

A Discourse on the Dhammadāyāda Sutta

by
The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw
of
Burma



Translated by
U Min Swe (Min Kyaw Thu)
Buddha Sāsanānuggaha Organization
Mahāsi Translation Committee, Rangoon

A Discourse on the Dhammadāyāda Sutta

by
The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw
of
Burma

Translated by
U Min Swe (Min Kyaw Thu)



First printed and published in the Socialist
Republic of the Union of Burma
December 1980

New Edition
Edited by
Bhikkhu Pesala
September 2021

Contents

Editor's Foreword.....	v
Preface	vi
A Discourse on the Dhammadāyāda Sutta	1
Prologue	1
Introduction to the Sutta	2
Pāli Text of the Sutta	2
Inheritance of Material Goods.....	2
Inheritance of the Dhamma.....	4
Simile of Two Monks.....	7
The Venerable Sāriputta's Question.....	8
Hindrances on the Path.....	10
Greed and Aversion.....	12
Concentration Is Essential to Gain Insight.....	15
The Practice of the Middle Way.....	17
Practice for Buddhahood.....	19
Right Effort	20
Right Mindfulness.....	20
Right Concentration.....	20
Anger and Malice.....	21
Ingratitude and Arrogance.....	23
Envy and Meanness.....	25
Deception and Hypocrisy.....	26
Impertinence and Vanity.....	28
Conceit and Excessive Conceit.....	28
The Humility of Venerable Sāriputta	29
Pride and Heedlessness.....	30
Birth, Clan, Youth, and Longevity.....	31
Gain, Honour, Respect, and Deference.....	31
Attendants, Wealth, Beauty, Knowledge, and Intelligence	32
Seniority, Alms-gathering, Endurance, and Fame	33
Morality, Concentration, Skill, Physical Proportions.....	33
Heedlessness	34
Six Kinds of Heedlessness.....	35
Two Ways of Practice	38
Appendix on Bhikkhu Kapila.....	40

Editor's Foreword

As with my other editions of the translated works of the late Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, I have removed many of the Pāli words for the benefit of those who are not familiar with the technical terms.

References are to the Pāli text Roman Script editions of the Pali Text Society — in their translations, these page numbers are given in the headers or in square brackets in the body of the text. This practice is also followed by Bhikkhu Bodhi's modern translations, like that below:

98

Dhammadāyāda Sutta: Sutta 3

i.14

Thus, a reference to M.i.14 would be found on page 14 of volume one in the Pāli edition, but on page 98 of Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation. It would be on a different page in Miss I.B. Horner's translation, but since the Pāli page reference is given, it can still be found. In the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana edition of the Pāli texts on CD, the references to the pages of the PTS Roman Script edition are shown at the bottom of the screen, and can be located by searching.

I have attempted to standardise the translation of Pāli terms to match that in other works by the Sayādaw, but it is impossible to be consistent as the various translations and editions are from many different sources. Aversion (*dosa*), ill-will (*byāpāda*), hatred (*paṭigha*), anger (*kodha*), and malice (*upanāha*), have subtle shades of meaning that overlap in English and Pāli.

This Dhammadāyāda Sutta exhorts the bhikkhus to be heir of the Dhamma, not heirs of material requisites. The Sayādaw delivered the discourse in December 1970, on the occasion of the annual assembly in Mahāsi Yeikthā, Rangoon, to exhort his disciples to adhere strictly to the Vinaya discipline, and specifically to abstain from accepting money ([page 10](#)) — a corrupt practice that is now almost universal among bhikkhus.

This edition may still have some minor defects, but I hope it is good enough to be useful. As my time permits, I will gradually improve it.

If you find any errors, please let me know.

Bhikkhu Pesala
September 2021

Preface

This is the English translation of Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw's talk on the Dhammadāyāda Sutta. The talk was given on the occasion of the annual exhortation and homage day¹ in 1970 and it was repeated on a similar occasion in the following year. The fact that Venerable Sayādaw gave the same talk twice leaves no doubt about the deep significance of the sutta.

In fact, the Dhammadāyāda Sutta of the Majjhimanikāya is an important teaching of the Buddha that deserves the serious attention of those who adore the Buddhadhamma. For the substance of the Sutta is that as worthy disciples of the Buddha, bhikkhus should avoid the pursuit of material wealth, and seek the heritage of the Dhamma through the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. This message accords with the basic teachings of the Buddha.

From the Buddhist point of view the root cause of suffering is desire and so it is necessary for us to overcome desire as much as possible if we want to achieve liberation. This teaching especially concerns the bhikkhus who, as dedicated disciples of the Buddha, are supposed to have set their heart on nibbāna. The Buddha founded the Saṅgha as a community of men and women who seek inner peace and liberation through non-attachment. The bhikkhus' way of life based on the ideal of non-attachment is familiar to everyone who has studied the Vinaya Piṭaka, the division of the Pāli Canon that deals with the disciplinary rules for Buddhist monks.

The bhikkhu is expected to share his daily almsfood with other monks. In the words of the Buddha, "Even if it were his last morsel of food, a monk would not enjoy its use without sharing it, if there were anyone to receive it." (Udāna) The hoarding of food is forbidden and so is the possession of property other than the bare necessities of life. Even so, according to Miss I. B. Horner, an English Pāli scholar who has made a special study of Vinaya Piṭaka, some rules relating to the begging bowl "point to a time when communal ownership was more actual than nominal." The Vinaya Piṭaka specifies miscellaneous items of property such as a dwelling, bed, chair, vessel, crockery, *etc.*, which belong to the Saṅgha and cannot be given to an individual monk either by gift or division.

¹ Each December, on the anniversary of the Sayādaw's arrival to start teaching at the Mahāsi meditation centre in Rangoon, his disciples would assemble from around the country to pay homage, and listen to an [exhortation](#) by the Sayādaw (ed.)

Of all the material objects of human desire the most alluring is gold, which has enslaved many people. The bhikkhu is, of course, strictly forbidden to possess gold or silver, and the Vinaya Piṭaka contains detailed instructions for dealing with cases of transgression. If a monk receives any gold or silver, he is required to confess his transgression to the Saṅgha and forfeit it. The forfeited object is then handed to a layperson who may purchase for the monks what they are permitted to receive. All of the monks may use these requisites, except for the guilty monk. If there is no layperson to accept the gold, a trustworthy monk is officially assigned to discard it. He must not take any notice of where it falls.

Professor Oldenberg's comment on the monastic prohibition against the possession of gold and silver is worthy of note. He says: "By nothing so clearly as by this prohibition and by the obedience which it has obtained is it guaranteed that the ancient Buddhist Order did really remain free and pure from all hankering after worldly power as well as worldly enjoyment. Never could it have so completely surrendered the possession of gold and therefore all possibility of outer action, had it not been in truth precisely that alone which it professed to be, a community of those who sought for peace and deliverance in separation from everything earthly." (The Buddha, p.358)

Of course the Vinaya Piṭaka reflects only the way of life in the early Buddhist Saṅgha. About 200 years after the *parinibbāna* of the Buddha the first schism occurred over the issue of the acceptance of certain kinds of offering from the laity. It is said that today in Sri Lanka there are landlords among the bhikkhus and even in Burma, which prides herself on having preserved the purest Theravāda tradition, the Saṅgha as a whole is a far cry from the ideal society envisioned by the Buddha. Nowadays many Buddhist monks are intent on seeking their material welfare rather than on living up to the teaching of the Buddha.

This preoccupation of the monks with the pursuit of material wealth is a matter of grave concern to Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw as well as to other Buddhists, monks and lay followers alike, who have the welfare of the Buddha's dispensation at heart. Hence Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw's emphasis on the need for the practice

of non-attachment in many of his talks. Thus, in his discourse on the Sallekha Sutta he says: "A bhikkhu should not ask for food, robes, or dwelling unless the person who is thus requested happens to be his relative or has invited him. Neither should he nor other bhikkhus use anything that is received in this way. Asking outright for donations as is being done nowadays is very unbecoming for a bhikkhu. A bhikkhu should not show signs or make indirect remarks that would induce a layman to offer food or robes."

In short, a good bhikkhu is a monk who lives up to the teaching of the Buddha, thereby making the heritage of the Dhamma (*Dhammadāyāda*) the cornerstone of his way of life. Such a bhikkhu need not bother about food, robes, and other necessities of life for he is assured of material comforts in a predominantly Buddhist country like Burma. It is common knowledge that lay Buddhists will vie with one another to offer the best food to the monks who are respected for their moral purity and spiritual attainment.

We believe that the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw's talk on the Dhammadāyāda Sutta will receive the serious attention of all Buddhists, monks and lay followers alike, who have the welfare of the Buddha's dispensation at heart. It will be appreciated by those who want to understand the Buddha's message and follow his noble teaching for their inner peace and liberation.

A Discourse on the Dhammadāyāda Sutta

Prologue

Sāsana Yeikthā has been a Vipassanā meditation centre since we came here in 1949. At the beginning, there were not many buildings to speak of. A monastery where I dwelt formerly, a dining hall that was not large enough to accommodate more than forty monks at a time, four single wooden dwellings, workers' quarters, these were the only buildings that existed at that time. In place of this auditorium there was a make-shift lecture hall, which witnessed the formal opening of the meditation centre in December 1949.

The centre started with twenty-five meditators. The female meditators were lodged in thatched bamboo buildings on the lower ground of the Yeikthā compound while the monks and male meditators had to stay in a similar building on higher ground. The number of meditators has increased every year. Many new buildings have been constructed. At the time of writing there are over three hundred meditators all year round, increasing to fifteen hundred in summer. There is now no vacant land for new buildings.

Twenty-one years have passed since the opening of the meditation centre at Sāsana Yeikthā. In 1950 I told my disciples to hold an annual meeting at which all the meditators who had practised insight meditation at the centre could gather to renew their faith and enthusiasm, and for closer contact and affinity leading to the suffusion of loving-kindness in acts, words, and thought.

Then Sir U Thwin, the founder of Sāsana Yeikthā, suggested that it would be good to make the meeting also an occasion for exhortation and homage. I had such an idea too, but I did not tell anyone about it lest I should lay myself open to charges of egoism and self-glorification. So in accordance with Sir U Thwin's suggestion we now call it the [annual exhortation](#)¹ (*ovāda*) and homage day.

It is my duty to exhort the bhikkhus, meditators, and lay disciples who are present on this occasion. This year I propose to give an exhortation on the basis of the Dhammadāyāda Sutta that formed the subject of my discourse last year. I wish to talk again about this Sutta because it is an important teaching of the Buddha. King Asoka

¹ Several discourses in the Suttanta Piṭaka have the title (*ovāda*) appended to their name, e.g. the [Siṅgalovāda Sutta](#) or Exhortation to Siṅgāla, the [Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta](#) or Exhortation to Anāthapiṇḍika, and the [Ambalaṭṭhikā-Rāhulovāda Sutta](#) or Exhortation to Rāhula. An *ovāda* is an exhortation, not an admonition. (ed.)

mentioned some teachings of the Buddha repeatedly in his inscriptions because they were profound and worthy of serious consideration. Likewise, I propose to give another talk on the Dhammadāyāda Sutta because of its deep significance and special relevance to modern times. If the monks and laymen follow this teaching, it will benefit them and contribute to the spread of the Buddha's teaching.

Introduction to the Sutta

The Dhammadāyāda Sutta was delivered by the Buddha while he was residing at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatti. The Buddha taught it because in those days some monks were excessively attached to material goods. Such attachment naturally leads to deficiency in respect of morality, concentration, and wisdom, and this discourse serves as an antidote to such spiritual decline.

Pāli Text of the Sutta

“Dhammadāyāda me bhikkhave bhavatha mā āmisadāyāda atthi me tumhesu anukampā ‘kinti me sāvaka dhammadāyāda bhavēyyum no āmisadāyāda.’

“Monk! You should inherit the Dhamma from me. You should not remain content with the inheritances of material goods.”

Here the Buddha expressed his wish in unmistakable terms and stressed the importance of the heritage of the Dhamma just like parents giving instructions to their beloved children before they pass away. Some people fear lest on their death their children by the second marriage should come off second best in the division of inheritance with the lion's share going to the older offspring.

So they take steps for the equitable distribution of their wealth, or otherwise make secret provisions for their younger children. Likewise, the Buddha instructed his disciples to inherit the Dhamma that was the best thing that he had for them. Although he addressed the monks in this discourse, his instruction was also meant for the lay followers who had implicit faith in him.

Inheritance of Material Goods

People usually show great enthusiasm when they inherit the material possessions of their deceased parents. Nobody wants to

sacrifice his interest for the sake of his brothers and sisters. Some are so consumed by greed that the death of a man often means the break-up of his family and the beginning of resentment, quarrels, and enmity among his offspring. This is a matter of common observation as regards lay people, and the same may be said of the monks who show no less enthusiasm over the inheritance of material goods. The death of a famous Sayādaw is often followed by a scramble among his disciples who lay claim to his possessions on the basis of his alleged bequests, close association, or the rights of his religious sect. These claims may be legal or illegal from the standpoint of the Vinaya Piṭaka. Under the British government there were many disputes over the inheritance of monasteries and some lay Buddhists had to spend so much money for their law-suits that they were finally reduced to penury. Such legal battles are still being fought in modern times.

In response to the request of a layman, I once sent a monk to reside at his monastery. Later, a monk at that place wrote to me, asking me to recall the resident monk as the monastery was declared as the property of the Saṅgha¹ in the time of his teacher. So I had to send a reply saying that the monk in residence had been sent not for the possession of the monastery, but for the spiritual uplift of the local people. I wrote that we urge our disciples to inherit the Dhamma not material goods, and that he should deal only with the layman concerned in connection with the monastery. Now the monk whom I sent there is in another place; he has declined the invitation of the layman whose monastery is still vacant.

Again, we were once asked to recall a monk whom we had sent to a place at the request of the local people. There was a monk who owned the monastery, and in fact he had welcomed our monk. We have nothing to do with such disputes, which concern only the lay people. Moreover, we have had to ignore some meditation centres which were forcibly occupied by those who could not teach insight meditation. We do not bother about such cases and leave them entirely in the hands of the lay people concerned. All over the country, disputes over the ownership of monasteries are rampant. In the context of the Dhammadāyāda Sutta this state of affairs should be a cause for deep concern, and we are afraid it has discredited the Saṅgha in the eyes of the lay Buddhists.

¹ I couldn't find the term, "*catusantaka*," but "*catu*" means four and "*santaka*" means property. No doubt this refers to property belonging to the community of monks from the four directions. (ed.)

Many monks are preoccupied with the pursuit of food, robes, monasteries, money, fame, popularity, *etc.* Some seek material goods by all possible means, even in contravention of the Vinaya rules. Such frantic pursuit of material goods means decline in the practice of the Dhamma and so it runs counter to the teaching of the Buddha.

Inheritance of the Dhamma

Now to continue the Pāli text in the Dhammadāyāda sutta.

“Atthi me tumhesu anukampā kinti me sāvaka dhammadāyadā bhaveyyum no āmisadāyadā”ti.

“My disciples, I have compassion for you. So I am concerned about how you should be heirs, not of material goods, but of the Dhamma.”

The Buddha was motivated by compassion when he urged his disciples to pay serious attention to the inheritance of the Dhamma. Not that he wanted them to deny themselves proper food, robes, *etc.*, but what he warned them against was craving for these things at the expense of the holy life.

The Dhamma that the followers of the Buddha should seek is of two kinds: the true or supreme Dhamma and the intermediary Dhamma, and the Buddha urged his disciples to cherish both. According to the Commentary, the supreme Dhamma comprises the four kinds of path knowledge — Stream-winning, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship — the four fruits corresponding to the four paths and nibbāna. These are nine supramundane states that one can realise only on the basis of the Buddha’s teaching. The attainment of the four paths means the attainment of the fruits and nibbāna. One who attains the first path also attains its fruit and one is then on the threshold of nibbāna. The meditator at this stage is then wholly free from the defilements that lead to the lower realms. He will be reborn in the human or the celestial realms and he will not have to face sickness, death and other sufferings for more than seven existences. So the Buddha urged his disciples to strive for at least this lowest grade of the heritage of Dhamma.

When the meditator attains the path and fruition of Once-returning, he or she is subject to no more than two rebirths in the human and celestial realms. Again, when he or she realises the

path of Non-returning, he or she is assured of total liberation from all suffering inherent in the human and celestial realms. The Non-returner is destined to land in the Brahma world. Then for the meditator who attains Arahantship, it means complete extinction of all suffering. The Buddha urged his disciples to practise the Dhamma till the attainment of this supreme goal.

The heritage of this supreme Dhamma is primarily meant for bhikkhus. For the lay followers of the Buddha who cannot live up to his teaching, there is the intermediary (*pariyāya*) Dhamma which the Commentary describes as alms-giving, a good moral life, observance of the Uposatha, offering of flowers, *etc.*, in memory of the Buddha at pagodas, listening to the Dhamma, and so forth. Doing these wholesome deeds leads to rebirth in the human and celestial realms, where through hearing and practice of the Dhamma one finally attains nibbāna. In other words, this intermediary Dhamma is a means to the attainment of the supreme Dhamma.

So every true disciple of the Buddha who has faith and zeal should strive for the four paths, the four fruitions, and nibbāna in this very life. If one cannot attain this object, one should practise alms-giving, morality, *etc.*, not merely for happiness in the human and celestial realms, but for the attainment of nibbāna. In other words, one should seek the heritage of both the supreme Dhamma and intermediary Dhamma.

The Buddha does not want his followers to have craving for material goods. Here the material goods which should not be the objects of attachment are of two kinds. The first kind is the four requisites of life for monks: food, robes, dwelling and medicines. Once a person joins the Saṅgha, he is assured of these requisites. It is easy for him to get them. Nowadays, a monk can even get foreign medicines although for ordinary people they are hard to come by. Some monasteries are bigger and far better than the tumbledown dwellings of many lay people. These requisites are easily available thanks to the faith of the lay Buddhists, but the Buddha does not want the monks to become attached to them.

Yet there are monks who seek to acquire material goods by any means. Some pretend to be Arahants and some claim occult powers that are supposed to enable them to advance the material welfare of their followers. To exploit the people in this way for selfish ends is, of course, a flagrant violation of the Vinaya rules binding on all bhikkhus.

The heritage of material goods in the form of the requisites of life concerns only the bhikkhus. As for the laity, there is the other kind of material heritage in the form of higher life in the human and the celestial realms. Many people practise alms-giving, morality, *etc.*, in the hope of attaining heavenly bliss or higher rebirths on earth. Such acts of generosity, morality, and mental development will not lead to insight-knowledge or nibbāna. Nor will they guarantee permanent deliverance from the dangers of the lower realms. On the contrary, the desire for higher rebirths in the sensual worlds of deities or human beings means attachment to material goods, which is harmful to one's moral life and so one is likely to land in the lower realms where one is overwhelmed by unwholesome kammās.

Even if one attains higher rebirth in the celestial or human realms through good kammās, one is bound to suffer old age, sickness, and death. Hence the second kind of material heritage, too, is inferior, undesirable, and not worth striving for. We should not, therefore, set great store by other worldly bliss, let alone the four requisites.

The Buddha warned his disciples against these temptations out of compassion for them, for he saw how attachment to material goods had led some monks to the lower realms as in the case of Bhikkhu Kapila in the time of Kassapa Buddha, who, because of his greed, had to suffer greatly in hell. The Buddha was also aware of old age and other evils that lie in store even for those who do good deeds, but who crave for sensual pleasure. He knew, too, how the Venerable Mahākassapa, Sāriputta and other disciples acquired psychic powers and wisdom through the diligent practice of the Dhamma. Without the heritage of the Dhamma we cannot rule out the possibility of rebirth with all its attendant sufferings.

Suffering is inherent in every kind of existence in the form of sickness, old age, and death. We need not dwell on the miseries of old age that plague many elderly people around us. Sickness is a universal evil and hospitals are full of patients whose sufferings cannot help but move us to pity. Even a man who is quite healthy throughout his life has to face a painful disease before his death. As for death, it is also inevitable in the celestial realms. If we do not strive for the path, its fruition, and nibbāna, we are in for repeated afflictions with these evils in one existence after another. In addition, there is the dangerous potential for rebirth in the lower realms.

According to the Commentary, the four lower realms of animals, hells, hungry ghosts, and jealous gods are like private dwellings for unmindful persons. Here unmindfulness means failure to guard oneself against evil karmas in words, deeds, or thought and against excessive indulgence in sensual pleasure.

It also means failure to do good, to practise generosity, morality, and mental development. By and large we dwell at home, although we may occasionally spend a day or two at another place. Likewise, the unmindful person spends most of his or her time in the lower realms. Rebirths in heaven or on earth are few and far between, just like our occasional visits to another man's house. This is the usual lot of ordinary people. The Buddha was deeply concerned about the future of his followers, hence his insistence on the need for the heritage of the Dhamma.

The Buddha also said that he and his disciples would be criticised by others if they cared only for material goods and failed to live up to his teaching. For example, society will blame us if the behaviour of our children leaves much to be desired. So too the people in the time of the Buddha would hold him responsible for the failings of his followers. They would have said that despite his claim to Omniscience, the Buddha was unable to discipline his followers effectively. On the other hand, if they were wholly committed to the Dhamma, the Buddha would surely earn the praise of the people.

It is not easy to become a true disciple of the Buddha. Many people have an unwavering faith in the Buddha. Some have even joined the Saṅgha and devoted all their time and energy to the holy life. Yet for all their adoration of the Buddha and their zeal and sincerity in the practice of generosity, morality, *etc.*, there is always the possibility of falling into the lower realms. For it is only the supreme heritage in terms of the path, its fruition, and nibbāna that will ensure real liberation. Hence the Buddha's deep concern for the spiritual welfare of his disciples.

Simile of Two Monks

Suppose, says the Buddha, there are two monks who come to see him just as he has finished his meal. Having come from far, they are tired and hungry. The Buddha says that he has surplus food that has to be disposed of, and that they may eat it if they like. One of the monks remembers the Buddha's teaching, and so he resolves

to spend the night in a weak and famished condition, but the other monk eats the food, thus restoring his energy and satisfying his hunger. The Buddha declares that the first monk who rejects the food is more worthy of praise and honour than his companion.

In the eyes of ordinary people, there is no reason why the other monk should be blamed. He makes a good use of the food which might otherwise have gone to waste, and by eating it he gains some vitality that makes him zealous and vigorous in the practice of the Dhamma. In fact, the Buddha does not criticise him, but he declares the first monk to be spiritually superior in that his self-denial is conducive to contentment, lessening of defilements, exertion of effort and easy maintenance of one's life.

Buddhism teaches us to control our desire. Unbridled desire leads to frantic pursuit of material objects or the heedless consumption of food, *etc.* Such wrong actions will be unthinkable for the monk who restrains his desire to the point of declining the Buddha's offer of food. He will be able to overcome evil desires and cultivate contentment for his spiritual uplift. Moreover, it will be easy for his lay supporters to serve his physical needs.

Some monks complain about the kind of food, *etc.*, provided by their lay followers. Once there was an elderly monk in Mawlamyaing township who had to be served with chicken curry every day. Even when he went on a journey, his lay attendants had to take his favourite food along with them. Again, the monk who has the will to forgo even the food offered by the Buddha will not get disheartened in the face of hardships and privations. His memory of the self-denying experience will rouse him to assert his will, exert his energy, lessen his defilements and minimize the necessities of life.

The simile of the two monks shows the way in which the Buddha teaches his followers. His approach was very gentle and, it is like that of the kind-hearted parents who have to discipline their children. He was motivated by great compassion that makes him worthy of reverence and emulation.

The Venerable Sāriputta's Question

After stressing the need for the heritage of the Dhamma, the Buddha left the assembly of monks. Then Venerable Sāriputta raised the question as to how far the disciples of the Buddha practised or

failed to practise detachment that forms the chief characteristic of the Buddhist way of life. In response to the request of the bhikkhus, Venerable Sāriputta answered the question as follows:

The Buddha's way of life is based on detachment (*viveka*) in respect of body, mind, sensual pleasure, *etc.*, but some of his disciples did not follow his example and practise detachment. The detachment of the Buddha is of three kinds; physical (*kāya-viveka*), mental (*citta-viveka*), and detachment from existence (*upādhi-viveka*).

Physical detachment means living in solitude. Instead of seeking company, the Buddha usually lived alone. Solitude is conducive to peace and happiness. The Buddha spent his time in solitude except on occasions when it was necessary to communicate with others, for instance, when he had to teach them.

Mental detachment means the attainment of absorption (*jhānasamāpatti*). The Buddha was perfectly qualified to attain all the various stages of absorption.

Detachment from existence refers to the extinction of the four substrata (*upādhi*) of becoming that cause suffering. In other words, it means nibbāna. Nibbāna is devoid of 1) sensual objects, 2) greed, aversion and other defilements, 3) wholesome and unwholesome kammās (*abhisāṅkhāra*), and 4) the aggregates of mind and matter (*khandhā*). So nibbāna is called detachment from existence. It is a quality possessed by the Buddha and the Arahants who can contemplate nibbāna at any time through the path and fruition of Arahantship. The meditator who practises insight meditation partly possesses detachment from existence at the moment of gaining insight into impermanence, suffering, and not-self. For whenever a meditator gains insight into these three characteristics of life, he or she is free from sensual pleasure, defilements, kamma, and the aggregates of new existence.

If, without any good reason, a Buddhist monk does not live in solitude, then he is lacking in physical detachment or the practice that is the attribute of the Buddha. If he does not practise concentration, he will have no mental detachment. If he fails to practise insight meditation, he will not have detachment from existence. If the disciple does not follow the example of the Buddha and practise the three detachments or if he does not practise at least living in solitude, this means the decline of his spiritual life. The Buddha teaches his followers to remove greed, aversion, and other defile-

ments, so if the disciple cannot live up to this teaching, it means failure to practise the detachment of the Buddha.

Defilements that arise may be overcome either through wise reflection or through mindfulness. However, reflection by itself will not help to eradicate it. It is only, if we note instantly and remove the defilements at every moment of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, that they find no outlet and pass away. Finally, when a meditator attains the noble path, they completely cease to arise in the mind and become extinct. If you do not dispel the defilements through reflection or mindfulness, it means that you welcome them in contravention of the practice of detachment. The defilements that have to be dispelled are sixteen in number and the Venerable Sāriputta described them in detail in the latter part of his discourse.

Some disciples zealously seek to acquire material goods and neglect the practice of Dhamma. They do not practise morality properly, let alone concentration or wisdom. If there is practice of insight meditation, it is only perfunctory; the object of their practice is just to gain merit or kammic potential for future existences. Needless to say, total commitment to the Dhamma is out of the question if one is preoccupied with the accumulation of wealth. In other words, pursuit of material goods spells deficiency in the practice of Dhamma and if a monk does not practise the Dhamma seriously, it is to be assumed that he is more interested in worldly possessions. Some monks seek to get money and this violates the Vinaya rules that forbid the handling of gold, silver, *etc.*, by bhikkhus.

Hindrances on the Path

According to Venerable Sāriputta, some disciples of the Buddha lead the way to degeneration. There are five causes of degeneration called hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) to the attainment of concentration and wisdom. These are sensual desire, ill-will, laziness, restlessness, and doubt. Here laziness (*thīnamiddha*) means reluctance to listen to or practise the Dhamma and getting bored or dejected during meditation practice. Restlessness (*kukkucca*) is worry or anxiety over one's past mistakes and doubt (*vicikicchā*) refers to doubt about the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, or about the way to the attainment of the path, its fruition, and nibbāna.

If a man leads an immoral life, giving himself up to drinking, gambling, and other vices, his children will follow suit when they

grow up. Likewise, the elderly monks who yield to hindrances and idle away their time are bound to have a demoralizing effect on younger members of the Saṅgha. In fact, they lead the way to degeneration. They are like a person who puts down the burden that he is supposed to carry, because they have abandoned the insight practice that leads to the extinction of defilements. Some give it up after practising it for some time, and there are even some monks who criticise and discourage those who practise insight meditation. So, according to the Dhammadāyāda Sutta, such errant monks are blameworthy on three counts. They do not practise detachment that is so much cherished by the Buddha. They make no effort to remove the defilements. What with their excessive craving for material goods, they do not practise insight meditation for the extinction of defilements. To avoid such criticism by good people, the monks should practise detachment that the Buddha enjoins on them. At the very least, they should practise physical detachment by living in solitude. They should sincerely practise morality and concentration to overcome the defilements. They should strive at least for the attainment of Stream-winning that ensures freedom from ego-belief and doubt.

The teaching of the Buddha as regards the evil consequences of moral laxity in the Saṅgha applies to all bhikkhus regardless of their age or spiritual status. The Buddha specifically mentioned the senior monks, the monks of medium standing, and the junior monks who are to be censured for their moral deficiency. Here the senior monks (*thera*) have spent ten or more years in the order, the monks of medium standing (*majjhima*) have spent over five years, while the junior monks (*navaka*) are those who have less than five years' standing in the Saṅgha.¹ So the discourse concerns all monks, and every monk deserves criticism if he fails to emulate the Buddha and fails to live up to his teaching.

On the other hand, a monk who practises detachment is worthy of praise because he is following the example of the Buddha; he has overcome defilements, and finally he does not care for his material welfare and is therefore not negligent in the practice of the Dhamma.

In commenting on the Buddha's discourse Venerable Sāriputta uses the word "praiseworthy" (*pasamsa*), to inspire the monks, but

¹ For the first five years a bhikkhu must live in dependence on an elder (*thera*) of ten rains or more. After five years he can live independently, while after ten years he can grant ordination and train junior bhikkhus. (ed.)

what matters most is practice of the Buddha's teaching which makes one a worthy heir of the Dhamma. It is the heritage of the Dhamma that can ensure permanent freedom from suffering and the dangers of the lower realms. It is this Dhamma heritage that Venerable Sāriputta has in mind when he refers to the praiseworthiness of well-disciplined monks for the inspiration and edification of his audience.

Greed and Aversion

Then Venerable Sāriputta goes on to describe greed and aversion as the first two defilements that should be removed. *Lobha* may be translated as desire, craving, delight, lust, clinging, attachment, greed and so forth. Evil-doing is usually motivated by greed. People suffer because they seek the object of their desire, they have to please those whom they love. Greed fuels evil and because of its unwholesome nature it leads to suffering in hell. Moreover, it causes repeated rebirths together with the attendant old age, sickness, death, and other suffering.

Dosa means aversion, anger, ill-will, the aggressive and destructive impulse, *etc.* Seeing or hearing anything that we dislike makes us angry and unhappy. We yield to anger and kill or mistreat others, making unwholesome kamma that leads to the lower realms. If reborn in the human world, one has to pay for one's past acts motivated by ill-will by brevity of life, sickness, and other negative results.

There is a way to overcome greed and aversion. It is the middle way between the two extremes of over-indulgence in sensual pleasures and asceticism. Some people spend all their time gratifying their sensual desires, and there are some who practise self-mortification that does not help to develop concentration and tranquillity. The Buddha's way avoids the two extremes. This middle way is not to be found in the non-Buddhist systems of thought. It is the Noble Eightfold Path comprising right view, right thought, right action, right speech, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This Path helps develop the eye of wisdom and insight-knowledge. The eye of wisdom is so called because it enables us to see clearly. It does not differ essentially from insight-knowledge. In the practice of the eightfold path, we have to observe the mental and physical processes or the five aggregates of attachment (*upādānakkhandhā*) that takes place ceaselessly within us. At every

moment of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, we should note the psycho-physical phenomena. Such moment-to-moment mindfulness helps to develop a clear insight into the nature of mental and physical phenomena.

In the course of the practice, we come to distinguish between mind and matter. When seeing, we recognise the eye and the visible object as material phenomena, and the eye-consciousness and the noting consciousness as mental phenomena. When hearing, we recognise the ear and the sound as material phenomena and the ear-consciousness and the noting consciousness as mental phenomena. When smelling, we recognise the nose and the odour as material phenomena and the nose-consciousness and the noting consciousness as mental phenomena. In tasting, we recognise the tongue and taste as material phenomena and taste-consciousness and noting consciousness as mental phenomena. When touching, we recognise the sensitivity of the physical body and the tactile object as material phenomena and the tactile-consciousness and the noting consciousness as material phenomena. When thinking, we recognise the physical base of the mind as material phenomena and thinking and the noting consciousness as mental phenomena.

As the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta says, “*Gacchanto va gacchāmi’ti pajānāti...*” when the meditator notes standing, sitting, lying, bending, stretching, *etc.*, he distinguishes between material phenomena and mental phenomena in the same way. Thus when he notes walking, putting forward the right foot, putting it down, *etc.*, he is aware of the distinction between stiffness, movement, and the noting consciousness. The same may be said of the rising and falling of the abdomen, and other bodily movements that are noted. This is insight knowledge of the distinction between mind and matter that leaves no room for a living entity. This analytical knowledge of body and mind (*nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*) and Purification of view (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*) arise from experience and have nothing to do with logic or speculation. It accords with one of the attributes of the Dhamma, namely one has to realise the Dhamma by oneself (*sandiṭṭhiko*), and with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which stresses the need for practice and personal realisation.

There are some people who criticise the Satipaṭṭhāna method of meditation. They say that is not necessary to note ordinary activities such as walking, standing, *etc.*, that are so familiar to us in our everyday life and that these exercises will not lead to extraordinary

insight-knowledge. This criticism is due to lack of experience in the practice of insight meditation according to Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

We breathe in and out every day, but few people will question the value of the breathing exercise (*ānāpāna*) in mind-training. Non-Buddhist holy men in India practise it too, but their goal is just to attain tranquillity (*samādhi*). It does not follow, however, that the practice of in-and-out breathing cannot lead to insight or path knowledge. Likewise, we should not assume that the practice of noting one's bodily movements has little to do with the development of mindfulness, concentration, and insight-knowledge. Those who do physical exercises, are intent on improving their health, whereas those who fix their mind on bodily movements, hope to develop mindfulness, concentration, and other higher states of consciousness.

Moreover, there are other reasons why we should not belittle the practice of noting what is familiar to us. In the concentration on external meditation devices (*kaṣiṇa*), we use ordinary objects such as earth, water, colour, *etc.*, but it is a mistake to think that these devices do not lead to the attainment of absorption (*jhāna*). Some meditation exercises involve contemplation of the organs of the body such as hair, teeth, finger-nails, or excreta, but it would be naïve to lump them together with the daily activities of grave-diggers or sewage workers, whose daily experience does not mean anything in terms of spiritual uplift.

Criticism of the insight practice that involves noting the familiar is incompatible with the Buddha's teaching about insight meditation. To note standing, sitting, and so forth according to the Satipaṭṭhāna method is a far cry from ordinary awareness of physical movements. For ordinary awareness does not call into play mindfulness, concentration, and other higher mental faculties. On the contrary, it is dominated by ignorance which gives rise to illusions of permanence, pleasure, and ego-entity.

Hence, ordinary awareness is closely bound up with greed, aversion, and other defilements whilst Satipaṭṭhāna meditation is designed to replace ordinary, illusion-ridden awareness with right mindfulness and right concentration. However, before a meditator has developed concentration, he or she cannot achieve the goal. In the lifetime of the Buddha, there were some people with special potential (*pārami*) who developed insight and attained the noble path and its

fruition in a short space of time. Nowadays, there are only a few cases of meditators who attained concentration and insight in a few days.

Concentration Is Essential to Gain Insight

The importance of concentration as an essential prerequisite for insight is borne out by the Buddha's teaching: "*Samādhiṃ bhikkhave bhāvētha samāhito bhikkhave bhikkhu yathābhutaṃ pajānāti*¹ — Monks, you should cultivate concentration. The monk who has attained concentration sees things as they really are (*yathābhutaṃ*)."

To see a thing as it really is to realise the impermanence of the eye-organ, the visible object, the eye-consciousness and the pleasant or the unpleasant feeling that arises at the sight of an object. The same may be said of the insight into reality at the moment of hearing, touching, and so forth. The insight occurs only when concentration is well-developed. In other words, it is only concentration that leads to insight into reality, which is empirical knowledge that has nothing to do with using logic or the intellect.

Insight into impermanence is genuine insight, but it does not arise as soon as the meditator develops concentration. When the mind is free from hindrances, it achieves purity. With **Purification of Mind**, the meditator discriminates between body and mind at every moment of noting. This discriminating consciousness emerges not at the beginning of the practice, but only when concentration gains momentum. Then the meditator knows that there are only body and mind, mind being consciousness and body being the object of the consciousness. He or she knows that there no ego, no living being besides body and mind. He or she thus attains the **Purification of View** (*ditṭhi-visuddhi*).

Then as the meditator notes walking, bending, *etc.*, he or she knows the desire to walk as the cause of walking. Similarly, it is the desire to bend the arm that causes it to bend. and there is no ego that makes the arm bend. We see because there are the eyes to see and the object to be seen. There is no ego that causes us to see. Thus, we distinguish between cause and effect. This is called **Knowledge by Discerning Conditionality** (*paccayapariggahañāna*). This insight develops into **Purification by Overcoming Doubt** (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*) when the meditator realises that the future as well as the past is also governed by cause and effect. It is the insight that helps

¹ S.iii.13, S.iv.80, S.v.414. (ed)

to remove doubt about one's existence in the past or future. This and other insights occur when the meditator develops the eightfold path by noting the mental and physical process from moment-to-moment. This special illumination is referred to in the Buddha's teaching as giving rise to the eye of wisdom (*cakkhukaraṇi*).

The experience is like that of a blind man who has recovered his sight because of good medicine. Formerly the meditator regarded the ego as the agent of seeing, hearing, *etc.* He or she might have heard of the teaching which denies ego and insists on the body and mind or cause and effect as the only realities in the universe.

With the further development of concentration, the eye of wisdom brings the meditator to higher stages of insight. As he or she goes on noting the mental and physical process, he or she becomes aware of the arising and passing away of the object of mindfulness. This knowledge of things as they really are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*) means insight into the arising and passing away of all phenomena. At first, the awareness is diffuse, being restricted to the continuity of the same kind of body and mind. Then the meditator realises that everything is in a flux, that there is nothing permanent, that all is suffering and devoid of ego-entity. This is **Knowledge of Comprehension** (*sammasana-ñāṇa*).

Then as concentration develops further, the meditator gains insight into the dissolution of phenomena in taking a step forward, in bending the hand, *etc.* Within one rising and one falling, he or she notes the phenomena vanishing piece by piece. When he or she hears something, hearing and vanishing are known as distinct phenomena. He or she does not know the meaning of the sound because there is no link between two consecutive sounds. So too when seeing something, the meditator notes only seeing and vanishing. This is **Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away** (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*). At this stage, the meditator sees lights and experiences ecstasy. He or she feels very light and comfortable. The mind is very keen and alert so that there is nothing that escapes his or her attention.

Then, when the meditator progresses to **Knowledge of Dissolution** (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*) and notes walking, lifting the foot, and putting it down, the appearance of the foot or that of the body becomes dim and only the rigidity and motion remain clear. Even so they are found to vanish one after another as are the other phenomena that the meditator notes in standing, lying, touching, *etc.* The meditator notes only the

vanishing of both the object noted and the noting consciousness. This experience of the meditator affords a deep insight into the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self nature of all phenomenal existence and accords with the Buddha's teaching — "The monk whose mind is concentrated sees things as they really are." When this eye of wisdom is fully developed, the meditator realises nibbāna with the knowledge born of the noble path and its fruition.

Moreover, the development of the eightfold path through the practice of mindfulness leads to insight, extraordinary knowledge (*abhiññāya*) and penetrative understanding (*sambodhāya*). Whenever the meditator knows that everything is impermanent, this knowledge rules out the arising of defilements, and on attaining the noble path the defilements are rooted out. Insight on the eightfold path also leads to nibbāna. With the extinction of defilements, the two cycles of kamma and results in terms of new body and mind also become extinct. This is momentary cessation (*tadaṅga nibbāna*), which means temporary extinction of suffering inherent in the round of defilements, kamma, and results. When the meditator makes further progress on the noble path, there is the total extinction of defilements, kamma, and body and mind. This is the real nibbāna that stems from abandoning by cutting off defilements (*samuccheda pahāna*). It is the goal of the Buddhas and the Arahants that guarantees permanent deliverance from suffering.

The Practice of the Middle Way

The way to this permanent peace and freedom or nibbāna is the Noble Eightfold Path. Venerable Sāriputta describes it as the way for the elimination of greed and aversion, the way that leads to the eye of wisdom, extraordinary insight and extinction of defilements. The insight that forms the goal of the path is extraordinary because it makes one aware of the cause and effect relationship between mind and matter, their impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.

The middle way is the Noble Eightfold Path, which comprises right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This middle way is developed through the contemplation of the mental and physical process whenever it arises at the moment of seeing, hearing, and so forth. Unmindfulness gives rise to craving in the case of a pleasant sense-object and ill-will in the case of an unpleasant sense-object.

With the development of concentration, the meditator becomes aware of the impermanence and conditionality of all phenomena. He or she does not react to them emotionally, and so there is no occasion for the arising of craving and ill-will. Every moment of mindfulness involves all the eight factors of the noble path. The effort to focus the attention on all phenomena is right effort. To note walking, standing, *etc.*, is right mindfulness. To fix the mind exactly on the respective sense-object is right concentration. These three factors constitute the concentration aspect of the path.

Again, it is right view to know the real nature of the phenomenon, mental or physical, that is noted. In other words, right view is involved when the meditator realises the impermanence of all phenomena, and their lack of any ego-entity that may create the illusion of man or woman, attractiveness or repulsiveness. It is right thought to make the mind intent on the real nature of phenomenal existence. Right view and right thought constitute wisdom. Again, these two path factors of wisdom and the three path factors of concentration together form a group called "*kāraṇa maggaṅga*," which means the working path factors. Harmony and co-operation between these path factors is essential for success in insight practice.

Also involved in the practice of insight are the three path factors of morality: right speech, right action, and right livelihood. The meditator already possesses these moral virtues as he or she has undertaken the moral precepts before taking up meditation and at the moment of noting a sense-object, he or she is morally pure because at that time there is no occasion for the emergence of greed or aversion, and so this means freedom from wrong speech, wrong action, and wrong livelihood.

Thus, with the gradual weakening of the defilements, the meditator attains the stage of Stream-winning that frees him or her from greed and aversion that are likely to lead him to the lower realms. At the next stage of Once-returning the gross sensual desire and ill-will become feeble, but only the attainment of the next stage of a Non-returner that ensures the total extinction of these defilements. At this stage the meditator takes no delight in sensual pleasure, nor does anything make him or her angry. The final stage of Arahantship brings about the complete extinction of attachment to existence (*bhavarāga*) and all other remaining defilements. So the Buddha points out the eightfold path for the elimination of greed and aversion.

Practice for Buddhahood

Some people believe that it is possible to overcome greed and aversion through proper reflection. Proper reflection may be helpful in some cases, but it is only the noble path knowledge that can root out these two major defilements. So even the Bodhisatta had to contemplate the five aggregates of clinging and develop insight. It was the progress of insight that led to liberation from all defilements and the attainment of Arahantship and Buddhahood. This is borne out by the Mahāpadāna Sutta of the Dīghanikāya which says that the Bodhisatta who was later to become Vipassī Buddha contemplated the five aggregates of attachment just before dawn. Here, the aggregates of attachment means the mental and physical process, and it is unmindfulness of this process that gives rise to the illusion of permanence, *etc.*, and the consequent attachment to it. The mental and physical process was contemplated by every Bodhisatta just before he attained supreme enlightenment and became a Buddha. So we should bear in mind that every Bodhisatta practised the path of insight, attained the four paths and four fruits, and become a Buddha. The same is true of the disciples of the Buddha. They attained the four paths only after contemplating the aggregates of attachment and developing insight.

At this meditation centre the meditators become aware of the nature of the body and mind while noting the bodily movements, the states of consciousness such as feelings, *etc.*, in accordance with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. With the development of concentration, they gain genuine insight. These insights involve the cultivation of right view and other stages of insight, thereby ruling out the arising of greed, aversion, and other defilements.

Those who practise mindfulness in whatever they do, say, feel, or know are the true disciples of the Buddha. They may be monks or lay followers, but they are worthy of praise irrespective of sex or age. They are the heirs of the Dhamma in accordance with the Buddha's advice. The Noble Eightfold Path that forms the path of insight may be subdivided into three groups: factors of wisdom (*paññā maggaṅga*), comprising right view and right thought; factors of morality (*sīla maggaṅga*), comprising right speech, right action and right livelihood; and factors of concentration (*samādhi maggaṅga*), comprising right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Right Effort

Right effort (*sammappadhāna*) is of four kinds: 1) the effort to avoid unwholesome states that have not yet arisen, 2) the effort to overcome the unwholesome states of consciousness that have arisen through insight, 3) the effort to develop wholesome states of consciousness, especially insight and the path, and 4) the effort to maintain and develop the wholesome states of consciousness that have already arisen until attaining Arahantship. One can exert these kinds of four right efforts only through the development of insight.

Right Mindfulness

Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) is explained by the Buddha in terms of four foundations of mindfulness — mindfulness of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) mindfulness of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), mindfulness of consciousness (*cittānupassanā*), and mindfulness of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*) such as sensual desire, matter, visual objects and so forth. So the meditator can cultivate right mindfulness only if he practises the Satipaṭṭhāna method of meditation.

Right Concentration

The path factor of right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) is described by the Buddha as the four stages of absorption (*jhāna*). Hence it comprises the basis of insight practice (*pāḍakajhāna*). Momentary concentration (*vipassanā-khaṇika-samādhi*) is synonymous with the first *jhāna* in respect of its characteristic of freedom from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). The practice of concentration and insight is essential to the three path factors of concentration. Without it, it makes little sense to speak of the Noble Eightfold Path. The eightfold path is to be found only in the Buddha's teaching, and no religion or system of thought that is divorced from the eightfold path can point out the four noble paths that ensure total extinction of defilements. So among those who know nothing about the path there is no Stream-winner, Once-returner, Non-returner, or Arahant. This is what the Buddha told the ascetic Subhadda on the eve of his *parinibbāna*.

“Yasmim kho subhadda dhammavinaye ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo na upalabbhati samaṇo pi tatthana upalabbhati dutiyopi tattha samaṇo na upalabbhati tatiyopi tattha

samaṇo ni upalabbhati catutthopi tattha samaṇo na upalabbhati” (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, Dīghanikāya).

These words embody the last teaching of the Buddha, which we should bear in mind and understand as follows. “There are the discourses (Suttanta) such as the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and others that contain my talks on the Dhamma. There are also disciplinary rules (Vinaya) of defeat (*pārājika*), formal meeting (*saṅghādisesa*), confession (*pācittiya*), and other minor rules. These discourses and disciplinary rules form my teaching. Only those who live up to this teaching are committed to the eightfold path and only those who are committed can attain Stream-winning, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship that ensure extinction of the defilements. Such Noble Ones are to be found only among my disciples. Other religions and sects are devoid of fully liberated saints among their followers.”

Even if you call yourself a Buddhist, you cannot attain the stages on the holy path if you do not contemplate the mental and physical process and practise the eightfold path in accordance with the Buddha’s teaching. Without such practice, you will not become even a Stream-winner who is assured of deliverance from the lower realms.

Anger and Malice

In the Dhammadāyāda Sutta, Venerable Sāriputta enumerated sixteen defilements in eight pairs. I have already described the first pair — greed (*lobha*) and aversion (*dosa*). The second pair is anger (*kodha*) and malice (*upanāha*). These are implicit in aversion. According to the commentaries, the pursuit of material goods leads to greed. If greed does not attain its objective, it gives rise to aversion, and if it is satisfied, greed for other objects arises. Non-gratification of greed makes us miserable. Aversion creates hatred of those who do not give us what we want. It infuses greed into the nine unwholesome states of consciousness rooted in craving. The nine unwholesome states are: 1) pursuit of desire based on craving, 2) getting the object of one’s desire, 3) deciding how to use it, 4) taking delight in the decision, 5) excessive attachment, 6) keeping the object of attachment, 7) miserliness, 8) guarding the object, 9) disputes, physical conflict, slander, and deception that arise from guarding possessions.

Again *kodha* is anger while *upanāha* means malice. The unwholesome state of consciousness begins with aversion, which later on leads to malice. If a person does not get the desired object, he or she will feel resentful of anyone who does get it. If this resentment is dwelt upon, it becomes malice. It is hard to understand these subtle differences explained in the Commentary.

Suffice to say that, in general, all kinds of craving and desire may be regarded as greed, and all kinds of hatred, frustration, and ill-will may be regarded as aversion. Anger and malice are specific forms of aversion and both arise from the pursuit of objects of desire.

Anger and malice are inferior and ignoble. We are angry in the face of any unpleasant sense-object. Anger is like a cobra that hisses and raises its hood when it is provoked. Even those who have gentle manners are sometimes so sensitive that they give vent to their feelings when they hear something offensive to them. Such an outburst of temper may become the cause for shame and regret. It may lead to loss of friendship and damage the reputation of the person concerned.

Some are likely to bear a grudge against anyone who has offended them. We may bear grudge against a person because we think that 1) he or she has jeopardized our interests in the past, or 2) is jeopardizing our interests in the present, or 3) will jeopardize our interests in the future. We may hold a similar view regarding his or her relation with someone whom we love. We may believe that a person has done something good for our enemy in the past, is doing good for our enemy in the present, or will do good for our enemy in future. Thus, there are altogether nine reasons for our spitefulness.

There are some people who express their annoyance without there being anything to justify it. They would get annoyed with the sun, the wind, the rain, or other non-living objects because of their frustration, or any accident. They may curse a material object for their discomfiture, e.g. a tree root for causing them to trip. Some might give vent to their annoyance by kicking it. This is an ugly outward sign of gross irritability (*aṭṭhanakopa*), a characteristic of short-tempered people. It is ignoble and damages one's reputation.

The way to uproot anger and malice is the middle way of the eightfold path. There are some things that we can do to overcome them. If, for any reason, we become angry, we should not allow the anger to find an outlet in words or deeds. We should reflect on the

evils of anger. If such reflection fails to remove it, then we should consider that the person who does or said something offensive to us is merely psycho-physical phenomena that have already passed away in common with our own, which are also extinct by the time that anger arises in us. Moreover, it is the offender who will have to suffer for unwholesome deeds or speech. If we take offence, then we too will have to suffer the same fate.

A better way to overcome aversion is just to note it. This practice is the method of the eightfold path. The best way is to note just “hearing, hearing,” as soon as we hear something offensive, thereby ruling out the arising of anger. The meditator tries to be mindful of every psycho-physical phenomenon at the moment of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, in order to head off the arising of defilements from sense impressions. If this practice fails, he or she will have to remove aversion through reflection or mindfulness of the emotion.

If anger is so violent as to manifest in facial expressions or verbal retorts, we should check it through reflection or contemplation of mind and matter at that moment. Failure to nip it in the bud usually results in uncivilized behaviour, threats, abuse, and other emotional outbursts that damage our reputation and friendships. Anger often bedevils those who are close to one another. and more often than not it is the close friends or relatives who help us in our crises. So if what a man does or says is offensive to us, we should exercise forbearance in view of what he has done for our good in the past. We should note the unpleasant words and practise self-restraint. Once, a meditator said that he remained calm and unruffled through mindfulness when he was reproached by his father-in-law. This accords with the Buddha’s teaching: “*Sute suta mattaṃ bhavissati* — when you hear, just know that you hear it.”

Ingratitude and Arrogance

The third pair of evils is ingratitude (*makkha*) and arrogance (*paḷāsa*). Ingratitude fails to acknowledge indebtedness to one’s benefactor. There is no doubt about the deep debt of gratitude that we owe to our parents, yet some young people are loath to acknowledge their gratitude, saying that it is the duty of every man and woman to care for their children or that their parents’ concern for their welfare is due to their own good kamma in the past. Some deny their indebtedness to their

teachers or elders for their education and attribute it to their own effort. In fact, we should thank a person even for a slight contribution that he or she has made towards our welfare, and it is incumbent upon us to do something in return for any service rendered. According to the Buddha, even a lifelong and wholehearted commitment to supporting our parents will not suffice to remove the debt of gratitude that we owe them. However, if a parent is a non-believer in the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, it is possible to repay the debt by doing something for their spiritual welfare. So ancient teachers describe gratitude to parents as infinite and immeasurable.

Those who are preoccupied with the pursuit of material welfare are often unmindful of their gratitude to their teachers. In the lifetime of the Buddha, the monk *Kokālika* tried to acquire material goods by taking advantage of his association with the two chief disciples — Venerable Sāriputta and Moggallāna. Later, when he failed to achieve his aim, he made false charges against his benefactors. He turned a deaf ear to the admonitions of the Buddha, and so had to pay dearly for his evil deeds. According to the *Samyutta-nikāya*,¹ he died of a terrible disease, and landed in Avīci hell.

Prince Ajātasattu's killing of his father for the sake of the throne is another case of flagrant ingratitude. Today there are people who will not hesitate to wrong their teachers or other benefactors because of their evil desires.

We should be aware of our indebtedness to others and try to repay their benevolence as far as possible. In the time of the Buddha an elderly brahmin named *Rādha* wanted to join the Saṅgha, but there was no monk who would assume responsibility for his ordination. Then in accordance with the Buddha's instruction Venerable Sāriputta ordained him by way of repayment for a spoonful of rice that the latter had once offered to him. Venerable Sāriputta's sense of gratitude is highly praiseworthy and exemplary. Even if we cannot repay another person's good deed we must be wary of doing him a bad turn. If we are tempted to be ungrateful we should remove such ill-feeling through wise reflection or the practice of mindfulness.

The other evil is arrogance, the desire to consider oneself on a par with those who are morally or intellectually superior. Some people make unjustified claims to morality, learning, or spiritual attainments, and

¹ *Kokālika Sutta*, S.i.151.

rank themselves on a par with or above those who do possess those attributes. It is not hard for them to find followers among credulous people. In ancient India there were some deceitful teachers who made pretensions to the enlightenment and wisdom of the Buddha, and they gained the credence of ignorant people. Arrogance is a gross evil that we should overcome through the middle path of the Buddhadhamma.

Envy and Meanness

The next pair of evils that Venerable Sāriputta denounced is envy (*issā*) and meanness (*macchariya*). It is the tendency of human beings to envy a person who surpass them in respect of wealth, beauty, education, status, reputation, or other praiseworthy attributes. We harbour meanness when we do not want to see a person in possession of something similar to what we have or when we do not want other persons to have anything to do with the object of our attachment.

There are five kinds of meanness. 1) Meanness regarding accommodation (*āvāsa-macchariya*). This especially concerns the monks. It is meanness to monopolize a communal monastery and deny good monks the right to dwell in it. However, it is not meanness if we refuse to admit immoral or quarrelsome monks. The same may be said of buildings meant for the community of meditators at meditation centres. 2) It is meanness in regard to followers (*kūla-macchariya*), to claim the exclusive attention of one's followers, and resent their association with other monks. It is also meanness for a layperson to have the same kind of possessiveness regarding friends or relatives. However, one should not be charged with meanness if one wants friends or followers to have nothing to do with foolish or immoral persons. 3) The desire to possess material goods exclusively is called "*lābha-macchariya*." However, it is not meanness to deny them to immoral monks or to refuse to give something that one needs as in the case of the bhikkhuni Uppalavaṇṇā who rejected the monk Udāyī's request for her bathing-robe. 4) "*Vaṇṇa macchariya*" is unwillingness to acknowledge in others admirable qualities such as beauty that one possesses. 5) "*Dhamma macchariya*" is reluctance to share one's knowledge of the Dhamma with others.

All these kinds of meanness lead to the lower realms and evil kammic consequences after death. Envy and meanness serve no useful purpose — on the contrary they make people unhappy in the present life and hereafter. In the [Sakkapañha Sutta](#) of the Dighanikāya,

Sakka, the king of deities, asked the Buddha why people are not free from danger and have to suffer although they seek happiness, peace and security. The Buddha said that the unhappy plight of all living beings is due to the two fetters of envy and meanness.

There is no doubt about the truth of the Buddha's statement. Because of these two evils, people quarrel with one another and make themselves wretched and miserable. Of the two evils, meanness is clearly apparent in the behaviour of dogs. When a piece of meat is thrown to two frolicking dogs, they will bite each other, consumed by the meanness for the exclusive possession of the food. There is no need to elaborate, since we have described envy and meanness at length in the discourses on the Sakkapañha Sutta and [Sallekha Sutta](#).

Still, we would like to point out the harmful effects that these two evils may have on Buddhism in Burma. The monks who love only material possessions do not want to share their sphere of influence with those who surpass them in some respect. In the case of a monastery where there is no abbot, it is up to them to tell their lay followers to install someone who is noted for his learning, observance of Vinaya rules and devotion to insight practice. However, most of them do not want such a person to be among them because they are jealous of their followers, and they envy anyone who outshines them in the knowledge and practice of the Dhamma. If we have a high regard for the teaching of the Buddha, it is our duty to welcome and give wholehearted support to those who can effectively contribute to the spiritual uplift of the people.

According to the Commentary on the first section of the Majjhimanikāya, those who faithfully and steadfastly practise mindfulness attain Stream-winning when their insight is well-developed. The path of Stream-winning and its fruition ensures the total extinction of the six defilements, including envy and meanness. This attainment means the permanent deliverance from the dangers of the lower realms, and the final attainment of Arahantship and nibbāna after a life-cycle of seven rebirths at most in the human and celestial realms. So we urge our disciples to be heirs of the Dhamma by trying to attain at least Stream-winning.

Deception and Hypocrisy

The next pair of defilements that we have to deal with is deception (*māyā*) and hypocrisy (*sātheyya*). We use deceit to hide our faults and

pose as an innocent person. Hypocrisy is making pretensions to qualifications that one does not really have. There are hypocrites who pretend to be learned, devoted to the practice of austerities, to have acquired psychic powers, or to have attained some higher insights. They resort to subterfuge to impress the foolish. Once, a monk who was teaching said, "Hey! The woman over there! Beware! Do not let your mind wander!" Of course most people lack concentration, but every woman in the congregation thought that the monk was speaking to her and his remark served to increase their faith in him as it gave them the impression that he could read their minds.

The way to overcome the evils of deceptiveness and hypocrisy is the practice of the eightfold path. Those who do not practise mindfulness are likely to hide their failings and become pretentious.

These two character defects are to be found especially among those who have them as hangovers from their habits in past existences. Anyway, it is necessary for the meditator to remove them if they have set their heart on nibbāna and liberation. Indeed, freedom from deceit and hypocrisy is an essential qualification that the Buddha required of his dedicated disciples when he declared as follows:

"Etu viññū puriso asaṭho amāyāvi ujujātiko, ahamanusāsāmi ahaṃ dhammaṃ desemi." (Udumbarika Sutta, D.iii.55)

"Let anyone who is not hypocritical or deceitful, but intelligent and sincere, come to me. I will instruct him. If he follows my instructions, he is assured of gaining Arahantship within seven days or seven years at the most."

The meditation teacher can guide the meditator effectively only if the latter is free from deception and hypocrisy. The teacher can do nothing for his spiritual progress as long as he is deceptive and hides his faults such as talking and sleeping most of the time instead of practising diligently. The teacher cannot properly guide such a meditator, any more than the doctor can cure a patient who denies his illness. Nor can he help the meditator who pretends to be doing well in his practice and to have attained insights. Such a deceitful meditator will fail to make progress, just like the patient who pretends to have recovered from his illness. The meditator should therefore watch the mental process carefully and guard against deception and hypocrisy. With the development of concen-

tration and the attainment of [knowledge of arising and passing away](#), the mind becomes free from these two evils. Once a woman who was overbearing and insolent in her relation with her husband practised mindfulness and became repentant. She confessed her defects and vowed to get rid of them. The practice of mindfulness and the eightfold path is very helpful in our effort to overcome the defilements that cause suffering, undermine our integrity, and prolong the cycle of life.

Impertinence and Vanity

The next pair of evils that we have to consider is impertinence (*thambha*) and vanity (*sārambha*). Impertinence means lack of respect for objects and persons who are worthy of reverence. Some people are loath to show respect for Buddha images, shrines, elders, and so forth by gesture or speech. Vanity is the desire to do an improper thing just to outshine others. This is exemplified in the case of a man who spends money extravagantly, to outdo others in respect of almsgiving. However, it is not vanity if it is pure, sincere, and unselfish motives that make a man practise generosity, morality, and mental development in a way unmatched by others. The characteristic of vanity is insincerity and egoism, and is not to be confused with the desire to do cultivate the spiritual side of life — a desire that arises from wholesome states of consciousness.

These two evils of impertinence and vanity do not usually occur to meditators who practise sincerely and diligently, but they become extinct only at the stage of Arahantship, so the meditator should be constantly on guard against them.

Conceit and Excessive Conceit

The next pair of defilements that deserve our attention is conceit (*māna*) and excessive conceit (*atimāna*). Conceit may have its origin in one's good family, wealth, physical appearance, intelligence, or number of associates. Conceit is of three kinds: 1) A sense of one's own superiority (*seyyamāna*) in respect of family, social standing, etc. This superiority may be true or false. The false sense becomes extinct at the stage of Stream-winning, and the true sense only at Arahantship. 2) A sense of equality with others (*sodisamāna*). The sense may be true or false, the false sense becomes extinct at Stream-winning,

but the true sense only at Arahantship. 3) A sense of inferiority in respect of something (*hīnamāna*). It is a feeling that forms the basis not for humility or reverence for other people, but for conceit and arrogance. Ironically, it makes someone defiant and scornful of what superior people think. since one considers them as totally alien. He or she is conceited, being less inhibited than those who are superior in some respects. One can overcome the false sense of inferiority at Stream-winning, but the true sense only at the Arahantship.

“*Atimāna*” means excessive conceit. One may, at first, consider oneself equal with others, but later this may develop into excessive conceit, that leads to a highly exaggerated opinion of oneself. Excessive conceit is a common character trait of government officials, religious teachers, leaders, and others who pride themselves on their authority, special qualifications, knowledge, skill, ability, or achievement in some fields. However, their conceit is so excessive that it makes them haughty in interpersonal relations. They betray their overweening pride in their writings and conversations.

This excessive conceit bedevils some meditators when they attain certain spiritual levels, such as knowledge of arising and passing away. They may think that they are making more spiritual progress than their teachers. So we should practise insight to overcome false conceit at the Stream-winning stage, and we should try to attain Arahantship to do away with the conceit that we may seek to justify by virtue of some special qualifications that we really do possess.

The Humility of Venerable Sāriputta

The humility of Venerable Sāriputta should be a lesson for us.

On one occasion, the Buddha’s two chief disciples, Venerable Sāriputta and Moggallāna, took leave of the Blessed One and went on tour. On seeing Venerable Sāriputta accompanied by many monks, a certain monk became envious. So he approached the Buddha and reported falsely that Venerable Sāriputta had brushed against him and gone his way without making an apology. The Buddha knew the truth, but sent for the elder and told him about the complaint of the monk. Venerable Sāriputta said that it was possible for an unmindful person to have done such a thing, but he was always mindful of his body. Then he referred to the forbearance which he practised by comparing himself with certain objects.

1) Venerable Sāriputta likens himself to the earth which serves as the dumping ground for all kinds of rubbish, both clean and unclean. It receives all sorts of filth, excrement, pus, phlegm, and so forth without complaint or disgust. He exercises the kind of forbearance that is so characteristic of the earth.

2-4) Again filth is dumped into water. It is disposed of by fire and air, but water, fire, and air neither complain nor show disgust. In the same way he practises forbearance to an extraordinary degree.

5) He also acts like a foot-wiping cloth with which one cleanses one's feet of dirt. The cloth is patient and free from complaint and so is he.

6) He adopts the attitude of low caste man towards the high caste Brahmins. When a low caste man enters a village, he has to rap with a stick by way of warning others of his approach, so that they may be able to avoid contact with him. Venerable Sāriputta said that he has the humility like the self-abasement of these low caste men.

7) He is like a bull with broken horns, which is docile and does not attack any living being.

8) He loathes his body. He is not pleased with it any more than the young men or women who have bathed and adorned themselves will be pleased with a rotten carcass hung round their necks.

9) He feels that he is bearing the burden of his body which is like a pot of animal fat with many holes for dripping.

When Sāriputta thus told the Buddha about his forbearance and humility, the monk who had falsely accused him was stricken with remorse and apologized to the elder for his misdeed. Venerable Sāriputta forgave him and also asked for his forgiveness.

Venerable Sāriputta's humility is exemplary. Many people may not be able to practise humility to such a high degree or even to get rid of ordinary conceit, but we should try to overcome excessive conceit (*atimāna*).

Pride and Heedlessness

Now we come to the last pair of defilements mentioned in Venerable Sāriputta's discourse — pride (*mada*) and heedlessness (*pamāda*). According to the Pāḷi text of the Khuddakavattu vibhaṅga¹ there are twenty-seven kinds of pride. In other words, one may become intoxicated with pride originating in one of twenty seven features.

¹ Vbh. 344.

Birth, Clan, Youth, and Longevity

The first cause of pride is birth (*jāti*). In India this word refers to the caste system. There are four castes: rulers or nobles, priests, merchants, and manual workers. The rulers and priests are overwhelmed with pride because of their royal blood or learning and this often makes them blind and irrational like a drunkard or a rutting bull elephant.

Some people may fall prey to pride due to attachment to their clan (*gotta*), their good health (*ārogya*), their youthfulness (*yobbana*), their longevity (*jīvita*), and so forth. For many people, pride regarding good health or youthfulness is a hindrance to the practice of insight meditation in that it makes them unmindful of the unpredictable nature of death.

Gain, Honour, Respect, and Deference

Again, pride may have its origin in wealth or material gain (*lābha*). Some people are so overwhelmed with pride in their wealth that they take no interest in the practice of mindfulness. Pride over gifts received from lay followers may make a monk so conceited that he becomes slack in the practice of morality, concentration, and wisdom, that is stressed in Dhammadāyāda Sutta. The gift that a lay follower offers as a mark of special reverence is called “*sakkāra*.” A monk who receives such an honour and is deeply respected by his followers tends to be vain and conceited. This kind of pride concerns especially eminent monks, abbots, teachers and so forth who often become overly egoistic and haughty because of their authority and leadership.

In the time of the Buddha, there was a religious teacher called Sañcaya. He had two disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna. After attaining Stream-winning on hearing the teaching of the Buddha, the two young men told their teacher about their intention to join the Saṅgha. They urged him to do likewise and practise the Dhamma. Sañcaya declined, saying that as he had been a teacher for a long time, it would be humiliating for him to become a disciple of another teacher. They told him to think twice about what he should do since many people would rally to the Buddha, leaving him virtually without disciples. Sañcaya then said that the wise were outnumbered by the foolish, so the fools who formed the majority of mankind would come to him while only a few wise men and women would go to the Buddha. He seemed to be well aware of the Buddha’s

superiority, but he was unable to follow the Buddha because of his conceit over leadership. Nowadays too there may be some leaders who cannot stomach the idea of practising the Dhamma under the guidance of another teacher. This is a form of pride that makes it impossible for a person to become the heir of the Dhamma.

Attendants, Wealth, Beauty, Knowledge, and Intelligence

Another five causes of conceit are: 1) having many attendants (*parivāra*), 2) abundance of property (*bhoga*), 3) beauty (*vaṇṇa*), 4) learning (*suta*), and 5) keen intelligence (*paṭibhāna*). The first two need no elaboration. The third concerns especially women.

In the lifetime of the Buddha, Khemā, the chief queen of King Bimbisāra was very proud of her beauty. She did not go to see the Buddha because she feared that he would belittle her beauty. However, the king planned her visit to the Bamboo Grove in such a way that she could not avoid seeing the Buddha. Then she was amazed to see a very beautiful girl near the Blessed One. She thought that the Buddha did not look down upon beautiful women, for here was a girl more beautiful than she, attending on the Blessed One. In reality the girl was a phantom created by the Buddha. As the queen looked at the girl, the Buddha exercised his psychic power and made the girl gradually become old, sick, and die. The queen became aware of the seeds of disintegration inherent in her own body, and when the Buddha taught the Dhamma to her, she attained Arahantship. She was later honoured by the Buddha as the leading female disciple distinguished by her great wisdom.

Another woman called Janapadakalyāṇī also did not pay respect to the Buddha because of her conceit regarding her beauty, but at last she too was forced to see the Buddha, who led her in the same way to Arahantship. She was known as Nandā Therī and she gained distinction in the practice of *jhāna*. Formerly she was under the domination of pride, as was the beautiful Pabhāvati in the [Kusa Jātaka](#) (Jā 531) who scorned King Kusa.

The other two sources of pride are extensive knowledge and keen intellect. Here, knowledge does not mean insight that results from the practice of meditation, for the meditator who has attained genuine insight will never be conceited. It means only the knowledge of worldly affairs or the knowledge of the Buddha's teaching that one acquires through learning (*sutamayā paññā*).

Sharp intellect (*paṭibhāna-ñāṇa*) is the skill that enables a man to speak or write fluently, and to be adroit in the choice of words that make his speech or writing clear, precise, and effective. By virtue of his sharp intellect, he can argue persuasively and tackle problems promptly. Such wit and resourcefulness may be a cause for pride.

Seniority, Alms-gathering, Endurance, and Fame

The next causes for pride are in the case of monks is seniority (*rattaññu*), having spent a long time the Saṅgha, and for the lay people seniority in government service. Again, the practice of collecting alms (*piṇḍapātika*), physical endurance (*iriyāpatha*) as, for example, the ability to walk for many hours, fame (*anavaññāta*), and accomplishment (*iddhi*).

The fourth of these, fame, literally means having attendants but here I think it should refer to fame or reputation. Thus a monk may become proud when he gains a reputation as a teacher of the Piṭaka, as a preacher, or as a meditation teacher. Excessive conceit may bedevil a government worker who has attained a high official position. The last cause of pride in this group, attainment (*iddhi*), doesn't mean supernormal powers as is usually understood by this term, but any unique accomplishment that may give rise to conceit.

Morality, Concentration, Skill, Physical Proportions

The next five causes of pride are morality (*sīla*), concentration (*jhāna*), special knowledge or skill (*sippa*), height (*āroha*), and girth (*pariṇāha*). Pride may have its origin in attachment to morality. Those who are morally pure sometimes speak impertinently to those who are not. However, it is not pride if a man stresses moral purity with good intentions and without any holier-than-thou attitude. Another cause of pride is attainment of access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*), or attainment concentration (*appanā samādhi*). A meditator may sometimes attain these states of concentration and speak contemptuously of those who do not. Some may fail to attain access concentration because of lack of sustained effort and it is the duty of meditation teachers to pay special attention to such meditators, but this duty has nothing to do with pride. Those who have attained momentary concentration (*vipassanā-khaṇika-samādhi*) are not prone to pride. Nowadays meditators who attain *jhāna* are rare, and cases of excessive conceit or pride arising from attachment to *jhāna* are virtually non-existent.

On the other hand, one may be dominated by pride because of outstanding ability in a traditional branch of learning or an academic field. Physical height that is considered neither too short nor too tall may be a cause of pride. A person may have a well-proportioned body (*saṅṭhāna*), which implies normal height and weight, or may be free from physical defects (*paripūri*), and these may also cause pride. Altogether, there are twenty-seven causes of pride that stand in the way of spiritual progress. It is no wonder that the practice of insight does not appeal to those who are inflated with vanity over their health, wealth, learning, or leadership. Some believe that their good moral life or their regular use of the beads obviates the need for the practice of mindfulness. However, all these various forms of pride are harmful to spiritual progress so they should be rejected through mindfulness.

Heedlessness

The last evil that we should overcome for progress on the holy path is heedlessness (*pamāda*). It is described in the Khuddakavatthu vibhaṅga as unmindfulness that leads to loss of self-control in respect of improper acts, improper speech, and improper thoughts. This is the worst and grossest of all the many kinds of heedlessness. Killing, stealing, and illicit sex constitute bodily heedlessness, while lying, slandering, abusing, and frivolous talk mean verbal heedlessness, and it is mental heedlessness to covet another person's possessions, to hate someone and wish them harm, or to accept false views such as the view denying the law of kamma.

Heedlessness leads one to do evil in deeds, speech, and thought. It means giving free rein to the mind instead of restraining it, like unleashing an ox and letting it forage at will. The antidote to heedlessness is strict observance of the moral precepts. The constant practice of concentration wards off heedlessness in thought, while the practice of insight means the total extinction of heedlessness in respect of the object noted with every act of noting. Heedlessness is uprooted as the meditator progresses on the Noble Path and proceed from one stage to another. At the stage of Stream-winning the gross, unwholesome heedlessness that leads to flagrant breaches of morality become extinct. Then the path of Non-returning brings about the total extinction of heedlessness that give rise to unwholesome

thoughts such as sensual craving and ill-will, while the attainment of Arahantship ensures the extinction of all other heedlessness such as that causing desire for existence. However, the Commentary on the Vattha Sutta of the Majjhimanikāya¹ says that the meditator at the stage of Non-returning overcomes four defilements: ill-will (*byāpāda*), anger (*kodha*), malice (*upanāha*), and heedlessness (*pamāda*). So according to that Commentary, the defilements that still linger in the Non-returner such as lust for life, pride, ignorance, *etc.*, do not belong to the category of heedlessness. So, to overcome the defilements associated with heedlessness, one needs to practise the eightfold path until the attainment of Non-returning.

Heedlessness is lack of self-restraint in regard to the five senses. In other words, it is heedlessness to think of the sense-objects, to crave for, or take delight in them. The Buddha instructed the monks that they should use the four requisites of food, robes, medicine, and dwellings not to gratify the sensual pleasures, but only for the preservation of life. The infallible remedy for heedlessness is the practice of concentration and insight

Heedlessness in the form of indulgence in sensual thoughts is not as coarse as the heedlessness that finds an outlet in the violation of the fundamental moral precepts. The preventative measures against heedlessness in respect of the sense-objects are wise reflection, constant mindfulness, and self-restraint. The best thing to do is to note constantly the mental and physical processes such as rising and falling, *etc.*

Lack of commitment to the practice of insight is bound to give rise to heedlessness as moral transgressions, sensuous thoughts, restlessness, and wandering thoughts. The meditator cannot be free from heedlessness if he is not diligent, determined, persistent, and steadfast in the practice. It is heedlessness to meditate half-heartedly, to meditate off and on, after long intervals, to relax one's effort, to give up the practice, or fail to meditate continuously and steadfastly.

Six Kinds of Heedlessness

You will now have some idea about heedlessness, which we may arrange in order of gravity as follows. 1) Heedlessness in its weakest and most subtle form may be identified with occasional

¹ MA.i.170, Commentary on M.i.38, Sutta 7, [The Simile of the Cloth](#). “Byāpādo kodho upanāho pamādoti ime cattāro kilesā anāgāmimaggena pahiyanti.”

wandering thoughts and forgetting to note them. 2) Less subtle is the heedlessness that makes us negligent and lets some sense-objects escape our attention. 3) Worse still is the heedlessness that leads to sensual thoughts. 4) More harmful is the heedlessness that causes us to indulge in sensual pleasure. 5) Still more dangerous is the heedlessness that creates the desire to kill, steal, lie, or do other evils. 6) The worst heedlessness is that which finds expression in doing evil in deeds or speech.

Every Buddhist should try to be free from the last two kinds of heedlessness. The fourth heedlessness should be overcome by bhikkhus and lay disciples who practise insight. Meditators should be always mindful and guard themselves against the third heedlessness — sensual thoughts. If sensual thoughts arise during the practice of mindfulness, they should be promptly noted and rejected. As for those who meditate seriously to attain the path, they should strive until they become free from the first two kinds of heedlessness.

Constant noting of the mental and physical phenomena from moment to moment and the development of insight leads to Stream-winning, which ensures the total extinction of six defilements: ingratitude (*makkha*), arrogance (*palāsa*), envy (*issā*), meanness (*macchariya*), deception (*māyā*), and hypocrisy (*sāṭheyya*).¹ At the stage of Non-returning, aversion (*vyāpāda*), anger (*kodha*), malice (*upahāna*), and heedlessness (*pamāda*) become extinct. Finally, at the stage of Arahantship, covetousness and greed (*abhijjhāvisamalobha*), impertinence (*thambha*), vanity (*sārambha*), conceit (*māna*), excessive conceit (*atimāna*), and pride (*mada*) are uprooted.² The total extinction of these sixteen defilements on the attainment of the noble paths is described in the Commentary on the Vattha Sutta of the Majjhimanikāya and other teachings of the Buddha.

According to these Commentaries heedlessness is wholly extinct at the Non-returning stage, but attachment to existence, ignorance, conceit regarding virtues that one really possesses, and other defilements still remain. So the meditator will have to continue the practice of the eightfold path until attaining Arahantship that ensures the total extinction of all defilements. Only then will the

¹ MA.i.170. “Makkho palāso issā macchariyaṃ māyā sāṭheyanti ime cha sotāpattimaggena pahīyantīti.”

² Ibid. “Arahattamaggena abhijjhāvisamalobho thambho sārambho māno atimāno madoti ime cha pahīyantīti.”

meditator or the bhikkhu become the worthy heir of the Dhamma in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha.

The practice of the eightfold path is essential to the elimination of pride and heedlessness. This practice involves the constant introspection of the mind-body process or the five aggregates of grasping (*upādānakkhandhā*) that arise from every act of seeing, hearing, etc. With the development of right concentration or momentary concentration through such practice, the meditator attains insight into the distinction between the mind that notes and the matter (the sense-object) that is noted, and realises the impermanence of everything. This insight is not ordinary knowledge; it is extraordinary and penetrative. Every moment of such insight means momentary extinction of defilements and eventually there arises the insight relating to the path, and nibbāna is realised.

The bhikkhus who attain such insights and overcome defilements are worthy of praise irrespective of their seniority or status in the Saṅgha. They become the real heirs of the Dhamma. The Buddha's chief disciple Venerable Sāriputta emphasised the need for the heritage of the Dhamma, but it is difficult to understand how we should inherit the Dhamma in terms of the path, its fruition, and nibbāna if we do not know how to practise the eightfold path in conformity with the teaching in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, [Mahāpadāna Sutta](#), etc. However, the practice is clear to us, and it is not hard for us to teach it as we have practised insight meditation on the basis of these teachings. Those who follow our instructions faithfully will find the practice really beneficial.

The practice of the eightfold path is like taking good medicine for the treatment of a serious disease. Just as good medicines help us to overcome many kinds of illness, so too the practice of the eightfold path helps us to remove various defilements. First we should practise the preliminary path (*pubbabhāga-magga*) or the path of insight. This practice is effective only if we note the mental and physical process or aggregates of attachment from moment to moment. Such practice leads to insight into the real nature of mind and matter: their impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and egolessness. These insights that arise in this way constitute the path of insight, such as right view, etc. This is the preliminary

path that leads to the noble path. When the path of insight becomes well-established, the noble path arises.

Two Ways of Practice

The Commentary describes two ways of practising the eightfold path. Some meditators practise the *samatha*-oriented *vipassanā* while others practise *vipassanā*-oriented *samatha*. Some develop access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) or attainment concentration (*appanā samādhi*) before they practise insight. This is tranquillity (*samatha*). In other words, the practice of the eightfold path has two approaches. 1) The development of the path of insight after one has attained tranquillity, and 2) The practice of insight without first trying to attain tranquillity. Tranquillity means access or attainment concentration, where access concentration is pre-*jhānic* concentration whereby one develops tranquility to the point of being free from the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*).

For some meditators either of these stages of concentration forms the basis of insight. Insight practice involves developing insight into mind and matter, their cause and effect relationship, their dissolution, impermanence, *etc.* It finally gives rise to the successive stages of the noble path, by the progressive elimination of the fetters (*saṃyojana*) and latent defilements up to the final stage of Arahantship with the total extinction of all defilements.

The Commentary also describes the bare insight (*suddhavoipassanā*) practice of the Noble Path. This practice does not presuppose either access or absorption concentration, but is concerned with the contemplation of the aggregates or mental and physical process in terms of their characteristics of impermanence and so forth. The contemplation leads to various stages of insight knowledge such as insight into the distinction between mind and matter. This means the Purification of View (*diṭṭhivissuddhi*), which usually arises from Purification of Mind (*cittavisuddhi*). However, Purification of Mind presupposes freedom from the hindrances, so although this insight practice bypasses the two kinds of tranquillity, it is based on what is called momentary concentration for insight (*vipassanā khaṇika samādhi*). Although the meditator may dispense with the two kinds of tranquillity concentration, he cannot do so with momentary concentration, which is absolutely essential to insight practice.

The Commentary refers to the one-pointedness of mind that results from attention to the relevant sense-objects. Here, the relevant objects mean the psycho-physical phenomenon that form the objects of insight contemplation. Insight practice rules out external objects that have nothing to do with insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self, that lead to reflection and discursive thinking.

With the development of concentration, the meditator finds that the mind stops wandering. The noting mind and the noted object become perfectly attuned. There is no consciousness that escapes the meditator's attention. The mind becomes a succession of noting consciousness. The noted objects vary, but they are in tune with the noting consciousness. At such moments the hindrances become totally extinct and there tranquility arises, which is called momentary concentration for insight (*vipassanā khaṇika samādhi*). On the basis of this concentration or **Purification of Mind** (*citta visuddhi*) that arises from it, the practice of mindfulness gradually leads to insight into analytical knowledge of body and mind (*nāmarūpapariccheda-ñāṇa*), then knowledge of conditionality (*paccayapariggaha-ñāṇa*). Later, insight develops into the arising and passing away of all phenomena (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) together with their impermanence, etc.

This way of practice begins with the contemplation of mind and matter in terms of their characteristics. Therefore, in this practice, insight arises first and tranquillity or momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*) follows in its wake. In other words, in this practice, insight takes precedence over tranquillity.

It is barely possible to overemphasize the importance of insight practice. It is only insight practice that will lead to the attainment of the Noble Path, its fruition, and nibbāna, which makes us real heirs of the Dhamma.

Appendix on Bhikkhu Kapila

Reference was made [above](#) to the monk [Kapila](#) and other vile bhikkhus in my discourse on the Dhammadāyāda Sutta. The following is the full story of Kapila as mentioned in the Commentary on the [Dhammacariya Sutta](#) of the Suttanipāta.

After the *parinibbāna* of the Buddha Kassapa, there were two brothers, Sodhana and Kapila, in the Saṅgha. Their mother, Sādhinī and sister Tāpanā joined the Bhikkhuṇī Saṅgha. The elder brother studied the Vinaya rules for five years, practised the Dhamma, and became an Arahant. The younger brother studied the scriptures devotedly and became a learned monk.

Because of his knowledge of the Dhamma, he had many followers and was well provided with material goods. Puffed up with conceit over his learning, he became presumptuous and arrogant. He would contradict other monks in everything and when they tired to reason with him, he would retort with abusive language. His brother tried to bring him to his senses, but it was in vain and at last he was deserted by all the fellow-monks who cherished morality.

He did not lead a good moral life nor did his followers. On one occasion at the gathering of monks he called out for someone who could recite Pāṭimokkha. Nobody was able to do the job. Then saying, “It does not matter whether or not you hear Pāṭimokkha. There is no such thing as Vinaya rules,” he left the assembly. In this way he did much disservice to the teaching of the Buddha Kassapa.

His brother Venerable Sodhana attained *parinibbāna* on that very day. As for Kapila, on his death he landed in Avīci hell and so did his mother and sister who had reviled virtuous bhikkhus.

In the lifetime of the Buddha Gotama, Kapila was reborn as a big fish in the river near Sāvatti because of his residual evil kamma. The fish was of golden colour but its mouth emitted a foul smell. One day the fish was caught and brought to the king. The king took it to the Buddha and asked the Blessed One why the fish had a golden colour, but a foul smell. The Buddha described the past existence of the fish as the learned bhikkhu Kapila in the time of the Buddha Kassapa. He told the king how Kapila abused the monks who did not agree with him; how he then did things harmful to the Buddha Kassapa’s teaching, and how as the kammic result of his evil speech he had to suffer and in the animal world. His body had a golden colour because of his

effort to promote the knowledge of the Dhamma and the foul smell was due to his diatribes against other monks.

Then the Buddha asked the fish:

“Are you not the monk Kapila?”

“Yes, I am, the monk Kapila, Venerable Sir,”

“From where did you come?”

“I came from Avīci hell, Venerable Sir?”

“Where is your brother Sodhana?”

“He has attained *parinibbāna*, Venerable Sir”

“Where is your mother Sādhini?”

“She is in the great hell, Venerable Sir.”

“Where is your sister Tāpanā?”

“She is also in the great hell, Venerable Sir.”

“Where are you going now?”

“I am now going to Avīci hell, Venerable Sir.”

Then the fish died and it landed in Avīci hell. The people who heard the story of Kapila were horrified and the Buddha taught the Kapila Sutta which begins with the following verse.

*“Dhammacariyaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, etadāhu vasuttamaṃ.
Pabbajitopi ce hoti, agārā anagāriyaṃ.”*

“A life of righteousness, a life of holiness.
This they call the gem of highest worth.”

The Kapila Sutta¹ consists of ten verses (*gāthā*), and the substance of the Buddha’s teaching in the sutta is as follows.

The Buddha has taught the ten wholesome deeds and the eightfold path as the noble Dhamma. Even though a man has renounced the householder’s life and led the homeless life of a monk, if he speaks rudely and delights in ill-treating living beings, his life is vile and base, and it leads to the increase of defilements.

The monk who delights in arguing with others remains steeped in ignorance. He cannot understand or appreciate the true Dhamma that is imparted by a learned person. Because of his ignorance he does not know that it is a defilement leading to hell to make a

¹ Dhammacariya Sutta, Sn.49, verses 276-285.

scurrilous attack on the Arahants who have attained the path and its fruition, to contradict them, to say that they know nothing.

The monk who is blind to such evil lands in the lower realms, passes through one dismal, gloomy existence after another and will undergo much suffering. Just as it is hard to cleanse a big pit that has been full of excrement for many years, so also it is hard for an evil monk like Kapila to purge himself of all impurities.

So the bhikkhus should recognize a monk like Kapila as one who is steeped in sensual pleasure, sensual thoughts, evil practices, and involved in close relations with women of loose character. They should give such a monk a wide berth. They should be united and remove vile, undesirable, and bogus monks like Kapila. After getting rid of the undesirable monk who are given to evil thoughts and evil practices, the bhikkhus should form a community of virtuous monks who live together and practise the Dhamma on the basis of unity, harmony, and mutual respect. In this way they will gain full insight and finally attain Arahantship and nibbāna that is the end of suffering.

This is the full text of the Buddha's teaching in the Kapila Sutta. According to the Commentary, after hearing the discourse those who had brought the fish joined the Saṅgha, practised the Dhamma and before long attained Arahantship.¹

Once, while the Buddha was dwelling in the Bamboo Grove monastery at Rājagaha, the Venerable Moggallāna and Lakkhaṇa dwelt on the Vultures' Peak. One day the two elder descended the hill to go into the city for alms. At a certain place on the way, Venerable Moggallāna smiled. His companion asked him why he smiled. Venerable Moggallāna said that it was not the right time to answer the question and that it should be asked in the presence of the Buddha. After finishing their rounds for alms, the two elders went to see the Buddha. Then, in the presence of the Buddha, Venerable Lakkhaṇa asked the question again and Venerable Moggallāna replied as follows.

"While I was coming down the hill, I saw a monk going in the sky. His robe was burning and so were his bowl and his body. He was screaming with pain. He was a hungry ghost (*peta*) and on seeing him I was very surprised to see that such a being existed."

¹ S.ii.260. Pāpabhikkhu Sutta, Nidānavagga, Saṃyuttanikāya.

Venerable Moggallāna was greatly moved with compassion for the hungry ghost as well as for all other living beings who would have to reckon with such suffering as long as they remained entangled in the cycle of existence (*saṃsāra*). He smiled because he knew that he had put an end to all such suffering.

Then the Buddha said as follows.

“Bhikkhus, my disciples have such higher knowledge that they can see such living beings. They are able to bear witness in support of my teaching. I saw such living beings at midnight on the eve of my enlightenment, but I have not told anyone about it before because my revelation would harm the sceptics. Bhikkhus, that hungry ghost was a vile monk in the lifetime of the Buddha Kassapa. As a result of his evil kamma he suffered for aeons in hell. Then as the residual effect of his kamma, he is now suffering with his body in flames.”

The Commentary explains the term vile monk (*pāpabhikkhu*). A vile monk is one who misuses the four requisites — food, dwelling, robes, and medicine — that were offered by lay people who believed that they would benefit by giving alms to virtuous monks. The vile monk did not exercise self-restraint in his deeds and speech; he acquired material goods by fair means or foul and gave free rein to his evil propensities. Therefore, after his death he suffered in hell and then in the time of the Buddha Gotama he landed in the world of hungry ghosts in the form of a monk.

The same may be said of hungry ghosts who were corrupt nuns (*bhikkhuni*) and corrupt novices (*sāmaṇera*) in their previous lives. The stories of these hungry ghosts are found in the Saṃyuttanikāya and Vinaya Piṭaka. Such hungry ghosts were not visible even to the Arahants like Venerable Lakkhaṇa. Probably there were as many hungry ghosts as there were corrupt monks and nuns in the lifetime of the Buddha Kassapa. They suffered in hell and became hungry ghosts because in their previous lives they vilified virtuous monks and did not live in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha.

Hence the paramount importance of the practice leading to the real heritage of the Dhamma in terms of the path, its fruition, and nibbāna, or at the very least the second-class heritage of the Dhamma in the form of morality and alms-giving.

May you all be able to practise morality, concentration, and wisdom faithfully and gain the heritage of the Dhamma!

