was then still striving for emancipation) gave up the search along the path of self-mortification, as he had still earlier renounced the path of self-indulgence. Between these two he now proclaimed the middle path as the culmination of the four truths.

It should be possible to build up the entire doctrine of Buddhism on this simple foundation, rigid in its basic logic, solid in its conclusions, compelling in its clear vision. There is a statement of fact; that event is traced to its source; the effect is removed by the removal of its cause; the way of removal is then shown. Thus stated in its bare essentials this discourse has a great resemblance to the so-called Fire Sermon<sup>2</sup> which also falls into four sections: the subject to be dealt with, its nature and cause, action to be taken, and the results of this action. As this Fire Sermon rated as the third discourse delivered by the Buddha, both stand at the beginning of his teaching career, before any development or detailed analysis took place. For that reason, both the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

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<sup>2</sup>Āditta-pariyāya Sutta: Mahā Vagga 34; S. iv. 35.

and the Āditta-pariyāya Sutta corroborate the essential and basic view of the Buddha's teaching; and we shall have frequent occasion of comparing the two discourses. Each Sutta as a whole is an admirable piece of ordered thinking. First the subject is stated and analysed with all particulars. Then the nature of the fire, followed by the cause of the conflagration, is explained. Action to be taken in this respect is detailed and finally the result of such action is shown.

This arrangement displays a pattern almost identical with that of the first discourse, where the first truth details the general fact of suffering and conflict (*dukkha-sacca*), followed by the second truth about the cause of conflict (*dukkha-samudaya*), the third truth about the cessation thereof (*dukkha-nirodha*) and the fourth truth about the path or method leading to cessation (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*).

In both, the facts are immediately present: the mind is in conflict; the fire is burning. Now, with those facts before me, where can I start my meditation? Concentration looks at the objects of meditation (conflict—fire) and tries to understand their nature through analytical knowledge. I concentrate on conflict, find out its cause, remove the cause, and all is clear.

Contemplation looks at the subject of meditation in which the object is reflected. After all, conflict does not arise by itself. If it is a reflection of the attitude of the subject then in that reflection one can see the nature of the subject and see, with insight, that there is no meditator.

From where then can one start observation and investigation? The most obvious fact is that I want to investigate. I want to know something which I do not understand. Whatever the object of investigation may be, it is obvious that I do not understand it; that is why I want to know. It may be the mere curiosity of a cat or the search of a philosopher for the ultimate; the fact is that I do not know, that I am in ignorance, in conflict; and that I want to find out.

From this simple fact I (which is neither good nor bad) one can now start an enquiry to find an answer to the questions: What? And why? What is it that I want to know, and why do I want that knowledge? I do not know what I want to know, because if I knew that, I would not be searching; I would have the answer. This does not seem to be a very promising line of enquiry; so let me try the other question. Why do I want an answer in my lack of knowledge? That seems clear enough: I want an answer, just because I do not have one.

Now let me press on. I do not have an answer to my problem; and without an answer the problem remains unsolved. That means that I want an answer which will solve my problem. For example: I am born, with a defect, which is a social handicap and I want to know why.

There are various answers suggested by faith, by reason and by science. Faith would make me believe that God has made me thus, as he made the man in the Gospel to be born blind, so that God may be glorified therein. Not very convincing, but one does not expect that from faith. Biology may tell me that this defect can be traced through the hormones which I inherited with the chromosomes from my parents, but that does not tell me how my parents got this deficiency without showing the defect. Of course, if we would know all the conditions, we would know all the answers. But the fact is that I do not know, and thus science does not provide any answer either. Reason may tell me that as this defect is part of constitution, there is no point in going beyond my make-up. In other words, the cause lies in myself, and the defect is the result of my own action. That is the law of karma. It seems to explain things better than faith or science, although there remain quite a few hitches which leave the problem with quite a few loose ends. Anyhow, it is a working hypothesis. And it seems to work. But it is still a hypothesis.

Can I go a little deeper? Why do I want to find a solution to a problem which I cannot solve anyhow? Even if I knew the answer, that would not be the end of my deficiency. Then, why do I want to know? And we are back again to square one: I want to know, because I do not know. I want an answer, because I do not have one.

That, of course, is no solution; it is not even an answer. But it shows me something which I find in nature very often. Why does the wind blow in this direction? Because there is a depression in the atmosphere here. Why does water run downhill? Not because of the law of gravitation, because that is a man-made law; but because there is a lower level to be filled up. Why do I get hungry? Because when my stomach gets empty, the gastric juices have nothing to act on except the lining of the stomach; and it is that acid reaction which becomes the symptom, the alarm, that there is a void in my stomach.

Similarly, I want to know, because I do not know, because there is an unsatisfactory void in the rational mind which wants to know the rationale of everything that occurs. Nature abhors a vacuum; and the mind too is uneasy when facing an unsolved problem. The 'psychological' reason for this feeling of un-ease is, of course, it the desire for, security, but we shall reserve that for the next chapter; when dealing with the cause of conflict. For the moment, I am living with conflict, and I try to understand what it is. When at night one wakes up by a light shining through the window, the mind cannot go to sleep in peace until it knows, until it can explain, the source of that light. Once it is recognised as moonlight, or the light of a car parked in the next garden, the mind is satisfied and may dismiss the problem.

The mind wants an answer to the problematic questions in life, for as long as those questions remain unanswered the mind will remain uneasy. And why is that so?



The answers provided may frequently not be correct, but as long as the mind can accept them, it will be satisfied. A child has learned that every month there is a new moon, and now it wants to know what happens to all the old moons. It would be difficult to explain the orbit of the moon round the earth and the reflected light of the sun on the moon in its various phases. Thus, when the child is told that the old moons are chopped up into pieces to make stars, it may believe this, and be satisfied with that knowledge for the time being at least. But there must be an answer, as a response to a challenge; for without response the challenge remains an open sore, a vacuum, a source of unease.

Why should a vacuum be a source of unease? A vacuum leaves the problem undecided; and indecision is a source of lack of security. Insecurity then, is the force which urges the mind to find an answer in which it can be secure. All search for a solution is a search for security, for fulfilment, for satisfaction.

Now we are getting somewhere. I search for fulfilment, for satisfaction, for security. Leaving alone this problem of security till the next chapter, it is clear so far, that the search is not for a solution of the problem, for an answer to the question, for a response to a stimulus or challenge, but the search is on for satisfaction, which is the desire for security. It does not matter whether the answer is right or wrong, so long as the mind is satisfied. This satisfaction is supplied in their various ways by science as well as by theology and thus the search comes to an end, till it is discovered that this satisfaction is not secure.

One can escape this feeling of insecurity in many ways, of which we shall speak more in our third chapter, while dealing with the ending of conflict. But for the moment we are still living with the problem; we are facing the problem which is a search for security. And a real problem it is, for security is about the most difficult commodity to obtain.

This is a world of growth, of change. The more science advances, the deeper becomes the understanding of the universe as a process of motion and change, of becoming and ceasing. Change is so natural and essential to everything, just as burning is essential to fire. ‘Everything is on fire’, said the Buddha in the *Āditta-pariyāya Sutta*, as he said earlier in the *Dhammacakkappavātana Sutta*, that all things are impermanent (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*).

It is a truth, a basic truth, a noble truth, that everything is conflict, on fire, because in its impermanence it is striving for permanence. This is a truth which should not be accepted and repeated, but should be lived in experience. It is life in all its phases from beginning to end which is a struggle to exist, an effort to become, a groping towards a future. Striving is not a quality, a mode of living, but it is life itself. There can be no life without struggle, as the will-to-become is the motive for existence. Without aim there can be no volitional activity, without intention there can be no moral or immoral result to action. Without to-morrow, life to-day is meaningless, is hopeless, and is thoughtless. All one’s activity is motivated by the future, by the hope of an ideal, the hope to continue, the hope to become. Being is only this moment, and without becoming in the future, this moment does not persist.

Thus, all one’s effort towards security is an effort to become, to project, to attain. Without this security in becoming there is no incentive to action, to living, not even food for thought. It is then continuance which is seen as essential to living. It is an experience which can be experienced every moment of thought, every movement of action. To be means to become; and to-day means to-morrow. It is the movement of the impermanent which is being channelled into a concept of the permanent. I cannot exist if I cannot continue.

And yet: everything is impermanent, everything is on fire, everything is being consumed. That is the problem for which I seek a solution. I am not, because I am impermanent; but I must be in order to continue, to become to-morrow, to achieve permanence.

That is the conflict. I am that conflict. That is the fire that burns; and I am that fire. I am the search for more fuel to keep on burning. I am the conflict, so much and so essential, that without conflict there can be no 'I'! The 'self' can act only in separation from others, in opposition to others, in exploitation of others. And if that conflict is not there, then there is no 'I' to exist. The 'I' must resist in order to exist. All my striving, all my effort, even my attempts at escaping, are only acts of resistance to what is, in order to become what is not. Such is the great sorrow, that so much effort is wasted for an ideal which can never be real. Striving is essential to becoming, as burning is essential to fire, as impermanence is essential to all that is composite. That is the sorrow in impermanence (*anicca-dukkha*), the conflict of the actual with the ideal, in order to become the real.

To understand this noble truth of conflict, one must live in conflict. Not to make conflict, not to oppose conflict, but to see that one is conflict. Not to escape from conflict, but to see that I am that conflict.

Such is the awareness which is seeing things as they are. The Buddha did not teach us physics and chemistry; he did not want us to analyse or dissect, but to understand what is. And how can I understand what is except in my reaction to things, to events, to people. In other words, I do not know the action of the universe, but I can know my reaction thereto.

And my reaction is one of isolation which destroys relationship. My relation is one of greed which cannot see the need in daily living. My reaction is the desire to continue, to exist and hence to resist. My reaction is conflict, because I am conflict. And that is the truth.

Can I live with truth, and be in conflict?

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The noble truth of conflict (*dukkha-ariya sacca*) is that everything is conflict (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*). This conflict is not a

quality, a property, not even an ingredient in the make-up of things, but it is the very essence of existence.

This was most dramatically expressed by the Buddha, when he pronounced that the five aggregates of body and mind, that is, the physical material, the function of the senses, the reaction of perception, the formation of ideas, the identification of consciousness, that they all, singly and collectively, are not only subject to conflict, but are conflict in themselves (*pañc'ūpādānakkhandha dukkha*). What are these five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), which have no entity, no endurance, no substantiality, no soul, no soul, no self?

There is the aggregate of matter (*rūpa khandha*) which is found in whatever is thought to be 'material' as the basic elements of solidity (*paṭhavī*), of cohesion (*āpo*), of caloridity (*tejo*), of oscillation (*vāyo*). These material elements are not properties of matter, but they are matter; just as water does not have wetness, but is wet. If water is not wet, it is not water; it may change its form and become solid, then it is ice; if it disintegrates atomically, then it is hydrogen and oxygen. But as water it is wet.

Similarly, matter is extension because it occupies space; and in this occupation it must resist, and hence it is solid. It may be broken up in smaller particles, it may be reduced to atoms, but they, too need space to exist in and move about. And in existing, there is resisting, essentially. This is the element of solidity (*paṭhavī*).

In this solidity there is coherence which makes its parts coalesce and combine in resistance which thus becomes an essential part of existence. Thus, matter unites, fuses, clings together, as drops of water tend to combine in its element of cohesion (*āpo*). But these two elements of resistance and attraction contain already the principle of opposition without which existence is not possible. This opposition is motion, the element of oscillation (*vāyo*); and motion produces heat, the element of caloridity (*tejo*). And so it is that solidity and cohesion are always combined with heat and motion, through which come about growth and change and decay.

It may be the mere hardness of a rock or the affinity in the kindred relationship between chemical elements; it may be the psychological attraction and repulsion, growing up into love and hate; they are essentially the aggregates of all that is, the elements that push and pull, and burn and churn.

There are in matter the derived material qualities (*upādāya rūpa*), such as colours and smells which are dependent on the sense-organs. These sense-organs are enumerated as six (*saḷāyatana*), five of the body, the organs of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch, converging in and controlled by the sense-organ of the mind. In final analysis, colours are only vibrations of molecules with refraction of light, interpreted by a recipient mind. In the dark there are no colours, in sleep there is no sight, in a vacuum there is no sound, in a defective organ there is no smell, and tastes cannot be cultivated. Then, what are those derivatives of matter but mental interpretations? And yet, one's whole life is dependent on those sense-contacts. When the Sense-organs do not function, no contact with the outside world is possible; and there is death of the senses even though the internal organs may function.

But does one contact the outside world with the internal organ? Or is it not rather the sense-organ of the mind which provides the images of mental objects, the food for the internal organ, the image on which to feed, the concept on which to grow, to become, to continue, so that the 'I' can exist as an abstract, the actor apart from the action? One does not see because one has eyes functioning according to their proper nature; for, the eyes are only the instruments for sight; such as a microscope is an instrument with special lenses, by means of which details become visible which cannot be observed by it the naked eye. It is not the eye that sees, but it is the mind which interprets those sense-data and stimuli, received by the physical eye. And so, sounds are received by the ears, smells in the nose, tastes in the mouth; touch all over the body; It is not

sugar in the pot which is sweet, it is not the taste the mouth which is sweet, but it is the interpretation in the mind.

Further, it is the co-ordination in the mind and by the mind which constitutes an over-all picture, a composite impression of the various receptions and contacts which furnish a complete image which then is recognised by details which are not even experienced. Thus one might 'see' that a cushion is soft, even without touching it. The world, as we know it in perception in the mind, is the sum-total of our perceptions as received in the senses and conceived in the mind. A complete experience, therefore, includes the external object, the internal organ and the contact which is the mind's interpretation.

It is as the process of nutrition, in which the material food will only yield its energy, if it is properly digested and accepted to be assimilated by the body. Thus, the derivative material qualities, colour; (*vaṇṇa*), smell (*gandha*), taste (*rasa*), and nutritive value (*ojā*) are all part of the one process of combustion, which is both growth and decay.

Objects are perceived not only through sensory contacts, but also directly by mental contact. That is how images are formed through abstractions. These are concepts, thoughts, ideas, ideals, on which the mind feeds as the body feeds on material food. The mind's food is the volitional mental activity (*manosañcetanā*) which is the nutriment of the growth of karma, which is action with grasping. For the mind to grasp a material object, matter has to be conceptualised. It is not matter, such as gold or oil, which make the mind grow, but the possession of matter that enables the mind to claim it as its own. Thus, it is the value of matter as seen by the mind which develops the thought of property in which the mind finds security, power, and continuance. Thus arise the ideas of space and time; for, it is only in space and time that property has the value of security, of power, of continuance.

While science only now inclines more towards the view of matter as energy, this concept was known and taught by the Buddha, when both space and time, the framework within which matter operates, were shown to be but mental concepts (*paññatti*) without, any existence of their own. It is this concept of relativity which brings matter within the mind. For, the whole framework used in the description of natural phenomena is the language used by the particular observer with relation to his individual standpoint. In that descriptive language, both space and time are the elements necessary for these concepts. The observer, standing outside his experiment necessarily relates all movements to himself; and thus he creates not only relative space and time in which things appear to move, but he also believes in their abstractions as infinite space and eternity, independent of his observation.

But, abstractions too find their basis in the limitations of individual thought, and they can, therefore, not be thought of as transcending thought. The concept of transcendence, of the supra-mundane, is a thought in itself, as much as the concept of God, of a super-self. It is still within the limitations of the individual, human mind. The concept of infinity is still finite; and thus the infinite is not conceived, is not an object of thought. All thought of truth is not truth, and thus it is an untruth. To realise this we need a kind of spiritual relativity theory, according to which the obvious truths relating to 'self' are not so axiomatic anymore, when the relating observer is not seen outside his experiment, but is part of experiencing, without being separate or absolute at all.

Such experiencing was the Buddha's realisation, when he formulated the non-entity doctrine of soullessness (*anatta*), in which there is no fixity of substance to carry the phenomena, but in which there are only phenomena. These phenomena, which are reactions to observed experiences, are the individual without entity. There is no separate observer, there is no experiencer conducting the exper-

iment. There is only experiencing, in which there is no separation between the observer and the observed.

This is not a denial of phenomenal facts, But, as the laws of nature have been interpreted from an individual standpoint, whereas, in fact, the individual himself is the outcome of such interpretation, one might give a twist to that well-known saying: 'I am the law!', for, 'I' am the interpretation, the creator and the creation of such laws.

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Just as in modern physics mass is explained as a form of energy, so in the doctrine of the Buddha, the individual, as a bundle of aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), has no permanent existence as an entity, substratum, substance or soul, but it is the expression of energy, the reaction to action. And apart from action (transforming itself through being active into reaction), there is no actor. One cannot speak of an object at rest when its very nature is motion; so one cannot speak of an actor apart from his action. If this is understood, there is no relative standpoint or an observer outside his observation.

Action cannot continue in an actor who stands apart; it can only renew itself in reaction. Just as energy is stored in the mass, the flame in burning, so the actor is stored in the action. To separate the two is a misconception, leading to belief in a soul living for eternity, in a God existing in infinity, a belief in time and space, absolute abstractions in which matter is cast, whereas there are only relative reactions and forms of description of an ever-changing experience without a permanent experienter.

We are still examining the material qualities of matter, and if therefore a living being is seen to have material qualities which are not immediately evident in inorganic matter, it is but natural to enquire about the nature of such qualities, which are not mental,



which are not controlled by will and which yet constitute an aspect of life.

The Material aspect of life (*jīvita-rūpa*) is not vitality (*jīvit'indriya*) which is a mental factor (*cetasikā*), nor is it the faculty of life which is a controlling power (*indriya*). It is a combination of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, sulphur and phosphorus, in a constantly changing combination during the process of growth. It is common to plants, animals and humans. This protoplasm is subject to chemical changes, and is therefore constantly being renewed in a process of building-up and breaking-down. It does not matter, whether this is called *jīvita-rūpa*, or D. N. A., or protoplasm. We are not concerned with the chemical composition in a process of evolution covering millions of years, but with the basic fact that together with this material aspect an individual aspect has come into being. This life, this faculty of living, is being grasped and appropriated for the continuation of this single moment of existence, which in action can only group and absorb to maintain its process.

In this process of evolution there is necessarily a process of involution, which is a process of nutrition (*āhāra*). Whether this nutriment is the edible food (*kabalīṅkāra āhāra*) which is the material quality of integration (*ojā*); or physical contact (*phassa*) which is the nutriment for the arising of sensations (*vedanā*); or volitional mental activity (*manosañcetanā*) which is the, nutriment for the growth of action into reaction (*kamma-vipāka*); or conscious thought (*viññāṇa*) which is the productive force projecting itself into a new life—it is also and always a process of involution, when integration (*upacaya*) is but another aspect of disintegration, as decay (*jaratā*) or change (*aniccatā*).

Impermanence is the most typical and characteristic aspect of matter, which is called 'rūpa', because it is only appearance (matter is that which appears to be': *ruppatī'ti rūpaṃ*). Thus, matter is, and it is not. It is, as a process; but it is not, as a substance. But the mind cannot grasp a process of change (as one cannot put a

wave of the ocean into a bottle). And thus there is the conflict when the mind must grasp at matter, just as fire needs fuel, while matter cannot be grasped because it is without substance, duration, entity. As the mind wants to continue, as an entity, or a soul, or an individual, it must seek the continuance of what it feeds on: matter as food, contact for sensation, will for the ego, ideals for the mind. But, the material, being essentially a process of change, does not allow to be grasped, preserved, contained, continued.

And thus the mind can only feed on its own reaction thereto.

It is very important to understand this, as in the course of the history of philosophy this has been throughout a central point of misunderstanding, leading to extreme views of materialism and idealism. Extreme idealistic views have rejected the existence of matter as much as extreme materialists rejected the existence of mind. Both, of course, claim to be rationalists at the same time. The middle path of the Buddha neither accepts nor rejects either view, but points out the insecure basis of understanding 'existence' as either substance or soul, as an entity. All knowledge is subjective, but that does not make the subject any more realistic than its idealistic viewpoint. It is indeed by taking up a subjective view that conflict is caused in the opposition between subject and objects. Here, there is no denial of matter, of physical action and physical interdependence, such as attraction, repulsion, change and motion. But those are experienced as reactions. And that is the important point.

Material activity is only known by its reaction, and the knowledge of such reaction is an interpretation of the intellect; such interpretation is based on comparison with previous experiences, from which a code or formula has been developed, according to which the mind registers accord or disagreement. Whatever the verdict, there takes place a judgement of conformity which has the 'self' as its base. A scientist may not place his own judgement above that of many other eminent scholars; yet, in grouping himself with others, he accepts their views as his own. If he does not, he will take side

with opposing views. It is still the judgement of 'self', comparing with the standards as chosen by the 'self'.

Thus, the materiality of matter, its substantiality, its properties and characteristics are all the reflections and reactions of a position taken by the individual mind. And as the individual needs continuance to be, his reactions will be the reflections of such attitude. Hence, the approach to the question is already predetermined by his views on 'self'.

The only point, therefore, where matter can be 'grasped' by the mind is not in the origination or source of matter, not in its dissolution or decay, but in its process (*santati*).

This is continuance in action, in becoming, but not in being which is space, not in duration which is time. As a process of action which is observable in reaction, neither growth nor decay, neither evolution nor involution, have any fixed beginning or ending. As a process it is always beginning and always ending, thereby depriving the false notion of an 'I' of a point of contact, at which to grasp and hold on, to make use of matter to establish the mind.

Matter, therefore, is action and not substance; and this action can be known and experienced only as reaction. It is not matter that continues, but the process of integration and disintegration. It may not be quite correct to speak of continued integration, for there is no initial integration. The concept of duration should be carefully avoided, for a process is not an entity, but is essentially changing. Thus it would not be strictly correct to speak of a continued process. But, making allowance for the difficulty in modes of expression, we should not be blinding the mind with a defective viewpoint. A distinction between origination and development is only apparent, as such distinction is only a cross-section as it were (and if that were possible), for the sake of better understanding. All assimilation is a new integration, and only the deluded view of self, soul, entity, substance, etc. makes it a subjective process, an object as experienced by a subject. A process can never be an object of observation, as it

has no beginning, and hence no continuation; it is always beginning, never the same, and hence always ending.

That such process of change and impermanence has become a source of conflict is not in the nature of the process, but in the nature of grasping the process. That is the work of the mind which seeks continuance in matter. Living in understanding, there is no grasping, for there is nothing to grasp.

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We shall now see that in the process of the mind there is no grasper either, as the mind too is but a process of reception, perception and conception. Seeing the individual as a process of reaction and interaction between the body and the mind, the mental aggregates which are collectively known as the mind (*nāma*) can be seen as a process of thought. They are truly called the aggregates of clinging (*upādāna khandha*), for this is a process of mind grasping matter.

The process of thought is presented as a stream (*sota*), where thoughts are submerged in the unconscious till there is a disturbance (*cālana*), when a physical or mental contact (*phassa*) enters the stream. Such contact naturally sets up a vibration which, if strong enough, may even become an obstruction to the undercurrent of thought or dream. That moment of interruption or interference (*bhavaṅg'upaccheda*) is the reception of the contact in one of the senses.

A sensation (*vedanā*) is the first of the four mental aggregates. It is far from knowledge and still further from understanding, but there must be some kind of awareness, because there is some unconscious reaction even when the mind is asleep. This reaction to a contact (e.g. a fly settling down on my nose in my sleep, to which I react by moving up my hand to drive it away, all without waking up), must have a mental base without which there would have been no reaction. But this reaction of awareness is a mere reception by

some physical organ, and the reaction thereto was not voluntary, hence mechanical. No thought was involved. There was reception, but no perception. A message was received, conveyed through the nerve system, and the response followed automatically. Still, it was not entirely mechanical, for the same action or stimulus will not get a response if the fly had settled down on a corpse. The mind, therefore, was involved, but not consciously.

Most sense-impressions are too weak to be perceived, or it may be that the mind was too much occupied with other matters, so that there was no further disturbance. The lines of communication are engaged, and not even a memory of the contact will remain.

In a wake state, however, the stronger sense-impressions or sensations (*vedanā*) will not only be received, but also perceived. That is the mental aggregate of perception (*saññā*), when there is not only a reception of a disturbance, but also a reaction. A sensory repercussion (*paṭigha saññā*) would be a mere awareness of the sense-impression: but when there is an equalising (*adhivacanā*) identification or recognition, there arises an unmotivated feeling of familiarity which contains an element of memory of having met before, a presentiment of what is going to happen next. Such perception based on recognition will either cause or prevent fear which cannot be explained consciously, but which is recognised as unmotivated. It is thus a definite reaction, even if it is not understood, not even thought of.

The next stage in this mental composite action is this mental formation (*saṅkhāra*) of the image which is now being formed on the basis of reception. Hence, this is the stage of mental concepts, the most important stage in the formation of thought. Perception was the preliminary to conception: now a contactual sensation, received and perceived, is being conceived as an idea or concept.

The aggregate of mental formations (*saṅkhāra khandha*) is just that. It forms a concept, an idea, about things, events, people, which come into the field of observation through physical or men-

tal contact. The mind first received the contact, then perceived it as having come in contact with the individual thought process, and now it forms ideas about it; and a concept is conceived. This idea is not an object, not even the perception of the contact, but a mental formation, an image, an idea with a subjective reference. These mental formations (*sarikhāra*) are now enumerated as 52 factors (*cetasikā*), which include the formations of sensation (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*). It is natural and quite right that these two should be included always in any mental formation, in any concept, because no concept can be conceived unless it has been received and perceived. They constitute the process of capturing, seizing, and are thus referred to as the aggregates of clinging (*upādāna khandha*). It is indeed ideation which forms the image of what was perceived. It is in mental formation also that the distinction is conceived between good and evil (*kusala-akusala*), useful and useless, skilful and unwholesome.

Here then is apprehension, but not yet comprehension. The object, event or person is not seen in its own value, but only in its desirability, utility, advantage for the subject. Thus the idea has become an ideal with likes and dislikes the results of estimation. Action which follows such ideals is only a reaction to the subjective attitude of craving and clinging, of desire and repulse, of fear and hope. It is here that ideas and thoughts are formed with volition and will-to-possess, to become, to expand. Volition (*cetanā*) indeed was the only descriptive term, which in the very early suttas constituted the aggregate of mental formations (*sarikhāra khandha*) together with reception (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*). It is this volition which is responsible for the reactive process which is karma (*cetanā haṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*).

The aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇa khandha*) is then the response to this process of grasping. It is the response of grasping in order to retain, to possess, to project, to establish on a permanent basis what was experienced in formation.

That this entire process of the development of thought is essentially a process of conflict (*saṅkhāra-dukkha*) is clear from the movement of thought from its inception. There is grasping in the reception of contact, there is grasping in the reaction of perception, there is grasping in the formation of ideas, there is grasping in the volition of conscious activity, just as there is grasping in the material elements, although not intellectually evolved, the elements that push and pull, and burn and churn.





# The Birth of Conflict

That this grasping is conflict is expressed in the second noble truth of the origin of conflict (*dukkha-samudaya-ariya-sacca*). Existence is conflict, because existence is a composition; and what is composed, is also decomposable, and will be decomposed. It is on the impermanence of all existence that the essential universality of conflict is based. I experience conflict in impermanence (*anicca-dukkha saññā*), because I oppose impermanence. The very thought of 'I' is opposition, because it is the essence of 'self' to exist; and thus there is no existence without becoming.

What is wrong with becoming? Does not becoming stand for progress, for growth, for evolution? Yes, certainly. But progress is not an end in itself. One progresses, or rather, one proceeds, towards a goal. The goal is there, in thought, before the idea of progress comes into play. Likewise, growth is towards perfection; old age and decrepitude are not seen as the purpose of growth, as the goal of life. And yet we grow old. Evolution is a blossoming out from what was involved towards a fulfilment which is seen as an ideal, but never the end. Thus, becoming is a striving for an ideal.

That ideal is not real; it is not even actual, for it has no existence whatsoever, except as an idea, a concept in the individual mind. And what is that concept? We have seen already that ideations (*sañkhāra*) are formed from sensations (*vedanā*) and perceptions (*saññā*), which are reactions to contact (*phassa*) with matter (*rūpa*).

Thus it is the mind (*nāma*) which grasps at matter (*rūpa*) to evolve, to grow, to progress, to become.

If mind does not grasp, it cannot evolve, just as the flame in the Discourse on Fire cannot continue without burning up the fuel on which it feeds. But the mind being a psychological reaction to a material action, there is nothing for it to grasp, actually. This grasping is only a psychological reaction; that is, an idea, a concept, a reflection in which the mind projects its own image. It is not physical matter which becomes the fuel for thought to live on, but the concept thereof. It is what I see in matter, which makes thought react in desire or rejection. If I collect money (or property) it is not those dirty paper notes which I want, but the power which is behind them, the power to purchase, the power to become independent, the power of feeling secure. I react, therefore, only to my image of matter. Contact in the mind does not need to be preceded by physical contact, for mental contact is established with the image which is in the mind.

Mind cannot develop through physical nutrition (*ka-balīṅkārahāra*); it has its own nutrition through volition (*cetanā*). It is then in volition, which is desire, that the mind evolves. And evolve it must, if it is to continue; just as the flame must burn and consume to continue burning. This process of combustion is then at the same time evolution and involution just as the process of physical growth is a process of eating and excreting. Becoming is but another aspect of ceasing for in nature there is nothing static. Nature to continue has to grow, to propagate, to adapt itself to changing conditions. In growth there is no addition, but only change. The food we take is changed into muscle fibre and tissue; the air we breathe provides the oxygen for the lungs, for the bloods-supply, for the building of waste material and cells. Nothing is static; there is only change; and in change then is becoming and ceasing, becoming which is ceasing.

But the mind does not want to cease, for in cessation there is no existence. And so the mind wants to become only. It wants to endure, to grow, to evolve, to develop, to acquire power, to attain higher states of evolution. All that is essential for the mind to be, and thus that becomes the ideal. The ideal does not exist, but it is formed by the mind as a concept of continuance; for only in continuance can existence be visualised. The ideal does not exist, and so the mind has made a projection which it must grasp to make it real. But it is still an ideal!

That is the conflict and its origin (*dukkha-samudaya*). The conflict arises in ignorance (*avijja*), when volition is formed (*saṅkhāra*). In volition a concept (*viññāṇa*) is set up as an ideal, for mind to grasp at matter (*nāma-rūpa*), This grasping is done through the six senses (*saḷāyatana*), that is, the five senses of the physical body with mind as the sixth sense, which now can contact (*phassa*) the external object by means of its subjective internal interpretation. The contact, therefore, is entirely psychological, when a need may be experienced in sensations (*vedanā*), but interpreted with craving (*taṇhā*), in which process need becomes greed.

Here all logic ceases, and teaching comes to an end. How to know where need ceases to become greed?

What is greed? It is not just desire for satisfaction, a craving for a piece of chocolate or the urge for sexual gratification? That is desire with a physical base which can easily be disposed of. To call those things temptations and fight against them is in itself another kind of craving, craving for remuneration, for abstinence, as means to attain virtue, sainthood, heavenly rebirth. Physical desires can be traced to some lack of coordination in the glands, hormones or other secretions which stimulate the organs to action. Systematic resistance against nature, even if nature is defective, can only lead to hallucinations and illusions, the chief one of which is the illusion of striving for a goal, an ideal; it is striving to become without understanding what is.

Thus greed is a desire to become (*bhava-taṇhā*) or a desire to unbecome (*vibhava-taṇhā*). In either case it is a desire to be different, and thus an attempt to escape from what is, to avoid, to elude, to get clear away from it all. But an attempt to get away cannot be made without an attempt to get somewhere, unless it is a cause of suicide, of which I have no experience. The desire to get away, in becoming or unbecoming, is the desire for an ideal made by my mind. I may renounce the world to attain union with God; but that God is only my concept, my picture, my ideal, in which I want to continue without disturbance, without conflict. I may meditate in concentration on loving kindness and compassion; but, actually I am only trying to avoid and annul that ugly picture of myself in hate and egoism. I may seek seclusion in the forest, in a cave; but, actually I am running away, at least trying to run away from myself, who wants to be left alone, who does not want to get hurt, who does not want unsolved problems.

Greed, therefore, is a psychological continuation of need. The need to exist, to continue, to live, becomes the greed to be reborn, the only possibility to continue this life in some form or other. And now we make a problem out of that how to live without greed! Isn't it clear yet, how the mind works at escaping? I see that existence is greed. I don't want greed, but I want existence. And I ask: How? That is the birth of conflict.

Conflict is a struggle between clashing principles; it is an essential incompatibility, not a mere discordant, but an inconsistency. There is no clash between 'I want' and 'I can't but, between 'want' and 'don't want'. Such conflict was born when need became greed, while all religions tell me to be without greed. How can I be without greed, when the self is greed, basically?

What is the 'self', the 'I', the psychological entity which can only think of itself as an individual with distinct characteristics? An individual is what is not divided, does not belong to others, stands apart from others in that class. Such individual would claim

to have properties and characteristics which single him out even in his own genus, race, clan, class.

Let me try now, not to analyse, but to experience deep within myself: 'What am I?' As an individual I claim to stand apart with a character of my own; with a name, with property bearing my name; with a will of my own through which I can choose to take or to reject, to act thus and not otherwise. I am myself, self-satisfied, self-seeking may-be, self-sufficient, at least as the working of my mind is concerned; self-opinionated, but with very little self-knowledge, I am fairly self-disciplined which is necessary for living at peace with others in society. I am what I am, because I am well-educated, hard-working, of frugal habits. Thus I have saved energy by non-dissipation, I have time and money by doing my work conscientiously, so that on retirement I can relax and look back on a life well-spent. I have preserved the family's good name handed by my father, and by following in the main his example. I have acquired moderate learning, moderate virtue, strong opinions as to what is right and wrong in religion and in politics. I am not ambitious, as long as I get what I want.

I think this is a fair picture, a fair reflection of what I am. But now, let us prick that bubble, and see what happens.

Whatever I am or appear to be is something acquired or added: name and property give me distinction, but can hardly be considered as essentially mine; a name can be changed, as can nationality, passport, politics and religion. They are things which I share with millions of others. Yet I attach great value to them. I am glad that I am not an Arab or a Jew, but belong to a religion esteemed the world over, to a nation which is famed for its kindness and hospitality, with a glorious history of over 25 centuries. But to be honest, that history is not really mine, but I claim it as mine in the same way as I claim membership of my religion, because I feel strongly supported by the majority in this country and by the good-will of people the world over. Still, that is nothing of mine, really.

I was born in Utrecht, in the Netherlands, which was not my choice, but I do not complain; for, if I would have been born 50 miles (80km) more towards the east, I would have been a German; and that would have made all the difference in 1939 and what followed thereafter, I might have been a Nazi or in a concentration camp.

My education was acquired, paid for by my parents; and although I gathered thereby a fair amount of knowledge, that certainly was not much to be proud of. In fact, they stuffed our minds with so much rubbish, that one would be glad to have been able to forget most of it. Knowledge can be found in books, can be imparted by authority, and has therefore no individuality of its own. Further, I am not individual enough to make history or tradition; it is rather the other way round: I am made by history, by the customs of society, by the adherence to tradition. And if I would dare to rebel against that, I would be an outcast, a non-entity, although that might make me an individual. But as things are, I do not rebel against authority, for I do not want to get into trouble. I do not really dare to have an opinion of my own; and so I pretend that I do not care. In company I fall in with the Customs of others, find excuses for their habits of drinking, as I am afraid to be left alone.

And so, whatever I can think of as something belonging to me is not mine at all. It is just a shirt I put on, because everybody else wears a shirt. Then what is left of that 'self', if I take away my name, if I do not rely on my memory, my past, on my bank-account? All these are things which I do not have, but those are the things which make me: I am that. So, I am a label, a Lanky, a Buddhist, the owner of a car and a wife (in that order of importance for self-survival). Then, what am I without that?

Yet I feel the necessity of calling something my own, so that I can live in that. I exist, even though it is only a thought, an image, a concept of 'self'; and I have to continue that idea and make it into an ideal, as without that reflection I am not. There is no 'I', no

‘self’ without that image, created because without it there would be no ‘I’.

And it is that ‘I’ that now poses as an individual, who is not divided, not composed, who claims to exist and to continue in existence, as an entity with identity, as a substance with a soul. With that identity or label I can now pose and oppose; for that is just what I am doing. I, in placing myself as a distinct entity, oppose all others. In establishing my position, my authority, my ‘self’, I create division and opposition.

In striving for security and permanence, I come in conflict with the impermanent, with the changing process which is life. And that indeed is the truth of conflict and of the origin of conflict a (*dukkha-samudaya-ariya-sacca*).

I am that conflict. I do not want the conflict, but I want the ‘I’. That is conflict; and ‘I’ am its origin. In the desire to be, there is the desire to become; for, existence has no meaning if it cannot endure. Being strives for becoming. As all one’s striving is for acquisition and attainment, craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*) lead on to becoming (*bhava*); and becoming means further results in birth (*jāti*), in decay, (*jarā*), in death (*maraṇa*). Such is the perpetual motion where each link in this chain of dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*) depends on the previous one, while in turn it gives its essential support to the next link. That is the doctrine of rebirth of a ‘self’.

The theory of rebirth in a future life is a rationalisation of the desire for such rebirth in which the ‘I’ can have another chance to make good. As a projection of thought, as a desire for an ideal which is the product of thought, there will be undoubtedly a reaction in space and time. It is that continuation of an action in reaction which creates the concept of identity, of individuality, of entity. It is the identification of ‘self’ with action, which creates the concept the continuity of that ‘self’ in the reaction, an identification with an ideal. Thus the actual is made into an ideal, when thought

begets thought. If this is understood, not with mere knowledge, but with the ripeness of experiencing with insight, there will be no more rebirth, because there is no more 'self'.

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In passing, reference was made to a few important aspects of the teaching of the Buddha which deserve closer attention at this stage, as they touch upon the origin of conflict.

There is the doctrine of dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*) which is an elaboration of the second noble truth on the origin of conflict (*dukkha-samudaya ariya-sacca*). And connected therewith, and really forming part of it, is the doctrine of karma, that is of action, and of rebirth as reaction to the way in which conflict has arisen, psychologically of course, from the isolation and opposition of 'I' in an attempt at securing its position, would lead naturally to further investigation of the concepts of security and continuance, in time and space. The nature of grasping, the greed for need, the essence of existence, all will require deeper understanding before even an attempt can be made to cease this process of craving which is the conflict which I am.

The doctrine of dependent origination, of arising, and cessation in dependence (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) is not quite a doctrine of causal connections. Causality is the view of relationship between cause and effect, the doctrine that all things have causes which produced them as their effects. Such doctrine runs into difficulties immediately when one attempts to find the beginning of such series. For, if causality means that every cause must produce its effect (without which it would not be a cause), it is not possible ever to be free from such inexorable law of fixed destinies. If it is thought that everything must have a cause from which it arose, the difficulty arises when one wants to trace one's steps to the beginning of all causes, the cause of causation. This attempt is made in theology, where 'in the beginning' there is a postulate of an ultimate cause



which was not an effect. In other words, there is one exception in this endless chain, in the beginning, and that ultimate cause is called God. It does not matter which name is given to this ultimate; it is an absolute, standing (at least with one leg) outside the closed circle of cause and effect, and hence outside the relationship which forms the causal connection. This absolute is the cause of all effects, the creator of all things created, and at the same time he (or it) is uncaused and hence unrelated. It is a mystery, a dogma, a point of faith, but it does not and cannot explain its own contradictory existence: a relative absolute an uncaused cause.

This question, this mystery, was facing the bodhisatta before his enlightenment; and the solution of this mystery was also the answer to his question. There is no causal connection as between entities created by a creator, but there is a relationship between events or phenomena which arise in dependence on certain conditions. Those conditions do not create the phenomena, do not cause the events, which are therefore not effects in a causal connection, but are in fact only results arising from certain conditions. Conditions may contribute to the appearance of events, but do not produce or cause them. Thus, it is always possible for a condition to exhaust itself, as it were, without any effective result, as there may be other conditions which are less favourable or obstructing the conditioning. This is a relationship of dependence which is necessary for any result, although it is not necessary to have any result at all.

This is not a paradox, but a simple matter of fact. Things happen because conditions are favourable without being their cause. Then the result is not the effect of such condition, although it is dependent on it for its arising, functioning and cessation. History throughout the ages is full of such events. The murder of the Austrian archduke in Sarajevo in 1914 was not the cause of World-War I, although it was the spark of that conflagration. And that was not the only event either, as the entire chaotic conditions of Europe at the time needed only just such a little push to make the conflict

world-wide. Fuel does not cause the outbreak of a fire, although fire cannot be sustained without fuel, it is dependent on fuel.

To understand this conditioned relationship one cannot begin to investigate at the beginning, because first of all there is no beginning, no cause; and further, this relationship of conditionality is not one of certainty of productivity or reproduction, such as creation and causality, but it is a dependence on conditions which, although necessary, are only contributing. Thus, there is only one point from which a start of enquiry can be made, and that is the fact of the present moment. That was the method employed by the Buddha in his discourse on the four noble truths: Here is sorrow which is conflict. Why did it arise?

The first truth has shown us already the universality of conflict as being rooted in the 'I'-concept. 'I' am the conflict; 'I' am the opposition, the isolation, the resistance which is conflict in relationship.

Now the second noble truth which tells us that this conflict has arisen from craving, which is the resistance of the 'I' on the one hand, and the expansion of that concept on the other, is further outlined in the doctrine of dependent origination, which begins, as the noble truths, with the fact of conflict. There is conflict, all is conflict. Birth, life, death, every complex is a conflict (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*), just because it is a complex. Impermanence is not sorrow in itself, but it becomes a conflict when there is attempt at escaping from impermanence in order to become permanent. That is the 'I', attempting to become, in order to be.

Thus, there is death, because there is birth. Birth does not make death, does not cause it, but without birth there would be no death. And so, death depends on birth, conditionally.

And how does birth 'come about'? How and why does anything become? There is no need to refer to pre-natal conditions, although they too, of course, play the same role. Anything comes into being because there is the urge to become (*bhava*), were it not for the

urge of becoming, there would be no attempt at continuance, at reproduction, no possibility even of existence. For it is existence, continued existence, future existence, which provides the purpose, the initiative, the motive, of action and reaction, of birth which is rebirth without continuance existence is meaningless, because all action is projected towards a result. If not for a result, there would be no karmic or volitional activity. Thus, the will-to-become is the condition for renewed existence.

The will-to-become is then a psychological holding fast to existence in the face of impermanence. All things being impermanent, the only possibility to cling to existence, (*upādāna*) is in a new becoming which may be construed as a continuation of the old. Thus, craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*) and clinging to the concept of existence, which is the concept of 'I', form the conditions under which becoming or rebirth is possible.

This craving to become (*taṇhā*) and clinging to being (*upādāna*) are the outcome of conditions in body and mind, that is in sensations (*vedanā*) through which the 'I'-concept has arisen. Not all feelings are selfish, not all sensations are 'self'-reproductive; but those sensations which are selected, fostered, projected, because they further the purpose of the 'I' to be, to become, to continue—those sensations are aimed at fulfilment of the desire for re-becoming. It is in the senses (*salāyatana*) that there is contact, as it is through contact (*phassa*) that there is feeling in the senses. Here again no causation, but dependent origination.

Sense-contacts arise in the body through the physical organs and in the mind through thought when ideas are formed. It is that mind (*viññāṇa*) which in the physical-mental make-up (*nāma-rūpa*) finds its opportunity to express itself, another type of rebirth dependent on conditions. This mind or consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the final conclusion of the process of isolation in ideation, of mental and karmic formations (*saṅkhāra*).

Now comes the crucial question: how and why should there be these ideations, mental formations, karmic formations, volitions? There is no reason why they should arise, because they arise in un-reason. Un-reason or ignorance (*avijja*) is not the cause of karmic action, of rebirth, of craving, of life which is death. But it is in un-reason that this whole cycle is maintained. If craving to become is the condition which promoted the becoming of conflict, it is un-reason which allowed the arising of craving, the arising of conflict (*dukkha-samudaya*).

There is no causal connection in this series: it is entirely unreasonable that all this conflict in life is based on ignorance. But that is the nature of ignorance. If there were no ignorance at the bottom, there would be no formation of ideals, no striving to become, no desire to be, no clinging to existence, no stretching out for contacts, no rebirth, no sorrow, no conflict, no 'I'.

Then, why is there ignorance?

Ignorance (*avijja*) is not a congenital mental blindness, a sort of original sin. It is a negation of understanding (*avijja*). Understanding is not reasoning (*takka*). The Buddha spoke of his teaching as being beyond logic (*atakkāvacara*). Reasoning is used to find excuses for doing the wrong thing. Understanding needs no reasoning, because it is seeing. The negation of understanding then is not an absence of logic or of knowledge, but a refusal to see, born from fear of understanding.

There is fear to understand, when understanding is causing anxiety of a necessary change in altitude to living. Change is always unsettling, for change does not provide security. It is security what is wanted, because security can provide the continuance of what is wanted.

What does one want? What is felt as the greatest need in a life of impermanence and conflict? Is it not the satisfaction of the permanent, the gratification of peace? Peace is wanted, because then there is no experience of unsettled conditions which cannot

provide the security necessary for peace of mind. It is then satisfaction of mind which is wanted, which cannot be had in conflict, in opposition, in change. Thus the mind seeks comfort in isolation, in relating everything to 'self', in building up a system of self-defence. It is thus fortifying the ideal fortress in which the 'I' can retreat and rule undisputedly.

Change must now be excluded, the 'self' must be made permanent as a soul, as a super-soul, as the absolute, in the hope of absolute security. But in that very striving there is the knowledge of the unattained, the fear of non-achievement, the fear of hope unfulfilled. Thus there is fear to understand, as understanding may cause the need of change.

Hence, it is only in ignorance that the 'I' can continue, can thrive, can project its ideals of security in space and time. Hence, the 'I' prefers ignorance to understanding; for, in ignorance the 'I' can grow; in ignorance the 'I' can continue; in ignorance there is the sense of security. The 'I' is ignorance. The 'I' is craving. The 'I' is conflict. It is on that ignorance that depends the entire process of dependent origination of the 'I', the process which is called rebirth, till life is seen as death, and conflict is no more.

The process of life as impermanent and full of change provides a different aspect on the relationship of life and death, and therewith on the birth of conflict. As long as permanence and security are sought as ideals in which can be found lasting satisfaction, there is the logical search for the continuation of individual life. This is the goal of all religious striving: Survival after death. And with that striving is born the ideal of an everlasting self or soul, together with an eternal and infinite God to look after such eternal souls. The survival of the 'I' is then more important than the infinity of God. Only in the Buddhist teaching there is no belief in eternity of either God or soul, and thus life after death is not of prime importance.

If life is seen as conflict, rebirth cannot provide an escape, but only more conflict. Rebirth, then, is not an ideal fulfilment at the

end of countless lives of striving. But as long as there is volitional, intentional action, there will be the intended result of a projected ideal. Every act with a purpose is conditioned by that aim, even though it is only a thought, an ideal. And as an ideal is only a self-projection, every purposeful act is an act which aims at rebirth.

In action there is no separate actor, as in walking there is no separate walker. When the walk comes to an end, there is no walker at rest. Likewise, the actor ceases with action, and when action becomes a reaction, it is not the actor who is reborn. Rebirth is not of an individual, but is the result of action, just as a response is the result of a challenge. There is no passing on of an individual, carrying with him the burden of good and evil. Good and evil deeds produce their own results of likewise nature.

Thus, it is not a person, or an entity that is reborn, but ignorance results in chaos, and chaos leads to conflict. But life is complex, and thus there will be many forces at work, all bent on producing their projected effects. Such forces will tend to strengthen or to weaken, just as the material qualities of solidity and cohesion repulse and attract. In love and hate there is the force of self at work, and thus there will be the result of such seeking. But that is not a soul transmigrating from one to another life; it is rebirth conditioning and reconditioned, which had its origin in dependence, and will cease in dependence on cessation.

The sense of responsibility rather ennoble virtue in the absence of selfish motives, gains or projection; here, only understanding is the sufficient reason for action, the understanding of a need for action without greed for results. Hence, life after death is not important and death loses its sting. When life is seen and understood as change, then it is not different from death. Only when death is felt as a loss of individuality, there is also felt the sorrow which is conflict. Change is no loss, and death is a process of living, as life is a process of change and death. Only in misunderstanding and

delusion of self-identity death is seen as a loss. Then rebirth is a hoped-for continuance of a life of self, which is a delusion.

But without 'self' as an ideal of continuance life as well as death is a new birth with every new moment, every new thought and act. And in that newness there is creation and freedom without the burden of the past, without fear for the future. That is joy!

But as long as that joy is an ideal, the 'I' must continue to exist, to partake in that joy. And the 'I' in order to exist, must resist. Then the 'I', is the conflict and the source of conflict. From that viewpoint everything seen and experienced is within that framework of conflict, a framework of space and time, to expand and to endure, for the 'I' to exist and to resist.

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The method of the mind grasping at matter naturally requires a concept of matter which would make it a suitable object for grasping. Seeing that a process must proceed, and that in proceeding there is change, it becomes imperative to the grasping mind to attribute to matter certain qualities which make it sizeable or, in terms of the mind, comprehensible. Such are the concepts of space and time which give to matter location and duration, neither of which can be attributed to a process of change.

Change which is movement is the essence of matter. Particles of matter move in waves and the pattern of the waves constitutes the nature and characteristics of matter. This movement of matter is conceived by the mind to take place in space. Thus, space becomes the framework within which matter moves and acts and lives. This framework is necessary to form a mental concept of matter, within which matter can be related to the observer, standing outside the frame. This relative movement has thus acquired a relationship between matter and mind, according to which the mind can grasp matter, determine its movement in relationship to itself. This movement in space-limitations can thus be measured not only

in distance, but also in speed which is movement in time as well as space. By measuring the movement of change in space and in time, thought can completely encompass this most essential characteristic of matter.

Mind can even transcend matter with its abstractions of infinite space and eternal duration and thus create concepts of a super-self, of God, of the absolute. But these abstractions are still concepts within the limitations of the human mind. They are ideas which become ideals for thought to grasp and to become, in which the impermanent seeks in which becoming seeks being, in which striving is for achieving.

There are at least three kinds of space. There is first of all what may be called physical space between two objects, which can be measured if the objects are considered static. Such space can be increased or decreased by moving the objects. Such space is dependent, therefore, on physical boundaries. It is the limited space (*paricchinn'ākāsa*) which has no existence of its own, as it is only the possibility of occupancy.

Then, there is that vast and immeasurable space or outer space; not the space between the earth and the moon, or between planets, between constellations, which is still measurable in light-years. It is measurable, and hence limited. What is thought of as outer space would begin at the end of the influence of the furthest star and end nowhere beyond. That would be infinite space, immeasurable, unbounded, unoccupied. And that is nothingness; absolutely nothing.

There is still another kind of space which is psychological, as it has been created by the mind. It is the space created by one's withdrawal in isolation, in exclusion, which has no boundaries and cannot be measured, because it is infinitesimally small. In that space the mind lives in isolation, self-centred, narrow-minded, in which only the 'self' is allowed to penetrate, infinitesimally small and hence immeasurable even in thought, it is at the same time as



infinite as outer space which is also immeasurable; for this psychological space can be occupied by desires and ambitions which are the spheres of influence and which embrace all ideas which can be contained in thought. In this expanding and never ending empire in which thought never sets, all thoughts are at once absorbed, analysed, classified and registered. In this endless space the 'self' rules supreme in utter isolation with fear and yet with desire. For, in this isolation there is the fear of opposition, while in its expansion there is the desire which is conflict.

Space, therefore, is the medium in which the 'I' lives, infinite in its ambitions, and non-existent but in thought. It is a mental concept (*paññatti*), the framework in which the 'I' can act and project; an image of imagination, a concept, of an ideal, a void to be filled with desire. In that psychological space the mind can withdraw from contact and from conflict, to build up the resistance to exist, to gather and project, never to issue forth to grapple with the real. In that little space of our little mind we have crowded all the antiques of memories, bequeathed to us by our ancestors, our race and religion, wherewith to build that fortress of isolation and insulation, in which there is no room but for the thought of 'self'. There the mind feels secure, even though it imprisons within its barriers all creative need. Thus the thought of the infinite space of freedom cannot arise within the limitations of the isolated 'self'.

Conditioned, empty, non-existent, limited even in thought, it is this space-concept which separates the observer from the observed. It is this concept of separation, of opposition, of isolation, which has created the concept of 'I', the observer. Within that space of separation there is not freedom, there is no love, there is no truth. There is only the thought of 'self'. Here the 'I' lives and loves and moves, and produces its own conflicts.

Freedom from this isolation cannot come through separation, but only with the understanding that space is void and that 'I' am that space.

Space in succession provides the illusion of continuance which the deluded mind sees as permanence. Succession is in time, the succession of the past into the future, when memory is made into the ideal, when desire to become is the birth of 'self'. The measurement of time is as delusive as the measurement of space, as either can be done only in comparing, in perceiving an entity of being in a process of becoming. Thus thoughts take place in space and time. Thought can outrun chronological time in imagination, just as it can retrace the steps of time and reverse its movement in memory.

Hence, it is not time that moves, and it is not space that alters, for they are not genuine and successive events, but interdependent and relative views of an interpretation by thought.

To go beyond the experience of space-time-causation is to break the action-barrier by dissolving the concept of an actor, of the imaginary fixed point of comparison, the standard of measurement. That is the liberation from time, from space, from causation, from 'self' who is thought of as the observer, the experiencer, the actor. Space-time continuum is not inherent in something in nature; but is the frame-work, used to define, to describe nature, to contain nature. It is the way 'I' see nature: it is my interpretation, the way 'I' react to nature.

Time is a physical measure derived from the apparent motion of the stars, which measure has been standardised, divided and subdivided, till it has been reduced to years, and then to days, hours, minutes and seconds, the chronological time which can be measured with a watch. This chronological time has only physical meaning as an observation of distance between objects, and as the time required to go from here to there, measured as space.

But time is also a psychological measure in which thought is involved, when trying to place an experience of to-day among the remembered experiences of what is called yesterday, in order to be prepared to meet a similar experience in the future. This movement of time is not measured by the hands of a clock, for it is the move-

ment of thought which has invented this time-concept with memory and projection as a medium of preserving a fleeting experience.

Just as the mind uses space to provide a standpoint for action, so the mind uses time to preserve action in memory. Without the concepts of space and time the 'I' cannot visualise action as 'mine'. It is in space that the 'I' is stabilised as here; it is in time that the 'I' is localised as now. Without space-time-conception there is no 'I'-concept possible. The concept may be projected into the future or into outer space; it is still the thought of 'I'.

Meditation in the form of concentration (*samādhi*) has even succeeded in transporting the mind in ecstasy (*jhāna*), in which thought is transported into infinite or timeless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*). In deep concentration and absorption of mind, time has stopped indeed.

What does one understand from all this?

There is no space in existence, apart from the limiting conditions, which make its relationship possible with thought. Thus, space is thought. There is no time in existence apart from the measuring of the mind, which are the stepping stones of its progress. One cannot think without space and time, which shows that space-time is thought. All contact, all sensations, all perceptions, all ideations, all thoughts are within this framework which is the reference to 'self'. The 'I' lives only in the past, the memory of action and translates the present in terms of that past. 'I' am the past; and to be, I need space to act, to react, to become. To become I need time to project. Apart from this 'I'-reference or contact, there is no perception of sensation but in time and space there arises a concept of this sense-perception, which is the idea of 'self' to be established in space, to continue in time. And that is the psychological delusion, when the 'I' is seen as an entity in being and in duration, an entity which psychologically can preserve the past in memory and prepare the future in projection and ideals.

Time is needed to become; space is needed to exist. But the process of life has only this single moment to be, in which neither space nor time is involved. Only the delusion of 'self' needs the nourishment of continuance and resistance which is the psychological self-projection of time and space in continuum.

Such is the origin of the concept of 'self', a concept without which there is no interpretation. But, interpretation with relation to 'self' is not understanding. It is only the origin of a misunderstanding, of a delusion, of ignorance, which is chaos and conflict.

In space-time-continuum lies the psychological dream-fulfilment of the continuation of 'self'. If there is no continuation in space and time, there is no purpose of action in the present. And so, the entire concept of life after death is but the outcome of the desire for continued existence. Any action which is urged on by this desire is the volitional activity of the mind seeking a reaction in which it can continue, be transformed, be reborn. Thus, the doctrine of karma is closely linked with the doctrine of rebirth. That action produces a reaction is the natural way in which all life propagates itself within the universality of impermanence.

Life, as visualised in the short span from an individual's birth to his dissolution in death, cannot, can never hope for continued existence. Yet, almost all religions have made such continued existence the goal of all their spiritual striving. This striving, however, is not spiritual, not supernatural, not divinely inspired; it is the natural result of the imperfect knowledge of impermanence. This knowledge is only a partial understanding; it is only an awareness of the undesirable aspect of a discontinuance of the process. The change which becomes essential on discontinuance is painful, because it upsets the even flow of life without disturbance. Disturbance is always upsetting the concept of security: and security is the most essential part of existence. Without security there is only anxiety in resistance to change. This resistance, this conflict, this opposition to the process

of impermanence, is the desire for continuance of the 'I', without which there is no security in existing.

But seeing that impermanence is the universal character of what is composed (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*), as all that is composed is by its own nature subject to decomposition; seeing that, although the 'I'-concept has united and concentrated all effort and desire, all memory and ideal, it is the carrier of all experience, the 'I'—seeing that the composite too is decomposable, it is natural (in the sense of the nature of desire) to wish for and strive for a continuation beyond this life-span. And that is the wish for rebirth.

It is more than a wish. It is an actual process which can be witnessed every moment of every day. Life, even within its short span of individual appearance, attempts and succeeds in expanding that lifespan, by reproduction, a process of multiplication by generation, of continuation of the species, of extension, reactivation, which is rebirth. It may not be the same individual, although even that idea has found a place in the eschatology of religions believing in a future life of an individual soul. But there is a continuity of action in its reaction, of the cause in its effect, of the tree in its seed.

That is not transmigration, but rebirth; not a, fresh incarnation, but a renewed manifestation of active forces, of wilful intentions, of conscious projections. Such volitions or karmic actions are the individual process which is misunderstood as an entity, but which is actually the sum-total of all conditions which have gone into the composition of this particular process. This grand-total of action, constantly absorbing, reacting, reproducing in thought, in will, in act, also constantly conditions the circumstances of environment, shared by endless other individual processes, perhaps revitalised, perhaps corrupted, or totally turned off the road. All that is rebirth without the transmigration of an individual soul.

Within such process there will be many currents and counter-currents of wilful activity, supporting (*upatthambaka*), obstructing (*upapādika*), destructive (*upaghātaka*), reproductive (*janakā*), im-

mediately effective (*ditṭha-dhamma*), or with delay (*kattatta*), inoperative through lack of opportunity (*ahosī*), wholesome in its effect (*kusala*) or not (*akusala*), some weak and others so strong that they are unavoidable (*garuka*), but never is there a permanent 'self' as the independent actor of all this action (*kamma*). And yet, there is the responsibility, as each one is an influence in the society in which one lives, in relationship, in hate or in love. Such results (*vipāka*) are naturally commensurate and proportionate to the actions which produced them, as apples grow on apple-trees, healthy fruits from a healthy tree.

In this doctrine of rebirth without a concept of transmigration of a soul, the sense of responsibility, which is so necessary in a living and peaceful society, is much stronger than if there were commandments to obey, punishments to avoid, awards to be reaped. The law of karma is not a stable law, which is promulgated by a dictatorial deity, a law which can be predicted in its outcome by a computer; for it makes itself and may unmake itself, just as any process of evolution and involution, dependent on numerous conditions, influences, circumstances and tendencies.

Thus in the Buddhist Concept of rebirth there is no permanent element for transmigration. It is the logical application of the Buddha's teaching of non-entity (*anatta*), the subject of his second discourse, the *anatta-lakkhaṇa Sutta*. It is this characteristic mark which has distinguished the teaching of the Buddha in every aspect, in every approach: no self, no soul, no God, no absolute, no salvation, no ideal, no life eternal.

It is not such a doctrine leading to despair and annihilation. It is rather the opposite view of 'self' which is the source of all conflict, as the isolationist's view of a 'self' against others can only lead to opposition, exploitation, self-seeking and any other form of conflict. For, that is the actual conflict (*dukkha*) which brings sorrow and grief in body and mind, the conflict which sets up the 'I' in craving

and hope, in clinging and attachment, all of which are based on 'self', have 'self' as their motive, and 'self' as their goal.

'Self' then is the origin and source of conflict (*dukkha-samudaya*), the fire of all passion, the fuel of all hate, the screen which blocks, all understanding.

That is the second noble truth.





# An Escape from Conflict

Deep understanding of conflict and its origin does not necessarily lead to its cessation. The ending of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha*) is the next logical step in the sequence of the four noble truths. But, see how the mind works, just now. What is the immediate thought which now arises? Yes, conflict must cease, but how? And so the search is on for a method to end conflict. It is a logical follow-up, but if there is no true understanding of this follow-up, the search will be on for an ideal state, a state without conflict, in which there is peace without contradiction, satisfaction without fear, fulfilment without the need for further hope. And lurking behind this noble ideal is still the 'self' which wants to continue without opposition, without threat to its security, in full possession of all that 'self' stands for: power, existence, achievement. Even the ultimate of Nibbāna is visualised, conceptualised, hankered after, as a goal of striving with the wish: 'May I attain.'

None of this can lead to cessation. It is merely an attempt at escaping from the unwanted. But, the unwanted never includes the 'self', for without 'self' what is the use of striving, without 'self' who is there to attain, without 'self' who is there to understand? Even in a vague understanding that without 'self' there will be no conflict, it is the ideal of no-more-conflict which becomes a spur to action, to virtue, to striving, which is still the action and the will-to-become in a state of no-more-opposition. That is not cessation.

When the Buddha stated that the only objective of his doctrine was the removal of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha*) and when he laid out the noble path as the way thereto, he clearly pointed out that he was not a reformer, even though he laid down some principles for righteous living in society. The reform indicated by him has to come from much deeper strata than constitutional reforms through moral principles. A righteous society cannot be created by act of parliament; it cannot exist on paper or in ideals, for the society is the sum-total of individuals. It is in each individual that a contribution must be made to that reformation. It is in each individual that the problem of conflict arises; and it is in each individual that this problem has to be solved and conflict dissolved, in a total revolution to be experienced within.

Conflict (*dukkha*) is not merely the unsatisfactoriness of living conditions as experienced in the rising cost of living, the inadequacy of supplies, the inability to cope with increasing demands. Those may be problems, but they do not constitute a conflict. The inability to meet demands is a problem; the existence of demands is a conflict. Problems exist in relationship, such as the unequal distribution of wealth, the inadequacy of housing, the food and air pollution which impair health, the lack of opportunity for education. Those are the problems of a government which has been put into power for the very purpose of dealing with those matters. The problem is in meeting those demands. And problems can be solved on different levels by different means. But deeper, much deeper than those problems is the conflict which is causing the problems, the increasing demand for better and for more, for greater security and ideal living.

The demand for satisfaction and security is an individual one. All our flag-waving and patriotism, showing our love for our country, are only a camouflage for a much deeper self-love. May my country live long, so that I may live long in my country. May there be peace and prosperity in my country, so that I can live in peace and prosperity. There is nothing wrong with peace; but let us not forget

that I cannot live in peace as long as I live in conflict. We can all work together and help the government solving our problems of living; but to dissolve the conflict of life which is within us, there is none to help, for 'I' am that conflict.

If dissatisfaction arises because I want satisfaction, it is easy to say: 'then do away with desire and there will be no more sorrow'. How true it is, and how easy to say it: remove the cause and the effect cannot arise'. How simple it looks: To eliminate dukkha completely one has to eliminate the root of dukkha which is craving (*taṇhā*); and the extinction of craving (*taṇhakkhayā*) which is Nibbāna.

Indeed, Nibbāna is the cessation of desire, cessation of becoming, cessation of ignorance. And that is the truth of cessation (*dukkha-nirodha-ariya-sacca*), the noble truth of the cessation of conflict. Indeed, 'thus have I heard!'

But, what is cessation, if it is not ceasing? Can one make ignorance cease by increasing one's knowledge? Knowledge is a collection of information through learning, through experiments, through acceptance of authority. And what is the value of information thus acquired? Learning is the assimilation of the knowledge of others. Experimenting is the gathering of knowledge of the functions how things work. Acceptance of the authority of others is faith without knowledge. In short, information does not provide understanding, although it increases knowledge as an item of information to be collected and preserved, and made use of. Knowledge, therefore, does not provide deeper or new understanding, but only preserves what has already been collected. And if there is no further understanding, there is still the same basic ignorance. Ignorance, therefore, cannot be made to cease by increasing knowledge.

Can I make desire cease by doing away with craving? What is craving? It is a desire to obtain what is not, or to get rid of something that is not wanted, or to destroy the unwanted. Being faced with the fact of desire or craving, in some form or other, can

a desire to overcome that craving ever be successful, and make that craving cease?

There is first of all the desire to get rid of craving. Pretending this to be a virtuous exercise, one merely replaces a craving for something base with a desire for an ideal state, namely to be without craving. This is not so simple as the removal of a thorn with the help of another thorn, because one does not throw both thorns away, but replaces one with another, which is substitution, but no solution. There is still desire, even if it is more sublime. It is also more subtle and hence more difficult to eradicate. The method of substitution is obviously not a remedy, as there is no cessation of craving.

Striving to become virtuous, to acquire merit, to attain sainthood, to emancipate the mind, to obtain deliverance of Nibbāna, none of this is cessation of craving (*taṇhā-nirodha*), but rather craving to become (*bhava-taṇhā*), craving for existence, craving for re-birth.

Cessation is not mere renunciation, for that too can be cultivated with a purpose of acquisition: one sees the evil of property and then makes a virtue of poverty: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’<sup>3</sup>. ‘If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven’<sup>4</sup>. But this is not renunciation; it is an investment with a view on future profits.

Property, whether it is a house, land, money in the bank, academic qualifications, social esteem, status in politics, skill, learning, even family and relations, all such achievements have no value in themselves, but have relative value with which other things can be acquired, such as power and security. As long as desire is for power and security, the means thereto are meaningless in themselves. Their presence or absence is then also meaningless, except in so far as they are instruments for higher and greater acquisition, when they can-

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<sup>3</sup>Mt, 5.3.

<sup>4</sup>ib. 19. 21.

not cease in renunciation. This is sublimation, but not cessation, for there is the desire to acquire virtue, the wish to become virtuous, the effort to attain spiritual status, the clinging to ideal values,

Thus, there is no cessation in knowledge, in striving, in renunciation. Then, what is cessation? What is there to cease?

On ignorance depends the arising of volitional activities (*avijja-paccayā-saṅkhāra*). Hence it is on the cessation of ignorance that the cessation of volition depends. Putting it more positively: When there is understanding there can be no craving. But, understanding is not the acquisition of knowledge which would lead to further becoming.

Then, what is understanding? What is its object?

There is first of all: understanding of conflict and understanding of desire. We have seen already that the nature of conflict (*dukkha*) is not the superficial experience of pain or sorrow or disappointment or loss, but the reason of such experience. In other words the main question is not: What is suffering, or sorrow, or conflict? But why is suffering experienced as conflict? Why is loss felt as a disadvantage, in deprivation, a separation? If a loss concerns a liability it is not considered a disadvantage. The loss, therefore, is only detrimental, if there is an experience of hurt to myself, physical hurt which is bodily pain or psychological hurt which is mental pain. It is in the identification of myself with the body and the mind that a loss can be experienced. The loss of a liability is not felt as a loss, because I have not identified myself with the undesirable. In other words, I identify myself only with the pleasurable, the satisfactory, the desirable, but not with the opposites.

Why? The pleasurable gives support and security; it makes the 'I' grow; it helps to support my position, through increase of property or learning, or esteem, or health, or influence or power. Thus I seek pleasure and satisfaction, because it gives me greater security. The dissatisfaction one may experience is not helpful in

building up this 'I'-concept. It has a tendency to break down my self-esteem in failure, in sickness, in poverty.

It weakens because it is a physical or mental weakness. It is the 'I'-concept which is weakened; and that weakens my feeling and increases my desire for security. Hence, the 'I' rejects failure by non-identification, which is by placing it in opposition, which is conflict. It is then not the illness or poverty which is the cause of conflict, but my rejection of it as not being helpful in the maintenance of the 'I'-concept.

It was ignorance which brought about the desire for volitional action. It was volition which brought about the mental attitude in conflict with reality, by dividing it into the pleasurable and unpleasurable, the consciousness of the 'self' depending on satisfaction for its security and continuation. It was the satisfaction of the senses which provided the false security of continuity in existence, the desire for more, the clinging to the past, the hope for the future, the expansion of the present into a life-to-come. It is the causal chain of conditioned origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*), where past activities have produced effects in the present, where those present effects become conditions themselves for a future, the links which constitute in ignorance the birth and rebirth of a 'self'.

Can anyone break that chain of interdependence?

This is the truth of the cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha-ariya-sacca*), the realisation that there is no conflict, the perception of the void of conflict (*dukkha-anatta-saññā*). It was that perception which was still lacking in the first disciples of the Buddha after his first sermon; it was that perception which was awakened in them by the second discourse; the anatta-lakkhaṇa sutta, and which made them arahants, enlightened, emancipated, free from craving, free from conflict, free from delusion, free from 'self'.

Seeing that the nature of conflict is the opposition of ideal to what is actual, the striving to become, to achieve, to acquire, rather than the experiencing of what is, one will also see that this experienc-

ing is a moment of insight, which cannot be produced by reasoning. Through reasoning there can be no ceasing, but only more becoming in search for deeper conviction. Then where in this perpetual chain of dependent origination can there be cessation of ignorance, cessation of rebirth, cessation of conflict? Ignorance does not cease through knowledge, for knowledge provides only information which is memory and hence already past and dead. Rebirth cannot cease by cessation of this life. Conflict cannot cease by the withdrawal from relationship.

As long as there is a search for cessation, there is no ceasing. A search for cessation is a search for a state of non-conflict. Call it peace, bliss, happiness, it is still a search for satisfaction, and that is not ceasing, but an effort to acquire. There is only cessation in ceasing. Once action has sown its seed of reaction, there is no cessation in that resultant process. It may not be active; it may be purely passive in its reaction, in its result, in its rebirth, but there is no cessation. For, those results of past action may become the causes or conditions in this present moment, growing to be the results of further reactions. And that is not ceasing. Cessation is only possible when the results of yesterday cease to become the causes of to-morrow.

Ignorance and volition are the conditions of the past which have produced the present state of conflict in thought, conflict between mind and matter, where the mind grasps at matter through contact, through the senses, through sensation. Those are the results which is life in the present. But, sensations can be seen for what they are, that is, as sensations. The mind cannot grasp objective matter, but only the subjective image thereof, which is a reflection of the mind's own state. Seeing and understanding that sensations are only reflections of the individual thought, there may be a turning point at this stage.

Sensations as individual reflections cannot give understanding of the external object, but may be understood for what they are

in themselves, viz. reflections of a mind which seeks continuity in grasping at those sensations. In themselves, sensations are just reactions to contact (*phassa-paccayā vedanā*); and as long as they are seen, understood and experienced as such, they remain the natural reaction of contact; it is the perception (*saññā*) of a sense-reception (*vedanā*). But, when thought lays hold of that perception and turns it into a concept (*sañkhāra*), then there is no more seeing what is but seeing what has been conceived. Then sensation becomes an instrument to obtain satisfaction, a means to an end, when the end becomes the purpose, and the instrument is forgotten, ignored unknown. Then sensation becomes craving (*vedanā paccayā taṇhā*). It is at this stage, therefore, when past results are either recognised as results, and cease; or are made into conditions for future reactions, and continue.

There is nothing wrong with feelings. The Buddha had feelings of thirst and exhaustion. Mahā Moggallāna was clubbed to death. But in them there was the painful sensation without its being made into a condition for hate or attachment. Thus, the result was experienced, but not projected; it was accepted and not rejected. And even in acceptance there was no appropriation, no identification, no dissemination, and there the process ceased.

But, when feelings and sensations are grasped at and clung to in craving and clinging (*vedanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ*), then there will be the becoming (*bhava*) of fresh conflict, be it in birth or in death. Then the reception of the senses has become the perception of the mind, the conception of wilful thought, resulting in birth, conflict and death.

An escape from conflict is only possible in understanding that there is no conflict. Conflict is made by thought in grasping at an idea, in making it an ideal, in projecting a sensation to become and to continue as an entity, to believe that the 'I' can continue as long as it is fed by craving, just as the flame will continue as long as it is fed by fuel. But there is no flame, there is no 'I', but only a process



of action, of grasping, of burning, in love and in hate, in ignorance, in opposition, and in volition.

Love and hate, ambition and forbearance, perplexity and agitation are but the symptoms of this ignorance in opposition, of this feeling of a need developing into the craving of greed, of the misconception of a 'self' wanting to become an entity of the impermanent striving for permanence, the original sin of man wanting to become God.

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In this light of ceasing, let us re-examine some of the major tenets of Buddhism.

There is the concept of perfection, the ideal of a bodhisatta. His ten perfections (*dasa pāramitā*) are the preparation for his enlightenment. This preparation is not a positive increase of knowledge and saintliness: liberality, renunciation, patience, truth, love are not individual properties or achievements; they are rather a loosening of the bonds which hold the 'self' together.

Giving (*dāna*), as a perfection and true virtue, should be at least what its name indicates. As long as giving is an act of liberality which has a future award in view, it is not giving at all; it is an act of acquisition, of investment, of selfishness. Giving must be the gift of oneself. 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 mere reaction, reflex action, exchange value.

In the helping of others with gifts (*dāna*) there may be plenty of selfishness in the form of self-esteem and satisfaction. Even self-abasement may be pride camouflaged. Thus, a gift to be perfect must be as a burning light, consuming itself not in a sense of sacrifice, not to derive some further benefit for oneself, but out of sheer necessity to burn. What else can a flame do but burn? Its self-consuming act is not directed to anyone in particular, but to all in need of light. This self-consummation is only possible through

understanding for any act of self-destruction is the search for an escape for 'self'. Consummation is the natural process of cessation, more fuel is added and no search for more is needed. Seeing that this 'self' is conflict and the cause of conflict, there must come a spontaneous liberation, which does not aim at a 'self' made free, a liberated soul; but which understands that all action leading to conflict must cease, not for the benefit of self, or all, but just because conflict is untruth. It is not a search for higher knowledge, but a revealing of what is not true. Then the false will cease as a burnt-out fire, not to be rekindled. Such is the freedom of liberality, the liberation from the delusion of 'self'. In the understanding of the 'I'-process as a delusion there is a spontaneous surrender of the false; and that is truth.

Virtue (*sīla*), too, is not a standard of morality to be attained. It is not the opposite of sin, but is the moral strength to be what one is. To be what one is requires right understanding of what one is. Seeing oneself as the origin of conflict because of selfish isolation and opposition, will not be a spur to further isolation, but rather lead to an understanding of relationship. To exist means to exist in relationship, and any form of isolation is an escape from that relationship, in selfish attainment. The rules of conduct are not commandments but moral norms to normal living in relationship, without selfishness. A virtuous conscience is not a standard of behaviour, a striving for an ideal of perfection, but consciousness that is awareness of motives. When morality is based on fear of transgression, it is not virtue. A sense of guilt can only intensify the conflict within, and erect stronger barriers of self-defence. Virtue is the strength to break down those barriers in understanding and insight, the strength to grow in freedom without conflict of evil and sin.

Renunciation (*nekkhamma*) is not a sacrifice of giving up what is dearest, or of relinquishing that which is not cared for. It is non-action, when action means volition to become, to acquire, to identify.

Giving up in sacrifice is the projection of an ideal to be attained after leaving off what may obstruct. But such projection is still a desire for an ideal, striving to attain what has been made by mind. That is not a sacrifice at all, but a shrewd business transaction.

The spirit of renunciation is a going forth from darkness to light with insight. There it is no denial of darkness when it is experienced as the absence of light. If light means seeing and understanding and living, it cannot be a sacrifice to leave behind what is delusion and ignorance. One does not deny or run away from a delusion. It does not exist; and in that experience there is freedom. In that freedom there is no attachment and hence no renunciation of giving up. Going forth (*pabbajjā*) is deliverance and emancipation. It is the giving up of volition which binds to property, which is the fetter which makes the 'I'. In the freedom of going forth there is no purpose to attain or to achieve, when the 'burden is laid low' (Theragāthā).

In the understanding of 'no-self' (*anatta*) there is no surrender of what makes the 'self'. Clinging to what is not, is impossible; and with that understanding there is no more return (*anāgāmin*), but only going forth to complete insight.

Religion with its practices, and dogmas, politics with its ideologies and assertions, science with its inventions and hypotheses, art with its self-expression and ideals, are all part of a dreamland, where there is amusement and comfort, and a feeling of security. Renunciation is the awakening from that dream, a going forth in truth.

Wisdom (*paññā*) is insight which does not crave for knowledge. The image-forming mind can make its ideals and strive for the attainment of that goal. But a concept without grasping can come creatively from simple and direct awareness, when there is no desire to attain, to become, to escape. Then, there is the wisdom of insight which does not seek, but sees what is. In wisdom there is no search for knowledge, no attempt to satisfy one's curiosity, no urge to fill the mind with thoughts. Thus, there is no desire to find the answer

to ‘How?’ For, in insight there is the answer to ‘Why?’ And that is the final question which does not search for a method, but which in self-knowledge understands why there is this search for truth, this greed for rebirth, this urge to become.

Wisdom which is insight sees the conflict in impermanence; not because things do not last, but because the ‘I’ refuses to accept impermanence in its search for the permanent ‘self’. The perception of conflict in impermanence (*anicca-dukkha-saññā*) leads to the perception that conflict is null and void (*dukkha-anatta saññā*), that there is no conflict when there is no ‘self’ to fight impermanence. To see, to understand, experiencing in living, that there is no ‘I’—that is the perfection of insight, the wisdom which can laugh at knowledge, as the grown-up man can laugh at a child’s play.

Energy (*virīya*) is the strength to be, and not the desire to become. It is the vitality of full growth which need not strive for perfection, for it is just what it is. Perfection as an ideal is an admission of weakness, a wish to become more and better.

Perfect energy is as a woman’s weakness, the admission of which is her very strength. Not in striving for emancipation, not in competing for equality, not in dissipation of effort to attain, lies the inner strength of being what one is. Effort to attain is a running away from what is. It is an ideal, a mental image, an escape, but never the truth. Energy is wasted in living up to an ideal, while there can be perfection in existence without resistance.

Such energy is humility, because it is truth; it is perfection because there is no desire to become perfect; it is real because it is not ideal. The strength to stand alone without the support of the convictions of others, to stand on one’s own without, the authority of religion, of the state, of public opinion, that strength gives absolute freedom.

Patience (*khanti*) is adaptation, is pliability, is freedom from forms and formulas. In patience one can wait, and thus there is no agitation and no frustration. He who can wait has the strength

of his inner convictions, the strength of understanding, the love of truth. In patience, all striving has come to an end, and there is but to wait and see. But, that waiting is full of calm, for there is no fear of loss. It is based on conceit which says 'I am' (*asmi māna*); but it is the calm which knows that there is no more to know. It is the end of striving, not in attainment, but in understanding that striving is conflict, and that the end, the purpose of striving is not its ending, but the satisfaction of 'self'. Thus, in patience conflict ceases, and there is peace.

Patience does not seek an escape and hence can see life as it is, with all its self-delusion. It sees that self-delusion cannot be overcome in the agitation of effort. Thus, patience is watchfulness and awareness, the ground for the awakening of insight.

Truth (*sacca*) is in experiencing what is. Faith and hope are speculative ideals based on self-projection, a desire to continue in existence. All dogmas, whether religious or political, are merely the outcome of this desire-to-be, and hence not true. This desire, even in its vanity, is, however, a fact and hence it is true. With that true experience, that the 'I' is conflict in its desire-to-become, there is the immediate opening up of a completely different approach to listing. To see the false as false is to see the delusion of conflict, when in the 'self' there is the conflict between being and becoming. To see that the conflict is not only in oneself, but that conflict is a concept of 'self', that is a discovery which with one stroke annihilates all conflict.

The experiencing of that discovery is truth. And once that has been discovered, there is no possibility of falling back in delusion. That is the meaning of 'non-return' (*anāgāmin*), for in that single experience of understanding, which is insight into the nature of that 'self', there is the solution of all problems; it is the realisation that conflict itself is a delusion and will be a delusion, as long as there is dealing with conflict as a reality. For, then there will be an attempt at escaping, at attaining, at becoming.

In the realisation that the concept of 'self' is also the concept of delusion, the concept of conflict, there is the solution of no-more-problem, no more becoming, no more return, There is no conflict, when there is no 'self'. In that experience there is truth.

Determination (*adhittāna*) is not the fixity of standardisation, but it is the assurance found in experiencing the truth. Hence, it is a fading away of doubt, a cessation of all search, the ending of all striving. In determination there is no more choice, no more volition, because in seeing what is, there is no alternative. Choice is never between objects, but between the mental images of those objects. It is always a 'self'-reference, a weighing of values in respect of 'self'; and then there will be striving to obtain such object of choice, because it makes the 'I' grow. This may be mistaken for stability, but it is only the firmness of the 'I', more deeply rooted in its choice.

Real stability is not the determination of choice, but a termination, the ending of choice, not in choosing but in understanding. Choice is not termination in a reconciliation of opposites, which is a search for an ideal peace, while leaving the two opposing poles untouched; a search for security in an abeyance of conflict.

There is no security in striving, in searching, in projecting; because there is no termination of the 'self' that seeks security. But, in experiencing that all striving is for security of self, and that all search is for attainment of an ideal 'self', in that experiencing there is the assurance of the ending, that is, the termination of conflict which is the ending of 'self', the cause of conflict. This assurance is the realisation that the delusion of opposites is no more; and in the ending of striving there is the assurance of no-more-becoming, the experiencing of no-self.

Love (*mettā*) is not selective. To be true love it must be universal. And hence it cannot be an individual love for the particular. To be universal, it cannot be content with kindness and help, even when those are necessary. The individual can never solve all prob-

lems of hate on a universal scale, but in understanding the cause of hate, one may cease to hate where hate arises. In isolation and opposition there is no understanding of love because there is no coming together; then, how can there be love? Opposition and isolation are born of fear; and fear is the feeling of a possible loss to oneself. It is thus the search for security, of 'self' which causes opposition, which is the opposition, to or rather the absence of loving understanding.

Love is not emotional, for the emotions are individual reactions. Love comes from understanding the need of love. And that need is universal, is not self-protective, not self-centred. In such understanding there is no selection, no preference, but a direct communication which has no experience of 'self'. Such true love is the cessation of isolation which is opposition and conflict. Thus, love is the ceasing of 'self', which, however, is not indifference. Neither is it preference; and thus it is not particular, not individual, but universal. In the understanding of need there is love.

Equanimity (*upekkhā*) is not a mere balancing of emotions, a restraint of opposites, suspension of power. It is an even-mindedness which is found in complete awareness. In such awareness there is no partial approach to influence a decision. In the face of imperfection, equanimity does not tolerate or condone, but sees the attitude of mind which wants to set things right. It is not the righting of what is wrong, but the seeing things as wrong which is as partial approach, because the correction becomes then more important than the imperfection. And if the imperfection is not understood, it cannot be corrected either.

Equanimity is an even-mindedness, which is an evenness of mind which does not find fault, because it does not seek perfection. An even mind sees the unbalanced attitude of a mind which is seeking, which is always partial; even when the goal is good. Why does the mind select? What is its standard in selecting? What is the goal? In that understanding there is neither good nor evil, and there is no approach either of approval or of rejection. But there is seeing

the source of judgement, the standard of morality, the motive of right conduct. And in understanding that, there is no more judge, no code, no path. There is just understanding in seeing what is, understanding of the reaction of a mind in judgement; and that is the cessation of judgement in an even mind.

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Of special interest at this stage should be the doctrine of the ten fetters (*dasa samyojana*), as these form actually the bridge which links the third and the fourth noble truths, that is, the truth of the ending of conflict and the truth that leads to cessation of conflict. For, not only are enumerated the ten obstacles for progress on the path, but they also indicate traditionally the various steps or degrees on that path of perfection (*ariya-magga*), the four supra-mundane (*lokuttara*) stages of attainment (*magga*) and fruition (*phala*).

In the first stage which leads to the attainment of a path-enterer (*sotāpanna*), the first three fetters which have to be broken are: misconception of individuality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), perplexity (*vicikicchā*) and attachment to rites and rituals (*sīlabbata-paramāsa*). This entering on the path of holiness gives the assurance of continued progress, so that final deliverance is no more a distant goal of striving, but is actually within reach, within not more than seven life-spans.

It is not clear how this ultimate of seven returns came about. It is reassuring, however, that there will be no more than seven, and that several instances have been recorded, when full emancipation was as achieved not only in one single life-span, but even in a single moment of insight. Kondañña, the ascetic who was the first to attain insight (*ñāṇa*), entered the stream of deliverance on hearing the first discourse on the four noble truths (Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta). He alone of the group of five monks became then a *sotāpanna*, with the assurance of not falling back. How could



there have been a falling back, when the misconception of individuality (*sakkāya-ditthi*), was clearly understood. He became a fully realised arahant, with the release of all ten fetters (*āsava-kkhaya*), on the occasion of the Buddha's second discourse on 'non-entity' (Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta) a few days afterwards. On that same occasion the other four of his companions, although they had not yet entered the path, became in one stroke as it were enlightened by the same discourse, thus traversing the supra-mundane path in one single step.

Numerous occasions have been recorded in the verses of emancipation of senior monks and nuns (Theragāthā, Therīgāthā), chants of their instant deliverance through insight, sometimes in contemplation of a natural phenomenon, such as the bursting of a water-bubble; or while performing some domestic duty as cooking rice, when the pot broke over the fire, and the mind was set free; or when, lighting an oil-lamp with the wick slipping down into the oil, she realising the light of insight in the darkness of the room. Others seem to take a little more time, perhaps owing to some preoccupation with clearing the path; or was it lack of opportunity rather than lack of growth?

The second stage is that of one who will return to this worldly life of lust only once more; and he is therefore called a once-returner (*sakadāgāmin*). In him the fetters of sense-desire (*kāmacchanda*) and aversion (*vyāpāda*) are much weakened, although not fully broken off. Hence his return.

Complete freedom from those two fetters is achieved by a non-returner (*anāgāmin*), that is one who will not, be born again in these spheres of lust (*kāma loka*). His final life one of full absorption in formless states of ecstasy (*jhāna*) from which there is for him no return (*anāgāmin*) to any form of birth, and in which is thus achieved the final step to emancipation.

Now there remain five more fetters (*saṃyojana*), namely, desire for rebirth in spheres of pure form (*rūpa rāga*), desire for rebirth in

the formless spheres of mental abstractions (*arūpa rāga*), pride or conceit (*māna*), agitation (*uddhacca*) and ignorance (*avijja*). With the conquest of these five obstacles on the path, the non-returner will have lived his last life and therewith attained the perfection of arahantship.

The development of the four stages on the path of emancipation is linked with the destruction of the four depravities (*āsavā*). False metaphysical views (*ditth'āsavā*) stand in the way of one's adopting the true doctrine by beclouding the mind, and thus prevent the entering of the path. Attachment to satisfaction (*kāmāsavā*) blocks progress on the path by its long-time association with sense-pleasures which become 'like old wine intoxicating' (*āsavā*). Desire for rebirth (*bhavāsavā*) will lead to rebirth, even if it is only once more in states of mental absorption in formless states of trance (*arūpa jhāna*). Intoxication through ignorance (*avijjāsavā*) is ignorance that the concept of 'self' is the cause of conflict and with that insight there is the total release from intoxication (*āsavakkhaya*), which marks the deliverance in arahantship.

Thus, the ten fetters, seen as aspects of conflict, lead with their cessation to the cessation of conflict. These four stages of cessation form also the stages of the noble path, which here means the supra-mundane path (*lokuttara-magga*), the fruit of which (*phala*) is arahantship. This is not the noble eightfold path (*ariya-atthaṅgika magga*) which was mentioned in the Dhammacakkappa-vattana Sutta, as the last of the four noble truths, the path that leads to the cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*). Both culminate in Nibbāna and are therefore one in attainment, although the path of overcoming the fetters seems to be more negative, and hence belongs to the third noble truth of cessation, while the noble eightfold path is more positive in describing conduct, mind-culture and insight (*sīla-samādhi-paññā*), and thus constitutes the fourth noble truth, or the method of cessation of conflict.

We shall now consider these ten fetters in detail.

Self-delusion (*sakkāya-dīṭṭhi*) is the false metaphysical view of a permanent entity, either as substance, a soul, a god, or an absolute. It is the most formidable obstacle which prevents any clear sight, because it beclouds the mind at the source. In this delusion everything will be distorted; and things, events, experiences, people, views, will be either reduced to a mechanistic world-view of materialism, or sublimated to an idealistic everlasting life in self-fixation. Materialism leads to the doctrine of annihilationism (*uccheda-dīṭṭhi*), while idealism leads to the doctrine of eternalism (*sassata-dīṭṭhi*).

This delusion is the holding on to heretical views which are so cunningly involved that no direct solution is possible in affirmation or negation. These heretical views come in pairs of opposites which are mutually exclusive: the world is eternal or not eternal; the world will come to an end, or will not come to an end; the Buddha continues to exist, or does not continue to exist; body and soul are one, or they are different. These and similar questions are left undecided (*avyākata*) even by the Buddha who refused to take sides. Reasons for his silence have been adduced, such as the greater importance attached by him to the overcoming of sorrow, the solution of life's problems. But a much deeper meaning is found in the Abhidharma-kośa (in an appendix to the 8th chapter, the Aṣṭamakośasthāna nibaddha pudgala-viniścaya). The reason why the Buddha declined to decide these questions, whether a living being is identical with the body, with sensations, etc. or with the mind, is just because there does not exist any living being as an individual entity, as a substance with a soul, which seems to be the presupposition to all these questions, irrespective of an affirmative answer or a negation. 'Either the body and soul are one, or they are different' presupposes the existence of a soul, the very thing denied by the Buddha in his doctrine of non-entity, of soullessness (*anatta*). The Buddha did not admit the existence of any living being as an individual entity; neither did he declare that there was no living process of individual action and reaction, the logical conclusion of which would have been

that he denied the continuity of such living process, together with a denial of an entity. Thus are avoided both extremes of materialism and idealism.

One might go from here one step further by saying that there is no self-delusion, because there is no 'self'. And that indeed is the master-key which unlocks all problems and dissolves all conflict: there is no conflict, because there is no 'self'. Dukkha exists only because of the delusion which sets up a 'self' against 'non-self', which strengthens this delusion in striving to consolidate this 'self'-concept, which must strive to continue the illusion, and which must continue and become in order to exist. Thus, existence is resistance, and life is essentially conflict, because of this self-delusion.

Any method of breaking this spell of delusion would amount to the forging of a new fetter, in the striving for an ideal without understanding the real.

It is certainly perplexing for a logical mind which can see no way out. Thus, the state of perplexity (*vicikicchā*) is caused by seeking a way out, an escape. But the search for an escape is the search for an ideal which is mind-made and thus another form of self-delusion. A search for truth is only a trial to escape from conflict, but is not a solution to the conflict. First we have to understand the conflict (as it is shown in the first noble truth), instead of which we have formed a concept of truth. Is that possible? Any concept is still my own thought; and that thought is in conflict. Can that thought search for truth? What is the truth? The truth is that I am in conflict; that 'I' am conflict. I cannot run away from myself. But, if this 'I' is understood to be a reaction to impermanence, then there is no perplexity, for there is no conflict.

Perplexity is not a simple doubt of not knowing, but an indecision or impotency, regarding which way to turn. The mind has apparently decided to escape, but it cannot escape as it does not see a way out. This is then the essence of the problem: the mind does not see a way out, but it wants a way out. Such is the position

of perplexity by not facing the issue, but by concentrating on an escape-route for the 'I'.

This could be made into another undecided question (*avyākata*): the mind can escape from conflict, or it cannot escape. The perplexity here is caused by the assumption of the mind being able to decide. It cannot decide either for there is no entity to make a decision, to reach a decision, to escape from itself. The problem is caused here by a deluded 'self' trying to escape from that 'self' in conflict, while retaining its continuation as a self-entity. The problem is not that there is no solution, but that the 'I' does not want a solution for that would dissolve the 'I'. I know it, but I do not want to know it, for that knowledge is too expensive, as it means the liquidation of that 'I'.

And so I continue on some route of escape or other. I try virtue to become a saint; I try sacrifices to overcome my vices. I become attached to my methods (*sālabhata-paramāsa*). I try learning, social service, politics, but it is still the 'I'. I try to overcome my ambition, and I become a doormat.

I try to concentrate and I become self-opinionated.

It is the ideal which I keep before me, and which prevents me from seeing what is. The fact is that the 'I' must continue in order to exist. And in that effort to become or to continue, to be reborn or reformed, there is always that ideal as the object of striving. It is this desire which now attaches itself to virtue or service, without seeing that its search is only for the satisfaction and continuance of that 'self', either in heaven or on earth, in domination or in service, in the negation of sacrifice or the building up of learning, property or virtue.

Thus, these three fetters are very closely linked together—whether it is one, or all together, they prevent even the entry onto the path. But, once entry is gained in leaving behind this concept of an ideal, either in search or in escape, the main obstacles have been removed, and progress assured.

It is not the end of the road; much has still to be done; but there is the encouragement of joy in proceeding, that first taste of freedom. The path ahead may be uphill and long, but there is the conviction of being on the right path on which no further search is necessary. There are still the obstacles of love and hate, of beauty of form and the abstraction of the formless; there a will be conceit of satisfaction and the excitement of partial success; above all there is the ignorance of the end. It may take many turns in evolution, but each step ahead is one step away from the conflict caused by the delusion of 'self'.

The pleasures of the senses (*kāmacchanda*) are the satisfactions sought by body and mind. They may be the gross pleasures derived from drink, or the more intense pleasures derived from indulgence in sex-relations, or the much more subtle pleasures of the mind in self-projection; they are ultimately the satisfaction sought in fulfilment of some void. This void may be an indication of some need as hunger, or the exhaustion of fatigue; more often it is the void of greed which cannot be satisfied with fulfilment of the moment's need. Then the search for pleasure becomes psychological and the satisfaction of the senses is then only an instrument for the lasting satisfaction of the 'self', seeking courage in drink and drugs, domination in sex, security in self-projection.

When pleasure is emotion without intelligence, it is passion in the beginning of conflict. But, when reason for satisfying a need is completely overruled by lust in search of satisfaction for greed, then there is indeed a conflict between insufficiency and the desire for security. All striving for more than is needed, and that means all striving for an ideal beyond the actual, is a search for security in which the object of striving is no longer the satisfaction of the senses, but misuse of senses for gratification of the 'self'. The void of a need is then not seen as such, because the senses are used not for biological survival, but for psychological projection.

Sense-satisfaction in search of an ideal is only self-love without consideration of the need of others. Hence it becomes exploitation in which feeling is distorted—and intelligence is suppressed. Love which can only think of self is pure selfishness. Every motive of action is to be suspected, for true love with understanding does not need a motive to love. Real sympathy cannot be individual which is selective; for in understanding the need for sympathy there is no selection no preference, no division.

The emotion of love is not far removed from the emotion of hate. Both are reactions to emotional excitement; and even if their actions seem to be moving in opposite directions, one in turning to the object of one's choice, the other turning away in aversion (*vyāpada*), they arise both in the common ground of a search for self-satisfaction. In love is felt self-gratification, in hate is felt the lack thereof. But in the centre, at the source, there is the 'self' who wants. It is this common source which is the source of all conflict: agreement with 'self' is thought of as love; disagreement with 'self' becomes hate.

Aversion is a kind of fear, the reaction to a desire to thwart any harmful influence; and thus, both love and hate have the security of 'self' as motive. The opposition as well as the attraction are only reactions to this all-overpowering urge to protect and to project the 'self'. Thus, hate cannot be outdone by hate; neither can it be overcome by love; as long as this basis of-'self' forms the motive of all action. And just as love is mostly self-love, so hate is usually self-hate, the desire to destroy what is the source of conflict, the 'self'.

But, neither the desire to cultivate in love, nor the desire to destroy in hate can solve this problem which is not to be solved, but to be dissolved in understanding that emotions are motions away from what is, motions towards an ideal 'self' which is a delusion. Even the understanding of one who will be born only once more (*sakadāgāmin*) in this life of sense is not enough to uproot totally

this deep sense of emotional satisfaction which alone can sustain the 'I' in its isolation and opposition of selfish hate and love.

It needs the insight of a non-returner (*anāgāmin*) to be beyond both love and hate, to be beyond desire for rebirth (*bhavāsava*), either in spheres of pure form (*rūpa rāga*) or desire for rebirth in the formless spheres of mental abstraction (*arūpa rāga*).

Craving for form (*rūpa rāga*) is a belief in the supernatural, a desire for rebirth in spheres of beauty and a wish for escape from the gross satisfactions of the senses. This is the kind of gratification mostly encouraged by the various forms of devotion in religions which promise the beauty of beatific vision together with celestial joys beyond those of the flesh. The basis of such devotion is, of course, the emotion in a mind which seeks the fulfilment of perfection in the refined delights of form and beauty.

This may be a transcendence of lustful desires, a sublimation of sensual pleasures, but as the mind is the sense-organ of thought, such ideals are not truly transcendental (*lokuttara*). Although on a higher plane, such aesthetic admiration, even if it develops into a state or trance (*jhāna*), is still the reflection of an ego-centric thought. Concentration on an ideal is not truly objective, but reflects the desire of 'self'. And so, a desire to be born in those spheres of pure form (*rūpa loka*), is still a desire, even though thoughts and reason are submerged in spiritual beauty. In a state of mental absorption (*jhāna*) there may not appear the crude desire for sense-satisfaction, but there is the much more subtle attachment to the pure forms of logic (*vitakka*) and deduction (*vicāra*), to spiritual delight (*pīti*) and a feeling of satisfaction in well-being (*sukha*) which seems to be beyond experience. Finally, there is the mental peace without distraction in one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

And yet there can be so much craving for those attainments, that they themselves become hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) on the path of progress. The very beauty of vision, the absorbing interest in sound, may distract the mind in its abstraction, whereby it would fail to see



what is in the absorption of its projected ideal; and thereby remain subject to desire-to-become, for making become (*bhavāsavā*), and thereby fail to rise above all forms and the formed, above all ideas and ideals, which still constitute the 'self'.

Higher still, then, will the mind try to escape in a world all of its own, namely the formless spheres of thought (*arūpa loka*). Here there is no concept of beauty, no attraction for the physical senses, no food even for the rational mind. These are states of formless ecstasy (*arūpa jhāna*), in which the mind escapes in the purest form of the formless (*arūpa rāga*), the world of ideas and ideals.

Space, experienced as limited, is transcended into infinity (*ākāsañca*), but the mind will identify itself with this infinity to escape the finite and impermanent. In this very search for the infinite, thought may identify itself with an everlasting soul, with god, with the absolute, the cosmic mind, and think: 'I am the Brahman'. But it will still be thought, and if the object of thought is the infinite, thought itself thinks itself to be infinite (*viññanañca*). But that too is thought, a thought in delusion in the sphere of nothingness (*akiñcana*). It could lead to annihilation.

If 'nothing' could be seen as 'no thing', this insight could convert concentration (*samādhi*) into contemplation (*vipassanā*). But in attachment to an experience there is no experiencing; and as the moment of deliverance passes by, delusion will still be there, although the perception is practically imperceptible (*n'eva-saññā-n'āsaññā*).

This desire and attachment to the formless, in its very detachment from sense-satisfaction, from beauty and thought-forms, becomes an extremely dangerous obstacle to freedom. It is this fetter of the formless (*arūpa rāga*), which narrows the free outlook, prevents seeing the truth within, searching for it elsewhere. And where there is search, there is the 'I'.

In craving for the formless, the concept of truth (which is not truth, but only the mind's image) is but a projection of the 'self' in search for its ideal. In these highest states of mental concentration

there is so much isolation in absorption, that even the problem of life is forgotten in the bliss of ecstasy. In this the present is not alive. The 'self' as an individual has been transcended and transformed into a super-self (*paramātman*), and bliss is seen as deliverance from sorrow. And with that thought of attainment there is stagnation in satisfaction and gratification.

The remembrance of such attainment can only lead to a desire for a renewal of the experience. When that desire is present, it is the clearest indication that the 'self' is present too. It is in conceit (*māna*) that the mind (*manas*) now says: 'I am (*asmi māna*), I have arrived, I have attained, I am free.' But what is overlooked and what is not seen is the mind's attitude: 'I am! I have!'

Even under the disguise of a sense of duty or justice, under the camouflage of right to freedom, progress of the nation, safeguard of democracy, or more spiritually, the forgiveness of sin, the acquisition of merit, the attainment of eternal bliss, there is the desire to have and to be, the conceit which says 'I am', because 'I have ideas' (*cogito ergo sum*).

Conceit is an idealisation of the subject in sublimation of primitive instincts and fundamental needs. In self-conceit one wants to help others, while unable to pierce through that thin layer of veneer, inlaid, overlaid, used to hide what is, to fill what is void. In a conviction of being right there is no more open mind to listen and to learn; and that is stagnation.

Misconception of 'self' (*sakkāya-dit̥thi*) was based on a wrong interpretation of contact in the senses (*vedanā*), and hence rooted in perception (*saññā*). Conceit which says 'I am' is much deeper than a misconception. In fact, it is never associated with false beliefs (*micchā-dit̥thi*), for it has always a grain of truth in it which it develops. That makes conceit so much more binding than a wrong view. It is a refusal to see; it is an idealisation of 'self', a sublimation, establishing a delusion in a super-relationship to others.

So close and yet so far! Practically within sight of the goal as one sees it, there is bound to be excitement in the crossing of that last hurdle. Agitation (*uddhacca*) to hasten the moment of arrival, mixed with worry (*kukkucca*) which is fear of non-arrival, such is the emotional set-up which prevents action in the completeness of understanding. More than ever before, the mind should now be calm to make sure that seeing is understanding. This calm may be the absence of agitation, but it should not become a goal in itself. That would be suppression through discipline. The object is not tranquillity through suppression, for that would merely put agitation under pressure.

This could easily happen when in meditation the mind is forcibly guided to tranquillity (*samatha*), either by exclusion of distraction, or by intensified attention of the mental process. But in that agitation there is no awareness of the nature of distraction. There is mere rejection of the unwanted. The unwanted, however, is present, is factual. It is the 'self' rejecting what might destroy its ideal, which now suppresses in agitation of hope, in worry of fear, all that is unwanted, which threatens the ideal 'self'.

Thus, agitation becomes an obstacle which prevents calm understanding and even investigation of the nature of disturbance, of distraction, of disharmony. Instead of trying to escape and hopefully forget the disturbance, one should find out what this distraction is trying to tell. A distraction from an ideal goal may be a pointer to what actually is. Awareness without worry about the past, without agitation about future, can be aware only of what is now that is the fact of distinction, the fact that emotions go one way, and intellect another. It is that conflict which should be seen, without a search for an ideal solution. If 'I' am that conflict, and if that is truly seen as such, then the only thing needed is the understanding of this 'self' in agitation and in worry. Then all frustration can be seen as the activity of that 'self' to maintain itself. This delusive 'self' does not want to be discovered as a delusion, and thus the mind, seeks an

escape, gets agitated and worried in fear that a discovery will result in a dissolution of all ideals and projections, in which case there is no more purpose in striving to attain a goal. Purposeful agitation is a striving in the spirit of possessiveness in the desire for attainment. But in this agitation the mind can only produce more isolation and confusion, more of the delusion which is 'self'.

Pure awareness of this game of hide and seek will put a stop to this play of speculation, of ideation, of creation, of identification. And when play ceases, there is rest in this cessation of agitation.

Now, ignorance (*avijja*) will be seen as insincerity of thought, rather than a lack of knowledge. Knowledge can provide information, and lack of knowledge can mean only the absence of information, but does not mean the absence of understanding. Frequently, a surplus of knowledge can prevent understanding, as strong views are not a sign of wisdom. Knowledge is based on the memory of experiences of the past; but understanding is in the actual experiencing of the moment. Thus, pain can be remembered as having been experienced. That is the 'I' accumulating the past and building up the present to be used in the future. But, when the 'I' is experiencing that 'I' am that conflict now, through my isolation and opposition, my existence through resistance, my culturing of greed through overfeeding my need—then in such experiencing there is no external observer apart from his conflict, but only understanding that conflict arises exactly by standing apart. Refusing to see can only produce lack of understanding; and in that ignorance there is conflict, a conflict in which the 'I' wants to stand to one side to watch the fight. But, in separation, this standing aloof is the safety of the spectators outside the ring. I do not want to get hurt, and thus I found a place on the balcony where 'I' am safe.

But, it is my refusal to see that I am only trying to make myself insensitive to hurt, which makes it impossible to see that 'I' am the conflict and not a spectator. My search is not for truth but for comfort; thus, I search for 'self'. I want to maintain this delusion, as it is

the only way to survive. In maintaining this concept of a permanent 'self', I try to maintain a thought, an ideal of an unchanging entity in this current of impermanence. And that is the friction of conflict.

Ignorance of the conflict is the cause of continuation of the conflict. Ignorance of 'self' is the cause of grasping to maintain that 'self'. It is a disease which no amount of suffering can cure, for the disease is only a symptom. As long as I try to make that symptom disappear by making the 'I' feel comfortable, the 'I' which is the symptom will only become stronger.

There is no 'I'; it is only showing itself in conflict. In ignorance the 'I' is born as a delusion; and any treatment of the conflict is still a delusion of the 'I' trying to feel better in conflict. Whether it is treatment or escape, the 'I'-delusion is still there in ignorance. The only way then to bring this conflict to an end is through understanding that there is no conflict when there is no 'I'. 'I' am the conflict; and the cessation of that 'self' is the cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha*).

Now, the non-returner (*anāgāmin*) has lived his life, has experienced his last conflict, has seen the origin and the cessation of conflict. He is the adept (*asekha*); for, in him who has seen with understanding there is no more learning. He is a saint, he is free, he is an arahant, for whom there will be no more birth, because in him the 'me' is no more defilement through craving (*āsavakkhaya*).

How did he cross the flood? Said the Buddha (S. 1.1): 'Not in striving, not in steadying myself. For, when I strove hard I was whirled about; when I steadied myself, truly sank'.



# The Timeless Path

A way of life, as Buddhism claims to be, is a way of living, a way of acting, in which there is no stagnation. Life is a current which must flow on, in which any obstruction becomes a conflict, in which any sluggishness interferes with its smooth circulation. That should not suggest, however, a passive surrender in dependence on grace or chance. For, an active participation is required, when life is presented in the simile of a path (*magga*). It is the middle path (*majjhima paṭipadā*) which avoids the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, rejecting a search for happiness through the senses and a devotion to asceticism. It is a road of action, in which both body and mind are involved through ethical conduct (*sīla*), mental culture (*samādhi*) and wisdom which is insight (*paññā*).

It has become customary to speak of a noble eightfold path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika magga*), but it is significant to note that although in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta eight sections are mentioned, there is no mention of it as such in the Book of Eights of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, even though that many volumed collection of numerical sayings, is classified according to numbers.

Still, in the same division (*Nikāya*), in the Book of Tens, there is mentioned and analysed a noble tenfold path. Whereas the commentator Buddhaghosa is silent about the absence of the eightfold path in the Book of Eights, he explains the tenfold path in the Book

of Tens as being a path of perfection while the eightfold path is the learner's course (*atthaṅga samaññāgatā sekha paṭipadā*).

Adhering to the main division of conduct, mental culture and insight (*sīla, samādhī, paññā*), we may be allowed to regroup the order of the ten sections as follows: ethical conduct (*sīla*) refers to speech, action and living; mental culture (*samādhī*) refers to effort, mindfulness and concentration; wisdom which is insight (*paññā*) refers to understanding, intention, insight and deliverance. Now, as the first discourse by the Buddha was delivered by him to the five ascetics who were not even learners (*sekha*), as they had not yet taken their refuge in the Buddha and the Dhamma, the path was presented to them in the better known form of eight sections, the additional ones of insight (*ñāṇa*) and deliverance (*vimutti*) being reserved for the while to await better understanding.

The three sections of conduct, culture and understanding are sometimes seen as the approach, progress and attainment, respectively. But a word of caution is necessary right from the beginning, that this path has no location, as it is applicable to every action of speech, of deed and of thought; that this path is timeless in the sense of not being restricted to fixed times of concentration practice; and that this path does not lead to a destination, for there is no walker on this path. In experiencing the freedom of deliverance there is no learner, no experiencer, no one to attain.

## Conduct

Approaching with clean speech, direct action and pure living may seem to be not very different from the ethical codes as found in other religions. But, right speech (*sammā-vāca*) is not merely the avoidance of lying, slander and calumny, but also of harsh words and even of vulgar and frivolous talk. The opposite of gossip then would be a noble silence, in which even mental babbling would cease with the ending of the reasoning of an argumentative mind.



As regards action, there is good action, bad action and right action (*sammā-kammanta*). ‘Right’ here stands as the opposite to ‘wrong’. Whether an action is good or bad is a question of skilfulness (*kusala*); and that is decided by its result (*vipāka*). But whether an action is wrong depends on the intention thereof. Wrong is wrung, twisted, distorted; and that means out of alignment. Alignment then would be right in line and direct. A direct action is not purposeful, in the sense that there is no motive beyond the fulfilment of a need by such action. Any action guided by a purpose would be a kind of greed, not a direct action, but a distorted one, wrung or wrong, even if the purpose or intention were praiseworthy.

Actions performed intentionally with a purpose out of alignment would be a volitional act of karma, which will bear its appropriate result. Such result may be intended, and that would make such action skilful (*kusala*) and successful. When such an action succeeds, it brings about the intended result (*vipāka*). But, as the intention (*cetana*) is always a projection beyond the scope of action, the result will be a thrusting forward with a view on the future. Such action which views the future is naturally incomplete, as the source of action and its scope are not born of need but of greed. The intention may be good or evil, and thereby the action and its result will also be good or evil; but it is not a right or direct action, because it is reaction to the intention, and indirect action.

Right action then is spontaneous and direct; it follows not the direction of intention or volition, but the direction of understanding. Thus, when the need for action is seen and understood, action will follow spontaneously without consideration of a result. Such action is not a reaction to memory, not guided by principles of hope and fear, and thus it will be free from the by-products of good or evil effects. It is not karma which depends on volition (*cetana*), but it is a pure action (*kriyā*), complete in itself and ending in that action.

The result of action, of a life-time of wilful action, good or bad, will have corresponding effects, which may or may not be within

the field of knowledge within this space and time of sense-reactions. Then they are thought to become effective whenever conditions for such rebirth are congenial. Rebirth of action is its reaction. And as most of our actions are the results of our intentions and volitions, they are the reactions of such conditions, which is rebirth.

In right action (*sammā-kammanta*) there is neither memory nor intention. It is action which springs forth from experiencing the need for action at the moment. Hence it is direct and spontaneous, not conditioned by motives, not guided by a goal or a code of conduct; and hence it is ethics beyond morality, it is virtue beyond goodness, it is right beyond duty. In its perfection there is no reaction; and as there is no projection, it is not reproductive; and hence there is no rebirth. Such is the action of a perfect one, of an awakened one, of an enlightened one. It is action with understanding, without reference to or reflection of 'self'.

Right living (*sammā-ājīva*) is living harmlessly (*ahiṃsā*). But the harm done by not living rightly is only a symptom of diseased living. Thus, killing or causing to be killed, unless it is an outburst of blind rage under sudden provocation, has always a motive behind it and living conditions to guide it. Motives and conditions are no excuses for wrong living, but they betray the origin of this will to do harm. The tendency to initiate harm is frequently not concerned with the harmful action, which is only its reaction under favourable conditions. A motive supplies, as it were, the motion, and the energy to move, whence wrong living is only a reaction thereto.

Thus, to approach life intelligently with ethical behaviour, one should understand what it is that makes intelligent beings behave unintelligently. For the sake of satisfying the senses, the individual seems prepared to jettison all principles and resolutions, all commandments and precepts, all laws and order. And what the individual cannot attain, that is done by organised society, in peace and in war. We have seen that conflict exists in the opposition of 'self' against nature. This inclination to do harm, to kill, to steal,

to cheat, is only a symptom of the basic opposition of ‘self’ against others. It is rare that the desire to eat meat becomes a motive for killing; and thus a compromise is made when people are found who do the killing for us, so that we can enjoy and satisfy our taste without a guilty conscience of having caused the death of an animal. To make a living through slaughter is undoubtedly wrong living; but at the root of that living is our desire for satisfaction. Wrong livelihood, then, is conditioned by wrong living. Our inner demands have created the outer opportunity. To seek self-satisfaction in isolation does not dissolve the conflict which is the basis of our problems.

Right living, together with right action and right speech, is only possible when the mind is clean, open and direct, to discern what is right and what is false. If killing or the uttering of falsehood is wrong, it is always wrong, intrinsically, and that cannot be altered by law or by circumstances. It is the attitude to right and wrong which has to be understood; then speech and action will follow spontaneously naturally. Virtue as virtuous conduct (*sīla*) has acquired a special significance in the observance of precepts in the form of abstinences. They are not commandments, but advice (*sikkha-pada*) to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants. Such advice is accepted and undertaken (*samādiyāmi*) in the negative form of abstinence (*veramaṇī*), so that the complete formula runs as follows: I undertake the precept to abstain from killing, etc. (*pāṇātipāta veramaṇī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*).

The most significant aspect here is that the pupil undertakes to observe and follow an advice; and thus there is no obligation, holding out a threat of punishment or promise of reward. There is no promise either on the side of the pupil, but a decision to accept the advice. Thus there is neither fear nor hope, but a simple statement, based on the understanding of the advisability to follow the advice.

The minimum advice offered is in the form of five precepts (*pañca-sīla*), which regulate and affect relationship with fellow beings in common social behaviour. The abstinence from depriving

any living being from its breath of life (*pāṇa*, *prāṇa*) is surely the minimum to be expected. No exceptions are made, however, and no distinctions. Thus, killing should be refrained from in its most general sense of affecting life whenever it is found. It does not give the state an authority to kill by law in capital punishment. It does not allow an individual to kill in self-defence or self-sustenance. It does not make an exception for declaring and waging war. If killing is a wrongful deprivation of a being's most essential existence, it is wrong essentially and always. Hence, the advice is to abstain from killing.

Theft, or the taking away of something which is not given (*adinnādāna*), either freely or on purchase, to which one has no right, is an obvious infringement on the rights of someone else. Disrespect of the rights of others makes social relationship an impossibility. Thus, without a commandment there is an appeal to common sense, in response to which one undertakes the precept to abstain from what amounts to theft.

Lack of application in the performance of one's duty, in the execution of one's job which is paid for, is also an infringement of taking liberty with that which is not 'mine'. Civic responsibility is not a law but a result from understanding mutual relationship in living together, without which there can be only chaos and conflict.

Sexual misconduct (*kāmesu micchācārā*) is to be abstained from on the same grounds. Sexual misbehaviour with a person under obligation, under restraint, under contract, below age of understanding, is to be avoided on humanitarian grounds, and as a commandment. It needs only clear understanding to exercise sufficient self-control in this regard. But no distinction is made between laws of monogamy, bigamy and polyandry, as long as individual liberty is not endangered. Such, however, is not the freedom of a permissive society, which has only thought for individual gratification without responsibility. The aspect of moral obligations to oneself will be dealt with

under the ten unskillful actions (*dasa akusala*). The five precepts (*pañca sīla*) are rules for social contact and relationship.

To tell lies (*musāvāda*) is further explained as including harsh words of scolding, back-biting, slander and even frivolous talk. Such wrong speech is obviously a hindrance to truth in deed, word and thought.

The abstinence from taking intoxicants, drink or drugs is advised on the ground that such practices bemuddle the mind (*sura-meraya-majjappamādatṭhāna*). When thought is confused, action will be misdirected, and motives will distort the perspective of understanding. Hallucination can never lead to truth. When man's greatest asset, his intellect, is set at naught, there is no chance of understanding either himself or his fellowmen. Thus, the damage by drink or drug is not just an individual's concern, for it damages and poisons the entire relationship in the family, in society, in one's total outlook on life.

These are the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) for everyday living with understanding in relationship. It is the least one can do to be human. Murder, theft, rape, dishonesty, drunkenness bring man down to animal level and below.

But the full impact of these rules is felt only in the moral field of conscience. It is the intention (*cetanā*), which provides the factor (*cetasikā*) which makes an act either good or evil. Thus, for an act of killing to be morally evil, there are five factors involved: there must be a living being which is killed, there must be knowledge on the part of the killer that there is a living being, there must be the appropriate means to produce the effect, there must be the intention to complete the act, and the effect must follow. An act or killing cannot take place if there is no living being; one cannot kill an image even if the intention to do harm is there. The knowledge of life is essential for the act to be criminal; without knowledge it may be a mere accident, even if death follows. The appropriate means are also necessary. In hate one may use words to express a will to kill, but

words do not kill. The intention to kill is essential; in the absence of intention there is no guilt. Finally, death must follow; obviously without death there is no killing.

Apart from the intention (*cetanā*), the other factors are only physical circumstances, may be essential conditions, but they do not constitute a moral responsibility. The intention to act, on the other hand, makes any act either good or bad, irrespective of the act being successful. The plan to steal is wrong, even if one is prevented to execute the plan. Then the evil is not in the deed, but in the mind; then, the evil act is not of stealing, but of greed and hate.

This aspect of morality, as an act of the mind which is known as conscience, is not expressed in the formulas of the five precepts, which seem to be of a much later origin and development. The Buddha spoke of the ten unskillful actions (*dasa akusala*). And he spoke of right conduct (*sīla*) which is the abstinence of doing wrong (*vāritta*). And under these are classified the precepts of abstinence from killing, stealing, sexual misbehaviour, lying and intoxication. But the virtues of the mind (*cetasikā sīla*) are those mental properties which overcome the mental wrong, even before it is translated into action. Such is the positive aspect of virtue as good conduct (*cāritta*), virtue in volition (*cetanā sīla*).

The wrong done in thought is frequently found in the Suttas as well as in the later Abhidhamma, in a group of three, corresponding to greed (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). As unskillful actions they are called covetousness (*abhiṅga*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*) and erroneous views (*micchā-ditṭhi*) and appear to be much more unskillful (*akusala*) in their aggressiveness.

These are the three main roots of all evil thoughts, words and deeds, three forms of craving. Greed is a desire to possess, hate is a desire to free oneself from what is disliked; delusion is a desire to cling to things which are not real.

Greed (*lobha*) is a positive form of craving, which may be a craving for sensual indulgence, for the pleasures of the bodily senses

(*kāma taṇhā*). These desires for sense-satisfaction are insatiable like fire which burns all the fiercer the more fuel is put on it. Hence it is compared to a swamp (*paṅka*) and a flood (*ogha*), because it submerges the person in whom it exists in the repeated round of rebirth (*saṃsāra*), and makes him sink lower and lower. It may also be a craving for rebirth (*bhava taṇhā*), be it a material or immaterial world. Thus it becomes a real obstruction, blocking the road to the final deliverance of Nibbāna. Or it may be a craving for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*), by which is meant a desire for annihilation, so that with the dissolution of this life everything would be finished. This is the desire for escape, inspired by the wish to be free from all moral obligations; and hence it leads the way to immorality.

Hate or ill-will (*dosa*) is hostility to what is unpleasant; hence it is a negative form of craving. In the beginning it might be only some annoyance about a disadvantageous action, but it might also be displeasure over a good turn done to somebody disliked by us. This is real aversion (*vyāpada*) repugnance, hate. This mental vexation irritates and upsets the mind, thus giving rise to anger, abusive language, slander and other harmful actions, sometimes causing injuries due to quarrels, disputes and litigations.

As greed is a positive form of craving and hate a negative one, they will never combine in one single thought. Where a lustful person will try to be everybody's friend ill-will on the contrary leads to envy and jealousy (*issā*), selfishness and meanness (*macchariya*).

delusion (*moha*) is not only a form of craving, but is the root of all craving, including greed and hate. Without delusion no evil thought can arise, no wrong action can be performed. Thus, all demeritorious deeds (*akusala kamma*) are caused by delusion, i.e. by ignorance (*avijja*). A person does wrong, because in his deluded mind he thinks that such an action will be profitable to him. One might think only of the pleasure of the moment and not think of the suffering to come. Thus, delusion is short-sightedness of mind,

which prevents one to see the real nature of the world, of the consequences of the act, of the true motives and purpose in self-projection. This lack of understanding and insight leads further to wrong views (*micchā-ditthi*), to craving and lust for wrong things (*lobha*), to misunderstanding of the viewpoint and actions of others, and hence to hate (*dosa*). The non-understanding of the three characteristics of all component things as impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and without abiding entity (*anatta*) will even prevent one from entering the path leading to the deliverance of Nibbāna.

Apart from the five precepts (*pañca sīla*) there are given also a few extra rules of private conduct, which need not be observed by all, all the time, but which lead to greater self-restraint occasionally. Together with the five precepts they form the group of eight (*aṭṭha-sīla*) when sexual misconduct (*kāmesu-micchācārā*) is enhanced to total abstinence from all sexual relationship, and is thus compared to the lives of deities in Brahmāloka, where sense-pleasures are unknown. This abstinence (*abrahmacāriya veramaṇī*) may be extended for a single day or for longer period of self-control.

As a help to such abstinence, there is the advice to abstain also from taking food at unseasonable times (*vikāla-bhojana*) when one meal before midday is thought to sufficient for the day. This is not the austerity of fasting because the meal is to be partaken in the morning before noon, so that the meal can be digested before the quiet of the evening calls for meditation.

Such a life (may be a day only) of abstinence will naturally call for abstinence in adorning the body with scent and ornaments (*mālā-gandha-vilepana*) and even indulgence in the comfort of large upholstered seats (*uccā-sāyana*).

They are however suggestions to reduce the mind's greed without impairing the body's need. This together with an abstinence of dealing with money matters and business completes the ten precepts (*dasa-sīla*), the 'vows' taken those who leave the worldly life altogether and enter monkhood as a novice (*sāmaṇera*).



Not until such a novice has reached the age of 20 is he considered sufficiently mature to take upon himself the 227 rules of monastic discipline as found in the Vinaya, the rules of the Pātimokkha. Although those rules are usually undertaken for life, there is no obligation to do so. In Burma and Thailand it is even customary for any young man to lead a life of monastic discipline for a short period of three months or so, thereby qualifying himself to a life in the world, enriched with greater self-control and discipline, from which even the crown prince is not exempted.

Virtue of restraint in the life of a Buddhist monk results from his life of renunciation, his going forth (*pabbajjā*) from home to homelessness. Guiding him on that path of renunciation are the rules of restraint as found in the Book of Discipline, the Vinaya Piṭaka, in which are collected the various grades of physical transgression, marked as such by the Buddha on different occasions, when the need thereto arose. The usual occasion was sure of some prominent lay disciple, seeing a monk behave as if he were still a layman. Several of these rules have no doubt been inspired by similar rules in force in various communities of ascetics at that time.

The more serious offences are the four rules, transgression of which means a defeat (*pārājika*) of the purpose for which the holy life is chosen. Those offences are in respect of intentional killing of a human being; stealing something valuable, which is explained as the value in gold to the weight of a quarter grain of rice; sexual indulgence with a female; and claiming untruthfully the possession of supra-mundane attainments. Any of these offences is to be punished with excommunication from the brotherhood; but on admission of his fault the offender could be reinstated as a novice (*sāmaṇera*) although it would not be possible for such a person to develop his virtue and insight so as to enter the path of holiness (*ariya-magga*), which constitutes his real defeat (*pārājika*).

Then there follows a group of thirteen transgressions which are not so 'deadly' as causing defeat, but which are still serious enough

to be confessed publicly to the entire monastic community, when the rules are repeated in common on the days before the new and full moon (*uposatha*). These thirteen are called ‘*saṅghādisesa*’ as they require confession in public to the entire community of monks having received the full ordination (*upasampadā*).

They include masturbation, touching a female with lust, addressing her with lewd language, praising and upholding the desirability of sexual indulgence, or acting as a go-between securing a couple in marriage. Also the independent acquisition or building of a dwelling place without approval of the brotherhood, exceeding the limits prescribed for the size of such building, and leaving less than two fathom space around the dwelling place, should be subjected to correction by the brotherhood. Further, a baseless accusation of a fellow-monk of having broken one of the four rules requiring excommunication (*pārājika*) and a refusal to accept even for the third time admonition of the Brotherhood.

They require not only confession to the Saṅgha (*saṅghādisesa*) but are followed by a time of probation, during which the monk at fault would lose his rank of seniority, till being restored subsequently, again by an order of the community.

Many minor offences, which are slight transgressions of disciplinary conduct, are called collectively *pācittiya*, which vary from ‘serious’ (*thūla*) to ‘minor’ (*dukkata*), some of which require the forfeiture (*nissaggiya*) of an object or food acquired or retained against other rules of conduct. They all require confession (*paṭidesanīya*) to a senior monk, although not publicly to the entire community. Silence during the recital of the Pātimokkha is taken as blamelessness.

All together they form a code of 227 rules of discipline, many of which, however, have no moral implication. E.g., to eat food while standing, to urinate on flowing water, is neither good nor bad, ethically; but as rules of discipline in conduct they have to be observed. A transgression of those rules would not be karmically unwholesome,

although it may become so due to a wrong intention connected therewith. But often there may not be merely a technical transgression especially when such is backed by volition and intention, disregard due to pride. Then it is not the act so much as the intention behind it which constitutes its ethical unwholesomeness (*akusala*).

This virtue of restraint (*saṁvara-sīla*) is the observance of the special rules for lay-people and for monks; but there is also the cultivation of mindfulness (*sati*) and the development of insight (*ñāṇa*), which together with the practice of virtue (*cāritta-sīla*) form the three divisions of the noble path in right conduct, right mind-culture and right or perfect insight (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*).

It is indeed the ethical importance of an act which makes it unskillful or not. And that applies to any act of transgression, whether it be by a layman of this code of conduct of the five precepts (*pañca sīla*), or by a Bhikkhu of the rules of monastic discipline (*Pātimokkha*).

According to karmic effects, there are five acts of immoral behaviour which are so weighty (*garuka kamma*) in their results that they cannot bear even a delay in their efficacy (*ditṭha-dhamma*). Thus, they take effect immediately in the life following. Those five acts are: killing of one's father, of one's mother, of an Arahant, they wounding of a Buddha and causing schism in the brotherhood of monks (*Saṅgha*). None of these five, however, is a likely occurrence in an average life; and thus one may say that the law of karma is never inexorable, never of a fixed destiny, never of the nature of fate.

Rules being what they are, having been promulgated as and when the occasion required them, should never become so important that they form a basis of attachment. The moral aspect is always much more important than a mere observance of a rule, freely undertaken as an instrument of self-discipline. In fact, in the various suttas, the Buddha did not devise those means of conduct, but stressed the moral aspect of behaviour. Thus, the suttas speak of

the ten unskillful acts (*akusala*) as follows: killing, stealing, misbehaviour with the senses (which includes sex as well as drugs), lying, slander, harsh speech, vain talk, lust, ill-will and erroneous views.

They fall into the three categories of act, speech and thought. As for an, unskillful karmic action (*akusala kamma*) the element of intention or volition (*cetanā*) is the most essential, it is obvious that this doctrine far exceeds the rules of conduct, whether of restraint (*samvarā*) or of observance (*cāritta*).

An act of killing (*pāṇātipāta*) is the taking of life; and this act to be complete requires the following five constituents. There must be a living being, the knowledge that there is a living being, the proper means for taking that life, the intention of taking it; and all that must result in actual death. If one were missing, there would not be the karmically unwholesome deed of killing. In explanation: one cannot kill if there is no life; in an accident there is no killing; a mere wish or threat cannot kill, even if a person would die of fright; an unintentional act is not responsible; if the victim survives, there is of course no killing.

Similarly, one cannot steal something which has no owner; an attempt at stealing is no theft, although it is an evil thought; taking by mistake is unintentional and hence no theft; being discovered in the act but prevented to complete the same is no theft, although there is the evil thought of greed. Similar applications can be made in respect of the other deeds, each time the intention to do wrong being the most important and decisive condition.

Not only external actions can be unskillful. Thoughts, too, even if they are not expressed in word or deed can be unskillful (*akusala kamma*). Evil thoughts of lust (*abhijja*) and of ill-will (*vyāpāda*), deluded thoughts of erroneous views (*micchādittḥi*) are the sources of evil deeds and speech. On the other hand, thoughts of detachment and altruism, of loving kindness and compassion (*mettā karuṇā*) will be the internal driving force which will produce similar actions when the opportunity arises. And thus these thoughts are skillful actions

(*kusala kamma*), because they produce a desirable effect (*kusala vipāka*). It is, therefore, mind-control which should be developed to bring about and keep the actions of deed and speech under control.

## Culture

If conduct and behaviour should be regulated by understanding, rather than through discipline, this should be observed even more so in the culture of the mind (*bhāvanā*).

In agriculture there are two ways of intensive cultivation. One is by strengthening the soil with fertilizer to supply the extra food to make the young plant grow up quickly and healthy; the other is by weed-control and removing all that is harmful to a natural growth. Mind culture is of the first type, when the mind is fostered with noble ideas and lofty ideals, which will make it forget to hanker after the mundane joys of life. This culture is not without discipline, and is therefore called concentration (*samādhi*).

Thus, right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) is included in this section of culture (*bhāvanā*) on the noble path. Four kinds are usually enumerated; the energy which is preventive of unwholesome conditions; or which gets rid of such conditions if they have already arisen; and the effort which promotes the arising of helpful conditions; or which assists such conditions if they have already arisen.

Conditions to be got rid of are the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) which prevent the arising of the mental states of absorption (*jhāna*). These hindrances to concentration are the urge of the senses (*kāmacchanda*), aversion in a hateful mind (*vyāpada*) indolence of body and mind (*thāna-middha*), agitation and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) and mental perplexity (*vicikicchā*). They prevent the growth and development of the five states of mental absorption (*jhāna*) which can be attained in the higher levels of concentration.

These five hindrances arise in the world of mind and matter, where the body and its senses inform the mind and its thoughts,

and where thought gives purposeful directions to the actions of the body. This purposeful direction is an urge (*chanda*) much stronger than a wish or desire. It is an impelling force which gives no rest to thought, which functions through any of the senses in craving for becoming (*bhava taṇhā*) and in craving for escaping (*vibhava-taṇhā*) from the responsibility of action, word or deed.

It is a desire for sense-satisfaction (*kāmacchanda*) which cannot be overcome by yielding or obstructing, but which must be understood to be dissolved. It is not the merely mechanical function of the animal nature through its hormones, which is nature's way of evolution in its struggle for survival. But it is the search for continuation of satisfaction in which the concept of self-identity can survive and continue. Evolution is nature's way of continuation of the species. Sense-satisfaction is the individual's way of continuation of its individuality. Nature has to fulfil the needs of its nature; the individual has to fulfil the greed of its projection to survive as a concept. Gratification is its method, its means, its action; 'self' is its motive, its aim, its goal. Hence, it is not in action, in striving, in projecting, that this urge can be stilled; but only in understanding the nature of this urge, the purpose of its striving, the goal of its desire.

Without continuance there is no meaning in striving, without a goal there is no meaning in desire, without individuality there is no self to survive. And thus, only in understanding the nature of this urge can there be a cessation of volition, of craving to become and craving to escape.

The arising of a thought of ill-will (*vyāpada*) is not merely a turning away from what is disliked. Here too, a mere suppression of feelings of hate or envy will not suffice to overcome this hindrance of aversion. Ill-will is rooted in the thought of 'self' as much as the urge for satisfaction, for it is a turning away from whatever is not conducive to the building-up and the strengthening of that 'I'-concept. It is the ideal of 'self' which must continue if there is any meaning

in striving. And thus, anything which causes an experience threatening the security of that individual entity has to be avoided. And that is the turning away in aversion in order to secure the position of 'self'. This turning away from the present contact is attempted either, by turning to the past in clinging to memories which keep the 'I'-concept alive, or by turning to the future in projecting the ideal 'self' for the purpose of continuation. Thus, aversion is not merely a dislike, but ill-will, that is a wrong will, a will in the wrong direction, a supercharged search for self-gratification through rejection in continuation and in projection of 'self'.

Indolence in body and mind, as sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), is an obvious hindrance to any progress. It is a typical attitude of escape by ignoring the issue. It is an isolationist policy of playing safe in search of self-protection. Here too, with 'self' as a latent motive and hidden goal there is a tendency to insensibility, non-involvement, callousness, all based on fear of loss of an ideal.

But, striving for an ideal is also a method of avoiding sensitivity of the present, of the actual. In sluggishness there is a refusal to understand and even to see what it is that the mind refuses to deal with. This fear of a possible loss is based on the misunderstanding that there is something to lose. It is the loss of continuity, of the future ideal which is feared when the present is not understood. And thus, the mind refuses to see, whereby it becomes one's obstacle to insight.

Thought is based on the past, on memory, and is aimed at the future in projection. It cannot do anything else; it is the nature of thought which is reference to the old as support, reference to the ideal as its aim. Without aim there is no purposeful action; without memory there is no identity. Hence thought is never in the present; while only in the present moment there can be real experiencing what is, experiencing the nature of conflict, experiencing the void of delusion. But that cannot take place in an indolent mind for the present knows no succession of time or postponement; and thus it is

only in total awareness of the reactions of the mind that there can be actual understanding of what is. To see the play of thought in trying to escape from the result of the past into an ideal concept of the future, that is seeing the truth in the present. In that truth there is no thought about truth; there is only experiencing the truth which is. In that awareness there is no more indolence; no more delusion, no more conflict.

But as long as the mind is agitated in its search for an escape from conflict, in its expectation of results, in its fear of loss of an ideal, there is excitement (*uddhacca*) in the emotions. But in a restless mind there cannot be a silent reflection, but only a distortion, which is either the agitation of hope or the worry of fear. The hope of achievement, as well as the fear of non-achievement, have that same basis of self-delusion. The very thought of achievement is the thought of 'self' in isolation, in opposition, in conflict. And in such thought, the mind is always conditioned, is never free to see, and can only act in dependence on those conditioned ideas. To be free from all opinions, from all standards, from all ideals, there must be a freedom from that ideal concept, not in opposition, but in insight that there is no 'self' apart from those delusive values. The 'I'-concept is based on opinions, on wrong perspectives, on distorted ideas. 'I am that delusion. And in that understanding there cannot be either agitation or worry. With the removal of that hindrance there is the freedom to see, and to act according to that understanding.

The absence of agitation and the absence of striving to achieve do not necessarily lead to the dullness of perplexity (*vicikicchā*). Undecidedness will lead to the uneasiness of insecurity, as long as there is the desire for security. It is that desire for attainment with the incapacity to attain which makes for the arising of perplexity, which is not doubt, but the uncertainty of the reliance on the thought and the ideal of 'self'. In the search for security and the failure of achievement, thought comes to a dead end.



In the ending of thought there can be cessation of striving, the cessation of a search for security, for identity, for continuity. But as long as there is the thought of perplexity, there is the confusion of an 'I' in delusion. And as long as there is a search of that 'I' for an escape, there is confusion, delusion and ignorance. Thus, where doubt can be healthy and lead to a solution, there perplexity is unhealthy because it still wants and cannot find a way out.

The conditions to be cultivated are the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta sambojjhaṅga*). They are not leading to wisdom, but they are the constituents of insight and enlightenment: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*virīya*), delight (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

It will be noted that the three steps on the noble path pertaining to culture, namely, right energy (*sammā-vāyāma*) right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) are also ranked among the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta sambojjhaṅga*).

Mindfulness (*sati*) not only leads to understanding; it is insight, because in alert watchfulness there is no speculation, no formation of opinions, no reliance on traditions, no acceptance of authority. Mindfulness is awareness of the true nature of an action in its reaction. In awareness there is no condemnation, no promotion, no ulterior interest of motives. There is just awareness of the conditions of the mind in which thoughts arise in dependence of desire for satisfaction, without denial or acceptance. All judgement is a self-assertion, because the 'self' is the standard for comparison. And so, in judgement there is no awareness of what is, but only of what should be. But in the awareness of the nature of judgement all condemnation ceases, for then it is seen as a reaction of the 'self' to its environment, the 'non-self' in opposition.

This mindfulness has no purpose of its own. There is no desire for interpretation, when sensations are seen as sense-reactions, when

perceptions are seen as reflections, when ideations are seen as mental formations, when thoughts are seen as references to memory or as projections of ideals. It is thought which must continue the past into the future, memory into the ideal, 'self' in isolation and opposition. And thus, it is awareness of the nature of thought which makes the mind free from the process of projection, free from the desire to become and to continue.

Culture of mind is now-a-days almost exclusively practised as a method of mindfulness (*sati-paṭṭhāna*), even though as a method it cannot lead to a goal, when there is no walker on the path. Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) is watchfulness, awareness by the mind and of the mind, of its changing mental states. Various artifices are employed to prevent the mind straying. The danger with methods is that they often become more important than the end in view. Then the repetition of a formula, a Sutta, a mantra, may dull the mind, so that there is no watchfulness in concentration, or they may focus attention too much on the mantra, with the result that there is a substitution of mental objects, sublimation perhaps, but no understanding.

The most favoured exercise is mindfulness on breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*). Watching the breath, being inhaled, watching it being exhaled, counting the breaths, keep thoughts tied to the post of concentration. When thoughts stray away from watching the breaths, it will be known that a distracting thought has interfered. With that knowledge thoughts are led back over and over again to observing: this is a long breath, this is a short breath. Thus, by suppressing distractions, thought is made quiet and peace of mind obtained. If the satisfaction of a calm mind is the goal, the exercise has been successful.

The object of mindfulness, however, is not in a search for an ideal calm, not in a solution of a problem, not in attainment of a goal. The purpose of mindfulness is not the actual search for a solution, not the actual wish for an escape, not the actual striving

for attainment. For, the search is a wish to obtain, a striving to achieve; but in mindfulness it is possible to see the actual movement of thought and its motives. Seeing the motive, rather than the object of a search, there is the erosion of striving in understanding. Thus, mindfulness does not lead to insight, but it is insight, an essential factor of enlightenment.

We have seen already that the doubt of perplexity (*vicikicchā*) is a hindrance to progress, because here is no attempt at understanding. Here, in investigation (*dhamma-vicaya*) we have a critical analysis which is a spirit of enquiry, the basis of all knowledge. It is the correct attitude of mindfulness, watchfulness, alertness, which frees the mind from prejudice and tradition, faith and conditionings through education, environment, instruction, etc. When there is this freedom to watch without expectation, there can be an impartial enquiry which is not the result of past memories or a reaction to ideals of a future anticipation.

Investigation need not be a groping in the dark, because even groping is grasping. But there must be an intelligent opening up of the mind, to observe without influence what is, what arises, what ceases. And that means the observation of the working of one's mind: for, it is in the mind that all things are made, that all things are reflected, that all conclusions are drawn, that all actions are planned. This investigation is watchfulness which, in seeing, understands.

The aim of investigation is not acquisition of knowledge, which can only strengthen the 'I'-concept; but true investigation may bring about right understanding which is insight, which is truth. There is no investigation of the truth, no search for the truth, but investigation (*vicaya*) which leads to the understanding of what is (*dhamma*). If it is thought which is seen as self-seeking and self-projecting, then in that understanding is the realisation of the nature of thought. And so, in seeing the false and understanding it as false, there lies the discovery of what is true. But, as long as

Energy (*virīya*) is the inner strength which does not rely on effort (*vāyāma*) which is an outgoing force. With the removal of the obstacles on the path there is the strength of freedom which is not the result of conquest, of acquisition, of achievement. It is the freedom from the need to acquire, freedom from the restrictions of individuality, freedom from the limitations of acquired property, learning and authority. It is the strength of independence which does not come from self-sufficiency, but from the realisation that the ideal of an independent 'self' is just as much a concept, an image, a reflection of thought, of the mind in lust, as the shadow of desire which has created the image of 'self'. Effort will have its goal of striving to make become what is not. But energy comes from the understanding that there is no opposition when there is no 'self', that there is no conflict when there is no opposition, that there is no 'self' in experiencing what is.

'Self' arises with memory and desire. In experiencing there is no experiencer, no 'self'. Hence, in mindfulness there is investigation which is not as search, there is strength of being what is, of no-more-becoming, which is the realisation of what is true. Such energy then is a factor, the fact of enlightenment.

The strength of freedom is an obvious delight (*pīti*) in realisation of independence; but it is not the freedom of 'self', but the real freedom from 'self' and all that 'self' stands for. There may be joy and satisfaction in emotional experiences, but that joy is not to be compared with the delight of being freed from emotions. The joy of emotion carries within it the fear of non-continuance. But in the delight of being free from emotions there is total deliverance without any further hope or fear. For, it is not the joy of achievement, but the much purer delight of no more struggle to achieve.

In the strength (*virīya*) which came through investigation (*vicaya*) without search, which was based on watchfulness (*sati*) without speculation in intelligent awareness, there lies a delight of the non-experienced, non-conditioned, the always new, without fear

of loss, without thought of 'self', without anxiety about things to come. It is the delight of emancipation which cannot be lost again, because the delusion of individuality and conflict has been seen as false in the awakening from the dream. Once awake, the dream carries no fear, because it was only a dream.

This delight (*pīti*) is then the factor, which through serene tranquillity of mind (*passaddhi*) makes of both, factors of wisdom (*bojjhaniga*), of enlightenment. In the calming down of the searching mind, when watchfulness (*sati*) becomes investigation (*vicaya*), when joy (*pīti*) is found in strength (*virīya*), there is a tranquillity which has no attachment to the past, no veneration for authority, no fear of consequences, no hope of ideals, no escape from the unknown, no search of imagination, no projection of ideals—which is the tranquillity of freedom, the relief of cessation, the discharge of confinement, the-release of emancipation (*vimutti*).

It is only the tranquil mind which is not conditioned, not motivated, not dependent. Thus, it is only the tranquil mind which can reflect without distortion, which can experience without memory, which can approach without a search, which can see without choice, which can act without craving. Only the tranquil mind can see with insight.

The mind is tranquil when thought has ceased, thought which argues and searches, which wills and wants, thought which is the 'I' in action, which reflects and projects, which is always becoming and never can rest. Thought cannot cease suppression, by sublimation, by striving, by idealising; for, all that is still thought. And such thought is action, the action of volition, of karma, of-rebirth of conflict.

The tranquil mind is watchful and alert, not aiming to understand, but understands what is because it does not aim. In that atmosphere there is direct perception which is insight, perception of the action of thought, and of the motive of such action, and of the source of such motive. In that tranquillity of direct perception

there is no distortion but just seeing things as they are, seeing 'self' as a delusion, seeing the action of that 'self' as the craving for continuance, the will-to-become, the lust for life in the future. And seeing that much, in the actual seeing there is no projection, there is no desire for achievement, there is no one who desires; there is just tranquillity, peace, no more striving, no more conflict.

Such is the proper setting for mental concentration (*samādhi*) which is recollection, the gathering of thought. Basically, the recollection of mindfulness (*sati*) and of concentration (*samādhi*) are very close, here as factors of enlightenment, elsewhere as sections on the noble path (*ariya magga*). It is also another name for one-pointedness (*citt'ekaggatā*), and as such it is the faculty of bringing together, thereby preventing distraction in the culture of the mind of (*bhāvanā*), and causing calm and tranquillity (*samatha*). Thus it becomes the chief link between virtuous conduct (*sīla*) and insight (*paññā*).

As a means to calm and peace (*samatha bhāvanā*) it is not very important and not even Buddhistic in a sense; for the practice of meditation as concentration was found to be part of ascetic training even before the bodhisatta discovered his own way to enlightenment through insight (*vipassanā*).

Concentration as a method of mind-control is rightly grouped under culture (*bhāvanā*), for it is a cultivation of the various stages of mental absorption (*jhāna*). Thus we hear of concentration exercises (*kammaṭṭhāna*), which should be undertaken according to the various temperaments and inclinations. A hot-tempered mind is advised to develop loving kindness and compassion by concentrating on the mental image of the beloved friend, then enlarging that feeling to all living beings, including even one's enemy. An argumentative and analytical mind is advised to concentrate on the composite nature of all things by analysing them into the four basic elements of solidity and cohesion, of caloridity and oscillation till the insubstantiality of all is seen in all. A timid character should

not concentrate on what is fearsome, such as a decaying corpse in a cemetery at night; for such might easily upset his mental balance.

The devotional aspect, the intellectual approach, the intuitional or direct access, all find their own level in a choice of forty meditation subjects, each one of which constitutes an individual's means of obtaining that one-pointedness of mind which is the highest and purest thought-form in a mind that yearns for peace in conflict.

On a disk of clay, on an aperture or gap in the wall, on the nine good qualities of the Buddha's no virtue, on analysis of material elements, on heavenly bliss, on the loathsomeness of food being digested, on universal love and compassion, on the 32 parts of the body, on the ten stages of decomposition of a corpse. All are methods of concentration; and as long as they keep the mind spell-bound, even in trance, thoughts will be concentrated, distractions will not interfere.

But, mindfulness (*sati*) is the watching of the movement of thought, not the directing of them.

When a distraction occurs, that too is at movement of thought; and in true watchfulness there will be understanding of that distracting thought, understanding of its arising, of the expectation arising outside the scope of concentration. Then the bringing back of thought to the post of concentration would not be conducive to the understanding of the distraction. Thought is not existent as an entity; it is the reaction to conditions; and when therefore a distracting thought disturbs the programme of concentration, it is that thought which should be followed and understood, instead of following the line of a predetermined concentration. In thought as it arises, whether spontaneously, conditioned or intentionally induced, there is revealed the actual attitude of the mind at work. If such thought is seen in action, to be a mere reaction, then that is the truth, the object of meditation. By suppression, substitution, sublimation, one merely avoids seeing the truth that is. In escaping from the actual, there is the formation of conflict, the cause of chaos in

the mind. The direction of a search according to a prefixed plan is the cause of concentration never leading to emancipation. Thought remains tied to its focus, and can never cease.

It is in equanimity (*upekkhā*) as even mindedness and mental balance, where is found the summit of perfection as far as mind-culture is concerned. It is one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) in concentration; the most sublime of the four boundless states (*appamaññā*) which together with loving kindness (*mettā*) compassion (*karuṇā*), and sympathetic joy (*muditā*) constitute the 'divine' states (*brahmavihāra*); it is the culmination in balanced awareness and intelligent understanding.

The practice of the ten perfections (*dasa pāramitā*) by a being aspiring to the supreme enlightenment of a Buddha, the summit of the perfection of a Bodhisatta, there is no more an attempt at escaping from sorrow, no building-up of self-defence in isolation, no further striving for acquisition of virtue. There is just seeing this one problem, facing this one conflict, which is approached in an unbiased attitude of mind.

It is the nearest human thought can come to complete understanding. In even mindedness there is acceptance without appropriation or rejection. Then there is neither hope nor fear. In equanimity there is no distraction of volition, of will-to-become, of a desire-to-escape; and thus there is clarity of seeing without searching, acceptance of the actual without distraction of the ideal. It is the summit of connection in balanced awareness and intelligent understanding.

There are the seven factors (*aṅga*) which do not lead to but which constitute enlightenment (*bodhi*). They cannot be practised in order to become enlightened, but the enlightened mind will thus be in peace and at ease.

This is as far as mind-culture can go. It is a culture (*bhāvanā*) of the mind, a focussing of thought, a bringing into subjection the hindrances and obstacles on the way. But it is not the end of the



road; the goal has not been reached. Conduct is regulated in speech, in action, in living. The mind is controlled and peaceful; thought remains, cultured and subdued. Yet, the process continues, there is still striving for more attainment in higher spheres of formless thought in worlds beyond (*arūpa jhāna*), where even nothingness becomes an object of desire, perception becomes imperceptible, and all sensation and sensational perception ceases. There is no ending to this end.

And so, where action has renounced its reaction, where culture has left behind its fruits, there is still the conflict of the unattained, striving for which has remained ignorance. Now there are only two remains to understand why there was failure. And in that final understanding with wisdom and insight may lie the solution of all conflict, the end of the path, the ending of striving, the end of becoming, the ceasing in cessation.

## Insight

The wisdom (*paññā*) of insight, which is not experimental knowledge but understanding while experiencing, while seeing, is the culmination of the noble path of perfection, with right seeing (*sammā-ditthi*) and right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) of the learner's course (*atthaṅga-samannāgatā-sekha-paṭipadā*), completed with perfect insight (*sammā-ñāṇa*) leading, to perfect deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*) on the tenfold path of sainthood (*dasāṅga-samannāgatā-arahā hoti*)

The path as a whole is said to, be 'the method for the realisation of certain conditions for the sake of which the brethren lead a religious life.' Those conditions are more sublime than heavenly pleasures, for they culminate even in this present life in the realisation of the emancipation of mind and heart which is arahantship, the perfect enlightenment and deliverance of Nibbāna.

Right understanding or right seeing (*sammā-dit̥ṭhi*) is the conviction through insight (and not mere knowledge) of the truth of the universal and essential constitution of every complex as conflict (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*). It is not the knowledge of, but living in conflict with understanding thereof that provides this insight, that I am conflict. There is conflict because the 'I'-concept is an identification of the 'self' with sensational pleasures and intellectual satisfaction, rejecting the displeasures of the senses as causing conflict in the mind, a disturbing self-security. The 'I' concept is the basis of all striving and projection, of all desire for continuance, for property and attainments, which support this misconception of individuality (*sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi*). I do not live in conflict as long as I try to live with conflict, in compromise seeing it as something extraneous. As long as I think that I have a conflict, I shall try to escape from it.

For this knowledge to become a living experience there is no method of analysis, for that is still knowledge. But when in contemplative meditations (*vipassanā bhāvanā*) it is actually experienced that all self-creative actions are only reactions of thought, references with the past in memory, and desires for projection in the future, when it is experienced that actuality is being made into an ideal so that the 'I' can continue—then the ideal will lose its value, effortlessly; and the misconception of individuality (*sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi*) will be seen and experienced as such. And that is seeing rightly, seeing things as they are (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*). This is seeing in analysis: that the body has no substance, that feelings have no meaning, that perceptions are deceptive, that consciousness is but the grasping of all those images. It is the experience that actions, ideas are but mental forms, that are reactions, and that there cannot be an actor when those actions are not real.

The experience that 'I' am conflict, the experience that all striving which is of self, to become self, more self, more secure, more permanent, is but the projection of an ideal misconception; the experience that there must be a 'self' as long as there is this desire to

act and to become; and that, with the end of this striving, there is also the end of 'self' that experience of the truth of conflict is right understanding (*sammā-dit̥ṭhi*).

To have this right sight it is very essential to have the right perspective (*sammā-saṅkappa*) which enables one to see the correct relationship in co-ordinated thought (*saṅkappa*). This is sometimes referred to as right intention; and here the qualification 'right' is very essential, because intentions are the driving force which make or unmake any act, good or evil. It is the creative force of action if guided by right vision, but it may be irreproductive of selfish views. The Buddha spoke of right perspective as views of renunciation, of good-will and of harmlessness. Then, the right perspective would be a detached view in which the mind can turn away disinterestedly from any pursuit or selfish purpose. A pursuit is to perspective, what wishing is to thinking. To have the right perspective (*sammā-saṅkappa*) with right seeing (*sammā-dit̥ṭhi*), or to see without prospectives and retrospectives, is as difficult as thinking without wishing.

The right perspective in right seeing, then, is an open mind without bias or prejudice, without purpose as the driving force to a pre-set goal. The narrow range of individual vision, is limited, coloured and distorted by personal considerations of likes and dislikes, love and hate, attraction and repulsion, be they physical or mental. It is the nature of thought to rely on past experiences, to refer to the authority of learning, to compare with the customs and rules accepted and imposed by society. It is fear that guides action when remembering the past. It is also hope that guides it into an unknown future.

It is always a thought of 'self', compared with what should be or should have been. Within that framework of 'self' any perspective must be warped.

Right perspective, therefore, is not guided by fear or hope, but is a perception of what is, without praise or condemnation. This

aspect of insight is not a looking through or looking beyond, but a looking at what is. I do not know the person I meet, even if he is an acquaintance of many years. What I know is only my reaction to this contact. Right perspective does not go beyond this contact, which is not his, but mine. 'I' am that reaction, and that is the only thing I can know. To judge another by my reaction is not only unfair to the other, but is essentially wrong, because in him I can only know myself.

And what does that knowledge of my reaction amount to? My reaction is based on my previously acquired knowledge, because that is the only, thing I have, the only thing I am. I am the viewer of the subject, and look at things from my standpoint. I am also the viewer, the theodolite which measures horizontal and vertical angles, the telescope which brings the distance to the foreground, the sight of my gun which sets the range of fire. My loves and hates are all self-love; my opposition is selfish isolation; my struggle to become is desire to be, for without existence there is no, meaning in being, in acting. And so I project that 'self' as the only fixed point on my horizon towards which vanishing point all my lines of reference are drawn.

Right perspective sees the relationship of thought as ideal, and experience as actual, and is free. It is not drawn into the projection-game, but sees and understands things as they are, a delusion as a delusion. And in seeing such delusion for what it is, the mind is free from delusion, and, can experience what is true.

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The two remaining factors of the noble tenfold path are perfect insight (*sammā-nāṇa*) and perfect deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*).

These two final sections of the noble path in Buddhism though opposed to the earlier eight sections (the noble eightfold path), yet constitute a different approach to that of right speech, right action and right living. Even mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration

(*samādhi*), which form the approach of mind-culture leading to tranquillity (*sammā-bhāvanā*), belong to a different branch of the road of tranquillity (*samatha*) through concentration. The other branch is the one of contemplation (*vipassanā*) through intuition and comprises right understanding (*sammā-dit̥ṭhi*) and right perspective (*sammā-saṅkappa*), but especially right insight (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and right deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*).

Insight (*ñāṇa*) is often combined with seeing (*dassana*), especially in the frequently repeated formula: to understand and see things as they are (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*). Normally one would expect *dassana*, seeing, to precede *ñāṇa*, understanding. But that kind of seeing is mere knowledge without details, whereas the knowledge of details would constitute understanding. Even this knowledge of details, however, is mere rational, and is found to some extent even in a few higher forms of animal life. But in this connotation of *ñāṇa-dassana* it is obviously insight which brings about seeing things as they are, which is not the reason of logic and deduction. Instead of the aphorism ‘seeing is believing’, it is more correct to say that understanding or insight is seeing, that is, seeing correctly. Then, insight and seeing become practically synonymous.

The knowledge of reason arises through the association of sense-data and is thus dependent on the sense-organs coming into contact with objects and events. These data are collected in the senses (*vedanā*) and recollected in perception (*saññā*), where they are classified (*saṅkhāra*) and stored in memory, to be called up for recognition (*viññāṇa*). This storing process constitutes the identification process which maintains the ‘I’-concept as store-keeper.

The understanding of this process of knowledge leads to the discovery that there is no store-keeper apart from his collection: I am the collection, and not the collector. This understanding is seeing the process as it is. It is seeing the suchness of things (*yathā bhūta*) which constitutes insight (*ñāṇa*).

Knowledge makes the 'I'; insight helps to undo that process. This does not invalidate the usefulness of knowledge, as long as it is understood in its proper relationship. But, when knowledge as a movement of thought brings about the activity of separate individuality of 'self' as the thinker, it is no more seeing things as they are. Insight into the true nature of the process of thought will prevent identification in the process of consciousness. Things are not the objects of consciousness but one's ideations (*saṅkhāra*) about those objects form the basis of the reflection which is consciousness (*viññāṇa*); to see that is insight. And so, where knowledge leads to bondage, insight leads to deliverance.

The path of wisdom is the path of self-realisation. Without the understanding which is wisdom, there is confusion and ignorance. Confusion as to the means and ignorance of the goal can only lead to chaos and conflict. Without knowledge the path cannot be seen and liberation is impossible. Without knowledge all virtue is desire, of acquisition. Without knowledge there is ignorance, and in ignorance there is conflict. Thus, where ignorance is the root-cause of all evil, of all a rebirth, there knowledge is the cessation of both good and evil; and is also the end of rebirth.

Then, what is knowledge? There is knowledge of perception. There is knowledge of learning. There is knowledge of understanding. There is knowledge of insight.

Knowledge of perception (*saññā*) arises through contact in the senses of body and mind. It is the knowledge of experience, which may be no more than the unconscious skill to perform seemingly rational acts by mere instinct or by training. It is an impulse towards a goal without knowledge of the means thereto. Actions thus performed are not much more than mechanical re-actions. Such knowledge has not risen above ignorance.

Knowledge of learning is the knowledge of means to end. It is the knowledge of analysis and synthesis or composition (*saṅkhāra*), driven by the impulse to get, to obtain, to possess. Such knowledge

is based on imitation and repetition, on hearsay and tradition; it is book-knowledge and memory; it is reaction, a response to some stimuli; it is purposeful. Being a response it is responsible activity, although dependent on conditions as stimuli. It is the formation of ideas, the knowledge of inference.

Knowledge of understanding is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is awareness of the end, the mental activity, to obtain that end. It is not a mere mechanical reaction, but it contains the element of choice and volition. Through understanding arises the knowledge of distinction between good and evil, between self and others. This knowledge of distinction is not perfect, because it is conditioned in its outlook, in its intention. The fact of being able to choose shows reason, but also a lack of perfect understanding, because choice is influenced and conditioned by desire, and this conditioning prevents full comprehension, which makes choice superfluous. But it is conclusive in its logic, although the basis of its logic may be inadequate.

Knowledge of insight (*paññā*) is intelligence. It is seeing, in the fullest sense of intuition which is above reason and ratiocination. Understanding is a mental grasping of the meaning of things; but insight penetrates the meaning of grasping; it sees the nature of perception, of conception, of ideation; and such insight makes the mind free from the concepts, from the image, from the grasping for meaning and purpose.

Knowledge in general, covering all four aspects, is to know. The term is derived from the Latin *nosco* and is related to that Greek *gnosis*, Sanskrit *jñana*, Pāli *ñāṇa*. It is in this term *ñāṇa* that one can recognise the various stages with their prefixes; reactive perception (*saññā*), conscious awareness (*viññāṇa*), and intelligence with insight (*paññā*). When reference is made to perfect knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*), it refers therefore to insight (*paññā*).

One has therefore to differentiate among the knowledge of perception, the knowledge of learning, the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of insight. The understanding of this process of knowl-

edge shows that reason and conscious awareness (*viññāṇa*) have developed from recollection in perception (*saññā*) and selections in the formation of ideas (*sānikhāra*). Thus, the mind as consciousness has the faculty of recognition, which is used for classification and identification. It is in that process of identification that things and experiences are seen as 'mine'. This mind has become the store-keeper of the 'I' concept. The chief occupation of that mind is reasoning, in analysis and, synthesis, a faculty of which a man is proud to distinguish himself from the animals who can react in perception, learn with imitation, respond to stimuli, but cannot reason responsibly, cannot chose with volition, but only react to conditions. In that identification with reason, man has made himself as an individual who stands apart from the herd and who identifies himself as an individual is his opposition as a result of his selection in classification.

Thus, his conscious awareness of distinction has produced, his isolation of 'self', necessitated by his conscious selection of survival, not in the herd, but as an individual. Perception, of the herd-instinct has produced a concept of the individual. Now reason takes over and sees that, whereas the herd or the race can survive by mere procreation in abundance, the individual can survive only in continuance. To continue in a process of change and impermanence requires constant resistance and thus the 'I'-concept is the constant source of conflict. Conflict is his only means of survival; I am conflict. Only in resistance there is existence.

The intelligence to see this is insight (*paññā*) which is the perfect knowledge (*sammā-ñāṇa*) or wisdom of intuition.

Among the mental factors (*cetasikā*) insight stands all by itself, as it cannot be brought under any of the other classes, the general (*sobhana sādharmaṇa*), the abstinences (*viratiya*), or the illimitables. (*appamaññā*). It is not a general mental factor, as there can be knowledge (*viññāṇa*) without insight (*paññā*), but it is a discernment of mental states to be developed or to be put away. And



thus it is mainly due to the absence of insight that unskilful actions (*akusala*) are performed.

Insight is an illumination of intelligence with awareness highly intensified. The mind becomes more fully conscious within than ever before; and its impact is often such a powerful experience that the effects remain indelibly imprinted on one's character for the rest of one's life. It is not the memory of an experience, but the experiencing itself which has transformed the very outlook on life. Hence we speak of insight, which is a mystical experience, dealing with a shattering blow to the 'I'-concept and demolishing the walls of isolation, separation and opposition, which constituted the conflict in living.

This contemplation of insight is a true deflation of the ego which results in a truly humble attitude in relationship with love and compassion. The enlightened one is naturally detached and indifferent to worldly greatness, fame and name, radically changed for life. It is the state of a non-returner (*anāgāmin*), for there is no going back in what is seen as a delusion.

The value of experiences lies in the memory thereof, which is knowledge. In experiencing, however, there is no flash-back, but a flash-in which in experiencing is free from all memory of experience. And that is wisdom.

Knowledge (*ñāṇa*) and wisdom (*paññā*) have arisen from the common root of understanding, one with culture, the other with intuition. And that has given rise to a double aspect of truth: the relative truth (which is not a partial truth, but truth partially veiled or obscured), and the absolute truth (*paramattha sacca*) which is supreme and beyond logical or empirical truth. The relative truth concentrates on differences and thus cannot see the complete truth; it is knowledge. Absolute truth can only be experienced; it is insight.

Knowledge is actual. Insight is real. The world of events as we know it in experience is actual. Through contact the world impinges on the mind, and thought is its reaction. The world of knowledge is

the world of action, and reaction. It is actuality. But the reactions are subjective, conceived in an individual mind-process; and thus those reactions are images representing the mental reactions. All that is knowledge; and knowledge is only that; it cannot go beyond. Hence, knowledge is actual but not real.

The reactions themselves, however, do present the real state of the mind. Thought may be reaction; but that reaction is a fact, is real as such. It is in that reality that there can be seen the truth of nature, the truth of action, of thought, of actuality, of reaction, the nature of conflict; all of which are factual, real and true. The mind's interpretation of the world of events may be a reflection which is a reaction; but the reflection as such is a fact, is truth, even though it may be a distorted image. Hence, it is possible to see the truth in the false, when seeing the false as false. For, that is a fact, the understanding of which is truth. And to see the falseness of the false is to be free from the actual. And that is deliverance (*vimutti*).

Insight does not necessarily involve the power or potency (*iddhi*) of super-intellectual thought (*abhijñā*), such as clairvoyance and clair-audience, or what is called nowadays extra-sensory perception in parapsychology or bioplasmic, or psychotronic energy.

It is the knowledge of the true nature of the working of karma (*kammasakata-paññā*), knowledge of the states of mental absorption and purification of the mind therein (*jhāna paññā*). As transcendental insight it is the realisation of the path of arahantship (*magga-paññā*) and the realisation of the fruit thereof (*phala-paññā*) in emancipation, which is Nibbāna in this life itself.

Hence, it is, not a research in re-incarnation, but a discovering insight of the function and the motives of the mind in search.

The state of liberation or deliverance (*vimutti*) is above all an experience which cannot and need not be repeated, for in experiencing there is a complete reversal of approach and of intuition, which cannot be reversed again into ignorance once the elusive nature of existence is understood. Once it truly has been understood, com-

prehended, realised, it is not possible to turn back, for the truth thus realised is the annihilation of a delusion. Once it is seen that there never was a basis for this delusion, it is not possible to intentionally revive it. Such realisation, however, is not an attainment of a state of salvation. What can be gained by 'self', can also be lost to 'self'; but when there is no 'self' there is neither gain nor loss, neither salvation nor damnation. Hence, all terms used in describing this state are hopelessly inadequate; because they all are views of attainment and of extinction, which are the views of 'self'.

It is the liberation from those views, which gives that unique sense of freedom which cannot be brought about, but which is always there, unknown, uncared for, unwanted; for, who wants to lose himself?

The Buddhist Theravāda view, seeing that conflict has arisen through the misconception of individuality, naturally focusses all attention on, and conducts all effort to the understanding of this misunderstanding. The realisation that the individual is only a term for conditioned and changing elements without an individual entity or soul, naturally dissolves the individual conflict, when it is realised that there is no problem of an opposition of self and others. This is not the salvation of self, but a salvation from the misconception of a 'self'. That is freedom and deliverance.

Those on the other hand, who seek the salvation of all beings, naturally see themselves as the instrument for such salvation. Thus, a Mahāyana adherent is prepared to work for infinite time in helping all beings to attain salvation. Such ideal saviour is called a 'bodhisatta', a being inclined to enlightenment, but who is yet prepared to postpone his own awakening till all others are awakened by him. This shows of course, at once the inherent weakness in this Mahāyana viewpoint; for, how can a person wake up others as long as he is asleep himself?

Undoubtedly, the development of a dry philosophy on the voidness of all existence into an idealism which can fire the imagination

into acts of heroic endeavour has to thank its progress to the inborn need of life to continue, to act, to be reborn over and over again in order to attain the ideal goal. In the endeavour to reach that ideal, the individual will exert himself to grow in virtue and experience, in order to obtain the wisdom needed to enlighten all. It is the bodhisatta-ideal as the goal of striving, which has appealed to the emotions, while the original teaching of a goalless, timeless path with no walker thereon has no appeal to make, but is self-evident in the awakening of intelligence.

Nibbāna as the ending of craving and the cessation of becoming has frequently been taken as the end (not the ending of striving). And thus one finds in the poetical passages of the ancient texts already some positive and affirmative attributes, such as happiness supreme (*parama sukha*), the deathless (*amata*), the peace of security, purity of mind and heart-truth and the ever-lasting. Such are expressions by those who attained deliverance in this life itself as perfected saint (*arahants*), free from the mental intoxications (*āsavakkhaya*), delusion and ignorance. It was the recollection of being free which could not put in words the actual experiencing of freedom.

The actual experiencing has no thought of 'self' in it, an experiencer or a witness. Freedom is not a quality of someone having achieved his goal of deliverance and now looking back with satisfaction on that achievement. The experiencing is not a feeling: I am free; but: there is no 'I'; and that is freedom.

Thus, in the discourses of the Buddha, there are no emotional outbursts, but words of insight, which show Nibbāna as the end of becoming (*bhava nirodha*), that is, the end of 'self' as concept, as a delusion. Thus, there is an awakening (*buddhi*) and an emancipation (*vimutti*) from the basic defilements of greed, hate and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*) which caused all conflict and the re-cycling of birth, life and death in Samsāra. In the absence of volition there is no more grasping, but the freedom from grasping is not through

an act of will in renunciation, but through the insight that there is nothing to grasp.

Freedom then is the deliverance from the foolishness which binds the mind to the delusion of continuance. In foolishness there is no striving for freedom from foolishness; for, in ignorance there can be no understanding of foolishness. All mental values are ideals for the mind to find shelter, security and continuance. Thus, without ideal, and hence without striving, there may be a simple view that ideals are mind-made and hence no objects for attainment.

In the discarding of ideals there will be only seeing what is; and in that freedom from ideals there is the experiencing of being free. Just as the taste of food lies in the eating, so the experiencing of freedom lies in being free. The desire for freedom is still a fetter which binds the 'I' to an ideal. But in the understanding that both 'self' and 'ideals' are delusions, there is freedom. In the understanding that desires for becoming free are still letters of delusion, there is the insight of deliverance, and deliverance through insight.

The freedom, which is the deliverance of Nibbāna, is not subject to space and time. There is no 'self'-entity to be made free and freedom is not an achievement for a future life. Hence Nibbāna is now, is unconditioned (*asankhata*). It is only ignorance which is conditioned by delusion; it is only craving that is conditioned by ignorance.

And thus, Nibbāna is the timeless path on which there is no walker. It is not a path of progress, because there is no goal. If there is action, there is no result, because there is no purpose, no aim, no actor. But in that action there is perfection, because it is complete in itself, with a completeness which comes from understanding the need for action, which does not contain greed for reaction. Being timeless, it is not bound to this or another life, for it is no-more-becoming.

If the understanding, which is insight, dawns within this life, it does not mean death or annihilation, for there may be the resultants

of earlier ignorance and desires which have to spin out their effects till there is ceasing as a result of no more effort, till the fire is quenched because there is no more fuel. There is no annihilation when there was never an entity; but a process will come to an end in ceasing when no further motive is induced to proceed.

Nibbāna is the extinction in this life of the fires which were kept alive by ignorance and craving and hate, the fire of 'self' which is delusion. It is the extinction and cessation of conflict, and of the becoming of conflict.

One thing only do I teach,  
Woe and how its end to reach<sup>5</sup>.

This has only meaning for one who has understood the nature of conflict (*dukkha*), the fact that 'I' am that conflict and the source of conflict (*dukkha-samudaya*), the fact that insight into the nature of 'self' alone can bring about the ceasing of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha*), a timeless path (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*), to be realised at this moment in the realisation of deliverance, which is insight that there is no self (*anatta*).

Man in his conditioned state of mind is in search of the unconditioned. In the chaos of his thought he is in search of order and security; and, in the conflict of this search he tries to escape from the finite and the impermanent into the infinite, the permanent, the absolute. He seeks transformation of the actual into the ideal, and complains that he cannot understand the real.

Just as to-day is not to-morrow, so the present is not the future, to be 'now' is not to become 'then'. But, although this will-to-become is not becoming, it is a wanting to become (*bhava taṇhā*). And a will-to-become and a will-to-be have no meaning if there is no continuance in being, which is becoming. All my action, my effort, my striving, my will, my desire, all that which is now making

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<sup>5</sup>Majjh. N. I. 22, p. 140.

the 'I', is entirely directed towards becoming. My whole present in action is a will-to-become. Without that will, which is a projection from the past into a future ideal, there is no present. 'I' am that will-to-become, 'I' am the ideal which is not.

To this ideal man has given many names; but names are words, words are labels, which can never be the experience itself. Words are about truth, but not truth. Whether one speaks of universal consciousness, of the transcendental unconscious, of objective consciousness, the inner light, liberation, enlightenment, it is always a perception of a total transformation, which is beyond space and time, beyond emancipation, the boundaries of experimental knowledge, beyond the limits of body and thought.

In that perception there is a realisation of the unreality of the 'self', of the ideal, of the unreality of changing thoughts and moods which constitute the 'I'. It is a realisation that there is no permanent and unchangeable 'self' as the carrier of sensations and desires, of the fears and hopes which come with memory and projection. The 'I' is an assumption without foundation beyond my desire to be. There is only the will-to-be, which begets a will-to-become, because without a future the present seems meaningless and purposeless; and that has created this projection of a desire to provide a security which the impermanent 'now' cannot provide. The 'I' must exist because it must persist; and in this persistence there is resistance, which is conflict. Persistence is necessary to give the security of continuance to what is now. It is the vicious circle of being and becoming, called *Samsāra*.

Whatever that 'I' is called is immaterial, the 'self', the soul, *ātman*, super-ego, *paramātman*, absolute, god, the universe, the whole. It is always the same 'I', who wants to become, because the 'I' wants to be, and who must 'be' in order to 'become' its existence is only an abstraction, a concept, an ideal; it is never actual. The actual 'I' is a continual struggle of emotions trying to gain the upper hand. Physical sensations are immediately translated as indi-

vidual experiences, compared with memories and selected stimuli of the past. Without the memories of those past experiences no comparison can take place, no registration, no identification. Without the past there is no 'I' in the present. The 'I' brought about by education and environment, developed by external influences and individual reactions, has no entity of its own. Yet, it is a multiplicity of 'I's, who make resolutions and break them, the 'I' who wants to be free and binds himself with ideals, which fights for peace, who struggles for survival, who wants to be himself and finds conflict in the process of searching for himself in a solution. He hypnotises himself in religion, drugged with ideals, fascinated with slogans, bound by the spells of convention, tradition and social demands. Such is the unreality of the 'self' which must resist in order to exist.

I am all that; and without that, I am not. The 'I' is not.

But that is not what the 'I' wants. All its desires are for continuity and security, for which there must be identity. It is the want to continue which preserves an experience in memory. It is the desire for security which seeks an escape from the unreality of impermanence into the concept of the infinite, the permanent, the absolute.

Lack of insight into the actual has created a vision of the ideal. This vision is now called the inner light, revealing cosmic consciousness, in which the 'self' has become the over-self, and believes to have achieved freedom from the delusion of individuality. Instead, there is identification with ideal, which is still a concept of deluded mind.

How does one know that one is deluded? Knowledge, consciousness, awareness, is only in oneself. Whatever one knows about others is still one's own reaction to relationship, a reflection in a mirror. In a mirror I see my reflection when I move, it moves; when I smile, it smiles. It is a picture, a movie, a reflection of myself. But I know that is nothing but a reflexion; it copies all my movements, all the



movements of my lips; it formulates the words, but it cannot speak; it cannot act independently, it cannot think. It does not exist.

Well, I am that picture in the mirror which is nothing but a reflection without individuality. All my actions are conditioned by education, religion, environment. They merely reflect what has been selected and preserved from the past. This reflection is the only present of this 'self'; and it is this reflection which I take to be myself, which I see and know, and which I try to preserve for the future. This reflection in the mirror now becomes a static picture as a photo, which can be framed, hung on the wall or put in an album for identification: I am that.

Just as I see myself in the mirror or in a photo so I see others reflected in that same mirror. I do not know my neighbour, I do not know my wife, I only know their image which I have framed in my mind. My love and my hate are only reflections in that mirror of myself. I hate, because I am hate; I love, because I am lust. I have no contact, no relationship with anyone, with anything, but only with the images, the reflections, which are in me, which are myself, the 'I' images which the 'I' makes, because the 'I' itself is nothing but a reflection, conditioned by fears of the past and hopes for the future. If God is my ideal, then I am that God; and if that ideal is a delusion, then I am that delusion. Such is not knowledge which I have acquired, but insight into the nature of that delusion. It is not acquired, it cannot be learned, it is not a property; but a constant awareness that whenever I judge or compare, it is always the picture in the mirror.

Do not despise that picture, however, for it is a great teacher. When I understand that picture as a reflection, that picture may not be able to tell me much about the other side of the picture which is not reflected, but it shows all there is to know, to see, to understand, namely that I am that, picture of myself and of the whole world reflected therein. If I love, I love myself; if I hate, I hate myself. For those emotions are the reflections of myself, of my moods, of

my desires; they are my creations of myself, as my picture in the mirror, not real, but actual. They are not existing in themselves, and thus they are not real; yet they are acting, I act, reacting as I react, and thus they are actual. 'I' am that picture, that image, that reflection, that creation always becoming and never being, non-existent, only conditioned dependent on conditions to arise and to cease, without substantiality, without permanence, without essence without identity, without soul.

This is not a thing to be taught by religion or philosophy. It can only be experienced in actuality through constant awareness in watching that picture, that reflection of a concept of 'self'. In awareness of action as reaction, the concept of an actor vanishes. When the 'I' is seen as a reflection, there is no need any more to look into this mirror; then there is no 'self' to see. It is the end of a delusion.

When one is thus living in a state of actual awareness there will be a change in his perception, and therewith the nature of his understanding. This is truly thought-transcending; for, thought which is conditioned by perception as it received through the senses in a conditioned mind, now ceases to be influenced by memory which is of the past and projection which is of the future. In the absence of memory there is no fear; in the absence of projection there is no hope of desire. And thus, there remains only the present moment without recognition of the receptacle (the senses, the memory, the past), without escape into the unknown, the ideal (through imagination, volition, projection, the future).

It is only in a state of actual awareness that the present moment can be realised without being grasped at in recognition or in identification. Both recognition (the past) and identification (continuity, the future) are the props of the 'I'-concept which cannot arise or abide without them. In fact, it is memory (*saññā*) and ideation (*sañkhāra*) which constitute the thought (*viññāṇa*) which is 'self'. 'I' am the past, because it is the memory of the past which creates

the individual; 'I' am the future, because it is the projection into the future which creates the continuity of the concept of identity.

But in the present moment, divested from the conditionings of past and future, there is neither individuality nor identity. That is why in the present moment there is neither fear nor hope, neither clinging nor craving, when there is no conditioning in thought by either memory or projection.

Thought, however, cannot arise without reliance on the past, cannot continue without aspiration for the future. Volitional action (*kamma*) is conditioned by mental formations or ideations (*sankhāra*) from the past; and it produces its result (*vipāka*) in a process of wilful becoming (*bhava taṇhā*) in the future. But if this will-to-become is not in the present, the causes of the past cannot become the results in the future. It is in this single moment of instant awareness that the chain of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) can be broken.

In this single moment of instant awareness there is a total change of perception and understanding, when there is no conditioning thought grasping at sense-perception (*vedanā, saññā*) to make it an object of craving (*vedanā-paccaya-taṇhā*). In this single moment of insight (*ñāṇa*) there is no thought, there is no individuality of subject, no identity of object; there is only experiencing (not the memory of experience) which transcends all thought. When thought ceases, there is direct perception. When conditioning ceases there is immediate understanding. For, thought is the veil of ignorance, is the mirror of distortion, the creator of delusion. Thought is the, 'image-maker', the conceit which says: 'I am' (*asmi-māna*). In direct insight there is immediate understanding, because there is no medium, no obstruction, no discoloration, no distortion by reference to a 'self' which is thoroughly and totally conditioned as to origin and function.

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<sup>6</sup>Majjh. N. I. 22, p. 140.

This is not a higher state of consciousness, but direct awareness. It is not concentration of thought, but contemplation in intelligent awareness. This awareness is emancipation from conditioning. It is this awareness of the conditioning which brings about an immediate emancipation therefrom. It cannot be developed or created, because that would be the creation of a new concept, an idea, an ideal, a new delusion of attainment. Hence, enlightenment is always instantaneous, timeless and uncreated.

Enlightenment is not a goal towards which one can strive and progress. That, however, does not indicate a completely passive 'laissez faire'. For, in this direct perception there will be the perception of the false, which is always more obvious than the right. That is not a judgement according to standards of good and evil, for the false is as obvious as an untruth. A lie is false, not by any standard, but by its intrinsic deviation from what is. Then, to see the falseness of a lie is a direct understanding of the truth, not by proclamation, but by insight. It is that insight without conditioning which is the realisation of the truth. It is not 'I' who finds the truth, as a subject discovering a hidden object. It is the discovery that there is no 'I', which in actual awareness has no place for reference. In the complete immersion of experiencing, in the fullness of loving, there is no thought: I am in love, or I have a loving disposition, I must protect my love, I am possessed by love, I must increase my love. Then, love is not a beloved object possessed by a loving subject.

It is loving, or experiencing love or hate as actually hating. As soon as the thought of 'self' intervenes, be sure, that is neither love nor hate; it is 'self'. And this is a delusion, for self can be seen only in opposition to non-self, a division, a separation made by thought for the purpose of identification.

To see hate as hating (not the memory of hate) is practically impossible, because in hating there is no thought about hate. And so, when the personal element intervenes there is no more hating,

but only self-projection. This comes about because of the need which is felt to continue in hate to make it effective. If hating does not continue, there is no hate anymore. And so, I create the division of an 'I' who develops or suppresses the feeling of hate. When that is understood, the 'I' as hate is no more, because it never was.

When it comes to giving a description of this state of experiencing insight, words become hopelessly inadequate. The reason is that words are symbols by means of which man tries to capture an experience. This capturing of an experience becomes necessary when there was a purpose in the act of experiencing, which made the experience itself incomplete, being only a means to an end. Thus thoughts are captured by means of words.

In the beginning was the thought  
And the thought was  
made word  
And the word was God-almighty, my 'self'  
Begotten by thought and creating the ideal.

It was thus not the word that was 'in the beginning', for there was thought which formulated the word. The word is not an experiencing, not even an experience; it is only a symbol, a signpost, of something that was. However inadequate, words spoken or written down are the only way the mind can label and try to retain the memory of an experience. Thus, to revive an experience through symbols is as difficult as to explain a mathematical formula with the finger-language of the deaf-dumb.

The only approach is a negative one, which denies that the experience was in the senses or in the intellect. Even for Dante 'vision was greater than speech', and Saul at his conversion heard 'unspeakable words'. Speech was invented by man's reason and can cover only his logical deductions. Thus, living to use words as symbols, one's thoughts become stereotyped, labelled and registered, the equivalent of book-knowledge. Then the only thing to do is to reject whatever has the taste of a personal experience, remembered as a thought, sterilised as a word.

‘The sense of immorality’ is an obvious misnomer, as whatever is sensed is conditioned, composed (*saṅkhata*) and hence decomposable (*anicca*), which is the denial of immortality (*amata*). He, who says he knows the deathless, is already dead to truth.

The factor of light seems to play an important role in most transcendent experiences, which are referred to as vision, insight, illumination, enlightenment. Hence one may distinguish the appearance of a light, a positive experience of incredible beauty, which with psychedelic colours floods and impregnates whatever is seen with a shining of its own; This can be induced in states of mental concentration (*jhāna*) and also by means of hallucinatory drugs; which shows that there is little or no intrinsic value in such experiences, apart from being escapes. They may provide visions, but not insight; and a positive experiences they leave the subject-delusion stronger than before. In this same category must be placed the experiences of sound, heavenly music or celestial voices. As long as there is the sensation of self-satisfaction and pleasure, there is still the basis of conflict, the subjective experiencer.

The mystic experience during meditative insight or contemplation is far removed from the ecstatic experience in states of mental absorption (*jhāna*) as the result of a concentration.

The ecstatic experiences following intense concentration will be based on and hence contain traces of the contents of the ideas, beliefs or images related to such beliefs. In the preparatory stages of concentration there will be the expectation which is based on memory and knowledge; and thus such knowledge will penetrate into the process of concentration, which then will show the expected result. Hence, in the trances of concentration there is present in the beginning the working of a discursive mind (*vitakka-vicāra*), superseded by delight (*pīti*), and gratification (*sukha*), till the ultimate balance is found in equanimity (*upekkhā*).

In the mystic experience of contemplation (*vipassanā*) there is direct perception without reflection, and hence no awareness of joy

or satisfaction, leave alone of the discursion and deduction of a logical approach. In contemplation there is no approach, not even a phenomenon of merging or unification, which could be known only in subsequent reflections, when the 'observer' is brought into play to explain his 'observations'.

The essence of contemplation is the total absence of reflection, of observation, of developing, a complete lack of stimulation and a deprivation of sensory reactions. While concentration would involve an active striving for a definite goal, contemplation creates a complete and psychological passivity. Such passivity, however, remains acutely aware; and its passivity is a vulnerability, an openness, based on a rejection of all conditioning influences from tradition, faith, learning, etc. In such openness there is a passive receptivity, which does not categorise or compare, but contemplates in direct perception of awareness. That means that in such openness there is a total void of all that strives for accumulation of experiences which is the work of memory, the mainstay of the collector. There is no thought of, or about, experiences, but only experiencing, in which there is neither subject nor object, neither aim nor goal.

In a truly mystical experience there is not only a transcendence of the subject-object relationship (Which is the experience of ecstasy in formless states of meditation), but is the real insight (*vipassanā*) that there is neither subject nor object, and hence no relationship of experience at all. There is only experiencing of an undifferentiated insight which, subsequently, may be symbolically compared with illumination, but which is only light in so far as things, people, events are seen and understood in a completely different way.

It is the approach which differs. Whereas formerly all experiences were of the 'I' having visions, now there is a new light in which the 'I' is not seen. In fact, there is only experiencing, and neither thought nor denial of 'self'.

Thus the 'light' comes from inside, as from within a crystal vase which thereby is completely transformed. There is no objective

light coming from the subject, but there is an experiencing with a totally detached understanding which has no relationship to 'self' or 'no-self'. It is the emancipation from the light-symbol, from all symbols, from all experiences and attachment to experiences, which is enlightenment.

In abstract works of art there is an attempt to express the inexpressible; and it is only the artist himself who can say how far he has succeeded. Thus it is with the painter and the poet, and the author and the saint. Some speak of a transfiguration, but that would imply a comparison. Comparison implies a preconceived idea; it may not be an ideal, but at least it is a concept, an image, a thought. Now, a new concept is seen with which one tries to replace the earlier one. Is that transfiguration not also an act of the image-forming mind? And can sublimation actually be said to be much different from a hallucination? Both are deviations from the actual in so far as sublimation is a mental correction of an earlier unsatisfactory experience. Thus the value of such experience is only a strengthening of the subjective experiencer, which is an escape from actuality.

Mystic experiences may change the horizon of one's outlook on life; but the view is still restricted for any outgoing viewer. There is still the experience of limitation which makes one search for the infinite. There may be the attempt to identify the viewer, the seeker, the mystic, with the experience and with the goal; but in that identification it is always the object which is to be absorbed, attained, possessed. The 'soul' wants to attain his God, which is the same as saying that thought wants to possess the ideal. It is the subject trying to obtain the object, even when there is an intellectual grasping of the misconception of identity. Thus it is often said: 'May I attain Nibbāna'. Never is it said: 'May Nibbāna absorb the 'I'-concept and thus dissolve the image of the deluded mind.'

It is not in dissecting the mind in psychoanalysis, finding that there is no 'self' in sensation, perception, ideation and consciousness. That still leaves the analyser admiring the work of his intellect.



But seeing the process of identification of thought and the thinker as a necessary step to make thought independent and continuous, so that in memory the 'I' can survive; in seeing this process of extension as the only possible way of making the 'I' continue; in seeing that the mind is merely reacting to its own activity which is resistance to find existence; in seeing that the 'I' is only a reaction in which action is reborn there is the insight into this entire process, an insight which sets free in emancipation. It is not thought which can deliver the mind, but intelligent awareness which can see things, persons, events, 'self', as they are, which sets free in the stilling of the thought-process, in the ceasing of ratiocination. It is not freedom of the 'I' but freedom from that concept. Without the view of 'self' there is right view, even in seeing the false as false, the 'self' as void (*anatta, suññatā*). In that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right perspective (*sammā-saṅkappa*), there is right comprehension (*sammā-nāṇa*) and true deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*).

Those who apprehend the truth which is beyond the knowledge of learning may experience a direct apprehension of insight which is the awakening of intelligence, the experience of immediacy, without separation of individuality in relationship. Others, who hear these words, will draw conclusions about the nature of deliverance, without understanding that the experiencing itself is without conclusion. Thoughts form theories which one could test for their truthfulness. But thought itself is not the truth; at most it is a concept of what truth may be, or may not be. But that is not experiencing.

Who can tell what sweetness is? It is the taste of honey: sweet flavour; it is the smell of roses: sweet fragrance; it is the sound of harmony: sweet melody; it is the smile on the face of a sleeping baby: sweet child; it is the loveliness in all that can be sensed. But those are words which have no meaning except in experiencing. Even memories can be sweet, when revived and experienced in sweet dreams. But without experiencing there is no sight, no sound, no smell, no taste, no memory even. And so sweetness is only in

experiencing. And so are love and hate, and all things good and evil. Without immediate experiencing there is only thought about it, which creates words and definitions, the means through which the 'I' tries to survive in, appropriation. Thought is the desire to maintain and preserve the experience of the senses, to make it 'mine', so that 'I' can be sweet and beautiful.

When I speak of love and hate, I am only my concept, my idea, my thought thereof; and that is not experiencing. But, when I speak with love, I am that love; when I speak with anger or in hate, I am that hate. But, when the 'I' tries to possess the experience and make it 'mine', to live in it, to continue in that thought of 'self'—that is not love; that is not truth.

In love or in hate there is no thought about it. It is the immediate experience of loving, of hating, of self-projection in hope and in fear. Then there is no thought of 'self', no separation of the experience and the experiencer; then there is no 'I'; then love is not lust. And in that there is actual truth when thought does not intervene to make a thinker and a lover who can keep his thoughts and his emotions as memories to fall back on, to revive, to be born again in them.

This is awakening, which is a total transformation, in which the 'I'-concept has no place, which is as a burning flame which in its consummation gives the light of intelligence and insight, and the warmth of understanding and of love. And out of the death of that self-in-conflict comes the living truth which is free from conflict, because there is no opposition; which is free from fear because there is no clinging to memory; which is free from hope, because there is no void of expectation; which is free from ignorance, because there is insight; which is free from enmity, because there is love; which is free from 'self', because there is no delusion.

It is that freedom which is the perfect deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*), a culmination which cannot be reached because it is always there, but which is not wanted by a 'self' in search of continuation, in search of satisfaction, in search of an escape. It is the freedom

of 'no-self' (*anatta*), the perception of the void of conflict (*dukkha-anatta saññā*), the cessation of the will-to-become, (*bhava-nirodha*). That is Nibbāna.

All things born, in truth must die  
 And out of death in truth comes life.  
 To live in truth is living free  
 In which there is no 'self' to be.

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Is a final word about Nibbāna necessary?

There are various terms for that experience: intuition, insight, enlightenment, all of which, like inspiration, revelation, invention, are also products of evolution. No enlightenment is possible without the necessary preparation by intellect and emotion. No invention without scientific enquiry. No inspiration without perspiration. Enlightenment comes at the saturation point, but with a sudden invasion of the truth, which usually cannot take place because of our evasiveness, our preoccupation, our search for security, for a solution. In such a search we do not allow the truth to evolve. We expect a revelation as from some external source, when the truth has to evolve from within, till it bursts open like a flower with all its beauty and fragrance. Evolution has to grow from within, not towards a goal, not according to plan: but from sheer necessity, just as eye-sight was evolved as action from within, a reaction to the limitation of the light without, as a response to a challenge. What is needed is not so much a discovery but an uncovering, a release of tension, a relaxation of intentional effort, an awareness of actuality, which then will naturally evolve into what is there already, but which could not be recognised on account of our intensive search, our concentration on an ideal, our fixation of mind on preconceived ideas.

It is not possible to speculate on the nature of the experience of enlightenment, because no speculation can ever be the experience

itself. A memory of an experience is only a psychological hankering after a repetition for the sake of sense gratification. If such psychological memory is there at all, it is the surest sign that there was no complete experience. Only the incompleteness of an experience will leave behind a residue of dissatisfaction, which makes the mind hunger for completion and the heart thirst for gratification. That is the stuff desire is made of, desire for the possession of a physical need which has become psychological greed. An experience can never be complete when the mind itself still sees the distinction between the experience as an event, and the experiencer as the subject. For, then there is no total awareness of the experience, but a partial awakening only, and a partial continuance of the dream of an 'I' seeking satisfaction and continuation, which can only bring about further conflict.

This happens when evolution is seen as a process of adaptation, a struggle for survival, a selection for the purpose of continued existence. Then it is not the understanding of the experience, but at most a sensation thereof, which can be stored up in the psychological memory, to be called back to reinforce the 'self' when interest in life falls low.

But, when an experience is understood to be an aspect of the process of evolution, without a clinging to sensations thereof, because there is no substance in the phenomenon, no experiencer in the experience, no actor in the act—then such experience can become truly a revelation, just as an open door reveals the freedom of nature. To experience that awareness it would be folly to cling to the door: it would equally be folly to cling to the 'I' as experiencer, for that is not the freedom, not the experience, not the enlightenment.

The experience itself, being an evolution in experiencing, cannot be repeated. On account of its unrelatedness to any 'self', it is absolute. In the understanding thereof everything else is understood. In the solution of one problem all problems are solved, because they are all based on the one possible conflict between the actual

experience and the ideal experienter. When that one conflict is understood, it is no more. And no further conflict can arise, because of the impossibility of further misunderstanding. Such awakening would be the finale of all evolution, further than which there is no beyond.

When it is understood (not just emotionally or even intellectually, but completely in actual experiencing) that this very impermanence of evolution is also the evolution of life in a constantly new birth, in which every experience is fresh, in which every event is a new discovery, in which every occurrence is a challenge for immediate action, then at that same moment the mind will be free and unfettered, free from the burden of psychological memories which prevent one from seeing things directly as they are, free to approach with the innocence of a new mind. The apparent problem which is no problem anymore because there is no conflict, no 'self', no opposition, no burden of the past, no worry for the future.

Such discovery can come only to a mind which is calm without thought, which has ceased to agitate, to be disturbed by desires of achievement and attainment. For, only a mind which is calm can see things as they are, can act freely and honestly without being conditioned, can see that there is no problem where there is no conflict.

In that peace of mind there is no restlessness, no search for happiness and satisfaction but the peace of completeness which has solved all problems in the realisation that there is no conflict, because there is no 'I'. In that realisation there cannot arise any further desires, and thus there will be no more becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), which is Nibbāna.

This is truly a path with no one to walk on; is a salvation from oneself, which is the ultimate deliverance. It is not a path of progress, of a search for, or an approach to a goal. When life ceases to be a search, when it ceases to be a process of grasping, then right living will bring perfect freedom from all bondage, and

deliverance from all fetters. When right effort ceases to search for substitutes and escape-routes, it will be solely directed towards the unveiling of a delusion. And when a delusion is seen as such, it can no longer delude the mind, which is set free. Then the path ceases to be a method, but is the actual solving of a problem in conflict.

Conflict ceases with the cessation of the problem of opposition. And when perfect insight ultimately and totally comprehends the delusion created by the imagination of a self-expanding thirst for continuity and security, then there is that perfect, complete, supreme and absolute deliverance, which is not conditioned, not originated, which has neither beginning nor cessation, the end in the ending, and no more beginning, no more conflict.

‘One thing only do I teach,  
Woe and how its end to reach’<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>Majjh. N. I. 22, p. 140.

# 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 his first year 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 Dhammapala. 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. From the 1980s onwards he lived at the Nilambe meditation center in Sri Lanka. He passed away on 15th September 1988.