



THE TRIPLE GEM

By Venerable Pyinnyathiha



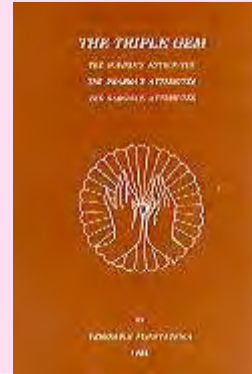
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**BY VENERABLE
PYINNYATHIHA**

The Buddha's Attributes
The Dhamma's Attributes
The Samgha's Attributes



1988

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Victory breeds hatred, the defeated live in pain.

Happily the peaceful live; giving up victory and defeat. (Dhp. v 201)

All tremble at punishment, all fear death;

comparing others with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill. (Dhp. v 129)

ABBREVIATIONS

Page numbers in the footnotes refer to the Pali texts of the Pali Text Society. In the translations the page number will be found in square brackets at the top of the page or, in the case of *Vinaya* and *Jataka* books, in the body of the text.

Some *Dhammapada* stories are taken from the translation by Daw Mya Tin (M.A) published by the Burma Pitaka Association, Rangoon, 1986.

Abbreviations	Text	Translation
A.	Anguttara Nikaya	Gradual Sayings
DhA.	Dhammapada Commentary	-
DhP.	Dhammapada	Dhammapada
Ja.	Jataka	Jataka
M.	Mejjhima Nikaya	Middle Length Sayings
MLS.	-	Middle Length Sayings
Sta.	Sutta	Discourse
Vin.	Vinaya	Book of the Discipline

FOREWORD

By

Ven. Dr. Hammalawa Saddhitissa

The book entitled "The Triple Gem", written by Venerable Pyinnyathiha is an excellent guide to understanding the main articles of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Samgha. The Buddha said that by Saddha one can cross over the stream of *samsara*, the circle of birth and death. This book really generates and develops real *saddha*, confidence based on knowledge. Without understanding the Buddha, the teacher; the Dhamma, the teaching; and the Samgha, the followers of the teaching; it is impossible to appreciate the Buddhist Path. Venerable Pyinnyathiha, I am quite sure, has written this book with these views at heart, to help the Buddhists and the intelligentsia to

understand and appreciate this sublime path.

I read this book with great interest and I have noticed that he has followed Buddhaghosa's interpretation of the Three Recollections dealing with the Triple Gem in his Path of Purification, the *Visuddhi magga*. Also, he has used other relevant parts of the Buddhist Canon in writing this valuable book. The presentation of the subject, the contents as well as the elegant language, are inviting to all sorts of readers. Venerable Pyinnyathiha is a graduate of Rangoon University and he has trained in the Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha on the practice of *Vipassana meditation*. He is well-versed in the Theravada Canon.

It is highly creditable for him to write a book of this standard after pursuing the study of English for less than one year under an able teacher. This is really an authentic presentation of one facet of the Dhamma. It is a readable book, not only for Buddhists and the people who appreciate Buddhism, but also for non-Buddhists who are learning comparative religion. Without any hesitation I am delighted to recommend this book to the readers as an illuminating and accurate interpretation of the Three Gems.

"Ciram tithatu lokasmim sammāsambuddhasāsanam."

"May the teaching of the Fully Enlightened Buddha endure long in the world."

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I was selected by Ven. Panditabhivamsa (*Ovadacariya*) and the Buddha Sasana Organization, 16, Hermitage Road, Rangoon, to propagate Buddhism in England. Ven. Dr. Rewata Dhamma, the Spiritual Director of the Britain Burma Buddhist Trust, and the Trustees and supporters made it possible for me to come to England, so I am much indebted to them. Soon after I arrived here I realised that most Burmese young people in England did not know about the attributes of the Three Gems. When they were asked about Buddhism, they could not give satisfactory answers. So, the idea came to me that it would be good to write a booklet about the Three Gems. I wrote it with considerable effort because my English is like a child's. My only purpose is to hand over the knowledge of Buddhism to the younger generation. Although it is not a classic book, if the readers, having read this book, learn the ABC of Buddhism my weariness will vanish away like a drop of water slips off a lotus leaf.

I wrote this book following the example of a translation of the *Paritta Pali* written by Venerable Vasettabhivamsa (Tha Pye Gan). I

thank and pay respect to him as a most venerable teacher.

Mary Hale, a retired teacher, has been very kind to me and generous with her time. She has corrected my exercises with great patience. Without her help this book could not have been published. I should also thank Mrs. Jacquetta Gomes who introduced me to Mary and asked her to teach me English. Two more people deserve thanks. One is Venerable Pesala who helped me by typing the draft and gave many suggestions. The other is Indrajit Samaranayike who offered the use of his computer to Venerable Pesala which greatly facilitated the preparation of the manuscript. Last but not least I would like to thank all of the donors who contributed to the costs of printing this book so that it is possible to offer it free as a gift of the Dhamma.

May all of them get great happiness and merit from their worthy efforts in this Dhamma work.

THE THREE MAIN VIEWS

Even during the time of the Buddha there were sixty-two kinds of views on the basis of three main views; and so, it goes without saying, that there are various kinds of views nowadays. The three main views expressed in the life-time of the Buddha are ***Pubbekata vada***, ***Issaranimmana vada*** and ***Ahetuka vada***.

The first view is that everything in the present life is only due to deeds done in former existences. It rejects the idea of a Creator and the consequences of good and bad deeds in the present life. With reference to this view, it is assumed that all evils that stem from killing, stealing, etc. are only the results of actions in the past and there is no consideration for the deeds which must be practised or avoided in the present life. If everybody does what he wants without mind and body under restraint, there cannot be security, peace, freedom and happiness in the world; which is longed for by all human beings.

The second view accepts that everything, including human beings and the happiness and suffering that they undergo, is created. Beings are unequal in strength, courage, ability, wisdom, wealth, faith, etc. Why are all living beings unequal? Who causes evil? Why does evil arise? Who wants evil? Who creates evil; killing, stealing, etc.? Who can control it? The Buddha said that all beings are dominated by envy and meanness and hence come into conflict with one another.

The third view describes everything as happening by chance. This view is completely untenable, for everything that we see has its corresponding cause; the good benefits us and the bad harms us. If a person holds this view he will think that there is no moral action that produces good results or immoral action that produces evil results, since death annihilates every living being. And then he will surely try to earn his livelihood without considering whether it is good or not. Therefore he will be a menace to others. More over, a person who holds this view is unable to make any spiritual progress because he is unlikely to make any effort for it. After death he cannot attain the status even of the lowest human being but is bound to land up in the lower worlds.

Buddhism dissents from all these views. It accepts the "golden mean" (*majjhima patipada*) and believes in cause and effect.

Why do people hold different views?

The Buddha answered the question as follows. In this world people do not have the same kind of temperaments. They obsessively cling to the views that suit their temperaments. They insist that only their views are

right and that the other views are wrong. Owing to their different temperaments people differ from one another in their preferences in regard to colors, sounds, clothes and so forth. Likewise they talk about the beliefs which they have accepted on the basis of their attachments and speculations. (1. D. ii. 282)

WHAT IS BUDDHISM

The Buddha's doctrine or teaching is called Buddhism. Everyone who follows the Buddha's teaching is a Buddhist. To be a Buddhist it is sufficient to regard the three jewels; the Buddha, Dhamma, and Samgha as one's refuge and to believe in kamma and rebirth. Every Buddhist commits himself or herself to the three jewels by reciting the formula;

Buddham saranam gacchami,

I go to the Buddha for refuge

Dhammam saranam gacchami,

I go to the Dhamma for refuge,

Samgham saranam gacchami,

I go to the Samgham for refuge,

WHO IS THE BUDDHA?

The name of the Buddha is just an honorary title which means he was enlightened. He was named Siddhatta which means "Wish fulfilled". He was born in the year 623 B.C. at Kappilavatthu on the Indian borders of present-day Nepal. His parents were King Suddhodana and Queen Mahamaya.

On the fifth day after his birth, learned Brahmins predicted that he would become either a universal monarch or a Buddha. But the youngest, Kondanna, convincingly declared that the prince would definitely become a Buddha.

At the early age of sixteen, he married his beautiful cousin, princess Yasodhara. For nearly thirteen years, after his marriage, he had a luxurious life.

He knew no personal grief because his father provided more than he could ever need. Although he lived amidst comfort and prosperity, he felt a deep pity for suffering humanity and realised the universality of sorrow.

One glorious day as he went out to the pleasure park to see the world outside, he saw an old man, a diseased man, a corpse and a dignified monk. He had never seen such sights before. When he saw the first three sights he was convinced that beings are subject to birth, decay, disease, death, sorrow and defilements and so also would he be. The fourth sight suggested the means to overcome the ills of life and to attain calm and peace. So, he decided to leave the worldly life to search for truth and eternal peace. On the day when his first and only son was born he left the palace to become a hermit. At that time he was just 29 years old.

After he had searched for the truth for six years he found it and, at the age of 35, became known as the Buddha. Perhaps you may say, "His enlightenment is nothing to do with me, so I cannot go to the Buddha as my refuge." But it doesn't matter. You can choose your own way. The Buddha did not threaten you that you must take refuge in him, and neither do his disciples. He neither punishes nor gives salvation to other beings.

If that is so, why should anyone take refuge in him? He did not judge, but he gave a great deal of guidance to everyone on how to live, practise meditation and how to be liberated from all suffering. To know whether or not he is the Buddha, you can try to practise his teaching. When you get the benefit in both your worldly and spiritual life, then you will know he is the Buddha, the Awakened One.

Why should you pay respect to the Image of the Buddha?

Buddhists do not pay respect just to an image of the Buddha. Actually they are paying respect to the Buddha's attributes. To remind them of the Buddha's nine attributes they make an image of him and pay respect to him in that way. It can be compared to the images of national leaders or flags which represent a country. The citizen has to respect these images although they are merely symbols. Why is that?

THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE BUDDHA

**Iti pi so bhagava araham sammāsambuddho
vijjacaranasampanno sugato lokavidu anuttaro
purisadammasarathi sattha devamanussanam buddho
bhagavati.**

The Buddha has nine attributes, namely: he is worthy of honour, he is the Fully Enlightened One, he is perfect in knowledge and conduct, he is the Blessed One, he knows the worlds, he is the tamer of unruly men, the teacher of gods and men, the Enlightened One, the Exalted One.

1. Why is he worthy of honour? (Araham)

He has no greed, ill-will, ignorance or other defilements which are the source of bad deeds. One who has these mental impurities is attached to sensual pleasures, has anger and aversion to offensive objects, and does not know the true nature of mind and matter; that is, he thinks that everything is permanent and pleasurable. Moreover, the Buddha has uprooted in himself all other defilements such as; conceit, envy, meanness, enmity, hypocrisy, boastfulness, deception, etc. Although we may wish to eradicate these things we have not been able to do so, therefore he is worthy of honour.

2. In what sense is he the Fully Enlightened One? (Sammāsambuddho)

The Buddha knows everything by his own Insight without depending on the teaching of others. He is always ready to explain anything that

should be explained. Once, a prince named Abhaya asked the Buddha, "If learned persons approach you and ask you a question they had constructed would the answer occur to you spontaneously, or have you already reflected on every possible question thinking, 'If anyone approaches me and asks me this, I will answer thus'?"

The Buddha answered with a counter-question, "Can you name all the various parts of a chariot?"

"Yes I can", answered the prince.

"What do you think, O Prince, if anyone who has approached you should ask thus, 'What is the name of this particular part of the chariot?' would the answer occur to you spontaneously or would you have already reflected on it in your mind?"

"The answer would occur to me spontaneously because I am a renowned charioteer and all the particular parts of a chariot are fully known to me" replied the prince.

"In the same way, O prince, the answer occurs to me spontaneously because the Dhamma is fully penetrated by me."

Nobody can answer as many questions as the Buddha. Other teachers, when they are baffled by a question, resort to speculation and imagination. Recognizing that the Buddha does not need to resort to such speculation we pay respect to the Buddha.

3. What is the Buddha's knowledge and conduct? (*Vijjacaranasampanno*)

The Buddha perfected fifteen kinds of conduct, namely: morality, sense restraint, and moderation in eating, vigilance, moral shame, moral dread, great learning, wisdom, confidence, industry, concentration and the four-fold *jhana* of the non-material sphere. Because of these attributes it is proper to pay respect to the Buddha.

Without right conduct no one can get knowledge. Some may have knowledge without having to study because of acquiring it in previous lives. For four aeons and one hundred thousand world-cycles, throughout innumerable lives the Bodhisatta (the future Buddha) sought for the well-being of mankind. Therefore he practised the ten perfections (*parami*), namely: charity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, industry, tolerance, truthfulness, resolution, loving-kindness, and equanimity.

In his last life, knowing that sensual pleasures could never give inner peace, the Bodhisatta renounced lay life and for six years practised austerities such as suppression of breathing, starvation and so on. When he realised that self-mortification was also not the way to enlightenment he gave it up and followed the middle way to become a Buddha.

What is the Middle Way?

The middle way comprises eight factors, namely:

Right understanding - There is no ego, soul or creator. There is only mind and matter, and cause and effect. Every second they are arising and vanishing.

Right thought - Thoughts free from hate are for the welfare of all living beings. They are based on love and good-will. Thoughts of harmlessness arise from compassion and sympathy. Thoughts of renunciation arise from the intention to liberate oneself from sensual desire, defilements and the cycle of life.

Right speech is speech which is free from lying, slander, abuse and frivolous chatter.

Right action means abstention from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

Right livelihood is to make one's living in an honest way and to avoid dealing in armaments, animals for slaughter, slaves, intoxicating drinks, drugs and poisons.

Right effort - There are four kinds of right effort. The first is to remove unwholesome thoughts which have arisen and if you have done wrong in the past you should try not to repeat it. The second is to prevent wrong deeds that have not yet occurred. The third is to try to do good deeds which you have not yet done. For example, you should give alms and observe moral precepts more often. Fourthly, you should strengthen and perfect the wholesome deeds which you have already developed.

Right mindfulness is bearing in mind wholesome thoughts which lead to further development of good qualities. It is not beneficial to dwell on past mistakes but you must only resolve to do good in the present moment.

Right concentration - This refers to mental development by overcoming the restless and scattered nature of the mind.

The Enlightenment

It was by following this middle way that the Bodhisatta gained enlightenment. In the early part of the full-moon night of May in 588 B.C. the Bodhisatta acquired the extraordinary knowledge whereby he could recollect all his former lives. In the middle part of the night he attained the celestial eye by means of which he could see all the celestial worlds and the destiny of beings. In the last part of the night he attained the extinction of all ignorance and attained the supreme enlightenment. With the extinction of all the defilements and the attainment of Arahantship the Bodhisatta realised Nibbana and became the Omniscient Buddha.

4. Why is he called the Blessed One? (Sugato)

The Buddha's fourth attribute is 'Sugato' which is translated as the Blessed One or the Happy One. It is a combination of the prefix 'su' and the word 'gato'. Su means good, and gato means speech. The Buddha never speaks anything which is false or meaningless. There are six kinds of speech:

- i) Speech which is not true, not factual, not connected with benefit and which is disagreeable to others,
- ii) Speech which is true, factual, not connected with benefit and which is pleasing to others,
- iii) Speech which is true, factual, connected with benefit but which is disagreeable to others,
- iv) Speech which is not true or factual, nor connected with benefit but which is pleasing to others,
- v) Speech which is true, factual, not connected with benefit and which is disagreeable to others,
- vi) and speech which is true, factual, connected with benefit and which is pleasing to others.

The Buddha's speech is usually the last type and on some occasions he speaks the third, but for that he knows the right time. As a mother would remove a stick from a baby's throat even though it might draw blood, so too the Buddha sometimes admonishes his disciples severely out of compassion. (Abhayarakumara Sutta, MLS Sta. 58, M. i. 395.)

In another sense, 'su' means peace, extinction or Nibbana. 'Gato' means getting or realising. The Buddha was the first to realise Nibbana so he bore the title Sugato. Although other people realise Nibbana they are not given the title Sugato because their attainment depends on the guidance of the Buddha.

Again, we can divide Sugato into 'su' and 'agato'. 'Su' means straightly or zealously and 'agato' means coming or practising. To reach one's destination or objective one must choose the best way and follow it without deviating. From the time of hearing the prediction from the former Buddha Dipankara that he would become a Buddha, the Bodhisatta practised the ten perfections (parami) and the five great sacrifices* which lead to omniscience.(* Giving up his wealth, wife and children, limbs, eyes and life.) Having reached his goal of Perfect enlightenment he is called Sugato.

5. How does he know the worlds? (Lokavidu)

The Buddha has knowledge of all existences, that is, he can perceive the nature of all beings, planes and phenomena. He knows all the past, present and future lives of beings as well as their temperament.

Beings differ from one another in their inclinations and preferences. Without the practice of meditation suitable for their particular temperament no one can get the best results. Only the Buddha was able to give the method of meditating for each person in conformity with his temperament.

For example, a young son of a goldsmith became a bhikkhu. Venerable Sariputta gave him the meditation object of loathsomeness of the body. Although he practised meditation keenly, he made little progress. So Sariputta sent him to the Buddha. The Buddha knew that he had been born in families of goldsmiths for the previous five hundred existences therefore he created a beautiful golden lotus flower with his psychic powers and told the bhikkhu to concentrate on it. While the bhikkhu concentrated on it the flower gradually withered. Seeing the flower wither he realised the impermanent nature of all things including himself. Thus he was able to get rid of craving. Had he not met the Buddha he would not have been able to overcome his craving. (DhA. v 285.)

The Buddha also fully knows the true nature of mind and matter. Perhaps other people may think that mind and matter are permanent and pleasant. But the Buddha perceives that they are always changing, that they are ceaselessly arising and vanishing.

8. Why is he the guide of unruly men? (*Anuttaro purisadammasirathi*)

The Buddha is also known as the peerless tamer and guide of the hearts of men. This is related to the previous attribute. He has the ability to instruct and tame other people because he knows people's temperament. As a physician can cure someone effectively only when he knows what is wrong with him. Other wise, not only may the patient not recover but he may die due to the wrong treatment.

Human beings are treacherous, tricky and guileful. So, it is hard to tame them. One day, when the Buddha was near the pond named Gaggra at the city of Sampa, an elephant trainer named Pessa arrived there. When he saw the quiet, serene bhikkhus surrounding the Buddha he thought, "I am able to tame elephants with ease because they show their minds by their behavior but I have difficulty controlling my slaves and workers who do one thing with their body, another with their speech, and their thought is still another. But the Buddha can instruct human beings. It is truly wonderful how the Buddha knows the progress and deterioration of beings." (Kandaraka Sutta, MLS Sta. 51, M. i. 340)

Perhaps the question arises, "Could the Buddha help everyone with his teaching?" It depends on the individual's spiritual maturity.

Once, a horse-trainer, Kesi, came to visit the Buddha. The Buddha put this question to him, "How do you train a tameable horse?"

Kesi answered, "I train a horse sometimes by kindness and sometimes by harshness or by both together."

"And if the horse does not submit to your training by either of these methods, what do you do?"

"In that case I kill him because I cannot let him be a discredit to my teaching."

Then Kesi asked the Buddha, "How do you train a tameable man?"

"I train him sometimes by kindness and sometimes by harshness and sometimes by both. And if he does not submit to the training, I kill him,"

At this, Kesi was shocked, "Surely you do not mean that you kill him! Taking life is not proper for a Buddha."

"That is right, taking life is not proper. Yet if any man does not submit to my training then I think it is not worthwhile to admonish that man and that is destruction for him as regards the holy life." (A. ii. 110)

So we should be very careful that we do not become such a person who takes no notice of guidance.

7. Why is he the teacher of gods and men (*Sattha devamanussanam*)

The Buddha was able to solve many problems which could not be solved by anyone else. Then he enlightened others. He taught them how to live, how to practise meditation in order to be released from the cycle of suffering. Some may think that the Buddha was pessimistic and cynical because he often stressed the loathsome aspects of life. But the Buddha not only taught detachment from the world but also gave many instructions on how to live happily and purely, how to relate to others, how to judge a person, how to make an honest livelihood etc. For one's daily life the *'Mangala sutta* and *Sigalovida sutta* are very useful and practical.

Before the birth of the Buddha, there was much dispute on what was a *mangala* or auspicious sign. In those days people believed that seeing certain sights or hearing certain sounds in the morning was a sign of good things to come. But no one could agree on what were the best signs. Eventually, the dispute even reached the heavenly planes.

Then, one night, a certain *Deva* approached the Buddha, and, standing respectfully to one side, asked the Buddha to preach on *mangalas*. The Buddha enumerated thirty-eight kinds of *mangala*. These can be summarized by saying that everything which causes good results and does not degrade a person is a *mangala* or auspicious sign for the future. Everyone accepted his explanation and the dispute were ended. So the Buddha was the teacher of gods and men.

8. What is the meaning of Buddha? (*Buddho*)

The eighth attribute of the Buddha is 'Enlightened One' or 'Awakened One' - Buddha. Anyone who attains omniscience deserves to be called by that name. One who possesses great wealth is known as a millionaire, it is not necessary for him to announce it. If a poor man claims to be a millionaire he will be ridiculed.

There are three kinds of understanding: understanding based on thinking, understanding based on learning from others and understanding based on mental development which has reached the stage of full concentration. It is by the last of these that the Buddha

knows the four noble truths. There is nothing to know beyond the four noble truths because all phenomena fall within their scope. Without realising the four noble truths, no one can be free from suffering.

What are the four noble truths?

The first is the noble truth about suffering. Birth is suffering, old age is suffering; illness, death, association with the unpleasant is suffering, separation from the loved is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering. In brief the five aggregates of clinging are suffering.

The second is the noble truth of the arising of suffering. It is that craving which is potent for rebirth, which is accompanied by pleasure and lust, seeking satisfaction here and there, namely; the craving for sensual pleasure, the craving for existence and the craving for non-existence.

The third is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering. It is the utter fading away and cessation of that very craving.

The fourth is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering or the noble eightfold path. It has already been explained above.

9. Why is he called the Exalted One? (Bhagava)

The Buddha possesses **six special qualities**:

- i) Control over his mind,
- ii) Nine supramundane attributes,
- iii) Good disciples,
- iv) Glory,
- v) The wish to further the welfare of all beings.
- vi) Untiring energy.

i) Control over his mind

The mind is very difficult to control; it wanders far and moves about alone. It lies in the cave of the heart and goes wherever it likes. It is good to tame the mind for a well tamed mind brings much happiness. Those who can control their mind will get free from the bondage of craving.

The Buddha has the ability to control his mind well. He can regard a loathsome object as pleasant, or vice versa. He can ignore both pleasant and unpleasant objects. He can concentrate firmly on any object.

ii) Nine supramundane attributes

This refers to his attainment of the four paths and the four fruits (of *sotapatti* etc.) and to Nibbana as the ninth.

iii) Good disciples

The Buddha's disciples have acquired great reputation because of the Buddha's excellence. Even though he passed away more than 2,500 years ago his name is still alive today because his teachings are so beneficial. If the veil of superstition and prejudice is stripped away the Buddha's teachings are too convincing for any intelligent person to deny.

It is not easy to win over religious bigots. Although they know that the Buddha's teachings are beyond defect they find it difficult to accept his teachings. You can understand how difficult it is from the following story.

In the life-time of the Buddha there were two young men from the villages of Upatissa and Kolita near Rajagaha. One day, while watching a show, they realised that the span of life was very short and so should not be wasted in the pursuit of sensual pleasures. There and then they decided to search for the way to liberation. First they approached Sanjaya, one of six famous religious leaders. But they were not satisfied with his teachings so they continued to search for the truth by themselves, each going his own way. One day, Upatissa met Venerable Assaji who said, "Of all things which come from a cause; my teacher has shown the cause and the way leading to the cessation of them." On hearing this, Upatissa became established in the first path of *sotapatti*. When he repeated the same verse to Kolita, Kolita too realised Nibbana.

They both wanted to share this extraordinary teaching with their former teacher, Sanjaya, so they went to him and said, "We have found someone who can point out the path to the deathless; the true Buddha, the true Dhamma and true Sangha have appeared. Come; let us all go to the teacher."

But Sanjaya refused saying, "I am also a religious leader, I cannot acknowledge anyone else as my teacher. Having been a teacher to so many pupils, for me to become his pupil would be like a water jar turning into a cup."

Then they said, "No one who really loves the truth will come to you. You will remain here alone."

To this Sanjaya replied. "In the world, who are in the majority, the wise or the foolish?"

"The majority are foolish."

"Then do not worry about me, because even though the wise may go to Gotama Buddha; the foolish will come to me. Go your own way my pupils."

Because of his false pride he never arrived at the truth. (DhA. vv 11, 12.) To realise the Dhamma everyone must remove the veil of religious bigotry.

The Buddha was always surrounded by noble disciples who were established in at least the first path. Perhaps, in number, his followers were sometimes less than those of other teachers but quality has nothing to do with quantity.

iv) Glory

The Buddha is majestic to look at because he has the thirty-two marks of a great man and the eighty minor marks. Five days after his birth, when his father asked learned Brahmins to observe his marks, six of them prophesied that the child would become either an emperor of the whole world or a Perfect Buddha. But the youngest of all, Kondanna, said quite definitely, "The child will become a supreme Buddha."

Appearance is important because it shows one's standards. We should bear in mind that it does not follow that every good looking person is noble minded. But we can estimate most people by their appearance. In the world, famous people often possess good appearance. When we see their statues or pictures they arouse our admiration.

In the life-time of the Buddha a Brahmin named Magandiya had a very beautiful daughter. He thought that an ordinary person was not worthy of his daughter. But when he saw the Buddha he decided that he was the only one worthy of his daughter. He approached the Buddha and said, "I have a very beautiful daughter; I want to give her to you, please wait here a moment." He hurriedly went off to fetch his wife and daughter but when he returned they saw only a foot print which the Buddha had left. As soon as the wife saw the footprint she said, "This person is not a worldling," because she was an expert in astrology. After searching for

the Buddha who was meditating under a tree, they offered their daughter to the Buddha.

Turning down their offer the Buddha said, "Even after seeing the beautiful daughters of Mara, I felt no desire in me for sexual pleasure, after all, what is your daughter's body which is full of filth?"

On hearing these words of the Buddha, both the Brahmin and his wife attained the path of non-returned (*anagami*) but the daughter became very bitter and vowed to take revenge if and when an opportunity arose. Although the Buddha had foreseen her animosity to him he spoke out of consideration of the well being of her parents.

Because of the Buddha's glorious appearance the Brahmin approached him and was blessed with the realisation of the deathless. But although the Buddha's saying was true the daughter did not get any good result because of her false pride. (DhA. vv 179, 180)

v) The wish to further the well-being of all beings

The Buddha was always zealous for the well-being of all beings. Even though he could have easily realised Nibbana during the time of Dipankara Buddha who arose four aeons and a hundred thousand world cycles* ago he did not wish for it. (* A Kappa or world cycle is the period of evolution and dissolution of the world. An aeon (*asankheyya*) or incalculable period is even longer than that.)

As soon as he received a prediction that he would become a Buddha he practised the perfections in order to gain supreme enlightenment and to teach all beings to be free from suffering. In his last life, desiring to become Buddha, he carried out self-mortification until his body became like a skeleton and he fell down in a dead faint. Such was his zealousness in the pursuit of the well-being of humanity.

vi) Untiring energy

The Buddha was the most energetic of all religious teachers. Throughout the forty-five years of his ministry, he was occupied with religious activities except when attending to his physical needs. Only taking a short rest after the meal and sleeping about one and a half hours at night. If anyone needed his spiritual guidance he went on long journeys to help them, sometimes by psychic powers but also by foot.

Even in the last minutes before attaining Parinibbana, the Buddha had to preach. When an ascetic named Subhadda came to the Buddha to dispel his doubt, Ananda objected to his meeting the Buddha, who was

sick and close to death. But the Buddha told Ananda not to prevent him from approaching. As a result of the Buddha's instruction, Subhadda was ordained and became an Arahant. Before the Buddha passed away finally, he addressed his disciples thus, "Behold, O disciples, I exhort you. All compounded things are subject to decay. Practise the Dhamma with diligence."

The benefits of reciting the Buddha's attributes

Mind is like pure, colourless water. If someone puts a drop of red dye into pure, colourless water its colour swiftly changes to red. In the same way, although one's mind may be intrinsically pure, as soon as one sees or imagines any sensual pleasure the mind is defiled with lust or greed; as soon as one sees unpleasant objects the mind is defiled with anger or hatred.

To purify and compose the mind, the Buddha urged his disciples to imagine the attributes of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Samgha, or one's own morality, generosity etc. While one is contemplating these pure objects the heart is never overwhelmed by passion, hatred, infatuation; the mind is at least temporarily free from defilements. When the mind is free from defilements it becomes well concentrated and joyful and when it is thus well composed one is ready to understand the truths and realise Nibbana.

Elsewhere the Buddha said, "When someone has gone into the forest, or to an empty place, if he feels fear, panic, creeping of the flesh, he should call to mind the Buddha's attributes or those of the Dhamma or Samgha. If he does so his fear will be overcome."

In the life-time of the Buddha there were two ten year old boys named Tissa and Datta. While they were playing Tissa always recited "I pay homage to the Buddha" (*Namo Buddhassa*), so he always defeated Datta. Gradually Datta recited the same although he did not know the meaning of it.

Then, one day Datta went into the forest with his father, a woodcutter, to cut some firewood. On their return home in the evening, they stopped near a cemetery to have their meal. They also removed the yoke from the two oxen to enable them to graze nearby; but the oxen wandered off unnoticed. As soon as they discovered that the oxen had disappeared the father went to look for them, leaving his son with the cart of firewood. The father entered the town looking for the oxen. When he went to fetch his son it was getting late and the city-gate was closed, so the boy had to spend the night alone underneath the cart.

Datta, although young, was in the habit of reciting the qualities of the Buddha; so, that night when two ogres came to frighten him and one of them pulled his leg, he cried out, "I pay homage to the Buddha". Hearing these words the ogres got frightened and felt obliged to guard the boy; so, one of them remained nearby, while the other went to the king's palace and brought some food on King Bimbisara's tray. The two ogres then fed the boy as if he was their own son and left a written message on the tray that was visible only to the king.

In the morning when the king's servants discovered that the king's tray was missing they frantically searched the whole city for it and eventually found it among the firewood in the cart. They also found the boy, still asleep underneath. They arrested him as a thief and took him with the tray into the presence of the king. When the king examined the tray he saw the message and asked the boy about it. The boy answered that his parents had come to feed him during the night and that he went to sleep contentedly after his meal. He knew nothing more. The king sent for the boy's parents and took them to the Buddha.

The Buddha explained what had happened and said that the boy's life had been saved by his reciting "*Namo Buddhassa*." The king asked if only mindfulness of the Buddha could give such protection from danger or was mindfulness of the Dhamma equally effective. The Buddha replied that there were Six things, mindfulness of which, protected one from danger; the qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Samgha, the Thirty-two component parts of the body, the meditation on compassion, and the meditation on loving-kindness. At the end of the discourse the boy and his parent's attained *sotapatti* and they later joined the Order and all became arahants. (DhA. vv 296-301)

WHAT IS THE DHAMMA

Whether or not anyone proclaims the truth or Dhamma It already exists in the world. But there is need of a person who can correctly reveal it. The Buddha searched for the truth and found it. So we respect him as an exponent of the truth. In addition, by way of acknowledgment of his capacity, his exposition of the truth is called Buddhism. Whether or not someone submits to the Buddha, if he follows the truth, he can get benefit. But I think one cannot fully understand the profound truth of egolessness (anatta) without depending on the Buddha's skilful exposition.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE DHAMMA

Svakkhato bhagavata dhammno sanditthiko akaliko ehipassiko opaneyyiko paccattam veditabbo vinnuhiti.

The Buddha's teaching or Dhamma is endowed with six attributes: it is well proclaimed, relating to the present, immediate in its results, inviting and challenging all, leading on to nibbana and to be comprehended by the wise each for himself.

1. Well-proclaimed (*Svakkhato*)

From the time of his supreme enlightenment until attaining parinibbana, a period of 45 years, the Buddha preached many discourses. They were enumerated in the following order. **Dana katha** which deals with the subject of alms-giving or charity. **Sila katha** which deals with the subject of morality. **Sagga katha** which describes the delights of the *devas'* blissful existence and **Magga katha** which exposes the disadvantages of sensual pleasures. None of his teaching is concerned with animosity, revenge, selfishness, racism or religious prejudice. Because it is systematically composed with correct grammar and meaning, no one can find any fault with his teaching. If a person listens to the Dhamma without cavil, captiousness or bigotry, there is no reason for him to reject it.

From the following example you can make some estimate of the value of the Buddha's teaching. In the life-time of the Buddha, while a Brahman named Karanapalin was building a house, he saw the Brahman Pingiyanin coming towards him. When the latter approached him he asked, "What do you think of the Buddha's clarity in wisdom? As for me, I think he is rather wise."

Pingiyanin said, 'Who am I to judge the Buddha's wisdom? To judge his wisdom one must be like him; he is too wise for me to even estimate.'

"Why do you praise him so highly", the former asked.

Pingiyanin explained to him, "As a man, who is well satisfied with some choice savour, does not long for any other savours, even so, whenever a person hears any part of the Buddha's teaching he does not long for the talk of others.

"As a man who, overcome by hunger and weakness, If he tastes any part of a honey cake, enjoys the sweet, delicious taste, even so, whenever a person hears the Buddha's teaching he becomes elated, serene of mind and happy.

"As a clever physician can immediately take away the sickness of a patient, even so, whenever a person hears the Buddha's teaching his grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow and despair vanish.

"As a man who is tortured by heat, thirst and weariness might come to a clear, sweet, cool pool and, plunging therein, bathe, drink and thus allay all his woe, even so, whenever anyone hears the Buddha's teaching all his woe and fatigue is wholly allayed because the Dhamma is proclaimed well and completely."

Karanapalin was very pleased with the explanation and then paid respect to the Buddha saying, "Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa - adoration to him, the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened." (1.A. iii. 237)

One should also know the other qualities of the Dhamma: it is good in the beginning, in the middle and in the end; and it sets forth the meaning and the letter of the holy life, wholly fulfilled and perfectly pure.

2. Relating to the Present (*Sanditthiko*)

It may be that some people think that the Buddha's teaching relates only to the future life. Some people even say that the Buddha threatened people with the past and enticed people by presenting the prospect of a bright future. But it is not like that. He related many stories to bring to people's attention the danger of unwholesome deeds and the merit of wholesome deeds. All his teachings can be condensed into the fact that there is only cause and effect. He propounded the doctrine of dependent origination which can be stated as follows:-

Because of new existence all beings suffer decay and death. Clinging brings new existence into being. Clinging is due to craving that in turn stems from feeling. Again feeling is conditioned by sense contact which depends on the six senses. The six spheres of sense have their origin in mind and matter which are rooted in consciousness. Consciousness is due to kamma formations. The root cause of kamma formations is ignorance which is due to craving. Craving and ignorance depend on one another. To understand their relationship, one must practise meditation.

For the most part, the Buddha's teachings are about charity, morality and development of the mind or insight meditation. If a person practises the Dhamma he will get due benefit in accordance with his effort at any time.

A person who lacks morality will have to face disadvantages in his worldly and spiritual life. His bad reputation will spread among good people. When he approaches people he will suffer disfavour and timidity. An immoral person will die confused and then will be reborn in one of the four lower worlds; hell, animal, spirit or demons. To get the opposite results a person must keep the moral code.

A person who offers alms is loved by good and wise men and they come to him. His good reputation is spread abroad among people. He is respected and loved by many people. On the dissolution of the body at death he will be reborn in the happy, heavenly world.

A person who, by practising insight meditation, purifies his mind; overcomes sorrow and lamentation, is released from physical pain and mental distress, attains the noble path (*magga*) and realises nibbana. So the Dhamma gives many advantages, not only after death but also in this very life.

3. Immediately Effective (Akaliko)

The third attribute of the Dhamma is that it produces immediate results. This attribute is rather difficult to explain because it is related to the four supramundane paths, the fruits of holiness and the realisation of nibbana. When a person has mature knowledge of insight meditation, he roots out the defilements in stages by the four paths and immediately following those attainments he can be absorbed in the corresponding fruits of holiness and realisation of nibbana. Because one does not have to wait to get the fruit of the practice, the Dhamma is called immediately effective. To understand this attribute a person should meditate.

There are five hindrances of the mind by reason of which the mind is neither pliable, nor ready to meditate or purify itself, nor rightly

composed for the destruction of the defilements. They are sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, remorse and worry, and doubt. To get free from these hindrances there is no simple way other than by meditating. When the mind is free from these five debasements it is pliable, pure, ready to get psychic knowledge and become an eyewitness to the true nature of life.

A person, being rid of these five hindrances which obstruct the heart and weaken insight knowledge, will know his own good or another's good and will know the good of both, and will realise the excellence of knowledge. So you should know that the more your insight meditation matures, the more you will understand the teachings of the Buddha.

4. Inviting Investigation (*Ehipassiko*)

The Buddha never encouraged blind faith and speculation. He allowed every aspect of his teaching to be questioned because his teaching can withstand critical inspection by the wise. He always encouraged people to make inquiry into all teachings saying in the *Kalama sutta*, Do not believe anything which is based on hearsay, tradition, rumour, what is in any scriptures, speculation, axiom, plausible argument, bias towards a notion that has been pondered over, famous person's speech, one's respect for a teacher. But when you yourselves know, 'These things are bad, blameworthy, censured by the wise; these things lead to harm and sorrow,' abandon them. When you yourselves know, 'These things are good, praised by the wise; these things lead to benefit and happiness' undertake and observe them. (A. i. 189)

See! How notable the Buddha's teaching is. He never boasted, "There is no need to enquire into my teaching because I am a great teacher; I know every thing perfectly." So for this reason we respect him.

Some believe in a creator who is eternal and has the power to create everything, including the world. They hold that the brevity or longevity of a man's life, or his poverty and wealth, etc., is predetermined by the creator. Perhaps some people's ultimate goal is to be associated with the creator after death.

During the life-time of the Buddha, a discussion about the best way to reach a state of union with *Brahma* sprang up among the people. In those days some people believed in *Brahma* as the creator. One day, two young Brahmans, Vasettha and Bharadvja, were debating about the direct way which leads to union with *Brahma*. But neither was able to convince the other because they held that only what their own teachers taught was right. To settle the dispute they agreed to go to the Buddha. They went to the Buddha and related their debate to him.

The Buddha asked them, "Do all your teachers say that a person who acts in accordance with their teaching, will reach a state of union with *Brahma*?"

"Yes venerable sir," they replied, "because of that we want to know which of them is right."

"Put aside that question for now and answer this; although your teachers pray and recite the three Vedas, dedicated to seeing *Brahma*, is there a single one of them who has ever seen *Brahma* face to face?"

"No, indeed not, venerable sir," they replied.

"Then in that case is it possible to believe in their words? They look like a string of blind men, who are clinging one to another, of which neither the foremost can see, nor the middle ones can see, nor can the hindmost see. Therefore the talk of your teachers turns out to be ridiculous. Just as a man who, never having seen a beautiful lady, and who does not know where she is, whether she is tall or short or of medium height, what colour her complexion is, but longs for and loves the most beautiful lady in the world; your teachers say, 'This is the most direct way which leads to a state of union with *Brahma* without knowing where *Brahma* is, who he is.'"

The Buddha then asked them whether *Brahma* possessed a wife and wealth; whether he had anger, mental obstructions, mental impurities. They replied, "Surely *Brahma* is without anger, mental obstructions and impurities, and possesses no wife or wealth."

Then the Buddha asked if their teachers were like this. "Indeed they are the opposite to this" they replied.

"Is it then possible for them to associate with *Brahma*? Just as a man who is standing on the river bank, and who wants to reach the other bank, will not reach it just by saying 'Come here other bank, come over to this side!' Just so they will not be united with *Brahma* merely by their invoking, praying, hoping and praising."

The way to union with *Brahma*

Then the two Brahmins asked the Buddha, "Do you know the way which leads to the state of union with *Brahma*?"

"Yes, I know the way. Just as a man, who is born and brought up in a village and who has only just left that village, undoubtedly knows every road that leads to that village. *Brahmas* always stay with the four noble

states of mind; loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy and equanimity. So, if a person wants to associate with *Brahma*, he must possess right behaviour and conduct, must adopt and train himself in precepts, must fill himself with virtue in speech, deed and thought, must guard the doors of his senses and he must develop the four noble states of mind towards all beings and in all directions." The two young Brahmans were very pleased with the Buddha's explanation. (Tevijja Sutta; D. i. p 300, ch 13)

If you do not believe in his explanation, you can test his way to reach union with *Brahma*. Here, you should not misunderstand that the Buddha believed in the creator. According to ancient tradition, *Brahma* was regarded as a creator. Although the Buddha spoke of and accepted the existence of *Brahma* he did not regard him as a creator.

To realise inner peace or Nibbana is the be-all and end-all of every Buddhist's life. Nibbana is the total extinction of suffering or mind and matter. In this regard, some people may think nibbana is useless because of this idea of annihilation. One should not misunderstand that as soon as a person realises nibbana, his mind and matter are absolutely extinguished. A person can realise nibbana and be absorbed into inner peace during his life time. Only after a person passes away as an Arahant or a Buddha, his mind and matter absolutely extinguished. There is no way to attain Nibbana but to practise the Dhamma. If a person puts the Dhamma into practice, even if he does not realise Nibbana, he will get due benefit in accordance with his own effort. There is no need for a Buddhist to rely on others for salvation. Just by practising the Dhamma a person will be promoting his own well-being. Although a person may be a Buddhist in name, if he is lacking in practise of Dhamma, he will not get any advantage from the Dhamma.

5. Leading on to Nibbana (*Opaneyyiko*)

Everybody must have a goal in their life or they will be like a rudderless boat. A Buddhist always keeps in mind his resolve to realise Nibbana and when he does wholesome deeds he has that view in mind. Once a person has realised Nibbana he will never again land in the four lower worlds. If he attains at least the first stage of the path (*sotapatti magga*) he will, from then on, be born at most seven times in the human world or in higher *Deva* and *Brahma* realms.

All of the Buddha's teachings lead towards nibbana. By following his *dana katha* one extinguishes the defilements of meanness and selfishness which lead to poverty in future lives. By following his ***silā katha*** one extinguishes mental corruption which leads to pain and

disease. By following his *maggā katha* one extinguishes all defilements and attains nibbana, the end of all suffering.

What is Nibbana?

Perhaps some people think that Nibbana is a place because, in some literary works, it is compared to a golden city. Actually it is not a place or a plane of existence. It cannot be seen by the eyes but it can be known by the mind only through the knowledge of the noble path (*maggā nana*). The way to attain this knowledge is none other than the Eightfold Noble Path. The practice of charity and morality enables one to follow this path more easily, but if anyone wishes to be free from suffering he must follow all eight aspects of this path diligently and intelligently.

6. To be comprehended by everyone for himself (*Paccattam veditabbo vinnuhi*)

A worldling can understand the nature of Nibbana through hearsay or learning but he cannot realise it as an *ariya* does. An *ariya* means a person who has rooted out the flames of lust, hatred or ignorance which are the root causes of suffering. He always practises the eightfold path so he attains Nibbana by his own effort. No one can pass on the supramundane results to another as one might share other kinds of merits. Even the Buddha can only explain the way to attain it. It is up to each individual to follow that way in order to become a noble one.

It is more important to practise the Dhamma than to worship the Buddha. He never encouraged any kind of personality cult, even though he won the respect and veneration of all. During the time of the Buddha a bhikkhu named Vakkali was very much impressed by the noble appearance of the Buddha and he always followed him closely, neglecting to meditate. So the Buddha said to him, "It will be of no use to you merely to look at my face. You must practise Insight Meditation; for indeed only the one who sees the Dhamma, sees me, one who does not see the Dhamma does not see me; so you should leave my presence." Vakkali felt very depressed and attempted to commit suicide by jumping down from the Vulture's peak. The Buddha foresaw this so he sent forth his radiance to Vakkali and made him feel his presence, appearing as if in person to him. The Buddha said, "The bhikkhu who frequently feels Joy and is devoted to the teaching of the Buddha will realise Nibbana."
(Dhp. v 381)

With the Buddha near him, Vakkali soon forgot all his sorrow, and at the end of the Buddha's words Vakkali meditated on his ecstasy and attained Arahantship.

The story shows how important it is to practise the Dhamma. The harder a person tries to practise the Dhamma, the more he will get happiness. At least he will be free from self-accusation because a person may be able to deceive others he will always know his own intention. To comprehend the Dhamma, a person should practise insight meditation.

Insight Meditation

We can find various forms of meditation which are practised by different people. According to the dictionary, meditation means considering or thinking about something. Perhaps they may think that by meditating on God they can be free from greed, hatred and ignorance etc. It is only partly right. It is like the practice of *Samatha* meditation which was also taught by the Buddha. The practice of *Samatha* is for the sake of developing tranquillity by thinking about the attributes of the Buddha, Dhamma, Samgha, one's morality, charity etc. Such meditation leads at best to rebirth in a heavenly plane of existence. Heavenly beings still possess mind and matter. As long as there is mind and matter one has to suffer physical and mental pain. Nevertheless, samatha is a necessary prerequisite for vipassana meditation because without tranquillity one cannot understand the real nature of mind and matter.

Vipassana meditation, however, is not Just thinking about something. Its purpose is to understand correctly the nature of mind and matter within oneself. Only one who understands the real nature of mind and matter by meditating knows fully about their impermanence and unsatisfactoriness. Then he has no desire for them. Being free from all defilements, he realises Nibbana and puts an end to rebirth. Therefore the word meditation alone is not sufficient to cover the full meaning of the word *Vipassana* Insight meditation is a suitable translation for *vipassana*.

Should everyone practise insight meditation?

In this world everybody seeks happiness because nobody likes suffering. So, people are making all possible efforts to be free from suffering but they are not able to achieve perfect happiness. Their efforts are mainly concerned with their physical well-being which cannot provide permanent happiness. Trying to get momentary pleasure which depends on material gain they get hardship again and again. They are like a person who has drunk salty water. The more he drinks, the more thirsty he becomes. One's mind may be easily overwhelmed by sorrow, pain and grief when one meets difficult circumstances such as association with antagonistic people, separation from loved ones, or the frustration of one's desires.

Happiness and sorrow are conditioned by mental attitudes. A sensitive mind cannot tolerate unfavourable circumstances. An unstable building cannot withstand an earthquake; it will collapse easily. In the same way a person whose mind is undeveloped will easily be upset when he has to go through hard times. So, to maintain peace and happiness, a person should develop his mind. To develop the mind, the best way is to practise insight meditation. The more one meditates, the more mature one's mind will become and then one will be able to overcome sorrow, pain and grief when they arise.

The King of the Devas' Question

One day the King of the *Devas* was very unhappy because he knew that he would die after only seven more days. So he went to the Buddha to ask how to overcome his unhappiness. But without exposing his personal grief, he asked a general question, "All living beings always want to get happiness but they are not free from danger and suffering. Why is that?" The Buddha replied, "They do not get happiness because they bear envy and selfishness in their minds."

Sakka, the King of the *Devas*, asked again, "What is the cause of envy and selfishness?" The Buddha replied, "Envy and selfishness are caused by love and hatred. If they have no love or hatred they will not fall into the error of envy and selfishness. Love and hatred are in turn dependent on craving. And craving depends on discursive thinking about sense objects." (Sakka Panha Sutta; ii. 263)

If a person sees something he is likely to perceive it as attractive or repulsive. When he considers that it is attractive, desire arises in him. If it appears repulsive, hatred will arise. So it is reflection or thinking that causes love and hatred to arise. In order to prevent love and hatred arising, when a person sees something he should note "seeing, seeing." Then there is no need to consider whether it is pretty or ugly; or even whether it is a man or a woman. In the same way one should note the other sense objects as "hearing, tasting, smelling, touching and thinking."

In order to restrain his discursive thinking a person should concentrate his mind on one object in his body. The Buddha gave a lot of methods to prevent desire and hatred from arising. To follow his way there is no need to pay respect to him. The Buddha never said that one must respect him in order to practise his teaching. So a person of any religion can practise his method.

One of his methods is to concentrate on the breath. If a person wants to meditate he should first find a quiet place. Then cross the legs

comfortably; sit with the upper body erect; close the eyes; breathe steadily; and concentrate on the nostrils. When a person breathes he will feel the air which passes through his nostrils. As he breathes in he must make a note of "in" to keep his mind on the process of breathing. When he breathes out he must make a note, "out". While a person is concentrating on the in and out breaths there is no greed, hatred or delusion in his mind. So he is gaining great merit as long as he is practising.

My teacher, the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw teaches the method of concentrating on the rising and falling of the abdomen. When a person breathes in the abdomen rises. Then he must note "rising, rising." When he breathes out the abdomen will fall. Then he must note "falling, falling." For a beginner it may be easier for him to notice the rising and falling of the abdomen than to concentrate on the in and out breaths. It is like when a blacksmith is working, he watches the bellows. He sees the rising and falling of the bellows.

At first, a meditator's mind will often wander away from the object of meditation. There is no need to worry about this. This is one of the first realisations of meditation. Before a meditator practised insight meditation he did not know the nature of the mind. Perhaps he thought he could control his mind easily. But now he finds that the mind is like a wild animal tied to a post; it struggles hard and moves round and round to get away. Because people live without trying to control their minds, when they tie it to the post of vipassana it often runs away from the object of meditation.

While a person is meditating, if his mind reaches somewhere or he imagines meeting and speaking with somebody, he should note "meeting" or "talking." When this has been noted once or twice the mind will stop wandering away and then he can go back to noting the rising and falling of the abdomen. He will find that as he practises more and more the mind will gradually become tranquil and he will get some concentration.

When a person meditates for a long time, he will encounter feelings of stiffness, heat or pain etc. Perhaps he may think that meditating causes him to suffer more because in his daily life he tried to live a life of ease, comfort and luxury. When he feels stiffness, pain or heat etc., in one body posture he changes his body to another position to ease the sensation. Until a person suffers from a serious disease he regards his body as a pleasant or useful thing. But when he is stricken by a serious disease and is close to death he cannot easily change his posture to ease the sensation. Therefore one should practise in order to be able to overcome unpleasant sensations by developing patience and endurance before he meets with such an unfavourable circumstance.

Unpleasant sensations can be overcome by systematic practice. If, while a person is meditating, unpleasant sensations become unbearable, mindfulness must be focussed on the most conspicuous pain or heat etc., and then he must note them mentally as they arise as "pain, pain" or "heat, heat." While mindfulness is applied to these various sensations of pain and discomfort, they may increase in intensity. The meditator may then wish to change his posture, but this should not be done immediately. He should make a mental note of this wish and if he has to change his posture he must do so very slowly, noting the movements involved. But a meditator should not change his posture very often. He should continue noting with patience. If patience is lacking it will take much longer to develop *samadhi* or tranquillity. Without tranquillity, insight knowledge will not ensue. When mindfulness and insight knowledge have grown in strength the unpleasant feeling will disappear as if it has been suddenly taken away.

A meditator should not, however, hope that great benefits will come quickly and easily. According to the maturity of one's knowledge from practice in previous lives and the degree of effort in the present life one will get due benefit. Even if he cannot realise nibbana at once his efforts will not be in vain. All his endeavours will make his knowledge ripe for full development after some years or in future lives. Therefore everyone should practise insight meditation whenever they have a chance, as no one knows when they will have such a good opportunity again.

WHAT IS THE SAMGHA?

Samgha means a congregation of those who have the same view. According to Buddhism, to be considered the Samgha there must be at least four monks who follow the 227 monastic rules laid down by the Buddha. (In addition to these there are a great many more minor rules). There are two kinds of Samgha; *Ariya Samgha* and *Puthujjana Samgha*. A member of the *Ariya Samgha* has realised one or more of the stages of holiness; the four supramundane paths (magga) and fruitions (phala). The *Ariya Samgha* came into being on the fifth waning day of July following the Buddha's enlightenment.

A *puthujjana bhikkhu* is still possessed of all ten fetters binding to the round of rebirths but he always tries to reach the noble state of an *ariya*. To be ordained as a bhikkhu he must have his own bowl and three robes; an outer double robe, an under robe and an upper robe. He must be free from such diseases as leprosy, boils, eczema, consumption and epilepsy. He must be a male human being and free from debt. He must be a free man and not a slave. He must have his parents' consent and be fully twenty years of age from conception. To ordain a bhikkhu there must be at least five bhikkhus, or at least ten in the middle country of India (*majjhima desa*).

THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE SAMGHA

Supatipanno bhagavato savakasamgho, ujupatipanno bhagavato savakasamgho, naya patipanno bhagavato savakasamgho, samicipatipanno bhagavato savakasamgho, yadidam cattari purisayugani, attha purisapuggal, esa bhagavato savakasamgho; ahuneyyo, pahuneyyo dakkhineyyo anjalikaraniyo, anuttaram punnakkhettam lokassati.

The Buddha's Order of *Ariya Samgha* has practised well, practised straightly, practised intelligently and completely. It is worthy of offerings, hospitality, gifts and reverence. It is an incomparable field of merit for the world.

1) Practised Well (*Supatipanno*)

The task of the Samgha is to put the Buddha's teaching into practice and to preach to others. So a member of the Samgha has to practise the Dhamma well, even if he cannot propagate the Buddha's teaching. If he says, "Do as I say, not as I do," he cannot teach others effectively. A poor

man can give nothing to others; if he tries to do so he will only fall into debt. The recipient too, will not be satisfied with a loan. So a member of the Samgha who wants to eradicate the defilements has to practise the Buddha's teachings well.

An *ariya bhikkhu* never commits the actions which have been described as an obstacle to the attainment of nibbana. During the lifetime of the Buddha the people blamed some bhikkhus who went to a public alms-house every day for their meal. When the Buddha was told of this he made a rule permitting the monks to take only one meal at a public alms-house. Then, when Sariputta was going on a journey, he fell sick at an alms-house. He had eaten a meal there for one day but could not yet set out on his journey. Although some people offered food to him, he did not eat even at the risk of his life, because of his wish to keep the rule laid down by the Buddha. When the Buddha came to know about this he made an amendment to the rule allowing a sick bhikkhu to take meals at an almshouse until he recovers. A noble bhikkhu never breaks the *Vinaya* rules even for the sake of his own comfort.

If a *puthujjana bhikkhu* is endowed with five factors: he believes in the enlightenment of the Buddha, he has good health and digestion, he is not deceitful, he sustains vigorous effort to root out the defilements, and he is endowed with insight into the impermanence of things, he will soon attain Arahant-ship. (1. A. iii. 64) So the puthujjana bhikkhu is also worthy of respect.

2) Practised Correctly (*Ujupatipanno*)

Following the middle way without deceit a bhikkhu practises correctly the way leading to higher knowledge. Most people always pursue sensual pleasures because they assume that that is the best way to be happy. But the happiness which is dependent on sensual pleasures is short-lived. As soon as a person obtains the object he desires, he desires something else. He is like a thirsty person who has drunk salty water. In the effort to get pleasures, he has to suffer many hardships and disappointments. So, realising this danger, bhikkhus do not pursue sensual pleasures. Some people, because they know that sensual pleasures produce suffering, try to remove desire for them by practising self-torment. But that way is also wrong. Not only is it connected with sensuality but also it cannot cause knowledge to arise. By practising it a person only doubles his suffering. So bhikkhus avoid the practice of self-torment.

There are two kinds of dishonesty. An ignoble person is reluctant to admit his faults and hides his wrong-doing by fair means or foul. He also makes much of his good qualities to gain more honour. You can find the

two kinds of dishonesty among those who do not respect the Dhamma and are greedy to possess great wealth and influence. But the ariya who has attained the first path (*sotapatti magga*) eradicates all dishonesty. After he has made some mistake without intention, as soon as he sees his defect, he admits his mistake and resolves not to do it again. So this honesty and straightforwardness is an attribute of the *Ariya Samgha*.

A *puthujjana* might pretend to be a noble person because of his desire for fame and wealth but a scrupulous bhikkhu will never do that because he knows that people often get into trouble through such deceit.

The Buddha gave the following guidelines on how to size up a person by his words. Someone who possesses four traits is to be understood as an ignoble person. What are the four?

i) A man says what is discreditable about another even when he is not asked. If he gets a chance to speak, he utters dispraise of another in full and in detail without reserve.

ii) He does not say what is to another's credit even when asked, let alone if not asked. If he has to speak, he utters praise grudgingly and in brief.

iii) He does not admit what is discreditable about himself even when asked let alone if unasked. When he has to speak he admits his faults grudgingly with reservations and equivocation.

iv) He says what is creditable about himself even when not asked. When he gets a chance to speak, he sings his own praises to the full and without reserve.

Thus possessed of these four traits he is to be understood as an ignoble person. (A. ii. 76) Possessed of the opposite four traits he is to be understood as a noble person.

So, one can Judge who is a good person by listening carefully. A hypocrite may be clever enough to deceive ignorant people but he will not fool those with discrimination.

In the life-time of the Buddha a bhikkhu behaved in such a way that some regarded him as wise. To admonish the bhikkhu, the Buddha related a story of the past.

Once while King Brahmadatta ruled in Benares the Bodhisatta was born in a merchant's family. An ascetic lived in a village supported by a wealthy man. One day the wealthy man buried his treasure under the

temple and told the hermit to look after it. Then the ascetic said, "It is not proper to do that, an ascetic never takes care of treasure." After three days the ascetic took away the treasure and buried it in another distant place. Then he told his supporter, "An ascetic should not stay always in one place; he should be like a bird, so I am going to another place." The rich man requested him not to leave his temple but it was in vain.

Soon after leaving the ascetic returned again to visit the rich man who was very happy to see him and asked, "Why do you return, have you changed your mind?" The ascetic showed him a piece of thatch that was sticking in his hair and said, "When I came out of your house, this thatch got stuck to my hair so I came to return your property to you."

The foolish rich man admired the ascetic's scrupulousness but the Bodhisatta guessed his pretence and asked the rich man, "Does the ascetic know any secret of yours?" The rich man told the Bodhisatta about the buried treasure. The Bodhisatta said, "Go and see if the treasure is still there. If you do not find it there is no one to suspect except the ascetic." The rich man immediately went and found that his treasure had disappeared. He followed the ascetic and beat him until he confessed. Then the rich man took possession of his treasure again. So, you should remember that all that glitters is not gold and be on your guard against hypocrites.

3) Practised Wisely (*Nayapatpanno*)

Bhikkhus are practising for the realisation of nibbana. Although laypeople can also realise nibbana their life is very busy. They are not able to practise the eightfold path which leads to nibbana so freely as a bhikkhu. In order to practise more freely some people join the Order.

In the life-time of the Buddha, as soon as a person was ordained he went to the Buddha and asked for a method of meditation. Then he practised earnestly in a suitable quiet place in order to realise nibbana. Depending on his spiritual maturity he realised nibbana in a short or long time.

Perhaps some people think that a person who is lazy or who finds it hard to make a living in lay life might become a bhikkhu. In the lifetime of the Buddha, a king named Korabya approached a bhikkhu, Ratthapala, son of a rich family and said, "There are four kinds of loss; the loss through old age; the loss through illness; the loss of wealth; the loss of relatives. When a person becomes old or decrepit he reflects thus, 'I am worn out. It is not easy for me to acquire wealth nor to use to advantage the wealth I have already. It would be better to be ordained and he becomes a bhikkhu. An invalid also reflects in the same way. A

rich person also thinks the same way when his wealth is diminished. A person who suffers the loss of relatives and friends, being alone, thinks to become a bhikkhu. But you are young and strong, you are healthy and have great wealth, a good family and many friends. Why did you join the Buddha's Order of monks? What is the benefit of ordination for you?"

Bhikkhu Ratthapala replied to the king, "The Buddha expounded four universal truths. What are the four?"

1. All beings are impermanent because they are always subject to decay and death.

2. They have no refuge and no protection; i.e. when a person has a chronic disease he is not able to say to his relatives, 'Ease my disease; take a share of my disease so that my suffering diminishes. He alone has to suffer.

3. All beings are not the owners of their own wealth. Although a person may possess a lot of wealth, when he dies he cannot take anything with him. He has to pass away with empty hands.

4. All beings are unsatisfied with wealth and sensual pleasures.

Because I realised the truth of this statement I have joined the Buddha's Order of monks."

Ratthapala's Story

When the Buddha arrived at a small town, Thullakothitta, and preached the Dhamma; Ratthapala, the only son of a rich family, was delighted with the Buddha's talk. He asked his parents' for permission to ordain but they would not agree to it because they wanted him to inherit their wealth. Then he laid down on the ground and determined not to eat any food until he had got his parents' consent to become a bhikkhu. His friends urged his parents to give their consent saying, "If you consent to his wish you may see him as a bhikkhu and if he does not enjoy the monk's life he will return to you. Consent to his wish."

Reluctantly, they consented and soon after becoming a bhikkhu, Ratthapala became an arahant. One day he went to his parents' house for alms. His father showed him a heap of treasure and said, "This is your inheritance from your mother. A lot of other treasure still remains. Give up the robe and return to lay life. Enjoy sensual pleasures and do meritorious deeds."

Ratthapala replied, "You should drop them all in the middle of the river because they are the cause of grief, sorrow, lamentation and despair." His father was very upset.

Then Ratthapala's former wives said, "Did you join the Buddha's Order in order to associate with heavenly nymphs? Are they prettier than us?"

Ratthapala replied, "Dear sisters, I did not become a bhikkhu for that reason but in order to be free from all defilements." On being called sisters by Ratthapala they realised that he would never return to them and fainted with grief and shock. (Ratthapala Sutta, MLS Sta. 82, M. ii. 64-65)

It is not possible to say that all bhikkhus will be released from rebirth, Some bhikkhus return to lay life. After death as a bhikkhu some go to heavenly planes of existence, some are reborn as human beings and some go to the four lower worlds because they did not practise the Buddha's teaching very well. Therefore, monastic life is a very serious undertaking. We can see this from a story which was told by the Buddha.

Once, Venerable Moggallana, the chief of those disciples with psychic powers, was coming down the Gijjhakuta Hill with Venerable Lakkhana. When they reached the foot of the mountain, Venerable Moggallana suddenly smiled. Venerable Lakkhana did not understand the former's reason for smiling and asked why he smiled. Venerable Moggallana said, "You should ask the reason in the presence of the Buddha." When they came to the presence of the Buddha Venerable Moggallana said, "I saw a swine *Peta* with its mouth swarming with maggots. Because of that I smiled."

The Buddha said, "I also saw that very same *Peta* soon after my attainment of Buddhahood but I did not say anything about it because they might not have believed me and that would have been harmful to them."

Then the bhikkhus requested the Buddha to tell about the *Peta's* action which had led to that state and the Buddha related the following story.

"During the time of Kassapa Buddha, the *Peta* was a bhikkhu who had skill in preaching. On one occasion he came to a monastery where two bhikkhus lived amicably together. The two resident monks were very hospitable to the visiting monk. All three monks went together to the village for alms. The resident bhikkhu urged the visiting monk to preach to the villagers. Day by day the visitor won the respect of the villagers

because of his skilful preaching. A desire to live there permanently arose in him and he thought, "It would be better If I could make the other two bhikkhus leave this place." The visiting monk told lies about each monk to the other to disunite them and the two resident monks gradually became suspicious of one another and then quarrelled violently. The visiting monk pretended to reconcile them and make them stay but secretly he was happy.

The two bhikkhus left the monastery and went in different directions. The visitor said to the villagers, "The two monks have left your monastery. Although I requested them not to do so, they did not listen to me. They were too angry." But some wise people did not believe him.

The two bhikkhus were unhappy. They thought, "We stayed harmoniously together for many years. Why did we blame each other?" After many years they met at a monastery by chance. At first they did not speak to each other.

The elder monk broke the silence by saying, "We lived together for such a long time. In the meantime, how did I offend you?"

The younger monk replied, "No, you did not offend me."

"Then why did you tell the visiting monk not to associate with me?"

"I did not say that; but you told the visiting monk not to associate with me," the younger monk replied. After that they realised that it was only because of the visiting monk that they had quarrelled and so they returned to their monastery together. When the visiting monk saw them coming, he ran away from the monastery.

On account of his evil deed the visitor monk was reborn in a hell and he was serving out the remaining part of his evil kamma as a swine *peta*.

Then the Buddha admonished the bhikkhus, "A bhikkhu should be calm and well restrained in thought, word and deed." (DhA. v 281)

From this story we can learn many lessons about back-biting and gossip. We should have good-will towards other people. We should say what is true at an appropriate time. We should be cautious about believing other people. We should keep ourselves away from people who backbite and praise themselves. If you listen to them and believe their words it will only lead to the arising of jealousy and anger.

4) Practised Respectably (*Samicipatipanno*)

In this world everybody wants respect from others. To be a respected person, one's morality must be better than others. To pay respect to each other is very important in society because everybody likes to win the respect of others and produces harmony and happiness. On the contrary, a contemptuous attitude increases hatred and causes quarrels. The Buddha taught that it is proper to pay respect to elders and to those of superior morality such as monks and nuns.

On one occasion the Buddha, with Venerable Sariputta and other Theras, set out on a journey from Rajagaha to Savatthi in order to receive a gift of the Jetavana monastery. Some other bhikkhus who were the disciples of a group of six immoral monks went on ahead to occupy a good place for their night's rest. So when Venerable Sariputta and the other elders arrived they had no place to rest. The Buddha summoned the monks and told a story of the past saying, "If, while I am still alive, my disciples do not pay respect to each other what will happen after I pass away?"

"Long ago, three animals; a partridge, a monkey and an elephant, lived together by a banyan tree in the Himalayan forest. One day they thought, "We should choose the eldest among us as the leader and we will give him the first choice of food and resting place." So they asked one another, "What is your first memory of this tree?"

The elephant said, "When I was young, I could stand with my belly touching the top of the tree."

The monkey said, "When I was young, I sat on the ground and ate its sprouts."

The partridge said, "When I was young, this tree was not here. I ate the fruits of another tree and excreted the seeds here. The tree grew from that."

So they recognized the partridge as the eldest and the other two paid respect to him. The partridge observed morality himself and urged the other two to do the same. After they had lived happily together throughout their lives they were reborn in a heavenly plane.' (Tittira Jataka no. 37, Ja. i. 218)

Bhikkhus dedicate their whole life to the practice of the Buddha's teaching to get rid of defilements. Discursive thinking and illusion produce defilements. Only a person who knows the real nature of mind and matter can root out the defilements. So bhikkhus have to practise insight meditation in order to know correctly the true nature of mind and

matter. So a bhikkhu is worthy of respect even if he is not an ariyan because he is practising to eradicate the defilements.

Devout lay Buddhists dedicate their wealth to the attainment of nibbana. They have no wish to gain mundane welfare. Therefore bhikkhus need to have good morality so that the devotees' offerings will get maximum benefit. The more bhikkhus practise morality, tranquillity and insight, the more merit the devotees will get from their offerings.

Why should one make offerings to bhikkhus?

The followers of the monastic life are entirely dependent on the support of lay people because they have no other source of income. This mode of living was prescribed by the Buddha to make the bhikkhus humble and amenable to instruction. No one likes to depend on others because a dependent is in an inferior position. The Buddha also prescribed the bhikkhu's ascetic appearance with simple robes and a shaven head so that bhikkhus would not become conceited about their appearance. Most people cherish their hair and try to keep it in an attractive style but the bhikkhu is not allowed to keep it more than two finger-widths long. Their robes are made from rags from the rubbish heap and coloured with bark dye. Nowadays, factory-made robes are usually used but the appearance is not much changed. Bhikkhus are not allowed to follow the changing fashions. For their food they have to accept whatever is offered and cannot choose what they want to eat.

The Buddha laid down this way of life in order to constantly remind his disciples that their life depends on others, so that they do not become conceited about their good looks, and so that they constantly reflect on their morality to see that they are not blameworthy.

This encourages bhikkhus to get rid of defilements whenever they arise.

Once a bhikkhu named Eyamitta lived in a forest. He always went to a village not far from the forest for his alms. One day while he went for alms he overheard a conversation between a mother and her daughter. The mother, before going to work in the fields, told her daughter, "Dear daughter, here is the best rice, butter, milk, cooking-oil etc., cook them carefully. Offer them to our bhikkhu and eat the rest yourself."

The daughter asked, "What about you?"

"Oh, I have had vinegar and left-over rice for my breakfast, I will take something else later."

Eyamitta thought, "They are dedicating their food to nibbana. Can I develop the result of their merit according to their wish?" Then he resolved, "Until I root out the defilements, I will never eat their food."

So he returned to his place to practise insight meditation. Because he had already practised for a long time he very quickly attained nibbana. There was still time for him to go into the village so he went to his supporter's house for alms.

The daughter was struck by the calm and serene features of the monk and when her mother returned told her about it. The mother, who was wise, said, "Our bhikkhu has realised nibbana", and they were both very happy. (Commentary on Mahasatipatthana Sutta)

The Buddha said, "If, as a result of a bhikkhu's teaching, one has the opportunity to go to the Buddha, Dhamma and Samgha for refuge, to observe the precepts pleasing to noble people and to realise the four noble truths then that bhikkhu is deserving of respect and offerings." (MLS Sta. 142, M. iii. 254)

5) Worthy of Offerings (*Ahuneyyo*)

Ariya bhikkhus are worthy of offerings which are brought even from far away. Even heavenly beings, let alone human beings, come and offer to *ariya bhikkhus* because of their morality, tranquillity and wisdom. Nothing gets around farther or faster than the scent of the virtuous. It can reach the Brahma world. It arouses the donor's generosity. *Ariya bhikkhus* promote the prosperity of poor people by accepting their alms-food. If a person offers alms to an *ariya* bhikkhu who has just arisen from absorption in nibbana, he can get whatever he wishes for immediately.

One day, Thera Mahakassapa entered a poor quarter of the city of Rajagaha for alms-food just after arising from *nirodha-sampatti*. Five hundred female heavenly beings asked the Thera to take their food but he refused because his intention was to give a poor man an opportunity of gaining great merit. When the king of the *Devas* knew about it, he and his most beloved wife, Sujata came down to Rajagaha in the guise of a poor old couple. They took the appearance of weavers in a small hut. The *Thera* stood at their door. They took the bowl from the *Thera* and filled it up with rice and curry. When the *Thera* opened the bowl, the delicious smell of the food spread throughout the city. Then it occurred to the *Thera* that this person must be no ordinary human being and indeed must be the king of the *Devas* himself. Then he said, "Oh, king of *Devas*, you have committed an offence by grabbing the opportunity of a poor family."

Sakka replied, "In a way, I too am poor because I have had no opportunity to offer anything to a bhikkhu during the time of the previous Buddhas so I have to run away from other *Devas* who have superior glory because they had given something to the disciples of the Buddha."

The *Thera* admonished him not to deceive him again in the future and the couple left happily after paying respects to him. The Buddha saw this event from his monastery and told the bhikkhus about it. The bhikkhus wondered how the king of the *Devas* knew that the *Thera* had just come out of *nirodha-samapatti* and the Buddha answered, "The reputation of the virtuous spreads far and wide; it reaches even the *Deva* world. On account of the *Thera's* reputation, Sakka himself came to offer alms-food to him."

The Buddha enumerated fourteen grades of offerings:-

1. An offering to the Buddha.
2. An offering to a *Pacceka*buddha who is enlightened by himself but cannot preach to others.
3. An offering to an Arahant.
4. An offering to one striving for Arahantship.
5. An offering to a non-returner.
6. An offering to one striving for non-returning.
7. An offering to a once-returner.
8. An offering to one striving for once-returning.
9. An offering to a stream-winner.
10. An offering to one striving for stream-winning.
11. An offering to one outside the Buddha's teaching who is detached from sensual pleasures.
12. An offering to an ordinary person of moral habit.
13. An offering to a person of poor moral habit.
14. An offering to an animal.

An offering to an animal yields a hundred-fold benefit; to a person of poor moral habit, a thousand fold; to a moral person, a hundred-thousand-fold; so you can best imagine how much is the benefit of offering to bhikkhus, nuns and yogis who are striving for the fruit of stream-winning or higher attainments.

But this offering to individuals is still less than the fruit of offering to the Samgha. When the Buddha's maternal aunt, Mahapajapati Goatami offered him a pair of the best new robes, he told her three times, "Give it to the Order Gotami, if you give it to the Order I will be honoured and the Order too. In the distant future there will be many who are just in the name of bhikkhus who wear the yellow robes around their neck. If a person offers even to them, dedicating the offering to the Order, the result of his offering will be too great to measure."(MLS. Sta. 142, M. iii.256)

6) Worthy of Hospitality (*Pahuneyyo*)

People tend to keep good things for visitors and friends who visit them occasionally. These visitors may give some pleasure and aid to them in worldly affairs. But *ariya bhikkhus* can be seen only when people live during the Buddha's Sasana. Whenever *ariya bhikkhus meet people they promote their merit*

and guide them how to conduct themselves well, how to gain release from suffering, how to choose good friends, how to associate with each other etc. So bhikkhus are worthy even of the presents which have been set aside for visitors. When someone offers something to an *ariya bhikkhu* he will accumulate a great deal of merit. To get immediate result of giving the offering must be endowed with four conditions:-

1. The perfection of the person receiving the alms; i.e. he must be an Arahant or Anagami.
2. The perfection of generosity, i.e. the donor must feel happiness for his offering before, during and after giving it.
3. The perfection of the alms given; i.e. they must be produced by lawful livelihood.
4. The perfection of the dignity of the offering.

The Story of a Slave

Once, in Benares, there was a young son of a rich man, Canda. He came into a great inheritance upon the death of his parents. Looking at

the wealth he thought, "My parents could not use the wealth fully. I will spend all of it." So he spent a huge sum of money to build a dining room and bathing house. He took a bath with scented water and ate food worth a thousand pieces of gold every day. Even from far away, people came to see him eat and envied his good fortune.

One day, when a villager saw the food, he could not restrain his desire to eat it and asked the rich man what he must do to eat his food for one day. The rich man replied that to do so he must work for him for three years. The villager agreed and became his slave for three years.

At the end of the three years he was taken to the dining room for his hard-earned meal. When he was about to eat the meal a Paccekabuddha suddenly appeared in front of him for alms. The poor man thought, "Because of my lack of merit in past lives, I have had to slave for three years for this meal. In order to avoid future poverty I will give the meal to the Paccekabuddha." He then offered the meal and prayed, "May I have perfect wealth and happiness in every future life and may I understand the truths that you have realised." The Paccekabuddha said, "May your wishes be fulfilled."

The people were surprised at his great generosity and praised him. When the rich man heard about it, he was also very pleased with the poor villager's offering and shared half his wealth with him. They lived together happily for the rest of their lives and when they passed away they were reborn in heavenly planes. In the lifetime of Gotama Buddha the villager was reborn in a rich family. From the time of his conception the family felt both physical and mental happiness so he was named 'Sukha'. He became a novice at the age of seven. On the eighth day after his ordination he accompanied Thera Sariputta on his alms-round. When they came across some farmers irrigating their fields, some fletchers straightening arrows and some wheelwrights making spokes for their wheels the novice asked the Thera if these inanimate things could be guided to where one wanted them. The Thera answered in the affirmative. The novice pondered that if that were so there could be no reason why a person could not tame his mind and practise tranquillity and insight meditation. Thinking thus, he returned to the monastery and practiced meditation in solitude. He attained Arahantship on that very day.

7. Worthy of Gifts (dakkhineyyo)

Naturally, living beings cling to their own wealth but they offer some to other people for various reasons. The Buddha assured us that the offerings based on attachment, fear or reciprocation cannot give much fruit in the future life. But the donor has contributed to affection and

freedom from danger in a small way in the present life. To be a fruitful offering it should be grounded in loving-kindness, compassion, respect or belief in kamma and rebirth; that is to say that progress in one's future life depends on present wholesome deeds, and unwholesome deeds cause one's status to decline in future lives. According to Buddhism there are thirty-one planes; namely, four lower worlds, the human realm, and twenty-six heavenly planes. Until beings attain Nibbana they will have to transfer from one realm to another. We can say that human beings are in a middle place between the four lower worlds and the heavenly planes. Everyone should try at least not to descend below the human realm by observing morality and practicing charity. The Buddha said that proper and pure offerings can produce benefit and he enumerated four different kinds of offerings.

What are they?

1. There is the offering purified by the donor but not by the recipient; i.e. the donor is of more habit and good character but the recipient is of poor morality and of evil character. This offering does not give great results. To increase the results of this offering one should dedicate it to the Order because a gift to the Order is of greater fruit than a gift to individuals.

2. There is the offering purified by the recipient but not by the donor; i.e. the recipient is of more habit and good character but the donor isn't. This offering also doesn't produce great fruit.

3. There is the offering purified by neither the donor nor the recipient. This offering is of least fruit.

4. There is the offering purified by both the donor and the recipient. This offering produces the most abundant fruit of all. (MLA. Sta. 142, M. iii. 257)

8) Worthy of Reverence (*Anjalikaraniyo*)

In the world there are various kinds of salutation. Although some people salute each other according to their tradition, culture, or principle; as for a Buddhist his salutation to the Buddha and his Order has nothing to do with them. Holding up his hands with palms touching he pays respect to their virtue which is worthy of respect. He does not pay respect only to their appearance or to the person. Anyone can take on the appearance of respectability with ease but it is difficult to live up to the high standards of morality, tranquillity and insight knowledge. An ordinary person has great difficulty even to observe five precepts. As for bhikkhus, they have to practise a lot of rules to be worthy of the people's

reverence. If a bhikkhu fails to follow the monastic discipline his life becomes a burden of guilt. Therefore the Buddha constantly admonished his disciples to conduct themselves so that they would be worthy of respect.

Once, the Buddha was on alms-round among the Kosala people with a great following of monks. On the way he saw a great fire and stepped off the road and sat down at the foot of a big tree. Then he asked the monks, "What do you think, O monks? Which would be better? To lie down beside that great mass of fire or to lie down beside a beautiful lady?"

The bhikkhus replied, "Surely it would be better to lie down beside a beautiful lady."

The Buddha said, "It would be better for a bhikkhu to lie down beside that great mass of fire. Because fire might cause him harm or even death but he would not because of that, go down to hell. If he were to lie down beside a beautiful lady his morality would easily break and his immorality would cause his birth in hell after death."

The Buddha continued his sermon thus: the suffering which will be felt by an immoral bhikkhu on account of enjoying the respect of wealthy nobles is worse than the suffering which a person feels when he is bound and both his legs are crushed to the bone-marrow with a stout horse-hair rope being twisted by a strong man.

The suffering which will be felt by an immoral bhikkhu on account of enjoying the salutation of wealthy nobles is worse than the suffering which a person feels when his chest is pierced with a sharp spear.

The suffering which will be felt by an immoral bhikkhu on account of enjoying wearing the monastic robe is worse than the suffering which a person feels when his body is wrapped around with red-hot iron plates.

The suffering which will be felt by an immoral bhikkhu on account of enjoying alms-food is worse than the suffering which a person feels when he swallows a red-hot iron ball.

The suffering which will be felt by an immoral bhikkhu on account of enjoying the couch or bed is worse than the suffering which a person feels when he sits or lies on a red-hot iron bed.

The suffering which will be felt by an immoral bhikkhu on account of enjoying the use of the monastery is worse than the suffering which a person feels when he is boiled in a red-hot iron cauldron.

Therefore you should train yourselves thus; we make of use the requisites; that is to say, the robes, alms-food, medicine and monastery. These offerings should become very fruitful, very profitable for the donors so we must develop our morality, tranquillity and wisdom while using these four requisites. In this way you should strive earnestly for the good of both self and others.' (A. iv. 128-135) In accordance with the Buddha's teaching, the bhikkhus practise the monastic rules so they are worthy of reverence.

9) The Finest Field of Merit in the World

(Anuttaram punnakkhettam lokassa)

Giving offerings is like farming. To get a bountiful crop there are several necessary factors; good mature seeds, sufficient water, fertile soil, a knowledgeable farmer, protection from pests etc. In the same way, for an offering to be beneficial a donor must have faith, generosity, wisdom, joy and must offer his donation to a virtuous recipient. As an unripe or rotten seed cannot grow; if a person has no faith, compassion or loving-kindness he will be reluctant to give anything in charity. If a seed is not supplied with enough water it cannot grow properly and yield a good crop. Like wise, some people offer their wealth reluctantly so they get only freedom from danger. When a farmer cannot protect his field from pests all his endeavours may be in vain. Some people offer things to others expecting that they will reciprocate or in order to put them under an obligation. When the recipients do not fulfill their wishes they tend to regret having made any offering. Such offerings also cannot produce much result. In connection with this a story should be told.

Once, King Pasenadi of Kosala came to pay homage to the Buddha after having confiscated a rich man's wealth because he had left no heirs. The king told the Buddha, "The rich man was very stingy, he was reluctant to spend his wealth even on himself and therefore he ate very sparingly and wore only coarse clothes. Why was he unable to enjoy his wealth?"

The Buddha related the story of the rich man's past life. One day when a *Pacceka*buddha came and stood for alms at his house he told his wife to offer something to him. His wife, thinking that it was very rare for her husband to give her permission to give alms, filled up the alms-bowl with choice food. The rich man met the *Pacceka*buddha on his way home and had a look in the alms-bowl. Seeing that his wife had offered a substantial amount of good food, he thought, "Oh, this bhikkhu would only have a good sleep after such a good meal, it would have been better if my servants had been given the food; at least they would have given me better service." Because he had offered alms-food to the *Pacceka*buddha

he became a rich man in the present life. Because he regretted having offered the food he had no wish to spend anything even on himself.

The king remarked, "Even though he had lived here in the life-time of the Buddha himself, he had not made any offering of anything to the Buddha or his disciples; indeed the rich man had missed a good opportunity; he had been very foolish." (DhA. v. 355)

The king's remark is quite right because the rich man is like a foolish farmer who does not work to protect a fertile field even though he has all the facilities. Now, we too, have a very precious opportunity to offer alms to virtuous bhikkhus, to observe the precepts and to practise insight meditation while the Buddha's teachings are still intact. The remaining lifetime of the *sasana* is only about 2,500 years. After the Buddha's teachings disappear it will be a very long time before one can have another such opportunity to practise the Dhamma.

All of the above mentioned attributes are concerned with *ariya bhikkhus* or noble ones who have realised one of the eight stages of holiness i.e. the four supramundane paths (*magga*) and fruitions (*phala*). There are four pairs:-

1. The one realising the path of stream-winning (*sotapatti-magga*).
2. The one realising the fruition of stream-winning (*sotapatti-phala*).
3. The one realising the path of once-returner (*sakadagami-magga*).
4. The one realising the fruition of once-returner (*sakadagami-phala*).
5. The one realising the path of non-returner (*anagami-magga*).
6. The one realising the fruition of non-returner (*anagami-phala*).
7. The one realising the path of arahant (*arahatta-magga*).
8. The one realising the fruition of arahant (*arahatta-phala*).

Path (*magga*) is the designation of the moment of entering into one of the four stages of holiness. Its duration is extremely short. The moment of rooting out the defilements is called *magga*. *Phala* (fruition) are the moments of consciousness immediately following the path moment and which may also be repeated for longer periods thereafter by developing concentration. So in brief there are only four types of noble individuals; the stream-winner (*sotapanna*), the once-returner (*sakadagami*), the non-returner (*anagami*) and the arahant.

The stream-winner is free from the five fetters which bind one to the lower worlds, namely; personality belief or ego illusion (*sakkhaya ditthi*), sceptical doubt (*vicikiccha*, attachment to wrong practices (*silabbataparamasa*), envy (*issa*) and meanness (*macchariya*). After he is reborn seven times at most as a human being or heavenly being his process of mind and matter will cease, i.e. he will attain *arahatta magga*.

The once-returner, in addition, is nearly free from the strong fetters of sensual desire (*kamacchanda*) and ill -will (*byapada*). He rarely desires sensual pleasures and will be reborn at most once more as a human being.

The non-returner becomes totally free from the above two fetters. He will never return to the sensual world (*kama-loka*) but will attain final release in the *Brahma* world.

The Arahant is free from all defilements; the above mentioned as well as craving for fine-material existence (*rupa-raga*), craving for immaterial existence (arupa -raga), conceit (*mana*), restlessness (*uddhacca*) and ignorance (*avijja*). He has put an end to rebirth.

How should one behave towards bhikkhus?

The Buddha preached one verse in the *Dhammapada*: "If one wrongs a person who should not be wronged; who is free from moral defilements, the evil falls back upon that fool like fine dust thrown against the wind." (Dhp. V 125)

In the life-time of the Buddha, as a hunter called Koka was going out to hunt with his pack of hounds he met a bhikkhu entering the city for alms-food. He took that as a bad omen and grumbled to himself, 'Since I have seen this wretched one, I don't expect I shall get anything today,' and he went on his way. As he expected he did not get anything. On his way home he again saw the same bhikkhu returning to the monastery after taking his meal in the city so he became very angry and set his dogs on the bhikkhu. Quickly, the bhikkhu climbed up a tree to a level just out of reach of the hounds. Then the hunter went to the foot of the tree and pricked the feet of the bhikkhu with the tip of his arrow. The bhikkhu was in great pain and was not able to keep his robes on; they slipped off his body and onto the hunter. The dogs, seeing the robes, thought that the bhikkhu had fallen from the tree and pounced on the hunter tearing him to pieces. The bhikkhu broke a dead branch from the tree and throw it at the dogs scaring them into the forest but when he came down he found that the hunter was already dead. He felt sorry for him and wondered whether he might be held responsible for the death

since the hunter had died because of being covered up by his robes. So he went to the Buddha to clear up his doubt.

The Buddha said, "My son, rest assured and have no doubt; you are not responsible for the death of the hunter, your morality is not soiled on account of his death. Indeed that hunter did a great wrong to one to whom he should do no wrong and so came to his grievous end."

In accordance with this story one should take care not to do any wrong to bhikkhus even if one cannot pay respect to them.

THE END



The Dharma Protector Bodhisattva



Transference of Merit

*May the Merits and Virtues accrued from
this work,
Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,
Repaying the Four Kinds of Kindness
above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths
below.*

*May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve of Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in Ultimate Bliss.*

