a manual
of peace:

38 Steps towards
Enlightened Living

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Paperback First Edition 2005

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Preface to the First Edition

How this book should be used

Most problems in the world can be traced back to the *habits* of the people inhabiting the world — the things we do, say and think until having become used to it. These habits can either be good or bad. Supposing you have good habits, the sort of things which you do, say and think again and again will be the things that bring you happiness in life — especially the habit of being responsible for human dignity on a personal level, human dignity of others in society and responsibility for fair economics. All the thirty-eight virtues discussed in this *Manual of Peace* need to become our habits if they are to be of any use to us — simply to know 'about' the virtues is of no use to us. The aim in studying this *Manual* for students of all levels should be to incorporate the virtues as their habits following the following four stage plan:

1 in the short term to learn rules and regulations that protect us from behaviours contrary to the virtues of the blessings;

2 in the medium term to educate ourselves according to the information on each blessing in the text to get answers to three questions about the virtue, namely:

- 'what' they are (concept and definition);
- 'why' the Buddha taught them (why a particular behaviour was either prohibited or advocated) and;
- 'how' they can be put into practice in everyday life.

1 Doing that virtue so regularly that it becomes our habit

2 train up the people around you to practise the thirty-eight blessings as their habits. The important conclusion we get from this three-stage process of acquiring the thirty-eight blessings of life is that we need to look deeply at ourselves to see how many of the virtues we have accrued for ourselves first. We should regard ourselves as still in our infancy as far as the spiritual teachings go, and make the appropriate adjustments. Only when we've mastered ourselves can we have something to offer to the world, to reach out to others as a good friend to build up a network of virtue in society.

Sources used for this book

This book draws primarily on translated transcripts of eighty hours of lectures entitled *Monkol Jivit* given by the Most Ven. Phrabhavanaviriyakhun (Luang Phaw Dattajeevo), acting abbot of Dhammakaya Temple in Thailand in the mid-seventies to those of undergraduate age. The beauty of this lecture series was abundant use of examples from the Buddhist scriptures and also from his own life experiences. A second major source used for this book, which was supposed to summarize materials from the first source into a short book designated for schoolchildren to do revision for their Path of Progress Ethics Quiz Contest was Ven. Maha Dr. Somchai Thanavuddho's *Monkol Jivit: Path of Progress edition* (1982). This latter gives no exam-

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ples, but offers a more structured version of the Mangala Sutta materials, simplified in a way Asian people can understand.

This text misses nothing of the core content of either these two sources. However, after teaching these materials to a group of western Buddhist newcomers in Belgium, there were still many questions in the audience's minds left unresolved. Things like respect and gratitude don't come as second nature to westerners. Not drinking alcohol requires more than a fleeting explanation in a western culture. The long lists of meritorious fruits of various virtues had to be replaced as far as possible by 'why' rationale and where possible examples of the damage which can happen when certain virtues are neglected. The Most Ven. Phrabhavanaviriyakhun's *Kamphi Gu Wikrit Chart* (2000) helped to illustrate many social ills from the neglect of the Six Directions in this respect. Ven. Maha Dr. Somchai Thanavuddho's *Nippan ben atta reu anatta* (1999) almost completely replaces the explanation of Nirvana originally given in Blessing Thirty-four. Also some of the illustrative examples have been replaced if repeated. Some have been supplemented by western anecdotes. Where sets of Dhamma headings are repeated, they are usually described in full at the first appearance and cross-referenced in subsequent appearances. Finally, wherever possible, illustrative examples and Dhamma headings have been traced back to their scriptural reference in the PTS Pali Buddhist Scriptures to allow students to cross-reference to other mainstream and academic Buddhist works. In finding the references and fuller illustrative examples, heavy use was made of Ven. Paiboon Dhammavipulo's *Dachanee Thamm Chabab Monkola Soot* (1997, 2000, 2002). The resulting version of the *Manual of Peace*, dubbed the 'Cheatsheet version' in its homepage form has been better received by western audiences, has had a good web readership and is currently being translated into other western languages

Who should use this book

This book discusses key practical virtues in a sequential path of Buddhist practice. As such it offers more than just a dry, theoretical approach to Buddhist study, but can actually form the basis of subjective practice by students. The level of difficulty of this book is designed for:

- students of Buddhist studies in the upper secondary. In the U.K. curriculum this book would be suitable for students studying at Key Stages 4 + 5. In Scotland, for Scottish Levels SG + HS. Although study of Buddhism at Key Stage 4 is time-limited, use of the index can help students to look in depth on selected aspects of the agreed syllabus. At Key Stage 5, the text can be used for research on project work.
- students of Buddhist Studies or Comparative Religion at Bachelors' or Masters' level of university.
- This book is useful supplementary reading for the GB102 course of the Dhammakaya Open University.
- overseas students of the Path of Progress Ethics Quiz Contest
- Buddhists or those interested in Buddhism wishing to supplement or consolidate their knowledge of lifestyle-related Buddhist teachings

What does it offer to lecturers teaching these courses?

Lecturers will find this book has a good range of illustrative examples and metaphors to support their teachings or assemblies. Scriptural references are given for nearly every example.

Student learning features

In each chapter:

Definitions

Links to other chapters

References At the end of each chapter:

Metaphors

Illustrative Examples At the end of the book:

general index

Pali index

index of similes

index of illustrative examples

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Acknowledgements

The publication of this book was made possible only by the special efforts of many staff and volunteers at the Dhammakaya Foundation in Thailand. This includes most importantly the source works in the Thai language already mentioned by the Most Ven. Phrabhavanaviriyakhun, Phra Maha Dr. Somchai Thanavuddho and Phra Paiboon Dhammavipulo. Thanks also to Phra Nicholas Thanissaro who has translated, compiled and field tested this version of the text in English. Thanks to Phra Jessadah Kittithano for help in tracking down references, to Lalita Prasertnopakhun, Peungpit Poopornanake & Chalom Srijarus (*administrative assistance*), Anant Kittitawesin (*cover design*), the Dhammakaya Foundation's still photography volunteers (*colour photography*), Tassin-Sipang-Pangbaramee-Pangboon Boontang, Manop-Vararat-Dhitinand Kawmark, Suwachara S.-Thanachaporn Nishiyama & Sukultra-Sabrina Catts (*cover shoot*).

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The Manual of Peace in Action

Education on inner peace in the style laid before us in this *Manual of Peace*, is a must for humanity today. Modern day education has many shortcomings as illustrated ironically by the fact that the majority of today's disasters, come from supposedly the best educated being on this planet — namely the human being. The trouble with much of the curriculum materials taught in schools nowadays is that they ignore the concept of peace completely. The higher one goes in education, the narrower one's knowledge becomes and the further it becomes estranged from the concepts fundemental to peace. Many of the violent acts committed in the world are perpetrated by highly educated persons and often the victims are those who have received little education.

Education for peace needs to start by imparting awareness of the consequences of one's own actions to young people — because every action, whether good or bad, has an effect on the doer's life and others' lives as well. One cannot afford to be complacent or irresponsible about one's actions. This is why any form of education which advocates certain actions by a student has to have considerations of the peacefulness of those actions built into it, in order to prevent the sort of misdeeds done intentionally or unintentionally that upset society.

The sort of education that provides awareness of peace issues is known as 'Inner Peace Education' (IPE). It is a form of education that helps us know ourselves better and know how to manage life properly. As a result, it is the key success factor behind the world peace that we are striving for.

Provision of IPE is not as straightforward as conventional curriculum content. However, as compared with usual spiritual provisions in school, it has the advantage of not being based on belief or faith — but rather experience and evidence. It is based on practical knowledge. It's applied knowledge that offers each person an individual approach to true happiness regardless of race, nationality, religion, culture or occupation. It is knowledge that can form a firm foundation to any other form of academic knowledge to guarantee that the applications of that knowledge are for peace. It is self-education that you can start upon anytime, anywhere (for as long as you are still a human being!) — and can be practised throughout the day alongside our regular daily activities in order to increase our efficiency and effectiveness. It maximises the efficiency of our time management, rather than being a burden on our time — if a certain period of time each day is allocated to it. It needs no formal classroom, and demands no tuition fees either!

However, more than conventional education, it demands time, concentration, perseverance, tolerance and goodwill. These are qualities which are too easily eroded away by materialism. It is only students who are determined and motivated who can succeed in their studies of IPE. IPE is not yet

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Teachers' round of the 'Path of Progress'. Teachers must become familiar with IPE materials & issues before being able to communicate peace values before being able to communicate them effectively to their students.

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children to open up their hearts to listen to the teacher inside and understand themselves, celebratin
similarities and promoting world peace through inner peace.

advanced IPE, young people can understand themselves better and have a clearer sense of purpose in life. Youngsters, parents and teachers alike like to participate actively in peace education projects as participants and organizers and also form an active network of peace volunteers throughout Thailand down to the present day, generation by generation through word-of-mouth. It is important that before becoming organizers and teachers of such programs that they first understand peace and means of nonviolent conflict resolution themselves — under this proviso, the organizers can even be older children organizing activities for their younger fellows.

During the history of the 'Path of Progress' Ethics Quiz Contest, the scale of participation has grown from one person to a small team then a larger and larger one. Over the last thirty years, the lives of total of over twenty million young people in

Teachers' round of the 'Path of Progress'. Teachers must become familiar with IPE materials & issues before being able to communicate peace values before being able to communicate them effectively to their students.

Thailand have been touched by the IPE curriculum

PATH OF PROGRESS ETHICS QUIZ CONTEST

The main learning activity for implementing IPE amongst young people is the so-called 'Path of Progress' Ethics Quiz Contest which has been held nationwide every year in Thailand since 1982. The aim of the project is to bring children's ethical development to higher levels resulting in positive behavioral changes in a way that is relevant to those

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Interreligious participation in the 'Path of Progress'. Christians, Buddhists & Moslems take the teachers' round of the 'Path of Progress' so that they can accurately pass on the IPE concepts to their schoolchildren.

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of all nationalities, races and religions. The 'Path of Progress' shares the same curriculum of the Thirty-Eight Blessings of Life described in this *Manual of Peace*. The number of participants started with 382 in 1982 and rose in 2002 to four million from 13,000 educational institutes — ranging from kindergartens, universities, police and military colleges — students and teachers alike from all over Thailand. The winners of the contest receive plaques of distinction from H.M. the King of Thailand and representatives of many international organizations. Besides honorary plaques, winners are granted scholarships and certificates for their success in each category.

Case Histories of Schools Participating in the Path of Progress IPE Scheme

Suteetorn Kindergarten, Nakorn Prathom, Thailand.

"We find that the teachings of the 'Path of Progress' programme eminently suitable to the curriculum at our school. The 'Path of Progress' program helps students realize the value of morality. Students can also adapt these morals to practice in their daily lives. The Home of Peace program (*see p.16*) focuses more on the practices of the learners, so students can really practice what they have learned. This is the reason why both programs are so beneficial for our school. At the beginning, we taught the *Manual of Peace* to small groups of students. As years went by, more students got interested, so we had to change the workshop format into assemblies. We had such an assembly each day for the students from first to sixth grade. Furthermore, our school has many activities that are involved with morals and ethics. For example, the school will let the students meditate along to an audio cassette of meditation instruction. The students usually attend Buddhist services and practise meditation afterwards. Later, the students have their own group discussions to analyze and comment about how they can improve their virtues. Kindergarten infants, do not join the assembly, but they will have a homeroom teacher. Most of the time, the teacher focuses on meditation practice. The teaching for them makes heavier use of illustrations to overcome their reading difficulties. Also, they seem to enjoy looking at the pictures too. We once had a boy named Pruchya. He had received an 'Olympic' gold medal for winning a math contest. In all his interviews, Pruchya said that he always wishes to be a virtuous person rather than being merely a smart one. From listening to his interview, it made us really proud to see that he had lived up to our ideals of a good student. In my opinion too, to be a virtuous child is more important than to be an intelligent one because at least virtuous people can co-exist peacefully in the world. If a person is endowed with self-discipline, they have the potential to develop intelligence and have a successful future. When the youth have morality in their hearts, they can differentiate what is right or wrong. They have awareness of the consequences of every action they do. Therefore they perform good deeds for the benefit of themselves, society and the world."

Headmistress

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teachings. I felt that I had become a better person morally as well as spiritually. ' I think one of the reasons has to do with the fact that I am teaching *Manual of Peace* to the students. I mean, can you imagine a person managing to teach *Manual of Peace* without understanding moral or ethics themselves? I couldn't be like that. So I felt like my attitude towards life has completely changed because of this book. The most rewarding thing I have witnessed is to be able to transfer my knowledge about how to conduct good deeds to my students. I try to put the basic teaching from *Manual of Peace* into all of my mainstream lessons." One single teacher's effort, inspired senior students to organize a tutorial activity of peace for their juniors. Finally it became the most popular club amongst our students."

Sompong Hunsadee: Coordinating Teacher

School Track Record:

- 3,800 high school students from Grade 7-12 joining the 'Path of Progress' Ethics Quiz Contest every year from 1983 to present;
- first prize in the team category for seven years running from 1993-9;
- first prize in the individual and team categories for the 19th contest.
- first prize in the secondary school team category in 2002.

Recovery of a former drug-addict

"Ever since I was born, the person I remembered seeing the most is my mother. She always taught me to be a good person and to do good things to others as well. Well, you may think I would probably turn out to be just like

Qualified teachers instruct their students. Teachers need to be role models of IPE and knowledgable of its concepts to instil virtuous habits in their students.

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Student 'Path of Progress' Examinations take place throughout Thailand. Each year more than four million students throughout Thailand participate in the qualifying round of the 'Path of Progress' Ethics Quiz Contest at countless provincial centres supervised by IBS volunteers.

other kids but it's not so.

It started when I was in high school. I had a big argument with my teacher and therefore, I decided to drop-out. I thought school was not necessary any more. Instead of helping my mother, I started to go out every night with my friends. I knew my mother worried about me but I thought I could take care of myself.

One night when I went to a friend 's house, one night, he showed me a small pill that looked like a painkiller. Curious and ignorant as I was, I decided to have my first contact with drugs. After that, I became addicted to drugs and had to steal money in order to buy them daily. At last, I became the drug dealer myself. At that time, I had no choice.

However, I was caught by police and was sent to a juvenile court. My mother then bailed me out from the juvenile prison. The first thing I asked her was, "Why did you help me, Mom?" My mother did not say much. Just the sight of tears in her eyes had already killed me. All she said was, "I love you. I can forgive and will always do so, son." After that day, I decided to stop doing all the bad things and avoided getting back into the vicious circle again.

I decided to go back to school in order to avoid probation. Though I knew that I didn't want to hurt my mother's feelings any more, my subconscious still tempted me to sell drugs to my classmates. There was a big fight in my mind between the good and bad sides. I did not know what to do.

Fortunately, when I was at the point of relapse, my teacher persuaded me to join ethics quiz contest called 'The Path of Progress'. At first, I saw no point in participating in such a program. Then she gave me a reference book



Interreligious participation in the 'Path of Progress'
Christians, Buddhists & Moslems take the teachers' round of the 'Path of Progress' so that they can accurately pass on the IPE concepts to their schoolchildren.

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Mr. Visarut Komkaew Bang
Luang Vithaya High School
Nakorn Pathom, Thailand

This is the true testimony written by one participant of the Path of Progress Ethics Quiz Contest. After receiving this letter in 2000, the IBS interviewed him when he was in Grade 12 and had been elected as president of the student committee.

THE INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST SOCIETY

The main coordinator of IPE in Thailand is the International Buddhist Society (IBS). IBS was established by a 1960 Alumni of Kasetsart University, Bangkok. After graduation, he took ordination as a Buddhist monk. At present, he is the Most Venerable Phrarajabhavanavisudh (Chaiboon Dhammajayo), President of the Dhammakaya Foundation — a United Nations-accredited Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) associated with the Department of Public Information (DPI). The founder's compassionate mission in setting up the IBS was to further public awareness of ethical issues, particularly in the youth.

In the present day, the IBS is an umbrella organization of university students all over T who sacrifice their time to organize ethical activities primarily for youth. Their success is a result of the dedicated work and devotion o all-volunteer staff, many of whom are former participants in IBS activities. This is a new wave of student activity boasting nearly 5,000 active members in 2003. Most IBS activities are based on the concept of promoting peace through education.

Interreligious participation in the 'Path of Progress'
Christians, Buddhists & Moslems take the teachers' round of the 'Path of Progress' so that they can accurately pass on the IPE concepts to their schoolchildren.

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Thai royalty & international organizations award plaques. Winners of 'Path of Progress' championships in the various categories receive plaques and scholarships from H.M. the King of Thailand and numerous international organizations.

IBS has become a major player in Thai youth development an active role in promoting through a variety of peace education programs in Thai society.

IBS ACTIVITIES

IBS activities are divided into two major levels — the elementary and the advanced.

On the elementary level, it aims to instill the normal inner peace core values in a child's mind. In order to prepare them for more advanced levels of study when they grow up. Such standards will translate into a child's behaviours and become his own second nature. It's a self- generated rather than an imposed discipline. That's why IPE has long term beneficial effects on its students. On the advanced level, meditation by students consolidates the process of IPE in the long run. Meditation is a good catalyst, because it helps youth see and understand themselves better, know their own needs and serve those needs in a more productive way. The IBS see IPE as lifelong education.

The main learning activities at the elementary level, used by the IBS is the 'Path of Progress' Ethics Quiz Contest' and 'the Home of Peace' (HOP).

These two projects have about 4 million students participating annually throughout Thailand and receive cooperation from 13,000 schools and educational institutions.

The 'Path of Progress' provides students with a peace manual for students to study as an extracurricular activity and an annual contest to compete in. Winners in each category receive honorific plaques, certificates and scholarships to motivate and stimulate their interest. By reading the *Manual of Peace* different topics will capture each student's imagination according to their disposition. It will guide them to see the good and bad sides of their own character and motivate them to want to improve themselves become more productive. They transform by means of internally derived discipline, rather than discipline needing to be imposed from outside. They change by their own willingness to become a more responsible person.

The 'Path of Progress' is complemented by a second project called the 'Home of Peace' — especially to supplement younger childrens' understanding of peace — to see if they differentiate peace and non-peace in their daily lives. The project provides a 'diary of peace' for the children to write down their own good deeds and good deeds done toward their parents, teachers and extended family. Since any deeds done every day can become habits, the IBS seeks to value to overlook a child's seemingly insignificant good deeds because these might be the root cause of their success in the future. Every child tends to have his or her own hero. If their hero is a worthy role model, it will inspire them to become a virtuous global citizen. On the contrary, with a negative role model, they can become public enemy no.1. In this respect, adults play an important role in presenting a model of peace to the young people around them. By reading, writing and practising peace every day, with the co-operation of parents and school, IPE will eventually become a child's second nature allowing them to respond to every situation by peaceful means.

For young people who show their readiness to

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learn at the advanced level, there are a futher three projects:

- ***Leadership Training Program:*** this scheme attracts young people by providing advanced IPE training in personality enhancement, public speaking, meditation and social affirmation — and it is these young people who go on to become 'supervisor' volunteers who organize the 'Path of Progress' throughout Thailand annually.
- ***Dhammadayada Ordination Scheme:*** During the Ordination Scheme, the IPE used includes Buddhist teachings made relevant to the needs of young men in Thai society. This activity is rooted in the Thai tradition that when a man reaches the age of twenty he should take temporary ordination as a Buddhist monk for a period to learn spiritual values first hand. This course comprises two months of intense study of IPE. Participants study and practice spiritual values incorporated into their daily routine to make sure that improved habits are properly instilled and that those habits will survive the transfer back to daily life when they return to their everyday life.
- ***Ladies' Dhammadayada Training Scheme:*** the Ladies version of the Dhammadayada training is as intensive in IPE concepts as that of the gentlement, but participants are not required to ordain as nuns.

At the advanced level, IPE projects seek to train university students who can act as organizers of IPE project managers themselves. It is because of the trainees of these sort of courses that the IBS has managed to run activities such as the 'Path of Progress' continuously now for more than twenty years. The unifying feature of the advanced projects for IPE is an increased emphasis on meditation.

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Abbreviations

A. AÌguttara NikÅya (PTS Edition) AA. ManorathapËraÁÈ - AÌguttara NikÅya Commentary (PTS Edition) Ap. ApadÂna (PTS Edition)

D. DÈgha NikÅya (PTS Edition) DA. SumaÌgala VilÅsinÈ - DÈgha NikÅya Commentary (PTS Edition) Dh. Dhammapada (PTS Edition) DhA. Dhammapada Commentary (PTS Edition) DhSA. AtthasÅlinÈ - DhammasaÌgaÁÈ Commentary (PTS Edition) It. Itivuttaka (PTS Edition)

J. JÂtaka (PTS Edition) KhpA. KhuddakapÅÊha Commentary (PTS Edition)
M. Majjhima NikÅya (PTS Edition) MA. Papañca SËdanÈ - Majjhima NikÅya Commentary (PTS Edition) MT. MahÅvaÔsa-TÈkÅ

Mil. Milindapañha (PTS Edition)
MNidA. MahÅ Niddesa Commentary (PTS Edition) Nd[1] MahÃ Niddesa (PTS Edition)
Nd[2] CËla Niddesa (PTS Edition)
Nd[2]A. CËla Niddesa Commentary (PTS Edition)
PsA. PaÊisambhidÅmagga Commentary (PTS Edition)
PTS Pali Text Society of London
S. SaÔyutta NikÅya (PTS Edition) SA. SÅratthappakÅsinÈ - SaÔyutta NikÅya Commentary (PTS Edition) SadS. Saddhammasaìgaha (P.T.S. Journal 1890) SN. Sutta NipÅta (PTS Edition) SNA. Sutta NipÅta Commentary (PTS Edition) ThagA. TherÅgathÅ Commentary (PTS Edition) Ud. UdÂna (PTS Edition) Vbh. Vibhanga (PTS Edition) Vin. Vinaya (PTS Edition) Vism. Visuddhimagga (PTS Edition) Vv. VimÂnavatthu (PTS Edition) VvA. VimÂnavatthu Commentary (PTS Edition)

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Orientation

A. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *Manual of Peace*. This orientation deals with the principles of ethical study and the value of the Thirty-Eight Blessings contained in this manual. The *Manual of Peace* contains subject matter which is not difficult — indeed it is very popular in Thailand especially amongst school children where over 4,000,000 annually take examinations in it. In schools where vocational subjects rob the curriculum of more and more time previously dedicated for spiritual studies, the Thirty-Eight Blessings have been forming an extra-curricular recompense in spiritual studies for children in Thailand since 1982.

A.1 Why study spiritual knowledge ?

The first question that comes to mind for many people studying this book is to ask why academic or material knowledge is not sufficient to get by in the world. If a full stomach and a place to sleep were enough to keep the human happy then we wouldn't have to go to the trouble of studying about ethics or about spirituality. However, for every human being, there is something deeper inside us which is always searching for the answers to questions on a deeper level — something which seeks for purpose and meaning in the life we live and the world around us. If supporting yourself were all there was to life then certainly millionnaires would be the happiest people on earth. Unfortunately wealth can only buy physical comfort — money cannot buy the means to nurture or nourish the mind. For all our qualifications and diplomas we might have, none of them can guarantee us against hunger of the *mind*. On the contrary, the irresponsible people may use their cunning to do *more* heinous crimes than they would do if they weren't educated. Thus worldly education cannot guarantee us a happy life or guarantee that we will not end up in jail. This is why we make the distinction between worldly and spiritual knowledge — because spiritual knowledge properly studied can guarantee that we will not be put in jail — it is not only something to fill up our brains — it has transformative power to upgrade the way we think, speak and act.

In the ideal world, our system of education would give us the answers we need to the questions inside ourselves, but in practice, the secular education doesn't manage to fill this gap — and maybe, even if it were to try, it *could* not — because in some way the personal quest is part of the process of acquiring knowledge.Thus we are forced to look for the answers from alternative sources.

A.2 Fashion and Universal Values

Many things can affect our spiritual progress. Sometimes it can be people, objects, attitudes, situations or experiences we come across in the world. However, for most things, the worth or uselessness of an experience is just a matter of opinion. Are there things then that have a universally uplifting effect on people's lives — that are more than just a mat-

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ter of opinion?

Take present day trademarks which are accepted as status symbols by everyone as an example — Mercedes, Adidas — really such companies should pay us to advertise their products, but on the contrary we pay *more* for a T-shirt with the trademark for the privilege of associating ourselves with the trademark. Why should this be? We feel that associating ourselves with such a symbol somehow improves our own worth. Sometimes we feel that the worth of these things is unchanging, but in fact from age to age these values change according to fashion. In times gone by, people thought in the same way, but they didn't call these things 'brand marketing', or 'trademarks', they called them 'lucky charms' — but again they liked to associate with them as a way of improving their worth or fostering progress in their lives. We still have lucky charms in the present day — things like lucky horseshoes or four-leaf clovers, but their role is diminished if compared to olden times. In olden times the role of charms was much more significant.

Systems of spiritual knowledge are attempts by men to model the values of the world in a way according to unchanging universal values — ways to recognize the things that improve our worth in ways that are eternal and don't differ from person to person. Many bodies of knowledge exist in the world to help us in this respect. They differ in their degree of comprehensiveness. The ideal body of knowledge for us to learn from would perhaps be one with the following characteristics:

- ***Progressive & Sequential*** something which leads you step by step from simple to more complex;
- ***Self-Catalysing*** creating its own motivation and enthusiasm to pursue it as you go along;
- ***Exhaustive*** being applicable to all aspects of life;
- ***Holistic*** perhaps dealing with problems not just by symptoms but in their entirety;
- ***Multi-level*** working on personal, interpersonal, family, social and global levels equally well;
- ***Non-discriminatory*** being equally applicable to those of all cultures;
- ***Multi-Factorial*** being able to deal not just with simple problems but with those with many contributing factors;
- ***Facilitating Practical Outlook*** giving a clear place to start with problems — not just theory or philosophy;
- ***Transcending Values*** allowing us to rise above mundane and petty values;
- ***Highlighting Opposites*** giving us clear "curses" to avoid as well as positive things to aim for.

There are many systems of spiritual values which fall short of these criteria. Some systems lead to spiritual exclusivity and even wars against those of other beliefs which are values no longer suitable for an age of globalization and tolerance. Some systems lead their practitioner to shut themselves away from the world and to ignore social problems. Some systems confine themselves to their own culture or language.

B. THE MANUAL OF PEACE

B.1 Historical Origins of the Manual of Peace

The Blessings of Life which make up the *Manual of Peace* are interesting because they seem to answer to all the characteristics specified above. They grew up in response to just the same type of debate over universal values mentioned in the introduction. In fact, even from ancient times, men had values — but at a certain time in the past 2,500 years ago in India a group of people started to wonder whether there was anything deeper behind the fashions — were there symbols of worth that transcended fashion? What sort of charms could possibly allow one to live without obstacles'. Supposing one wanted wealth, honour, praise and happiness, how could one ensure that one received just that? There was such a debate ensuing from this question, over which everybody seemed to have a different point of view. To generalize the debators divided themselves into three main camps:

1. The first group believed that the thing to make one's life a blessing was to *see* something that was 'pleasing'.
2. The second group believed that the thing to make one's life a blessing was to *hear* something that was 'pleasing'.
3. The third group believed that the thing to make one's life a blessing was the *mood in the mind*

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which arose whenever you saw or heard something that was 'pleasing'.

Each group disagreed with the others because it was obvious that an image pleasant to one person may not be pleasant to another. A sound pleasant to one person might not be pleasant to another. Something that creates a pleasant mood today might cause an unpleasant mood tomorrow. Thus there is nothing to make anything discussed a 'blessing' without doubt. The debate went on and on without any sign of coming to an end. It is just like people in the present day can still not agree as to what is truly a 'lucky charm'.

Eventually the problem was only resolved by taking audience with the Buddha. A representative asked the Buddha the nature of blessings and his reply is what is now know as the Mangala Sutta
— thirty-eight blessings divided into ten groupings.

B.2 Definitions: The Word 'Blessings'

Some may still wonder about the meaning of the word 'blessing' [maḷgala]. Some people think a blessing must be an object or an action — but by our technical understanding of the word, we translate it as 'a cause of prosperity, progress and happiness'. If you want to know the definition, you could say that the progress towards happiness that a 'maḷgala' will bring is four-fold:

1. progress through acquired wealth (worldly treasure, heavenly treasure and the treasure of Nirvana).
2. progress through wisdom, which is the means by which obstacles in life and evil are abated.
3. progress through virtue through the channels of body, speech and mind, at the basic, intermediate and advanced levels
4. progress through the three benefits: benefit in this lifetime, the next lifetime and in the hereafter.

A blessing is a sign that positive development is about to take place (to a person, society or the world). Unlike such principles as that of deserved fate, the logic of blessings is forward looking, signifying that something good is about to happen.

B.3 Principles of Ethical Learning

A working computer has two important parts: hardware and software. The hardware of the computer is the wiring and the circuitry. The software is the programming that we install on the computer. The hardware of a computer is neutral, but what makes the difference between a beneficial and a degrading computer is the type of software installed. If you install working programs, the computer can be useful. However if you install violent games, viruses or pornography then the computer becomes a source of degradation. The worth of the computer thus depends on the software.

A drinking glass is also neutral. What makes the difference between a beneficial and a degrading glass is the sort of drink you put in it. If you put a nourishing drink in the glass such as milk then the glass will be an uplifting one welcomed by every

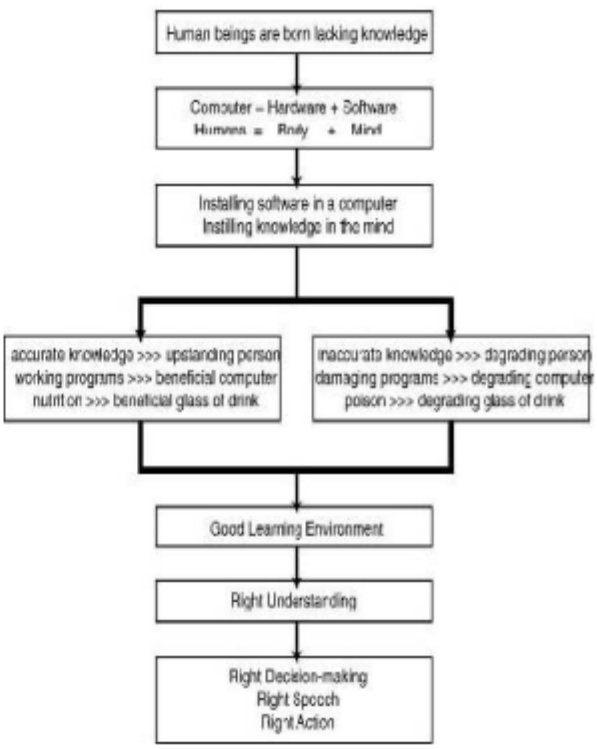
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the blood, bones, muscles and organs associated with the physical body — even the brain, which is a physical organ. By mind, we mean the knowledge and attitudes that constitute our consciousness. The mind is like "the ghost in the machine". The physical components of the human being are also neutral. The difference between a human who is uplifting and one who is degrading depends not on the body, but on the mental component. Unfortunately, the software of the human mind is not pre-installed from the factory! When we are born we are born along with an ignorance about all aspects of life. From the time we are children, we spend our life learning in order to fill the gap in our knowledge — to provide ourselves with the knowledge we need for life. The path of our subsequent destiny depends on the sort of knowledge we fill ourselves with. We can fill ourselves with either:

one. However, if you put alcohol or poison in the glass, then the glass is immediately eyed with sus-picion. The worth of a drinking glass thus depends on its content.

In the same way, a human being has two impor-tant parts: body and mind. By body we mean all

PRINCIPLE BEHIND THE THIRTY-EIGHT BLESSINGS OF LIFE



even of following the *first* blessing — what more will be the benefit of practising *all* of the blessings in their entirety. The benefits will be not only to ourself, but to society and to the world as well.

The second group (*see p.65*) concerns consolidating upon the goodness of the discretion you already have through the environment which we inhabit, from the habits we have built up for ourselves in the past and by setting a proper aim in life. This style of teaching is characteristic of the Buddha who taught virtue in a way that becomes successively more complex.

The third group (*p.139*) concerns how we can make a contribution to society by our skilfulness, so that we ourself do not become a burden on society and can at the same time be a refuge to ourself in terms of earning our living.

The fourth group (*p.139*) progresses from being able to help ourselves to being able to help other people as well. The first people who we must help are those to whom we are indebted: our parents. If we have new people to whom we owe our efforts towards virtue, such as our children and our spouse. Furthermore, we have to be able to divide our time so that neither our responsibilities in the work and in the home are neglected.

The fifth group (*p.183*) builds on the strength of virtue we have built up for ourselves in the home, expanding the scope of our virtue wider into societywith generosity, public works. If you have already got your life under control, you will be able to do something for the benefit of society with some sort of efficiency. Those who try to help social works when they have not yet got their own personal affairs under control, may create disasters rather than helping others. Those who want to give advice to others but who are unable to speak politely, may make enemies instead of improving the quality of society.

Higher groups of blessings deal with the more subtle aspects of training the qualities of the mind in purity.

- ***accurate knowledge:*** positive knowledge which is creative and uplifting for ourselves and others, or;
- ***inaccurate knowledge:*** negative knowledge (comparable to lies to the soul) which is harmful to ourselves and others.

Our knowledge increases as a result of influences in our surroundings. The first and most fundamental influence on our learning is the sort of people that make up our environment. The second most important influence is the environment in general. Together, these two influences have the potential to instil us with Right View about the world (effectively our core values and assumptions about the world and our attitude to it).

The first group (*see p.25*) which concerns the acquisition of discretion concerns our understanding of what is wrong and what is right. Even if someone is knowledgable,if their discretion is faulty, their future is unlikely to be bright. On the contrary those with good discretion but who lack education, at least they will not become a burden on society. It is the basis of Right View [sammÅ diÊÊhi]. Simply avoiding associating with fools will bring us wealth, because we have no risk of spoiling our reputation, our wisdom is also not at risk and may be improved — virtue of all sorts will start to flow in our direction. This is the result

B.4 38 Blessings as an ethical system

We find that the *Manual of Peace* lives up to the demands of an ethical system as follows: ***1Progressive & Sequential:*** The thirty-eight bless

ings are arranged according to the degree of dif

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ficulty in practice: the easier ones come before the harder ones. The sequence of blessings begins with external practices, i.e., dealing with gross social behaviours but gradually leading up to the more internal and subtle ones. Following these sets of virtues gives one an impression of climbing up a flight of stairs leading to salvation. If you don't associate with the society of the fools, then you enhance the process of associating with the wise. When you are dealing with the first Blessing, you are creating conditions to fulfill the second one. One can say that at the same time you respect those who are worthy of respect. It starts with number one. While you are working to develop number one, it is already doing the groundwork for number two and number three — it's progressive. One blessing conditions the next progressively. By doing the first Blessing, you are committing yourself to many subsequent Blessings thereby. By associating with the wise, it is opening you up to many good things; you learn from the wise, you progress — all good things come from associating with other people. So, by practicing one Blessing, it will eventually lead to practicing all of the Blessings. And by doing one, you prepare for the other; they are inter-related. This logic is very beautiful, it leads you ownwards step-bystep. It allows you to improve, socially and spiritually, hand in hand with each other. It is like a self-catalysing process in chemistry or a positive feedback process in physics. This makes salvation via the thirty-eight blessings a kind of upward spiral, where you move upwards to Nirvana, the highest goal in Buddhist spiritual cultivation, starting from the simplest blessings, and gradually perfecting yourself.

2 ***Self-Catalysing:*** When one kind of living blessing comes into existence or is practiced, it will support other kinds of virtues to manifest themselves, and the manifestation of any one blessing will lead to development of the next higher blessing in the sequence.

3 ***Exhaustive:*** Other mechanisms of spiritual values can easily be accommodated within it.

4 ***Holistic:*** Blessings assume the presence of a deeper unseen network of causes and effects which interact together in cycles of positive feedback for the ethical development of society. Blessings can be used as a non-subjective socio-ethical checklist, that cuts through self-centred ness that might otherwise lead to superficial social changes (an individual's prosperity, for example, being misunderstood as a sign of social development) because social development that is unethical is by this philosophy, a contradiction in terms. It also provides a holistic mirror to view one's own personality and development.

5 ***Multi-level:*** It covers the full spectrum of human relations from the interpersonal, through the familial, occupational and communal levels to the social. It offers a holistic perspective of a world governed by interrelating conditions.

6 ***Non-discriminatory:*** This philosophy makes no distinction between men and women, lay practice and monastic practice. The set of virtues is not restricted to a particular sort of person or society, but it can be treated as the *common* good that is shared in a particular community or even by the whole of mankind.

7 ***Multi-Factorial:*** The Thirty-Eight blessings are a *means-ends* model of ethics. The ethics of the Blessings escapes the rigid linear dimension of 'means' and 'ends' in favour of a multi-factorial causality model. The weakness of consideration in terms of 'means' and ends' is seen when trying to establish definitions in a complex multifactorial situation. With the lighting of a match, for example, can we say that the match is the means to the production of fire? Are not oxygen, friction and a striking surface also means to the production of fire? If the friction is not sufficient to cause ignition, can it still be considered a means? Is a match struck in a vacuum still a means? Is not Oxygen also an end for the process of photosynthesis too? . . . but simultaneously the means for ignition? How would linear ethics tackle the problem of 'auto-catalytic' phenomena (better known as vicious circles). If definitions of means and end are so difficult to pin-down in such a simple scientific situation, it is hardly surprising that ethics based on 'means'

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and ‘ends’ are virtually impossible to apply in multi-factorial social scenarios. Unfortunately, the problems found in society are almost always the vicious circles that make application of ethics so difficult. To the question of whether blessings are ‘means’ or ‘ends’, it must be answered that they are both. Putting any one of the thirty-eight blessings into action will contribute towards social development. At the same time, the existence (or coming into existence) of any of the thirty-eight blessings is itself an indicator of social progress. Blessings also help to avoid the dilemma of justifying unwholesome means by wholesome ends.

8 Facilitating Practical Outlook: The practice of blessings are effective through reversal of positive feedback loops of decay through the setting in motion of positive feedback loops of development: firstly, to check the downward spiral and, secondly, to turn the spiral upwards. Action for social problem solving can start by the effort to replace any one of the thirty-eight counterparts of the blessings by a blessing. Problem solving can start with the local application of any blessing. The blessings encourage personal commitment instead of passing the buck. Once the first blessing comes into being, then it will cause an upturn in society, which will ease the accumulation of the next blessing in the sequence. The end-point, said to be the biggest blessing of them all, is to bring all thirty-eight blessings into being in society.

9Transcending Values: The *Manual of Peace* does not focus merely on the values of action based on moral principles or intention for the actions, but rather on the modes of our relationships in society, environment, family relations, education, communication and spirituality. Yet, the scope of application of blessings can even expand to cover the whole of the human race, with all lives sharing their part in the single commonwealth of morality—the Global Community.

10 Highlighting Opposites: Blessings also reveal the flipside of blessings — the ‘Bad Omen’ or ‘social curse’, which are the sign that something bad is about to happen (omens of forthcoming decay). Where there is no development, there must be decay, and to this end the opposites of the thirty-eight blessings are representedby a set of thirty-eight identifiers, like tips-of-the-iceberg, which signal thepresence of a nest of much deeper-rooted but invisible social problems. The nature of such problems is, again, that of negative feedback loops or ‘vicious cycles’ which lead toward decay. Unsolved, such curse will spread, into ever broadening circles of repercussions with their own vicious cycles. A comparable example in science might be the thermodynamic model of loss of entropy through the dissipation of heat.

These are characteristics of the *Manual of Peace*. In the chapters that follow, each of the thirty-eight Blessings of Life will be explained in turn.

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The First Group of Blessings

"Turning your back on unwholesomeness"

Goodness doesn't come unpackaged. It comes as part and parcel of the person who does good deeds and and who exemplifies those good deeds. Goodness is transmitted between people by the example a good person sets for others and by a good person's teaching and criticism of the behaviour of a person whose level of goodness is lesser. Goodness is like the food which we eat. It strongly influences of our view and understanding of life and the world. To begin with we have no idea what goodness is. Some people tell us that such and such a thing is good. Others tell us that something completely different is good. Who should we believe? And when we ask them why they consider such and such a thing to be good, no-one seems to know the answer. Thus if we want to learn how to do good deeds, we have to start making decisions about our lives even from the time we are still unable to tell the difference between good and evil. Although we cannot tell the difference between good and evil, there are certain indicators that allow us to tell the difference between people who habitually do good and people who habitually do evil. The first step on this path is the identification of the people who habitually do evil and we make our first step towards goodness by avoiding such people. Our next step towards goodness is to associate with people who are habitually good. The third step is to honour those who are habitually good so that we can start to observe the faults in ourselves, by comparison with the higher virtue of those who are worthy of respect. Thus, the first group of blessings is thus almost entirely concerned with being selective about our friends.

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Blessing One: Not Associating with Fools

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 First Step on Journey the Most Important

For the *Manual of Peace*, although all of the blessings are important, all of the latter thirty-seven hinge on the first. Thus you could say that of all the blessings the first is the most important. It is like the first tread of the steps leading into a house. If you cannot climb this first step, you will spend the rest of your life at the foot of the staircase with no way of getting into the house. You can also think of this blessing "Not Associating with Fools" as being like the first step on a long journey, without which the voyage can never begin.

B. DISCRETION: THE IMPORTANCE & FORMATION

B.1 The importance of calibrating discretion

No-one wants to make a mess of their lives. Everyone wants to feel that they are profiting from the years that pass them by — to give them a sense of success and achievement in their lives. However, the way each person defines "success", "profit" or achievement in their life will dictate what they channel their efforts into. A businessman defines profit in life in monetary terms so he devotes his time and effort into earning as much as he can. A criminal might define achievement in life by "cracking the most impenetrable safe in the world" or "cutting the most corners possible" to maximise the amount of stolen goods he can a mass — so he spends all his waking hours planning his next robbery. A criminal doesn't particularly want to live his life dishonestly, but he thinks that being a criminal is good enough. Although everyone seeks success (in their various ways), in the long run they may be left with regrets in their mind. If you ask why a difference of definition of success in life can make such a difference to one's destiny, it is because this "common sense" about the world dictates the decisions we make about the world — and these decisions drive all that we say and do. In the *Manual of Peace* we call such common sense "discretion" — it is the basic understanding by which we judge each experience and situation in the world to know whether it is likely to be beneficial for us or harmful.

B.2 Discretion doesn't come unpackaged

Discretion is a personal quality we acquire, test and calibrate as a result of the experiences we meet in life. It is not a quality we can get by reading about it, buying it, downloading it or memorizing it. It can only come as the result of our transactions with real people. It is a quality often unspoken, but easily learned by example. Thus discretion doesn't come loose, but is part and parcel of the exemplary people who possess it.

B.3 Two Formative Influences on our discretion

There are two major influences on the formation of discretion in a person. The first major influence is

the example of those people we are closest to, such as our family and friends. The second major influence on our formation of discretion is ourselves. Sometimes we call it the ability to be a good teacher to ourselves [yonisomanasikÅra]. Even if you have been listening to advice for good or bad friends, you always have to consider advice and justify it to yourself before getting down to following the advice. If you have accurate discretion when you consider things, even given faulty data, you will have the common sense to see through the discrepancies and come out with the right decision required by the situation — unlike the man with unreliable discretion, who even when given reliable data, will come to the wrong conclusion.

Usually we have to learn discretion from the example of other people by transactions with them first, before we can calibrate our "auto-didactic" discretion and come to accurate conclusions independently — because in the beginning we have no idea what constitutes a sensible decision and what constitutes neglect. Thus when we are learning discretion, at first we are very vulnerable to the example set by others. The example they set us may calibrate the way we think for the rest of our life. Thus a correct example has the power to correctly calibrate our thinking for the rest of our lives — but conversely, a faulty example may damage the way we think for the rest of our life.

C. PROCESS OF ACQUIRING DISCRETION

C.1 Benefitting from others without catching their bad habits

Every time we have a transaction with a person it is like a negotiation or tug-of-war between us to see whose discretion will brush off who. In a situation where people are unable to recognize good or bad examples of discretion, then the exchange of "discretion" will be like osmosis — flowing from a point of high concentration to a point of low concentration. If Person A has a lot of good discretion and Person B less, then Person A's good discretion will tend to brush off on Person B. If Person C has a lot of bad discretion and Person D less, then Person C's bad discretion will tend to brush off on Person D. In practice though, as adults with a degree of life experience, we don't passively let others' habits brush off on us. If we are able to recognize good habits and good discretion then we will open ourselves up especially to absorb them. However, if we recognize bad habits and bad discretion, then we will try to protect ourselves from picking those habits up. Thus, normally we are selective— and try (to the best of our ability and discretion) to pick up good habits while avoiding the bad ones. In this way, we can have transactions with others without losing our own virtues under their influence. You can compare it to visiting someone in hospital who has a fever. You can visit them, talk to them and console them — you can do all these things without catching their fever, but you would try to avoid having them sneeze over you.

There are some sorts of patients and some sorts of illness, however, that are so dangerous that we cannot afford to have any transaction with that person. Such diseases like the plague are so contagious, that it is not safe for healthy people to transact (specifically come into physical contact) with them. Such patients, by the nature of their disease need to be nursed in an isolation ward with no visitors. If they were animals, they would be put in quarantine. When considering the transmission of discretion, there are some cases of those so contagiously infected with faulty discretion that despite our immunity or our efforts to be selective, we will nonetheless be infected by their faulty discretion. Even if we started with healthy discretion, it would be undermined by the strength of negative discretion of those people — what more the danger if we are still inexperienced and impressionable (perhaps still children or lacking world experience) and don't even know what it means to be selective? These quarantine victims of faulty discretion, whether intentionally so or not, are the first and most fundemental obstacle we will meet as we try to acquire blessings — in the *Manual of Peace* we call such people by the technical name of "fools".

D. FOOLS: BEARERS OF CONTAGIOUS MISAPPREHENSION

D.1 Definition of a Fool

A fool is someone wicked, or weak, or feeble. They are made feeble by the fact they *habitually think, say and do things that are unwholesome*. The root of the lack in common sense by which they can justify such unwholesome behaviour is the fact that they don't have their mind centred or under their control. To call such a dangerous person a "fool" might seem like an understatement — because some fools might look like a proverbial giant punching sandbags, a frightening prospect for a rhinocerii, let alone a fragile human being. Thus, how come we use the term "feeble" for a fool? A fool is made weak like a person made weak by a serious disease

— we do not fear him on the basis of his strength or knowledge or ability to think — but because his disease is dangerous.

D.2 Four Human Strengths

Human beings have four different sources of power:

1. Physical Strength: different people are endowed with different degrees of physical strength. Anyone with plenty of muscles and no disabilities is endowed with the first storehouse of power.

2. Strength of Knowledge: derived from one's background of education and the experience of passing years. Having the ability to apply educated reasoning in useful subjects is the second storehouse of power.

3. Strength of Thought: Some people go through the same number of classes together. They have an equal amount of knowledge, but their ability to think through things using their knowledge may not be equal. Some people know so much, but it is of no use to them when they come to think things through. Someone may know how to mend an engine but sits idle all day long. Why don't they offer their services as a mechanic? Or earn their living in the engine business? Sitting around all day long, waiting for someone to come along and find work for them...? We can blame this on their having knowledge but not using the knowledge as part of their thinking. Thus, if anyone uses both their strength of knowledge and their strength of thought, they are at great advantage because they are endowed with the third storehouse of power.

4. Strength of virtue: When one has both the strength of thought and mindfulness of what one is doing, when one is using one's knowledge and thought to perform good service to oneself and others, one is endowed with the fourth storehouse of power: strength of virtue.

The human being has the potential to be endowed with all four storehouses of power: physical strength, strength of knowledge, strength of thought and strength of virtue.

Even if someone is endowed with (some of) these storehouses of power, if their judgment is faulty, they will not be able to put their power to full use. If, for example, a foolish guy is physically strong, and may be qualified as a professor with a Ph.D., with plenty of knowledge, but without the ability to think properly, he will be want to apply his mastery of chemistry for dishonest purposes (e.g. distilling heroine). Thus even if you are endowed with only *some* of the four powers, you can still be classified with the fools — and those powers are not used to their full potential. At the most a fool can use only three of the storehouses of power. They can use only three of the four. Like a four-cylinder car in which only three of the spark plugs fire — it is of no use to anybody. If you have a four-cylinder car, all four need to work in order to get benefit from any one of the four. Thus, if you know your 'cylinders' are damaged, you don't need to wait until none of them are left firing before you go for mending!

In conclusion, when we define the meaning of a fool as someone weak or feeble, we can see more clearly now that it means that they are weak or feeble in doing good deeds. Now that we know about the risk they present to our discretion and know a little about the reason for a fool's weakness, the next challenge that faces us is how to protect ourselves from them. As we shall see, we first need to be able to recognize fools — if we can *recognize* them, we can more easily protect ourselves from their influence.

E. RECOGNIZING FOOLS

E.1 You cannot tell a fool by external appearances

When identifying whether someone is a fool or not, we cannot base our judgement on external appearances — we must base our judgement on internal features. The things we should avoid basing our judgement on include gender, age, lineage, nationality, connections, knowledge, job or wealth. Although fools are characterized by their habitually evil actions of their body, speech and mind, because all of these three come from *within* they might not be obvious to us, especially if we are still at a stage in our spiritual maturation when our discretion is still inaccurate. Appearances, gender, age, lineage, nationality, connections, knowledge, job and wealth are only indirectly connected with the quality of the mind. When we want to identify a fool, we need to look for behaviours that betray their underlying quality of mind. The sort of behaviours that are most clearly identifiable are those that come out in the context of our interaction and friendship with them.

E.2 How to Tell a Fool

We are not mind readers who can observe how others think. All we can observe are the things which others express openly — that is others' words and actions. Even fools have chinks in their armour which will be revealed as we interact with them — in fact there are five in all:

1. They like to persuade others to do evil things: Not only does a fool persuade others to do evil. He will also exemplify those evil deeds for others to follow. He might skip work on the slightest trivial pretext and persuade his colleagues to do the same.

2. They like to interfere with things that are none of their business: A cleaner has the duty simply to keep the office clean, but if instead of doing her duty, she leaves her work undone and spends her time rummaging in the wastepaper baskets for trade secrets, already you should be suspicious that she is a fool. A student has the duty to study, but if instead of studying their subject they waste their time on protests against the government — then again they might be a fool masquerading as intelligentia.

3. They like anything that is improper: Fools have a dislike for anything that is right and proper. They like playing with fire. They like taking drugs. They like gambling. They like fighting fish. They like the opportunity to put a spanner in the works. You can be sure that anything they like has someone on the receiving end of their suffering. Even if they take the chance to ordain as a monk, they will end up being the one to cause a schism in the order. Their predicament is the same as the one illustrated in the ancient tale of the angel and the worm. (*See §G.1 below*)

4. They get angry even when spoken to decently: Suppose a mother warns her daughter to dress modestly before leaving the house in case the neighbours gossip. The daughter might reply angrily that this is how modern people dress. Her mother gave her a perfectly reasonable piece of advice but her own daughter answers back with the verbal equivalent of a slap in the face. Suppose a father advises his son that he should be revising instead of going on outings so close to his examinations. "How can you say that?" might shouts the boy. "Didn't you go for outings when you were younger?" Often the other person knows that they are in the wrong, but when they are found out and their fault is discovered, they lose their temper — the mark of a fool. A fool is like a person covered in open wounds. If he bumps into something even only lightly, it hurts. For a fool, his mind is covered in wounds, and when confronted with the truth, it hurts. Sometimes even just a glance is enough to provoke him to aggression.

5. They refuse to comply with rules and regula***tions:*** Fools heeds neither the laws of the country nor the local customs. If you meet someone who refuses to comply with the regulations, you can be 99% sure that you are dealing with a fool. If it wasn't for the law, there would be a lot more opportunity for fools to express themselves through the performing of evil deeds. The law forces fools to have to express themselves less freely or in secret. The law will thus obscure from the public eye the real nature of a fool's mind. It is for this reason that we have to notice the marks

of a fool from the first four sorts of behaviour mentioned above.

If you come across any of these five features, then it should already be ringing warning bells in your head.

E.3 The sixteen ways a fool might treat you

Some people who may appear on the surface to be friendly, might be fools masqueradingas friends. The Lord Buddha called such people false friends [mittapaÊirËpaka] and categorized them into four types each with four characteristics — giving a total of sixteen forms of behavioural characteristics to look for. With friends like these, who needs enemies?

1. The Mercenary [aññadatthuhara]
2. The Man of Empty Promises [vacÈparama]
3. The Flatterer [anuppiyabhÅÅÈ]
4. The One who Leads you down the Road to Ruin [apÅyasahÅya]

1. a mercenary is one who:
   1. tries to appropriate your possessions;
   2. sacrifices little in the hope of gaining much;
   3. helps others only when threatened by the same danger;
   4. only makes friends to serve his own interest;

2. a man of empty promises who:
   1. tells you how sad he is not to have been able to share with you something that has already run out;
   2. promises to share with you things they don't yet have;
   3. tries to win your favour with empty promises;
   4. has excuses every time called upon to help;

3. a flatterer who:
   1. toadies to your evil-doing,
   2. toadies to your doing of good;
   3. sings praises to your face;
   4. gossips about you behind your back.

4. leads you down the road to ruin by:
   1. being your loyal drinking companion;
   2. being at your side when you roam the streets at unseemly hours;
   3. frequenting games and shows with you;
   4. joining you at the gambling table.

Such behaviours illustrate sixteen ways in which a fool will unwittingly reveal his lack of responsibility. Besides leading us to ruin, such people lead society unfalteringly in the direction of deterioration in a way which is hard to remedy. If you come across any of these sixteen features, then it should already be ringing warning bells in your head.

F. AVOIDING THE INFLUENCE OF FOOLS

F.1 Putting fools in quarantine

In the words of the old Thai proverb:

> "Always keep a safe distance — give a hound an armslength, give a monkey six feet but for a fool a hundred thousand miles may not be enough." Just as mentioned earlier, when a person has such a dangerously contagious disease as faulty discretion, we have no alternative but to isolate them. However, as we shall see it is not physical distance which we use to isolate a fool — it is more on the level of interaction. We have to be careful getting to familiar with them — that is effectively how we keep "psychological distance".

F.2 Association Defined

When we talk of associating with others, what are the limits of our definition? In fact there are seven different ways in which it is possible to associate with others:

1. Meeting up with fools. This can be called associating with fools but it is only association in its most rudimentary form. Of course such association might not lead to anything. After all it is just our visiting them and their visiting us. We may not even particularly enjoy each others company.

2. Getting closer. This is once you start getting more familiar with the fools you meet up with, start lending things to one another, talking on subjects of common interest, and following common pastimes.

3. Feeling a liking for one another. This is once you

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start to get more familiar, you start to believe that you have common tastes. You start to believe that you yourself like *anything* that they like.

4. Respecting them. After a while, you start to find that you respect that fool for his particular skills:

(e.g. his skill in gambling) and you start to think what good luck it is to have this fool as your acquaintance and an example to follow.

5. Moral Support. After having admired the fool for a long time from a distance, you start to believe anything they think.

6. Joining in. After sharing the same opinions for a long time, you start to join in with their activities and follow the same way of life.

7. Influencing and instilling behaviour to one another. In the final stages of association, it is impossible to tell the difference between the fool and his associates. It has also come to the stage when it is impossible to reverse the effects of the fool on his associate.

Thus for any reader who realizes that they are under the influence of a fool they should realize too the danger of even casual contact with the personality of someone who is a fool. There will be an unavoidable escalation of intimacy even without realizing it.

F.3 Practising non-association in everyday life

If you want to avoid associating with fools in your everyday life, apart from avoiding social contact with fools as already mentioned, it will be necessary to give special attention to the following issues:

1. ***Prohibit yourself from every sort of evil and from all of the roads to ruin:*** Don't go thinking that the odd game of poker amongst close friends, or just to keep your hand in, can surely be of no harm to anybody. Prohibit yourself right from the start. This way you will save yourself from tears in the long run. Even if you are someone with weak tendencies in the direction of being a fool, such as liking to get up late and ignoring the alarm clock you have set for yourself, you should get tough with yourself right from the start. Prohibit yourself from doing even the most minor unwholesome deeds.

2. Make the break from any evils you may have committed in the past: It doesn't matter what sort of bad habits you might have had in the past

— don't give yourself even the smallest chance to relapse. Don't even speak of those things any more.

3. Make Your performance of good deeds continuous. There is no need to think over your past failures or entangle ourselves in the guilt of your past bad deeds. Starting from today, you must practise generosity, keep the Precepts, meditate and do the daily chanting — continuously. In this way the scars left by our old way of life will gradually heal leaving only good behavior in its place.

4. In the case you have to associate with a fool be especially careful. Sometimes we are put in the situation where we have to associate with fools, even though we don't want to. Sometimes, for example, we find out that even our own boss is involved in corruption. If we refuse to have any part in his dealings, we might get sacked. What should we do in such a situation? If we do everything he orders, in the end we will pick up his bad habits. Our ancestors had a simile for warning us in such a situation. They said you should be as careful 'as if you were warming yourself before the fire. If you stay too close to the fire for too long, you will get burned. If you keep too much distance, then you will be left shivering in the cold'. Thus, just as with the fire, you need to keep the appropriate distance from the fool — not too near and not too far.

5. You can associate with a fool only in the case that you are sure you have the capability and steadfastness to help them. Jumping into the water to save a drowning person is only sensible if you are able to swim — otherwise you get two drowning people! Whether you can really help a fool or not depends whether your own virtue is sufficiently steadfast to allow you to help them unscathed. If you are not yet sufficiently steadfast then keep your distance — even

if they are your own relatives! If you come across a friend who takes no heed of your warnings, however many times you might tell him, you have to resign yourself to helping him out instead when the suffering from their own mistakes starts to sink in — when the circumstances make him a little more ready to listen. However, if he is not such a bad guy, and you are able to make some impression on him, then try to help him — try to keep him from going under. It's not that you should be hard hearted, but you have to know our own limits and if helping a fool is beyond your capability, you have to withdraw our help and keep our distance in order to survive.

F.4 Interaction without Transaction

Some texts summarize the functions of association as two fold. Others summarize association as a pathway as follows: joining, receiving, and giving.

- ***Joining*** means eating, sleeping and investing together.
- ***Receiving*** means taking someone on as one's spouse, one's child, one's employee or as one's extended family. The point where we start to associate with them is the point when we take them on.
- ***Giving*** means that after joining them and taking them on, we give something to them. Such giving includes giving them consideration, praise, encouragement, lodging, food or payment. All of these are included in the definition of association.

If you are associating with fools on any of these three levels you should be warned to withdraw yourself before sustaining any further damage.

F.5 The Varieties of Fools

Some people think that they already have enough discretion to choose their friends and thus overlook the importance ofthe first blessing. In fact, even though we may be experienced and adult there is a fool with whom we have to associate cautiously throughout our life — that is our "inner fool". In conclusion, there are two different types of fool in the world — the fool in the outside world and the inner fool. The inner fool is the little"devil" that seems all too ready to justify your doing the things for which you should know better. They are the erroneous discretion that creep into our heads, and it is our task to put an end to the arising of such fools in the mind.

Further to the temptation to be complacent about our ability to recognize fools, it should be added that parents have a special responsibility to their exemplar-sensitive children to be cautious about the sort of friends they associate with — and even to choose a school and teacher for their children to help them to avoid associating with fools. This subject is dealt with in more detail in Blessing Thirteen
— nevertheless a little extra attention on this front right from the beginning of our study of the blessings can help to ensure a bright future for them — preventing tears when it's too late to reverse the problems (like drug-addiction).

G.ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

G.1 The Angel and the Worm (traditional)

Once upon a time there were two young men who were friends. How they came to be friends no-one knew, because one was found of doing meritorious deeds, while the other did only evil deeds all his life — like cockfighting, fish fighting, taking drugs and alcohol.

When he was working as a merchant, he would sell only fake goods and stolen goods.When he was a teacher, he wouldn't teach normal subjects to his pupils — he would teach all the shortcuts and loopholes in the law.

Even with such different tastes, the two friends managed to maintain both their identity and their friendship until they both passed away. When the good guy died, he was reborn as an angel in heaven. The bad guy was reborn as a worm in a lavatory. One day the angel was wondering what had become of his friend. The angel checked every level of heaven but could not find his friend. He checked the human realm, but again his friend was no where to be found.The angel made a further check and was surprised to see that his friend had been born as a worm in a lavatory. The angel wondered what

he could do to help his friend, and tolerated the revolting smell of the lavatory out of compassion in order to stand at the edge of the toilet bowl and make himself known to his friend. Standing at the rim of the toilet bowl, he changed himself into his old human form.

"Old friend do you remember me?"asked the angel.

"Of course," said the worm."We used to be friends a long time ago."

"O! Worm! Now I am an angel. Today I have come to do you the biggest favour of your life. I have come to invite you to join the heavenly host. However, there is one condition. If you want to be an angel you have to keep all the precepts without breaking any of them from this day onwards. You must think only meritorious thoughts and do meritorious deeds and before long we'll be able to abide in the same heavenly host."

"What's so great about being an angel?" asked the worm.

"You can get whatever you wish instantly simply by thinking of it. As soon as you think of angelic sustenance, ambrosia manifests itself. If you think of clothing then instantly you are clothed in angelic apparel. If you think of a heavenly mansion, then a heavenly mansion arises instantaneously. All you have to do is have the intention and hundreds of good things will come your way.

"In that case I don't want to be an angel. I'm better off as a worm thank you."

"What do you mean?" asked the angel.

"If you are an angel you have to make the wish before you get what you want. As a worm I don't even have to make the effort to think. Excrement in the toilet just keeps on flowing into my mouth. Just leave me alone because I'm better off as a worm." In such a case it is obvious that he is so used to his foolish ways that in the end he is beyond help.

G.2 Metaphor: Leaves wrapping a stinking fish

Another parable used by the Lord Buddha is that of the leaves wrapping a putrid fish taking on the same putrescant smell of the fish itself.

G.3 Metaphor: Burning hovel next to a palace

Our ancestors had a parable. They said that to associate with a fool, no matter how good we might originally be, is like building a palace next door to a hovel. Whenever the hovel catches fire, no matter how safe the palace is from fire, as soon as the hovel goes up in flames the palace burns down as well, just like the virtuous person destroyed by association with fools.

G.4 MahÅkassapa's ***Kuti Burned Down by Foolish Student (KuÊidËssaka JÅtaka J.iii.71)***

In the time of the Lord Buddha, there was an elder monk of unblemished virtue named Kassapa. He was respected by all of the enlightened monks and other members of the monastic community. Even the Lord Buddha's closest disciple/nanda, had great respect for Ven. Kassapa.

It was the norm for the elder monks of the community to accept newly-ordained monks as their disciples, in order that those new monks could receive training. Some of the elders accepted more than others in keeping with their ability as teachers. Ven. Kassapa accepted three or four disciples but it turned out that among their number was a stubborn monk, UluÌkasaddaka who would listen tono-one's advice. On winter evenings it was the duty of the disciples to boil water for the elder monks for them to take a bath in comfort. The stubborn disciple would never boil water for Ven. Kassapa in accordance with his duty. He would always leave the chore of boiling the water to his fellows while going himself to invite Ven. Kassapa to wash as if he had boiled the water himself.

Everything else the stubborn disciple did was in the same vain. Instead of going on alms round, if he fancied something special to eat the stubborn monk would claim to temple supporters that Ven. Kassapa wanted such-and-such to eat and when they brought such-and-such a food to offer, he would eat it himself.

Ven. Kassapa knew what was going on and warned the stubborn monk,"to be so lacking in respect is not in keeping with having ordained as a monk. You must train yourself better than this in

future."Kassapa warned the stubborn monk continuously, but the only effect of the criticism was to make him feel as if his master was singling him out unfairly for criticism.The more advice he received from his master, the more victimized he felt. Instead of feeling grateful for all the special attention his master had given him, he planned on getting his revenge. He planned the following day instead of going out on almsround with the rest of the disciples for the master's breakfast, he'd stay behind, let the master go for almsround himself and burn down the master's *kuti* while he was gone. In this case it is clear to see the behaviour of a fool who repays a master's advice given with the best of intentions, by burning down his master's house. Ven. Kassapa came back from his almsround to find only ashes where his *kuti* had stood. The disciple had run away.

The Lord Buddha heard the story and disclosed to Ven. Kassapa that the stubborn disciple had been a fool causing damage not only in this lifetime, but in previous lifetimes as well:
In that previous lifetime, Kassapa had been born as an oriole while the stubborn monk had been born as a monkey. The two inhabited the same tree. The oriole wanted to waste no time in building a nest to protect itself from sun, rain and dust — but at the same time the oriole warned the monkey, he ought to build himself a nest against wind and rain, sun and dust, because he had perfect gripping hands like a man, and could build a nest even more easily than the bird with her beak. The oriole told the monkey to build its own nest again and again. but the monkey never took any notice. When it came to the monsoon, the oriole ducked into the shelter of its nest whenever it rained, while the monkey sat out in the rain sobbing. The oriole felt sorry for the monkey and thought the time had come to tell the monkey to build a nest. Perhaps now that he'd had a good soaking he'd see the value of the advice. Thus the oriole poked its head out of its nest and told the monkey ,"you ought to build yourself a nest against wind and rain, sun and dust, because you have perfect gripping hands like a man, you can build a nest even more easily than I can with my beak. As soon as the rain stops build yourself a nest !"

The monkey replied,"If I wanted to build a nest I could build one easily — but even though my body is like that of a man, my intelligence is the lesser."
"You're a strange case," said the oriole. "Some days you go around destroying the nests of others but when it comes to the monsoon, you're the only one without a roof over your head. This is the destiny of one ungrateful for the generosity of others. You had better start improving yourself!"

The monkey was stirred to anger by the criticism. Soaked to the skin by rain and only insulted further by a bird from inside the comfort of a dry nest, the monkey climbed up the tree to the oriole's nest and pulled the nest to pieces.

As a monkey he had pulled the oriole's nest to pieces. As a human, he put his own master's *kuti* to the flame, even though his master had spoken only kind words.These are the identifying features of a fool and are the reason why we have to beware of this type of person.

Blessing Two: Associating with the Wise

A. INTRODUCTION

The second Blessing of the Thirty-Eight, concerns how in our self-cultivation we can successfully close the door on unwholesomeness in our lives, to prevent ourselves from slipping any further back on the slippery slope of spiritual entropy. At this point, when our discretion and sense of conscience is still not very accurate, we are not yet sufficiently versed in spiritual ways to become a Wise One ourselves. However, what we can start by doing is to learn how to recognize others who *are*, and to associate with them so that some of their discretion may brush off on us.

A.1 Difference between knowledge and wisdom

A wise one is distinguished by his or her *wisdom*. Before starting this blessing it is important to *define* this wisdom clearly because being 'wise' is not the same as being 'educated'. 'Wisdom' as intended in this blessing is the discretion as to what is real 'profit' in our lives as outlined by omission in our description of fools in Blessing One. In fact, being educated is also a blessing, but its details can be found in Blessing Seven. The word "wise one" of this Blessing comes from the Pali word "paÁÎita" better known in our language as "pundit". Some people believe that you can become a "pundit" simply by getting yourself a graduation certificate from a reputable university. In fact if you get yourself a good degree and set yourself up in business and make a success of it, you will earn praise and respect from many other people. However, there are no small number of the more unscrupulous amongst these who find themselves behind prison bars inspite of all their academic knowledge. Thus in spite of all their good intentions it is reasonable to assume that such graduates are not truly wise but are only wise *in the ways of the world*. The sort of wisdom we are interested in, in this section, is the sort of wisdom that will, at the very least, keep you out of jail and ensure wholesome profit for the owner both this lifetime and in the here after. This sort of wisdom is called spiritual wisdom. The best example of the wise man in the present day must have both wisdom of the ways of the world *and* spiritual wisdom to a true example of a wise man.

B. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FOOL & A WISE ONE

We are all people alike, equipped with a body and a mind, so what can be blamed for the different amounts of success people meet with as they go through their lives? Why is it advantageous to associate with one sort of person and not another? If you look at people just on the surface, the reason is not obvious. You have to look deeper.

B.1 People distinguished by quality of mind

In these days of human rights, we do all we can to make people equal, but it is not always so easy.

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When it comes to differences of wealth or access to education, it makes sense to give people the maximum of opportunities to help themselves. But where the system of rights breaks down is when people no longer want to help themselves any more — or when people don't even want to live their lives by the rules of decency that bind society together. Of course there are some people who claim that even criminals should be given full human rights and who spend their time feeling sorry for sentenced murderers. However, for the most part we accept that when a person's behaviour deviates into violence or vengefulness or cruelty so far as that of a wrong-doer, no matter whether the police catch him or not, that they are no longer dealing with a person like you or me any more. There is a "screw loose" somewhere in the thinking of such people. Even though they might have two arms, two legs and a head just like you or me, but there is a difference of mind so great that it makes that person dangerous. Whats more the deviation of thinking of such people is (*as discussed in Blessing One*) so contagious that it brushes off on the people who associate with them.

B.2 Effect of differences in the quality of mind

It is differences of mind[1] that distinguish such people from the rest of the world whose lives are governed by discretion.To pinpoint why a fool suffers from faulty discretion, is hard to explain to a person who has never tried meditation. The difference between the mind of a fool and the mind of a wise one is a difference of *quality*. The mind of a fool is one where the thoughts are confused — a mind which is unyielding and blind. Such a mind is dull and cannot think constructively about any subject. Such a mind is blind to reality. If you were to compare such a mind to glass, you could compare it to opaque or frosted glass.Whatever you look at through glass of this type will appear distorted, dark and formless. By contrast, the mind of a wise man is like crystal clear glass. Everything viewed through the glass is crystal clear. Like a clear mirror, you can even see yourself as you really are.

1. The terms 'mind' or 'mental' are used in the Asian sense meaning the abstract phenomena of 'spirit' or 'awareness' rather than the western concept of 'brain' or 'nervous system'.

You might doubt that the mind, as an abstract phenomenon, could have such a powerful influence on our destiny — but the mind is in fact of utmost importance because every dealing we have with the world must pass through the channel of our mind. Consider looking at the world in the mirror. What ever is situated in front of the mirror will show its reflection instantly. Furthermore, a mirror only the size of the palm of your hand is large enough to show the reflection of an entire mountain! All it needs is for the mirror to be really clear, that's all, in order to be able to show instantly the reflection of any object, indiscriminable from the real object itself. In the same way, all it takes is for the mind to be really clear and it too can instantly hold, examine and understand anything and everything as it really is. All of this is by contrast with the man who has a clouded mind (who we have compared to a dull or frosted mirror) which can do nothing to facilitate clear understanding, who cannot comprehend clearly because his own mind is clouded. Because the mind of a fool is distorted, he sees the world in a distorted way. When everything he sees is distorted, how does he interact with the world? The answer to this question is, "in the way he thinks is appropriate" — namely, according to thought, speech and action which are distorted from the norm. On the contrary, because a wise man has a mind that is crystal clear like a diamond he sees the world clearly — as it really is. Thus, he can deal with the world in a way that is appropriate on a more cosmic level than the fool who is locked up in his own selfish view of the world.

Meditation is the main means by which we can upgrade the quality of our mind. Once we realize the peril of having a mind which is dull, clouded and of generally low quality, we can start to appreciate why meditation is so important in the prevention and cure of problems in our lives.

B.3 The Ups and Downs of the Mind from Day-to-Day

Very few people are out and out murderers and plunderers. At the same time very few people are completely pure in mind. The ones who are already "arahants" have no need to waste time reading a book like this.

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An example of ups and downs in the quality of mind of someone like you or me, who lies between the extremes, is the man who gets up in the morning with the best of intentions and enthusiastically prepares almsfood to offer to the monks. At the time he is preparing the food his mind is as clear as that of a wise man. However, even before the monks have arrived on almsround, he has lost his temper, shouting at his children and his state of mind has been reduced to that of a fool. When the monks arrive, his mind is back to a state of clarity as he gives the alms and pours water from the vessel to transfer the merit — he has recovered for himself the clear mind of a wise man. But as he is leaving for work he spoils his state of mind again, shouting at his kids for being late for school. As soon as he leaves the house, he gets his temper back. In the best of moods he makes the intention to do the very best he can at work that day — to make every penny of the wage he receives from his employer worthwhile. The black clouds in his mind go over the horizon and he's back in the frame of mind fitting for a wise man. But alas, another car cuts in in front of him, someone overtakes him on the inside and thoughts of revenge stir up a storm of road rage in his mind spoiling his quality of his mind and the rest of his day. Don't worry this man is not something special. When talking about such imperfection of mind it is not the same as mental illness — merely inefficiency in our quality of mind. Most of us have the same ups and downs in the course of making our way through life in the real world.

B.4 Varieties of people

If we were to divide people according to the quality of their minds, being very simplistic we can divide people into a minimum of three different types:

1. Those whose mind is usually clouded — the fools;
2. Those whose mind is usually clear — the wise;
3. Those half way in between whose mind is not entirely clear, but at the same time their mind is not completely obscured by clouds.

This third category represents the majority of good intentioned people in the world. We're not yet free of mental defilements and for this reason we earn the special name of kalyÅÁabÅla. "KalyÅÁa" means beautiful or good. "BÅla" means the fool. Together the two words mean the good-intentioned fool. Sometimes a fool, sometimes a wise man — but not a 100% accomplished example of either of the two. Another term often used in Buddhism for this sort of person is 'puthujana'. The root meaning of "puthu" is 'thick'. The root of "jana" means person. Such a thick person doesn't mean that he lacks intelligence, but conveys instead that he has a thick rind or peel — and the thing that makes it thick is the defilements in the mind. In the case of those whose layer of defilements is not so thick that they can still listen to reason, they can be referred to as kalyÅÁaputhujana, because they still have some hope of scrubbing through those defilements to reach the innate wisdom that lies within. The first step for a kalyÅÁaputhujana in working his way towards his own inner wisdom is to be able to recognize the wise men amongst his acquaintances so that he can pick up on the good character possessed by a wise man as his standard in elevating the quality of his own mind.

C. DEFINING THE WISE ONE

We can define the Wise One in any one of four ways. In effect, the definitions overlap — they differ only in emphasis:

C.1 Defined in terms of discretion

A Wise One is one who has the discretion to discriminate what behaviour is wholesome and what behaviour is unwholesome, specifically:

- knowing what constitutes good and what constitutes evil;
- knowing what constitutes right and what constitutes wrong;
- knowing what constitutes merit [puñña] and what constitutes demerit [pÅpa]

C.2 Defined in terms of behaviour

A Wise One is someone who habitually thinks, speaks and acts in a good way. All of the features of

a wise man discussed so far have all been his external characteristics — but on closer inspection it turns out that the wise man has several spiritual features that distinguish him from the ordinary fool:

1. The wise one is wont to think habitually in a good way: His habitual way of thinking comprises at minimum: non-greed, non-hatred and right view. Going beyond this, his thoughts are downright wholesome and include loving kindness (in place of non-hatred), generosity (in place of non-greed) and right view (in place of wrong view).

2. The wise one is wont to speak habitually in a good way: The wise man is apt to be well spoken in diametric opposition to the fool who has only a babble of insults to decorate his intelligence. There are four ways in which the wise speak good words:

1. He avoids telling lies. The wise one will always speak the truth. He is always a man of his word.

2. He avoids divisive speech. The wise man by contrast will always be the one to mend the differences between others by his words. He will be the one to forge harmony within a group.

3. He avoids the use of swear words and harsh words. No matter how angry the wise man is, he will not even consider insulting others. The wise man gives careful thought to the every word that escape his lips.

4. He avoids idle chatter. If the wise man knows what he has to say is without use, he will keep it to himself — he will maintain 'noble silence'.

3. The Wise One is wont to do only good deeds: The wise one likes to perform physical good deeds with an emphasis on being compassionate [mettÅ/karunÅ], getting down to earning an honest living [sammÅ ÃjÈva] and marital fidelity. The fool by contrast is continually killing, stealing and committing adultery.

C.3 Defined in terms of virtues

A Wise One is wont to demonstrate the following four virtues:

1. Gratitude [kataññË]: He recognizes the debt of gratitude he may have to others
2. Self-Purifying [attasuddhi]: He purifies himself of all evil
3. Purity [parisuddhi]: He purifies others of all evil
4. Endearing [saÌgaha]: makes himself useful to society

C.4 Defined in terms of the profit sought from life

In Blessing One we have already seen that the discretion concerning the nature of profit in life for a fool is different from that of a Wise One. In Buddhism we have two definitions of profit in life: profit in the short-term and profit in the hereafter.

C.4.1 Material profit defined (A.iv.281)

The Lord Buddha taught four ways in which the wise one accrues benefits in the present lifetime (in Pali the diÊÊhadhammikatthapayojana). In Thai culture they are colloquially referred to as the 'four chambers of the millionaire's heart' or more simply, the way to set yourself up in life. As we have said, sitting idle will do nothing to ensure your comfort in life. Comfort doesn't come unearned.Thus comfort in one's old age must come from hard work in one's youth, when one is still physically strong enough to be productive in one's work. The wise will, while they are young, store up the means to live comfortably in their old age when they are no longer able to earn. There are four virtues for accruing benefit in the present life. These are:

1. Diligent Acquisition [uÊÊÅnasampadÅ] i.e. not being too lazy to go out and earn a living. Wise is the man who applies himself to the task in hand (not sitting around all day and waiting for money to appear magically)

2. Stewardship [ÅrakkhasampadÅ] means both saving and protecting what you have earned

3. Associating with Good Friends [kalyÅÁamittatÅ] means the same as associating with the wise — that is the title of this Blessing — and to avoid associating with the evil — especially the sort that are always trying to persuade you to go and gamble or go down to the pub.

4. Appropriate Spending: [samajÈvittÅ]. This means being thrifty in spending your earnings. Anyone who has already expended so much effort in earning a day's wage should get full benefit from their own earnings without being extravagant and also without being so stingy they don't allow themselves to use their money for any material comfort.

C.4.2 Spiritual profit defined (A.iv.284)

The wise man recognizes that he cannot live by bread alone and that for all the material wealth he might earn, it cannot buy him spiritual fulfilment. Thus a second important form of profit in life is spiritual profit — better known as profit in life for the hereafter. This again consists of four virtues to be cultivated during one's lifetime [sampÅyikattha-payojana].

1. Faith or Confidence means faith that doing good deeds will lead to good outcomes (for the doer) and that doing evil will lead to bad retribution and giving rise to the commitment to perform the maximum of good deeds throughout one's life. Faith is the first step upon the road to striving to do so many good deeds. Sometimes the clarity of peoples' minds is insufficient for their mind to be faithful continuously. They may be faithful when they wake up but later on in the morning the inspiration fades away. The Lord Buddha referred to such faith as 'turtle-head faith' because sometimes the faith shows itself like the head of a turtle, but just as often it will disappear out of sight inside its shell! This is not the nature of the faith of a wise man whose faith is steadfast and commitment continuous. 'Turtle-head faith' is not so hard to find — like the man who takes the Precept in the morning not to kill any living being but as soon as the tiniest of mosquitos tries to bite him he is slapping it as if his good intentions are all forgotten — but the mosquito disposed of he thinks, "Oh! I'm taking the Precepts today, all you mosquitos had better get out of my way before I change my mind!" Such 'turtle-head faith' is no use to a wise man. With a mind that is crystal clear, a promise even to oneself, is a promise to be kept.

2. The Precepts. You must keep the minimum of Five Precepts as the baseline of one's virtue because the Precepts measure the degree to which you are a *person* as opposed to being a *savage*. Any time you want to find out to what extent you are human, you can use the Five Precepts as your benchmark. If all five of the Precepts have been perfectly kept, you can conclude that you are 100% human that day. If only four of your Precepts remain intact, you can conclude that you are only 80% human. If only three remain you are only 60% human, your fangs are beginning to show. If only two remain you are only 40% human, your fangs are longer and traces of a tail are visible. If only one remains you are only 20% human and the remainder of you is 80% savage. If none of your Precepts remain intact, nothing human remains about you. Try swapping yourself for a dog in anyone's house but no-one will accept the trade in. The dog is worth more than you are. You can fairly say that keeping the Five Precepts is the thing that closes the doors of hell. Because Five Precepts are the only thing that underpin our status in the human realm. Thus for the wise man, there is no doubt as to maintaining the Five Precepts and his humanness for the whole time, throughout his life.

3. Generosity: That we are still alive and well today on the long path since our birth is only because we have relied upon the generosity of others all along the way. If on the day we were born, our mother had refused us her milk, our first day of our life would have been our last. If all throughout our childhood, our mother, father and relatives had refused us their care and attention, where would we be today? The fact that we have managed to learn to read and write and master knowledge of the world is only because our teachers have given their time and energy to educate us all through our schooldays [vidhayadÅna*]*. Whenever we have made mistakes, in our childhood and maybe only been punished for it and then forgiven (rather than being put to death for our errors) is because others have been prepared to forgive us our tres-

passes [abhayadÅna]. When you grow up and marry, again you can only get by as a result of the time and energy your spouse gives to support you, sharing mutual earnings. Without such giving the marriage would certainly be on the rocks within the space of seven days. Ultimately, even the pavilion where you go to listen to sermons and the chairs you sit on to listen to it, all originate from the charity of others and that there is a monk with the time and energy to give you the sermon is another sort of giving [dhammadÅna]. Thus, in addition to faith and keeping the Precepts, it is necessary to be generous too if you are to number amongst the wise.

4. Wisdom [paññÅ]: To be specific, anyone who is diligent in studying the teachings of the Lord Buddha will attain wisdom — the mark of a wise man. Anyone who lies around in bed all day has no chance of accruing wisdom. For the wise man, simply developing the four chambers of the millionaires' heart is not enough. He must seek out wisdom too. When it comes to a holiday instead of lying around in front of the TV or going to the cinema, he is already on his way to the temple in the early morning to study what the Buddha taught. This is what we call seeking out wisdom.

The fool is one whose understanding of profit in life conforms neither to material nor spiritual profit in life. Thus we can say that the wise man is one who understands and works towards profit both in this lifetime and the here after — i.e. *both* material and spiritual profit in life.

C.5 Defined in terms of quality of mind

The wise man is one whose mind is habitually pure. A person could be completely unqualified. He could even be completely illiterate — but if his mind is habitually pure, he is a wise man. The reason for this is that just the fact that the mind is pure has a snowball effect because it sets his standards of judgement and discretion and this alone will ensure that wisdom is invested in everything he does

— whether it may be thought, speech or action.

D. RECOGNIZING A WISE ONE

D.1 Tell-tale Behaviours (5)

Many of the characteristics of a Wise One mentioned above may not be immediately apparent to us because they are not external features. Thus we may have to look at the following five characteristics which will betray the wholesome inward qualities of someone who is wise:

1. The wise like to shepherd others to live their lives in a proper way. Asked where one can go on a Sunday, he will reply, "to the temple of course

— don't waste your time going to the cinema." Or passing him in the street, "it looks like rain, you ought to get the harvest in before it spoils." If you were to meet a fool in the same circumstances, he'd give you altogether different advice — "it looks like rain, if you're feeling aches & pains you'd be better off down at the bar with a stiff whisky down your throat!" Both the fool and the wise man are persuaders but their persuasion leads to different results indeed.

2. The wise take full responsibility for the things that are their own business. Apart from being responsible, they will influence those around them to be responsible in the same way. What the wise won't do is interfere with other peoples' business. They know where to draw the line in order to avoid nosing into others' affairs. The fool by contrast is often more interested in interfering in other peoples' business than he is about taking responsibility for what he's meant to be doing.

3. The wise favour the honest and the decent. Its no use trying to persuade him to be dishonest or unscrupulous, because he is above those sort of things. The fool by contrast is proud of the fact that he can get away with anything. Nothing is too low for him.

4. The wise man is not easily angered. He is grateful for criticism from others. The fool, by contrast, even if criticized in the politest of ways will lose his temper. Even if someone offers him criticism with the best of possible intentions, he'll turn round with a scowl and answer back, "you've been constantly picking on my faults".

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If you smile at him, he'll interpret your smile as teasing and turn his back on you. Even just speaking to a fool can make him lose his temper. Sometimes you don't even need to say anything. Just seeing you look at him can upset him — "What are you looking at me like that for?" The fool is constantly on the lookout for a fight. The wise man by contrast is hard to stir to anger. Thus if you recognize yourself as hot-tempered, you ought to associate with the wise and this will gradually cool down your fiery temper. However, you shouldn't confuse the cool-tempered wise man with the inert and irresponsive character of the sort of guy who sleeps all day and seems to do everything in slow-motion. These dopey sorts are irresponsive to nearly everything around them, but don't think they're free of all defilements. They are another breed of person altogether from the wise men we aim to associate with.

5. The wise favour self discipline and orderliness. When we live together in society with a huge number of other people, if we don't comply with the laws laid down in society, we end up as misanthropes. The regulations say that when you are at the temple, at the appropriate time you must come to sit in the main pavilion and sit in neat lines, without encroaching on the people sitting next to you, that way there is enough space for everyone and everyone has an equal area to sit in. The fool, however, doesn't respect the rules. He doesn't like obeying anyone or anything. He'll be the only one to sit out of line, sticking out like a sore thumb. He's like a spanner in the works. For temples in general, people go to the temple with the best of intention to accrue as much merit as possible but when it comes to mealtimes, they end up fighting to get to the front of the queue like vultures. In the morning they are like angels walking on the Earth, but when lunchtime comes, they are like hungry ghosts!

In conclusion, the good thing about associating with the wise is that it will develop our discretion to be that of the wise with whom we associate — or to come to the real point — it will allow our mind to become bright and clear like that of the wise man.

D.2 Qualities of a Wise One's Friendship

Alternatively, the Wise One can also be noticed by his characteristics of being a true friend who exhibits all three sorts of responsibility:

- responsibility for his own personal dignity
- responsibility for the human dignity of others
- responsibility for a fair economic system In our association with such Wise Ones, we will be able to recognize their level of responsibility from the quality of their friendship. If we are a good friend to them, then we should see the following characteristics in the friendship which is returned. However, even amongst True Friends, the responsibility can be manifested in different ways. The Buddha subdivided True Friends into four groups. He identified each group by four examples of be

haviours — giving a total of sixteen characteristics to look for in a good friend.

1. The Helpful Friend [upakaraka]
2. The Constant Friend [samanasukhadukkha]
3. The Friend of Wise Counsel [atthakkhayi]
4. The Sympathetic Friend [anukampaka]

1. a helpful friend is one who:

1. protects you even when you are off your guard;
2. helps protect your property even when you neglect it;
3. is your refuge in times of danger;
4. always provides you with twice as much as you asked for;

2. a constant friend is constant in bad times and good:

1. they confide in you;
2. they don't go spreading your secrets around;
3. they don't abandon you when you fall on hard times;
4. they would even die in your place;

3. they give you good counsel:

1. they warn you against unwholesome behaviour
2. encourage you towards wholesome behaviour;
3. save up new things to tell you;

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4. point you in the direction of heaven.

4. they empathize with you:
   1. they don't laugh at your misfortunes;
   2. they congratulate you on your good fortune,
   3. they speak out against anyone who maligns you,
   4. they stand up for those who speak well of you

As you can see, all sixteen characteristics of the True Friend are characteristics that lead to the creation of positivity.

E. ASSOCIATION

E.1 How to associate with the wise (7)

The Lord Buddha taught seven features of behaviour which counts as association with the wise. If your association misses out on any of these seven factors, it cannot be counted as fruitful association. The seven features are as follows:

1. Frequently meeting up with them. If you know that someone has the characteristics of a wise man, you ought to seek him out and visit him regularly. If you hear that such and such a temple has wise people going to it, then that should be the temple you are visiting regularly. This is the first step to true association. Without it no association can come about.

2. Make yourself known to them. What this means is that when you have gone out of your way to seek out a wise man, you should make yourself known to them, not sit just out of their line of vision round the corner. Whenever they go to the boxing or the fashion show they are right at the ringside or up against the catwalk, but when they go to the temple and see one of the monks coming, they will disappear to the back row of the pavilion. In such a case, even though they have come as far as the temple where the wise are to be found, they cannot be said to have associated with the wise.

3. Sincerety towards them. If there is any affection in your association, you must be sincere to one another — with nothing behind your back. There is no secret which your other half can't ask about and get a straight answer. Loyalty means that there is no hidden agenda concerning your association. But even this is not enough.

4. Loyalty towards them. Where in sincerety, your association is bound through affection, in loyalty the association is bound through respect. Thus to make for the best of possible associations you should do nothing to diminish either the love or respect that bonds the relationship. Also you should do nothing to interrupt the train of thought of the wise man with whom you have chosen to associate whether it be through careless speech or otherwise. This is what we call loyalty.

5. Help them in times of need. Whenever we notice that our associate (the wise one) is busy with something we could help with, we should offer our help without reluctance. However, if we know that our associate has something that we could help with and we keep our silence instead of offering our assistance, we can hardly call our association a friendship. Just imagine if a group of so-called friends all come together at meal time but cannot be found when it comes to time for work. Such a group could hardly be called friends.

6. When free joining up to talk and eat together. When the wise have free time they come together to discuss the Dhamma and to clear up their doubts (not to gossip about the neighbours).

7. Reflection on Dhamma and Getting Down to Earnest Practice. This is one of the most important headings. Even if you have diligently followed the previous six steps but omit this seventh step, you cannot call it true association. Also, if you do none of the first six but do the seventh one, it is as good as true association, because Dhamma always has the same flavour — it always gives rise to self discipline [sÈla]: it always gives rise to concentration [samÅdhi]: and it always gives rise to wisdom [paññÅ]. Thus even if you have never met your wise associate before, even on your first meeting you will feel as if you have been friends for a thousand years, or for many lifetimes — because both of you have Dhamma in your hearts — it is Dhamma that binds your association.

The behaviour that we refer to as association means that that whatever happens you will do things in togetherness. If there is work you will work together. Accept each others' help, accept the same identity, accept the same place of abode, accept work in the same place. If you possess anything, you will be willing to lend it to them or give it to them, giving them possessions or respect. In conclusion the operant parts of the process of association with the wise are sharing, accepting and giving. If you expand upon these three then you arrive at the seven steps described at the beginning of this section.

E.2 Principles of Association

Like all the groups of people closest to us in the world, the best way we can get the virtues of the wise to brush off on us is associate with them as 'good friends'. The Buddhist teaching most relevant to the cultivation of a fruitful friendship is the 'northern quarter' of the SiḶgalovÅda Sutta which gives us the following practical advice about how good friends should treat each other:

The Buddha laid down five examples of duties we ought to practice in order to express our responsibility towards our friends:

1. generosity: anyone possessed of Right View [sammÅ diËÊhi] is bound to moved to compassion when seeing others experiencing hardship or suffering — and generosity is the way in which he can ameliorate the lot of friends caught in such a situation, while at the same time strengthening his bond of friendship to that person;

2. kind words: if a person is able to relinquish the Four Defilements of Action, and has the altruism of a Good Friend [kalyÅÁamitta] he will be of the habit of speaking only words that are polite and true;

3. helping and acting for their welfare: endowed with the characteristics of a True Friend, one will have the altruism to want to do things for the benefit of one's friends;

4. being consistent: however well one has treated one's friends in the past, one will not suddenly change to treat them better or worse because of force of circumstances. Just because one gets a promotion in rank which is better than that of one's old friend, one will not subsequently look down on him;

5. never telling them lies: as good friend what one says will never deviate from the truth.

It is only possible to fulfil the demands of these five duties if one has already had the qualities of a true friend instilled by effective upbringing at the hands of one's parents, teachers and employers.

In turn those wise friends should practice the following five duties towards us in order to express their sense of responsibility towards us:

1. protect us when we are off our guard: learning that we are in the midst of problems as a result of our own recklessness, if it happens that such recklessness is not in our nature, if a friend is true, they will intervene and help — if they leave us to our recklessness you can know that they are an enemy in a friend's guise;

2. help protect our property even when we neglect it: such is the behaviour of a true friend;

3. be our refuge in times of danger: willingness to let us rely on them is the sign of a true friend;

4. not abandoning us in times of trouble: this is the sign of a Good Friend [kalyÅÁamitta];

5. show due respect to other members of our family: friends who not only show us respect, but also respect those to whom we have debts of gratitude, our children and grandchildren as if they were part of their own family — are indeed true friends.

All five duties of a friend are identifying features of a truly Good Friend — if we ever have the luck to come across such a genuine friend, we must take care to associate closely with them, treating them with respect, in keeping with the Buddha's advice: "associate with them respectfully, like a mother to her sons"

It is pertinent to observe that such a genuine friend could only arise in the world as the result of an amenable environment (*see forthcoming Blessing Four*), especially those in whose company they grew up, in order for the good habits of those people to

have brushed off on him and been preserved in his own personality. It is such people that society and nation alike are crying out for — because such a person has tremendous power of virtue stored up inside them — sufficient power to channel the tide of society and economics around him down the same virtuous path.

E.3 What are the consequences when there are no Wise Ones to be found?

If there are no genuinely wise ones to be found in society or if those posing as 'wise' fail to cherish others according to the advice of the Buddha, many sorts of harm arise on individual, interpersonal and social levels. Many of the potential problems can be extrapolated to the relationship between government and the citizens it is supposed to be a refuge too. If the government fails to be a Wise Friend toits citizens, it the false friendship brings serious problems on a national level. In conclusion, the harm that arises when there is lack of association with the wise manifests itself on three levels:

1. Losing a sense of responsibility for their own human dignity: If friends lack self-discipline and don't fulfil their duties towards one another as prescribed by the Lord Buddha, the first level of disaster which will happen to them is that they will lose their sense of responsibility for their own human dignity — this loss giving rise (at the minimum) to the following three undesirable symptoms:

1. Breaking the Five Precepts: Because there is an atmosphere of mutual suspicion, former friends will deceive and lie to each other. The pledges of allegiance they formerly kept to one another will be nullified in the way often seen in political circles;

2. Chronic False View: Lacking discretion as to right and wrong, virtue and misdeed, appropriate and inappropriate and the Law of Karma, there is nothing they will not do as a means to procure power, money and personal profit;

3. Mistreats Friends: They might resort to back stabbing of former friends in order to procure personal ends;

2. Losing a sense of responsibility for the human dignity of others: If friends lack self-discipline and don't fulfil the duties towards one another prescribed by the Lord Buddha, the second level of disaster which will happen to them is that they will lose their sense of responsibility for the human dignity of others — this loss giving rise (at the minimum) to the following three undesirable symptoms:

1. Harbours bias: They will lose their sense of fairness and will be continually biased in favour of their own cronies — not with altruistic thoughts for even their own people, but in order to pave the way to personal profit;

2. Disloyalty to homeland: Out of selfishness and False View, they will become narrow-minded and unrefined in their thinking. All they will think about is how to maximize the profits they can procure for themselves and their cronies — to the point they will no longer have any sense of loyalty to their own country, religion or nationality — they wouldn't feel any scruples about making a profit, even if they have to destroy the national heritage to do so;

3. Misuse of rank or position: When they lack any accurate sense of justice, they will attempt to make illegal dealings look legal or outlaw legal things, if it suits them to do so.

3. Losing a sense of responsibility for economic fairness in society at large: If friends lack self-discipline and don't fulfil the duties towards one another prescribed by the Lord Buddha, the third level of disaster which will happen to them is that they will lose their sense of responsibility for economic fairness in society at large — this loss giving rise (at the minimum) to the following three undesirable symptoms:

1. Corruption: When false view and selfishness get the better of their thinking, they will worship money alone — because they understand that the more money they have, the more power they can gain. Money will be the means that they can secure the any position of authority they hold (through bribery).

2. *Implicated in dealings with the Six Roads to Ruin:* When money becomes important above all else, they will have no scruples about taking shortcuts to find it. Of course the most profitable forms of trading are dealing in drugs, forgeries, arms smuggling or casinos — the fact that they are illegal or exploit the poorest sectors of society — considerations which mean nothing to those so far alienated from thoughts of fairness in economics;

3. *Betrays homeland:* if such people find themselves in positions of legislation, because of selfishness and False View, if they can make a 'quick buck' from foreign investors, they will not think twice about waiving laws which formerly protected their country from foreign exploitation.

The problems of lack of association with the Wise can be summarized down to two main points:

1. Obvious social problems: In countries such as Thailand, social problems which are out of hand are high-level corruption, partiality of the legal system, degeneration into vice and widespread prostitution;

2. Covert social problems: The covert social problems exist in the form of False Friends in positions of influence — whether it be positions in politics, the civil service, government utilities — who have less than scrupulous behaviour. Unfortunately what the people see of such public figures — an image of respectability and chivalry — often belies illicit dealings behind the scenes. Such false friendship has its origins in undisciplined parental upbringing, undisciplined schooling and eventually, having become a fool, seeking the company of other fools is the final nail in the coffin of true friendship.

Possible solutions to these problems are:

1. In the short term are to avoid voting those with the character traits of 'false friends' into positions of authority;
2. In the long term are to use the nets of 'sixteen characteristics of true friends' and 'sixteen characteristics of false friends' to identify and replac

ing the weaknesses in yourself with virtues starting with yourself — associating with the wise so that their good virtues can brush off on you too.

F. VARIETIES OF WISE ONES

F.1 Inner teacher, outer teacher

Broadly speaking, there are two categories of the wise — the outer wise ones and the inner wise ones. The outer wise ones can be subdivided into the wise who are truly wise and those who are not truly wise. The truly wise are start with the Lord Buddha, the arahants and those who have attained the various levels of Buddhist sainthood. The wise who are not truly wise are those who are as wise as or wiser than us. Examples of these are monks who truly train themselves in meditation. Even though such monks may not be arahants, they come up to the standard of a wise man. You should seek him out for association and familiarize yourself with his virtues. You can only gain from such association. As for your own parents, given that we are their children, we ought to do our best to associate with them. Sometimes we encounter difficulties however. Sometimes our parents have the character of fools. If this should be the case then we have the duty to live in the same household, but with the utmost care not to let those foolish habits rub off on ourselves. If your parents drink alcohol, don't go prohibiting them from such behaviour. It is not your place to do so. However, at the same time you shouldn't go joining them in their drinking. If your mother loves playing poker, it's no good telling her to give up. Let her carry on with her gambling — but don't go joining in with her. Even though we know these are the habits of a fool, they are our own mother and father. We can't just ditch them. We must carry on living in the same household while taking care not to be infected by their foolish habits.

The wise also extend to our friends and relatives who are a good example to us by their behaviour. Even if they might not be right all the time, or they may not be as wise as an arahant, to associate with them is still to our benefit.

In the case of associating with the wise who are not yet perfect, the Buddha taught that we should

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concentrate on observing only their good points and mimic only these good behaviours. If that person has his faults, don't waste your time criticising them for these, because for as long as one hasn't come to an end of all defilements, faults and weaknesses will always remain. Don't go looking for peoples' faults. Look for their strengths and make the effort to instil these strengths in ourself. In the end we will be like an ocean full of all types of virtue. Don't go letting someone's minor fault blind you to all their virtues. If you are only interested in peoples' faults, by the time you have picked out everyone's weaknesses, there will be only one good person left in the world — yourself.

Thus the wise in the outside world are of two types: the permanently wise who have rid themselves of all defilements and the sporadically wise who still have defilements remaining. Both types of wise ones are beneficial to associate with.

You may have noticed that sometimes when we think of doing something evil there will be a little voice inside that warns us not to do it. Have you wondered where that little voice inside comes from? Usually we cannot see whose voice it is, but if we meditate until our mind is much clearer, we will be able to see the wise one inside who is the owner of the voice. Information, whether it be in the form of knowledge as a voice or the content of a dream or sixth sense, is transferred down the line from deep inside ourselves, like a baton between the runners of a relay race.

G. THE PRACTICALITY OF CULTIVATING ASSOCIATION WITH THE WISE

It is for this reason that we must do two things— try to find the wise in the outside world and find the best ways to associate with them. If we know that anyone is a good example then we should make sure we get to know that person. That way the good character that makes that person a wise one will begin to brush of on us as well. Secondly, once we have seen the nature of those who are a good example to follow, we should start to cultivate an inner self which has the same good qualities so that the self which is wise will manifest itself inside ourselves. If we already have an inner self that is wise, even if we don't meet any more wise people ever again, it will not matter to us, because we have our inner source of wisdom from which we can draw the knowledge of our inner teacher.

H. ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIALS

H.1 Metaphor: Leaves wrapping a perfumed fish

A parable used by the Lord Buddha is that of the leaves wrapping a perfumed fish taking on the same perfume as the fish itself.

H.2 Red-Bearded Executioner saved by Association with the Wise (DhA.ii.203)

TambadÅÊhika who was a former thief had served the king as the public executioner for fifty-five years; and had just retired from that post. One day, he went to the river for a bath, intending to take some specially prepared food on his return home. As he was about to take the food, Venerable SÅriputta, who had just arisen from sustained absorption in concentration [jhÅna samÅpatti], stood at his door for almsfood. Seeing the monk, TambadÅÊhika thought to himself, "Throughout my life, I have been executing thieves; now I should offer this food to the monk." So, he invited SÅriputta to come in and respectfully offered the food.

After the meal, SÅriputta taught him the Dhamma, but TambadÅÊhika could not pay attention, because he was extremely disturbed as he recollected his past career as an executioner. This mental disturbance did not allow him to concentrate properly. SÅriputta knew this, and in order to put him in a proper frame of mind, he asked TambadÅÊhika tactfully whether he killed the thieves because he wished to kill them out of anger or hate, or simply because he was ordered to do so. TambadÅÊhika answered that he was ordered to kill them by the king and that he had no ill will or wish to kill. 'If that is the case,' SÅriputta asked, 'What wrong did you do?' Thus re-assured, his mind became calmer and he requested SÅriputta to continue his sermon. As he listened to the

Dhamma attentively, his mind became tranquil and he developed the virtues of patience and understanding. After the discourse, TambadÅÊhika accompanied SÅriputta for some distance and then returned home. On his way home he died due to an accident.

When the Buddha came to the congregation of the *bhikkhu*s in the evening, they informed him about the death of TambadÅÊhika. When asked where TambadÅÊhika was reborn, the Buddha told them that although TambadÅÊhika had committed evil deeds throughout his life, because he comprehended the Dhamma, he was reborn in the Tusita *deva* world. The *bhikkhu*s wondered how such an evil-doer could have such great benefit after listening to the Dhamma just once. To them the Buddha said that the length of a discourse is of no consequence, for one single sentence of the Dhamma, correctly understood can produce much benefit.

Blessing Three: Expressing Respect to Those Worthy of Respect

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 People Differentiated by their discretion

As seen in the previous blessings, the brightness of a person's future relies on his ability to judge the difference between good and evil. If his judgement is faulty, there is no way he can make a success out of his life. Even though people may look superficially similar, their standards of judgement can be so different. As human beings we are born equal — we all have a pair of hands and ten fingers — but some people use their hands to perform works that are useful to society while others think that their hands will become more famous as fists and go around punching up the neighbours for a living. In this Blessing we look at the third of three major influences on our development of sound discretion

— having the right sort of "role model" in our hearts. This blessing doesn't imply that we model ourselves on anyone or anything at all — but if we want to develop sound discretion we need to model ourselves (recognize and pay respect to) only those worthy of our respect.

A.2 Effect of one's "hero" on one's discretion

Hearing such terms as "paying respect", "expressing respect" or "people worthy of respect", the casual reader might come to the premature conclusion that this blessing is irrelevant to our day and age. However, if we rephrase what we mean in modern terms, asking "Who is the hero of your heart — which celebrity do you model yourself on or dream of emulating?", the pertinence of this blessing will become much more immediate.

When we are children and the horizons of our experience do not extend beyond the walls of our house, maybe our own parents represent all that we want to achieve in our lives. We try to play at being "grown-up" like our parents, imitating them in our play. If we are exposed to a good parental example, our idea of what we perceive as normal or ethical will develop quite accurately from an early age. However, if, for example, parents lie to their children often or beat them out of anger, then that comes to be what the child perceives to be the standard of "justice" in life.

During one's teen years, when one's horizons extend beyond the home, the influence of constructive or destructive role models becomes stronger and stronger. These role models are over and above the influence of good or bad friends as studied in the previous two blessings.

Look at some of the role models celebrities set for the youth of today and you can imagine some of the problems facing our impressionable youth of today. Supposing you plan to model yourself on Vincent Van Gogh, Kurt Cobain, Marilyn Monroe, Janis Joplin, Dylan Thomas, Jimi Hendrix, Elvis Presley, Jim Morrison, Keith Moon, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway or Brian Jones all of whom killed themselves at an early age, you might come to the conclusion that truly creative people are "too beautiful for this world". You might come

to the conclusion that creative writers drank because they had to — or it was the "pressure of fame". Or that killing yourself is how to earn fame or emotionally blackmail others. We can overlook the insecure, grotesquely boring reality of these peoples' lives. We can rationalize away the brutal and banal nature of their addictions. We can forgive our heroes and we come to be able to forgive ourselves as well. It gives us an instant excuse to be irresponsible and indecent. We can say we're too beautiful for this world too. We can act like drugged children, crash our lives and drop out.

The truth about someone like Vincent Van Gogh is that when he painted he was beautiful, but in other matters he was not. He was always encouraging his emotions to work their dark magic. It's true that he ought to be admired while he had his paintbrush in his hand, but to be admired for his whole sorrowful life and to make a legend out of it is to confuse oneself. The problem for us as beginners on the initial steps of the *Manual of Peace*, as debutants only just beginning to pick up an inkling of what is good for our spiritual development and what is not, we don't yet have the ability to distinguish between the creative and destructive aspects of someone's behaviour — therefore, when you are starting out on your sojourn of spiritual discovery, it's better to choose a role model who you can rely upon as an exemplar in all aspects of life.

If you can choose a reliable role model for yourself:

- you will accelerate your acquisition of Right View and Wisdom.
- you will become less vulnerable to the influence of fools
- you will more easily be able to avoid associating with fools
- you will facilitate the spread of virtue in society and the world.
- it will prevent you from becoming self-centred or arrogant about your own virtues.
- it will facilitate the development of mindfulness that is the precursor of wisdom.
- it will add to your enthusiasm for self-development

B. EXPRESSING RESPECT AND ITS PURPOSE

If you ask yourself what you automatically do, when you have a "hero" in your heart, on analysis, you find that you devote all your waking thoughts to them. We put their picture on the wall. When we speak about them, we only speak praise of them. we take every opportunity to learn their opinions and share them. Given the opportunity we try to meet with them and imitate what they do in their lives. Some people even go to the lengths of dress like them. All these are random components of an attitude we call "respect". Many of the behaviours are ways of "paying respect" or "expressing respect".

B.1 What do we mean by "respect"?

Respect means the attitude of looking for the *positive aspects* of a person or an object and the effort to instill oneself with those same virtues. Such respect, in context of the *Manual of Peace* is for the aim of furthering one's spiritual development — it must not have any ulterior motive. It mustn't be like a judo player who raises someone up (in his own self esteem by flattering them) only to drop him onto the floor more easily. Some bosses blindly believe their subordinates' flattery is respect to the extent that they overlook the real state of affairs and end up getting fired. This latter case of expressing respect does not come from a mind of pure innocence which expects or demands nothing material in return.

True respect arises in response to someone's virtues. Something else which may look like respect but which is in fact an imposter is the intention to help someone in the expectation of gaining something material in return. First comes the flattery, then comes the unrefusable request for this or that favour. Boyfriend praises girlfriend, saying how pretty she is, because he wants her to love him. He has an ulterior motive to get something in return. He's not interested *per se* in either her goodness or her prettiness.

B.2 What do we mean by "expressing respect"?

Expressing Respect means any polite and inten

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tional action towards someone or something, *both in their presence or behind their back*, that is the device that demonstrates that one is really recollecting the virtues of that person or thing.

B.3 Purpose of Respect

The reason behind paying homage to those worthy of homage is an extension of the reason for associating with the wise. We have already said that we associate with the wise in the hope that they will help us to develop accurate discretion in things concerning virtue. It is to help us overcome the weakness in our make-up, that we tend too easily to forget all the good and valuable things taught to us by our teachers and masters and parents or the monastic community, the Lord Buddha, or from books we read. When you are taught how to meditate for half-an-hour per day (or to do any other good deeds), however, your memory doesn't seem to be so reliable. The first day, you sit for meditation for exactly half-an-hour — no more, no less. On the second day, you sit for only fifteen minutes — well, that's better than nothing. On the third day, you think that while you are chanting is actually a sort of meditation, so five minutes of true meditation is enough. On the fourth day it is especially humid, so you think that chanting is enough, no meditation today — after all, thousands of other people don't meditate, and they seem no worse off for it. By the fifth day you have entirely forgotten how to meditate for half an hour. It is for the reason that doing good deeds is so easy to forget that is the real reason for the need to pay homage.

On the contrary, when it comes to being devious, or doing mischievous things, we remember the from the first time we're taught and never need to be taught again for the rest of our lives! We never forget how to play poker. We never forget how to shuffle a deck of cards.

The real reasons behind paying homage areas follows:

1. To give us a firm connection with the virtues of that person. Connecting up our thoughts with a person of virtue will elevate our own minds to the higher level of virtue of that person.

2. To practice expressing virtues so that in the future we might have the chance to gain a real appreciation of the virtues of that person. Whether we are an adult or a child, if our appreciation of the real depth of virtue of a does not really do justice to the depth of their virtue, expressing homage can help us to appreciate it. When we were only five or six years old and our parents took us to the temple they would make sure that we paid respect to the Buddha images. For the child, he cannot see beyond the clay or the brass of the image and might wonder what all the fuss is about. A child that is so young can have no appreciation of the real depth of the virtues of the Lord Buddha. Taken to the home of their old uncle, they are told to pay respect to their uncle. The child cannot distinguish the goodness of their uncle's character, but pays respect because he has been told to. At school, the child is told to pay respect to their teachers. The child might not be able to tell the real virtue of the teacher, because the child's ability to comprehend is only limited. However, sometime in the future when we become so used to expressing our respect that we become used to it, the thought will eventually occur to us to look for the reason.

B.4 Three Types of Bowing

Sometimes people confuse *respect* with *expressing respect*. However, if you express respect when your attitude is wrong you will not succeed in furthering your spiritual progress. Consider the following examples:

1. Bowing out of obsequiousness: Some people bow just because everyone else does. Usually they bow reluctantly. They have no attitude of respect in their mind. Therefore, all they get for their efforts is a stiff feeling in their muscles.

2. Bowing out of peer-pressure: Some people only show respect in order to please the person they pay respect to, so that they can ask favours from that person, often for things which are not entirely honest or noble.

3. Bowing in search of wisdom: This refers to those who have an attitude of respect and who also

express their respect with the determination to practice themselves all the virtues exemplified by the object of their respect. An example of the sort of attitude in mind of someone who benefits from expressing respect is — supposing we bow three times to express respect towards the Buddha:

1. When we bow the first time: to reflect on the supreme *wisdom* of the Buddha which allowed him to see the existence of suffering, know the origin and the cessation of suffering and find a Path to the Cessation of Suffering — wisdom arising from the Buddha's extended meditation mind until his mind had become sufficiently clear and bright to eradicate all defilements of the mind. Following his example, we should also determinedly meditate until we can achieve the same wisdom as that of the Buddha.

2. When we bow the second time: to reflect on the supreme *compassion* of the Lord Buddha that instead of just keeping his wisdom to himself, he spent all his life teaching Dhamma to others so that they could become enlightened in his footsteps. Following his example, we should also find ways of being generous as a way of expressing our compassion to others.

3. When we bow the third time: to reflect on the supreme *purity* of the body, speech and mind of the Lord Buddha cultivated through his extended practice of self-discipline. Following his example, we should also find ways of finding better ways to extend our own self-discipline so that we too can attain full purity of mind.

B.5 Two sorts of Respect

However, all four of these can be summarized under just two headings, that is:

1. Homage through gifts: [ÅmisapËjÅ]: this refers to all *material* forms of paying homage — whether it be putting your palms together in a gesture of respect or even speaking words of praise about a person.

2. Homage through practice: [paÊipatipËjÅ] this means paying homage by doing as one is taught — for example, we pay respect to the Lord Buddha by doing as he taught. Thus, in practice, expressing respect has two major components.

B.5.1 Relative importance

When we pay respect to the Lord Buddha, we should emphasise homage through practice, while homage through gifts should play only a supporting role. As for paying respect to teachers who are still concerned with worldly matters (ie. king, parents, teachers, elders and boss, we have to emphasise homage through gifts) while homage though practice plays only a supporting role.

To give an example, if we are to meet up with our teacher and when we meet up with them all we have for them is the words,"I have put into practice everything you have taught me". This would hardly impress the teacher. It would have been appropriate to have some sort of gift to give the teacher as well.

Others go abroad and on the way back thinkof their teacher. They don't know what to get as a present for the teacher and so they get a bottle of liquor. In the end the result is that the teacher and the pupil sit down and drink liquor together. The more they drink, the more irritated they feel and end up fighting one another. When it gets to this point, that gift can hardly be counted as a token of respect any more. It is an unwelcome gift resulting from false view.

C. PERSONAGES WORTHY OF RESPECT

The person worthy of respect, in its simplest terms is the wise one (*as defined in the previous Blessing*). The wise one in this context is someone whose status or position or level of existence is so high that it would be completely inappropriate for us to associate with them on equal terms or as peers. Examples of such people include:

C.1 Buddha

The Lord Buddha (who is truly wise),

C.1.1 Three worthy qualities of the Buddha

For example, why we consider the Lord Buddha to be worthy of respect, and we find that it is because:

1. His wisdom is so great that he could singlehandedly attain enlightenment.
2. His Compassion is so great that He sacrificed the rest of his life to teach the way for others to reach enlightenment as he had done.
3. His body, speech and mind were so pure (because of the immaculateness with which he had kept the Precepts) that no one else in the world can compare — and for that reason we hold him in the highest of respect.

To begin with we might not be able to appreciate the degree of his virtue, but after paying respect more and more, it makes our own mind more refined, gives us the ability to consider things in a constructive way and in the end, opening to us the innate wisdom that will allow us to appreciate that virtue. In any place, there are many things that are worthy of respect and many more things that are not worthy of respect. Thus, when deciding about the type of people who are worthy of respect, the subject of this Blessing, it is important to be able to distinguish one thing from the other.

C.2 The monastic community and other clergy

The monastic community [SaḬgha] (who can be divided into those who are devoid of all defilement [ariyasaḬgha] such as the arahants, the non-returners [anagÅmi], the once-returners [sakatagÅmi] and the stream-enterers [sotÅpana]; and the general monastic community who are striving to train themselves towards an end of all defilements [sammutisaḬgha]. Although the latter may not yet have purged themselves of all defilements, they are abundant in virtue to a degree that it is innappropriate to associate with them as if they were our equals. If we associate with them, we should treat them as our superiors — i.e. with respect — at all times. Monks or clergy worthy of respect are those who exemplify, teach and discern virtue for us by fulfilling the following six duties:

1. ***restrain their congregation from evil***; ***encourage them to establish themselves in virtue:*** these two responsibilities are also the domain of parents and teachers;
3. ***minister to them in kindness:*** this means spreading loving-kindness towards the congregation without exception for their happiness. They might also visit their supporters, together with their monastic fellows, in order to give those congregation members the chance to hear Dhamma teachings and have the opportunity to practice to practice generosity;

4. ***teach them new or beneficial things:*** One of the most important functions of the clergy is to encourage study of the spiritual teachings amongst their congregation. Monks should have a large repertoire of teachings to give to the congregation, teaching without repeating themselves, so that the congregation can have a broad knowledge of Dhamma knowledge, reinforcing their Right View and ability to be a teacher to themselves [yonisomanasikÅra] in relation to finding the highest happiness in their lives;

5. clarify things they already know: if monks give Dhamma teachings they have already give to a particular group from the congregation, they should enlarge the subject in more detail than before, giving additional meaning to materials or explaining in further detail how the Dhamma can be applied for problem solving in everyday life;

6. show them the way to heaven: this monastic duty is particularly special in the system of the 'Six Directions' because no-one in any of the other social groups can do it in the monks' place. Those who are able to enter heaven must be those who live their lives in accordance with the noble code of Self-Discipline.

This group consists of all forms of clergy who have an exclusively spiritual (rather than material) aim in life — namely monks in Buddhism, or priests, pastors or ministers for other religions. We hold them in respect, because they maintain their status through their high level of virtue. In conclusion, the responsibility of the clergy consists of training the

lay congregation to become Wise Ones or virtuous people — a noble duty indeed! Monks who are able to practice all six of these duties to their completion are of inestimable value to society and the world — they are worthy of respect both by men and angels alike.

C.3 Virtuous monarchs

Monarchs worthy of respect are those established in the Tenfold Virtues of a Monarch;

C.4 Our Parents

Our Parents and upstanding members of society. Our parents are wise ones. We should treat them with respect. Anything less would be inappropriate.

C.5 Our Teachers

Teachers and masters established in right view. In this context we should mention the two identifying features of a teacher's duties, both of which he needs to fulfil in order to qualify for the respect of his students. These two duties are:

1. The duty to explain (i.e. teach a subject in theory)
2. The duty to exemplify (especially the moral usage of the subject he teaches)

If he fails to perform either of these duties his teaching is no more than daylight robbery of his pupils. If he gives good explanations but his personal behaviour is no example for his students to follow (for example he teaches 'do as I say not what I do' and tells the class that liquor is evil while spending all his spare time inebriated at the bar, he is nothing more than a mercenery teacher.

If he both explains the theory well and is a good example to his students, he is a person worthy of respect.

C.6 Virtuous employer

Virtuous employers are also worthy of respect. It is hard to find bosses with virtue, so when we find one, we should not hesitate to pay them respect. We may still be unable to be as virtuous as them, so we ought to pay them respect, in order that their virtues might never be far from our minds — instead of being tempted to do something devious, we will be less tempted because we feel ashamed after the seeing the good example set by our boss. Also we will be more ashamed that anything we do wrong might reflect badly on our boss's good reputation. This is the value of having a virtuous boss. It keeps us on the straight and narrow until such time that we have reliable discretion for ourselves.

D. OBJECTS WORTHY OF RESPECT

There are certain classes of objects identified by the Lord Buddha as worthy of respect, and these are objects associated with people worthy of respect i.e. the Lord Buddha, the Saṅgha, monarchs, parents, teachers and bosses. There are two categories of such objects, pagodas (and their contents) and teachings:

D.1 Pagodas

D.1.1 Four Types of Pagoda

The Buddha enumerated four types of pagoda worthy of respect:

1. A relic pagoda: this is a pagoda containing the relics of a Buddha, a *paccekabuddha*, an arahant or a universal monarch. After the cremation of a truly virtuous person there are pearl-like relics left behind in the ashes. In keeping with the teaching of the Buddha, these are collected by the faithful and are paid homage to, by Buddhists, not only with candles and incense, but by enshrining them in small pagodas.

2. Paribhoga Cetiya: These include the Four Holy Sites connected with the life of the Lord Buddha: the place where He was born, enlightened, where He gave His first sermon and where He passed away into Parinirvana. The Lord Buddha called these four places His Paribhoga Cetiya and taught that all Buddhists of following generations should visit these holy sites if they had the chance because it would awaken them to the urgent need to get down to practice. Many people who have been to visit the Holy Sites have discovered that their inspiration to practice has

is strengthened from the feeling of going back to a time when they were in the presence of the Lord Buddha himself. This is the reason why these four sites are worthy of worship.

3. Dhamma Cetiya: This is a Cetiya that contains Dhamma teachings such as books of the Tipitaka or other Scriptures.

4. Uddesika Cetiya: This is a Cetiya that contains Buddha Images or images of His Noble Disciples. Objects worthy of respect in this category also include the requisites belonging to monks

— whether it be robes or bowl, all of the monks' requisites are worthy of respect.

D.2 Dhamma Teachings

A fifth sort of object worthy of respect are spiritual teachings and their sources. These may include the Teachings of the Lord Buddha, of members of the monastic community, of kings, of our parents and elders, of our teachers and masters, of our boss and the teachings of the wise with whom we associate. The teachings of all six categories of the wise mentioned above are the manifestation of the virtue of those people and should never be taken in vain. Making a mockery of such teachings will undermine our earnestness in putting those teachings into practice. If we lack earnestness in putting the teachings into practice, we reduce our chance of ever understanding those teachings. In the absence of understanding, there remains only ignorance and false view.

Thus any of the objects mentioned above should not be used for mockery or for fun. To treat these things without reverence robs them of their sanctity and when we come to study them we will overlook their depth or subtlety. An example of this might be the man who goes to receive Five Precepts from the monk at the temple and keeps the Precepts so well for the first few days. Later he joins in with one of his friends makes fun of the Precepts and says,"Oh the Precepts? Aren't they for keeping one for each day of the week and weekends off?" Even if he still keeps his Precepts, the effect of these words is to gradually undermine the man's inspiration to keep them.

The same principle goes for photographs or pictures of the Buddha, of monks, of the king, of our parents or teachers. Such photographs should not be left lying about or used without reverence. Chanting books shouldn't be left lying about either or folded up and shoved in the back pocket of one's trousers. They shouldn't be put down on a dusty surface and other things should not be placed on top of them.

In conclusion, those worthy of respect are the wise who are established in virtue, or those who by their social standing are too high up for us to be able to associate with personally or as peers. Apart from these six categories of person, objects which should be treated with respect include the requisites they use as a way of recollecting the virtues of that person. Even though that person may already have passed away, treating their belongings with respect will help us to maintain high-mindedness and Right View concerning that person.

D.3 Educational Objects

Also we shouldn't forget that all books which contain Dhamma should be treated with respect. The ancients would be very particular even about the notebooks in which we have taken note of Dhamma sermons. They forbade us from throwing such notebooks, stepping over them, putting them in low down places or tearing out pages — because all of these things would constitute disrespect to the teachings themselves. If we were to lack respect towards the Dhamma, then when we come to consider Dhamma Teachings for which the meaning is very subtle, we will be unable to fathom the meaning and our understanding of the Dhamma will be destroyed and we will be left with nothing more than our own ignorance.

D.4 Objects not worthy of respect

Correspondingly, we must be careful *not* to pay respect to things not worthy of respect. In brief, there are four categories of things we should avoid idolising or paying respect to:

1. People not worthy of Respect: This means not idolizing fools, and not supporting them or praising them — no matter how high in rank they might be.

2. Objects not worthy of respect: This means not idolizing pictures, sculptures, works, possessions or tools of fools.

3. Objects which lead to foolishness: This means not idolizing things like pictures of models, singers or sportsmen who lack virtue or advertising for "roads to ruin" such as alcohol. We shouldn't use these sort of things to decorate our homes.

4. Objects which lead to gullability: This means not idolizing things which promote superstition such as "holy trees", "holy mountains", "spirit houses" etc.

E. THE PRACTICALITY OF PAYING RESPECT

E.1 Expressing respect with body, speech and mind

Respect can be paid through the channels of body, speech or mind.

1. Physical Respect: Physically paying respect means the various polite manners that we demonstrate towards someone in their presence, such as standing up when they come into the room, or sitting politely when in front of them. Even if you are not in their presence, you should still show physical respect towards those worthy of virtue even if you are not in their presence but are in the presence of their photograph, their sculpted image — such as a Buddha Image or a photograph of your teaching master. We should show our respect by not pointing our feet towards such an image, and even if we are lying down to sleep — pointing our head towards the image instead of our feet;

2. Verbal Respect: Homage through the channel of speech includes the speaking, chanting or singing of praises of one worthy of homage, rather than gossipping maliciously about them;

3. Mental Respect: Homage through the channel of the mind means recollecting the teachings of one worthy of homage to the degree that they inspire us. We might recollect what that person has taught us in the way of good deeds. We might also consider the good character and virtues exemplified (but not taught) by that person. Both of these are homage through the channel of the mind;

E.2 How to Express Respect

Many people misunderstand paying respect as bundling together a lotus, candles and incense, laying it before the object of respect and bowing down three times. Paying respect in this way is not incorrect, but it is not the whole story. Paying respect that is complete in all respects must exhibit four factors:

1. Physical token of respect [sakkÅra]: This refers to a gift which is an expression of respect. It is something we must prepare in advance and which is presented during the act of paying respect. Such a token of respect differs for different situations and different categories of persons worthy of respect — for example, flowers, incense and candles are worthy tokens of respect for paying respect to the Buddha, monks or teachers. Clothes or bedclothes might be more worthy tokens of respect for your parents. Neither of these tokens of respect are suitable as the sort of gift you might take with you when visiting distinguished persons of social standing. Nor would they be suitable as the sort of gift you bring back with you for your friends when you have been away on holiday. Even money can be a token of respect. If your teacher has been putting in extra hours out of the kindness of his heart, giving up his time to give you tutorials at home, giving him money as a gift would not be out of place, and in this respect would be considered a token of respect, not a payment. Another consideration for tokens of respect is that they should be prepared in advance. To leave a bucket of cut flowers, no matter how big the bucket is, in the middle of the main temple pavillion would hardly be considered an act of respect. Any token of respect should be prepared with care and precision and be both clean and well organized.

2. Gesture of respect [vandanÅ]: this refers to gestures which express respect such as bowing or prostration or praise or chanting praise. Morning and evening chanting can be counted as vandanÅ. Even recollection of what one has been taught by the wise or one's teacher can be

counted as vandanÅ.

3. Attitude of respect [mÅnanÅ]: This refers to an attitude of respect. Respect consists of the stems 're' which means again and 'spect' which means to re-examine a person (for their good points). Given that all people except the Buddha are made up of a mixture of both good and bad then we have to look for the good points in people. Taking these good points, apart from noticing these good points, part of respect is to praise them for these good points and use them as a good example to model ourselves upon.

4. Concern for the object of respect [garukÅra]: this refers to an attitude of concern about the wellbeing of the person who is worthy of respect and recollection of the good deeds and virtues of that person.

All of these four components comprise the way of paying respect.

E.3 Consequences of Not Paying Respect to those worthy of homage

If those held in high respect do not behave in a fitting way, many sorts of harm are brought on the individual, interpersonal and social levels. To take the clergy as an example, if members of the monastic community are undisciplined and do not cherish their congregation according to the advice of the Buddha, the harm that will come to the congregation can be concluded on three levels:

1. Losing a sense of responsibility for their own human dignity: If clergy lack self-discipline and don't fulfil their duties towards their congregation as prescribed by the Lord Buddha, the first level of disaster which will happen to them is that the congregation will lose their sense of responsibility for their own human dignity — this loss giving rise (at the minimum) to the following three undesirable symptoms:

1. *Breakdown of self-discipline:* Society will degenerate to the point where the majority of people do not keep the Five Precepts and do not even understand what keeping the Precepts means. This will increase the incidence of so

ciety of people taking advantage of each other. When taking advantage of each other becomes the the norm, especially for those in positions of authority, the effects will have repurcussions on a national scale — therefore, citizens must unite in preventing those who don't respect the Five Precepts from being put in positions of power;

2. Those seeking ordination are of low quality: Low-quality ordinands burden their preceptors with problems — it is hard to train them at all. If clergy are unable to develop purity of body, speech and mind, they will undermine the existing faith of the congregation — ultimately destroying the religion;

3. Transcendental attainment becomes becomes increasingly inaccessible: The highest aim of those who ordain is to attain Nirvana. However, if those who ordain are of low quality and are difficult to train, there will be a continuous deterioration in the capability of the monastic community to the point where they will no longer be able to reach any sort of transcendental attainment. When there are no religious exemplars to look up to, the congregation will become more and more firmly entrenched in False View — more and more ignorant of Dhamma teachings, self-discipline

— with some of the most serious repurcussions for social chaos;

2. Losing a sense of responsibility for the human dignity of others: If clergy lack self-discipline and don't fulfil the duties towards their congregation as prescribed by the Lord Buddha, the second level of disaster which will happen to them is that the congregation will lose their sense of responsibility for the human dignity of others

— this loss giving rise (at the minimum) to the following three undesirable symptoms:

1. Verbal abuse of clergy and monks: Once the congregation no longer realize the value to society of clergy and monks, misunderstanding the duty and lifestyle of the clergy, the public will abuse the clergy shamelessly (as is happening currently in Thailand);

2. Lack of financial support for clergy and monks: Swayed by the often unjustified abuse of clergy in the media, the faith of the public deteriorates, and with it the support with which they should provide the clergy — religions such as Buddhism can only survive through the voluntary support of the congregation, and without it, there will soon be no clergy left, and consequently no-one to perpetuate the religion;

3. Congregation is left without any true refuge: Having dismantled their religion by their own neglect, when the public find themselves in dire straits, they will be without a refuge, lacking the ability to be a teacher to themselves, they will resort to superstition or animism.

3. Losing a sense of responsibility for economic fairness in society at large: If clergy lack self-discipline and don't fulfil the duties towards their congregation as prescribed by the Lord Buddha, the third level of disaster which will happen to them is that the congregation will lose their sense of responsibility for economic fairness in society at large — this loss giving rise (at the minimum) to the following three undesirable symptoms:

1. Total enfatuation with the Six Roads to Ruin: In a society of deteriorating morals, it will become more and more common for people either to eke out their living *via*, or be enslaved by the consequences (such as debt and disease) of Roads to Ruin such as drugs, gambling, prostitution, entertainment and underground lotteries.

2. Desecration of religious property and establishments: The Roads to Ruin are part of the vicious circle of poverty. Some people try to alleviate their poverty by theft — and religious property is an easy target of plunder. Some encroach on temple grounds in pursuit of their livelihood. In Thailand this practice is becoming more and more widespread, especially because it has been legally condoned by biased legislators;

3. Embezzlement of religious donations: Some people like to extract some sort of 'commission' from the funds they manage to raise for the temple (in accordance with the phrase "half for the temple, half for the temple committee'!) In the present day, however, some legislators try to go further than this by giving the government the right to control temple funds directly!

Problems concerning not paying respect to those worthy of respect can be summarized down to two main points:

1. Obvious social problems: Easily seen is public deterioration in morality as a result of ignorance of virtue. Such people like to say they have lost interest in virtue because they see so many examples of hypocrisy. For the same reasons they withhold financial support for spiritual causes and some go further, overtly making legislative changes necessary for the dismantling of the religious establishment;

2. Covert social problems: The covert social problems mostly originate from the hypocrisy amongst those who should be behaving as exemplars of virtue. Considered with wise reflection, the problems might be analyzed as such:

1. Good exemplars are sometimes unable to pass on their knowledge to others because
    1. the public are not interested to learn from the clergy— all they want are the material trappings of spirituality and virtue such as holy water and amulets;
    2. the public undervalue the teachings on virtue they receive because they think they are already highly qualified in academic subjects — so thinking, they consider their ability in vocational subjects makes earning money more important than knowing spiritual teachings.

F. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

In order to illustrate the results of paying respect to those worthy of respect here are five examples, the second of which is an example of homage through gifts:

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F.1 Metaphor: Small sapling with supporting stake

When a new-grown tree is still a flimsy sapling, it needs a supporting stake to protect it against strong winds — otherwise it will be blown down or torn up by its roots. Similarly, one who hopes for spiritual progress in one's life needs to express respect to those worthy of respect — to keep a place for those people in one's heart — so that those people can be a guiding light and an example, and a protection against False View and unwholesomeness which might otherwise reappear in one's life.

F.2 Ex. Sumana the Garland-Maker

In the time of the Lord Buddha, within the walls of the palace the workers divided themselves up into different sections and one of the sections was specifically for flower arranging. The section head was called Sumana and his duty was to arrange flowers to decorate the palace, to decorate the throne and even decorate the royal bed chamber of the king, to give all of these places a delightful fragrance. Sumana fulfilled his duty to the satisfaction of all in the palace every day, year in year out without ever slipping up.

One day, in the season where flowers were the hardest to find, Sumana travelled to every part of the city and wherever there were flowers to be bought, he would buy them all. No-one else in the city had any flowers left to use for themselves. Every last flower in the city had to be used for the decoration of the palace.

Even though Sumana had exclusive rights to all the flowers in the city, because the dry season had caused a drought, he could hardly find any flower
— even food was scarce let alone flowers. One day the flowers were so scarce that in the whole of the city all Sumana could find were eight (coconut shell) measures of jasmine flowers. Really, this wasn't enough to decorate the palace, but it was better than nothing.

That day, as Sumana was bringing the eight measures of jasmine flowers to the palace, he met with the Lord Buddha along the way. The Lord Buddha was on almsround. Sumana regularly attended the Buddha's sermons but he had never really had the chance to make a decent offering to the Buddha, partly because of his poverty and partly because his faith was not very profound.

That day, as Sumana saw the Lord Buddha he felt that the Buddha looked particularly resplendent and worthy of faith. The deportment of the Buddha seemed so perfect in every respect that he felt that it was only fitting to bow down before Him. Sumana's next thought was that all he had was eight measures of flowers. If he used them to honour the king, all the king could give him was income, food and clothing to see him through the present lifetime. However, that day he was going to pay respect to the Lord Buddha to create for himself the positive karma that would bring him benefits not just in this lifetime but in many lifetimes to come. Even if the king were to execute him, it wouldn't affect the good results of these deeds.

Sumana raised the flowers to his forehead and when he had made his resolution, sprinkled the jasmine flowers on the path ahead of the Lord Buddha with the intention that the Buddha would walk upon his fragrant offering.

The Lord Buddha saw the strength of Sumana's faith — to the degree that he was prepared to lay down his life in order to make this offering. Thus the Lord Buddha created a miracle in order to bring Sumana real joy, to allow him to gain the full merit of his generous deed and lead him to attain enlightenment in the future.

Thus as soon as the flowers were released from Sumana's hand, the flowers floated up as a net of flowers above where the Lord Buddha stood and this net would follow the Lord Buddha wherever He went. At both sides of the path all of the householders came out of their houses to see the miraculous sight and were inspired by the sight of the flowers which seemed to have a life of their own in honour of the Lord Buddha.

Through Sumana's faith together with the power of the perfections of the Lord Buddha, the jasmine flowers sent their scent throughout the whole of the city. The scent followed the Lord Buddha wherever he went and this attracted everyone out of their houses to see the sight of the Lord Buddha.

Many of the householders had seen the Lord Buddha before, but they had never been inspired by Him. But that day the sight of the Lord Buddha was so impressive that many of the householders were inspired to faith. Those who were only slightly faithful put their hands together in a gesture of prayer. Those who were more inspired raised their hands in a gesture of prayer and offered words in praise of the Lord Buddha. Those whose faith was even greater prepared food to offer into the Buddha's bowl and followed him around to see what would happen to the flowers.

The Buddha's almsround took him all over the city and eventually brought Him to the front of the palace. The king heard the news and came to give alms himself. Then the king invited the Buddha to take his breakfast in the palace.

As the Buddha was taking his meal, the ceiling of flowers remained above Him — while the Buddha gave His blessing and until he returned to Jetavana Temple. As He entered the temple the flowers fell down in a pile at the temple gate. This only added to the faith of the followers and even Sumana thought,"If the king is to execute me for failing in my duty, it has certainly been worth it!"

By contrast, Sumana's wife thought the opposite. She wondered how her husband could have been so incredibly stupid. If he had given the flowers to the king at least he would have got money in return. By giving the flowers to the Buddha, he got no money in return. All he got was faith and how was that going to feed his hungry children? And if the king were disatisfied about not getting his flowers and decides to execute Sumana and decide to execute his wife and children too, they'd all suffer because of his stupidity. And if the king seized Sumana's belongings, he would just take Sumana's possessions — he would take the possessions of everybody in the household. She didn't want that to happen. The wife went straight to the king and disowned all responsibility for her husband's actions. She demanded divorce from her husband there and then, and swore before the king that if her husband was to suffer for his actions let him suffer alone. The king asked her if she was sure of what she was doing. The wife asserted that she was quite sure of her actions.

Instead of being angry with Sumana, the king felt intrigued and inspired by the flower-man's example and decided to give Sumana a prize for his virtues. In the end Sumana received the prize alone because his former wife had already disowned him.

When the story reached the ears of the Lord Buddha, the Venerable Ânanda asked the Lord Buddha about the fruits of Sumana's faith on that occasion. The Lord Buddha taught that with a strength of faith that someone is prepared to lay down his life, such as that of Sumana, faith is very deeply rooted in someone's mind, making the mind of Sumana very radiant and that for at least a hundred-thousand aeons [kappa]. However many rebirths Sumana took, he would be born in only the human and the heaven realms. He would never be born in the neither realms of hell, animals, hungry-ghosts or asËras. After the appropriate length of time, Sumana would become enlightened as a *paccekabuddha*.

Thus from the power of faith in the Buddha,the resulting brightness and clarity of mind will stay with one throughout the course of many lifetimes. One's discretion will be impeccable and because one's judgement is sound, one will be a wise one in every lifetime. This is the fruit of paying respect to those worthy of respect — radiance of mind, which ultimately will lead to Right View in every lifetime.

DhA.ii.40ff.

F.3 Ex. SudhÅpiÁÎaya ***helps build pagoda***

Another illustratory tale is that of Ven. SudÅpiÁÎiya Thera. When he became enlightened as an arahant he recollected his previous lives to see how he had come to attain arahantship and meditating to recollect his previous lives he discovered that he had made an offering of only a handful of lime.

SudÅpiÁÎiya Thera was born in the era of one of the previous Buddhas, at the time when that Buddha had already entered Parinirvana. The people of the country were building a *cetiya* in which to inter the relics of that Buddha. SudÅpiÁÎiya Thera was a man of faith despite his poverty, he thought,

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"I have relied on the Teachings and virtue of the Lord Buddha all along. Now that the people are all building a *cetiya* as a memorial to the generations of the future to take the same opportunity as the Lord Buddha to do good deeds all their life. It is only fitting that I should make some contribution to the building of the *cetiya* on this occasion."

With this thought in mind, SudÅpiÁÎiyaThera felt strong faith in the Buddha and wanted to take a part in paying homage to the Lord Buddha along with the other people. As a pauper, he had no possessions to give as an offering. He went and bought a handful of lime and took this lime as his contribution to the building of the *cetiya*. But on this occasion, although the contribution was small, but his faith profound.

The fruit of SudÅpiÁÎiya Thera's faith made his mind so radiant that from that lifetime onwards to his final rebirth, he was born only in the human and the heaven realms. He never descended into hell throughout 94 aeons and attained arahantship in his final lifetime.

In the opposite respect if we cultivate anger or vengefulness for 94 aeons this will lead us to do no end of hateful acts and the resulting extra interest of bad karma will ensure that you never get born in the human realm again.

Ap.i.133

F.4 Ex. KosÅtakÈ ***pays homage at pagoda***

Another example is that of KosÅtakÈ. Her name means 'loofah'. There are many species of loofah. Some can be eaten. Some are inedible and have to be thrown away. At the time when the Lord Buddha had already passed away and his disciples were organizing a grand cremation, King AjÅtasattu enshrined the relics of the Lord Buddha in a *cetiya* and when the ceremony was over, there was a festival. At that time there was a woman who was pitifully poor who had had faith in the Lord Buddha since the time when he was alive. When the people of the country were holding their festival to celebrate the completion of the new *cetiya*, this woman wanted to join in the celebration by honouring the *cetiya* with flowers.The woman wasn't discerning enough to buy beautiful flowers like the rest of the people. She went and collected four loofahs from the edge of the forest — golden yellow in colour. These loofahs were priceless — because no-one would pay good money for something inedible. She took the four such fruits and set off in the direction of the *cetiya* with the full intention to offer them in homage to the Lord Buddha.

She was in such a rush that she didn't look where she was going, so fixed was her mind on making her offering at the *cetiya*. In her path were a cow and calf. The cow saw the determination of the woman and misunderstood that she wanted to harm her calf and responded by goring the woman to death, before she could reach the *cetiya*. Even so, even though the woman never reached the *cetiya*, her mind had such a determination to accomplish her good deed that with the collected potential of a mind with shame and fear of evil, virtue and the wisdom to appreciate the good deeds of the Lord Buddha, meant that as she was gored to death she was reborn immediately as an angel — her clothes became immediately refined as angelic raiment of the same golden colour as the loofah and the angelic mansion that arose as the result of her merit was also the colour of the loofah.

Indra, the king of heaven saw the new arrival in heaven and asked what merit she had performed to cause the arising of a golden coloured mansion. The angel smiled shyly and replied that she had done only something very insignificant — just taking four loofahs to pay respect to the *cetiya* containing the relics of the Lord Buddha but she had been gored to death by a cow on the way and regretted not having reached her goal or else the golden col-our of her raiment and the mansion would surely have been even more striking than this!

On hearing this, Indra exclaimed,"Paying respect to the Lord Buddha with a mind of faith, even though He has already entered parinibbÅna in no way lessens the fruits of good karma. Whether the Lord Buddha is alive or passed away gives fruits of merits equally."

For this reason, even though we have been born in a time after the Lord Buddha has already passed

away, it should in no way lessen our diligence in paying respect to the Lord Buddha.

PÈtavimÅnavatthu, Vv.iv.9, VvA.200ff.

F.5 Ex. PañcapÅpÅ ***pays homage with resentment***

There is one more illustratory example — that of PañcapÅpÅ. This name means 'five types of evil' and is the name give to this particular woman by her father. The reason for such an inauspicious name was that the child was born defective with knarled hands, lame feet, a squint mouth, squint eyes and a crooked nose. None of her bodily organs were in symettry. Her hands went one way and her feet went another. Although the child was repulsively ugly, she had one attractive point — her skin was soft like that of an angel. Because of her one good point, PañcapÅpÅ was to become the queen of the country late life. When she was in the royal palace as one of the royal consorts, her skin was so soft that the king forgot all the other women the palace. The other consorts were so jealous that they framed her so that the king had to float her away on a raft downstream. But as soon as she reached the next kingdom, all it took was one touch for the king there to take her as his queen. Everybody was so astonished that a woman so physically deformed could come to be the queen of two kingdoms that someone asked the Lord Buddha how this could come to be.

The Lord Buddha looked back at her previous life times and discovered that the woman had made an offering to a *paccekabuddha* but the offering was made out of anger. On that day, the woman was shoring up the wall of her house with mud. A *paccekabuddha* also needed mud to build his kuti and seeing that the woman had more than enough mud came bowl in hand to ask for some of the mud. The woman was reluctant to give away any of her mud, but gave the *paccekabuddha* some anyway. Out of anger, she threw a clod of mud into the *paccekabuddha*'s bowl. At the time she was scowling, with her eyebrows knitted together, her feet stamping the ground and shaking a fist at the *paccekabuddha*. The result of her reluctant gooddeed in future rebirths was that her stamping feet were lame, the hand which threw the mud was knarled and her scowling face was deformed beyond recognition. The good part of her deed, the generosity, still gave its fruit — because the mud which built the *kuti* which helped shelter the *paccekabuddha* from the rain gave her angelic complexion. But this could not diminish the bad part of the deed that was not being polite to those worthy of respect.

J.v.440ff., KuÁala JÅtaka (J.536)

Thus in conclusion, not paying respect to those worthy of respect, or not having faith in those who ought to inspire faith clouds the mind and the extension of this ultimately to become a fool.

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The Second Group of Blessings

"Turning towards wholesomeness"

It is rare to find a system of spiritual wisdom that has environmental considerations built into its metaphysics. The possible exception is the Chinese *Feng Shui"* system which probably has its roots in Buddhism anyway. In science by contrast, there is always a great debate in developmental biology about the relative influence of the genetic component and the formative experience — the so-called 'nature v. nurture' debate. For science, of course it is mostly considerations of the development of physical features like a colour, or a size which might have an influence in the 'survival of the fittest', but for spiritual wisdom, we are more interested in the development of spiritual maturity. However, no less than with science the *Blessings of Life* recognize that there is influence both by our internal dispositions (nature) and our environmental influences (nurture). The fourth blessing on "amenable location" is the first blessing of the second grouping of blessings which deals with "turning towards wholesome discretion". If we have practised the first three blessings successfully, we will already have" turned our back on negative discretion". In this set of three blessings, the first (Blessing Four) deals with "nurture" influences of the environment on the development of our discretion. The second (Blessing Five) deals with the "nature" influences on the development of our discretion and the sixth deals with having a clear aim or purpose in one's life. All three together are necessary if we want to set ourselves on the path of development of spiritual maturity. Thus, in Buddhism, it is acknowledged that the environment must be good if people are to become good. If the environment lacks virtue, it will hinder peoples' spiritual growth.

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TABLE 4.1 AMENABLE LOCATION ON DIFFERENT LEVELS OF DESCRIPTION

AMENABLE LOCATION	National Level	Local Level	Neighbourhood Level	Household Level
Amenable Location	Unextreme Climate, not too rugged, accessible from other countries	Ease of earning an honest living, good social infrastructure, no infectious diseases.	Good water & electricity supplies, good roads, no traffic jams, good communications, no natural disasters	Well planned house, sufficient spaces, good ventilation, trees for shade, parks nearby, no disturbance from noise
Amenable Food	Self-sufficient in food	Supply of good all year round	Proximity of market	A cottage garden, a good cook in the house
Amenable Neighbours	Righteous monarch or government, population honest, no terrorists or anarchists who threaten solidarity	Lack of criminals, outlaws and mafia	Access to doctors, patrons/benefactors, wise men, no dens of vice nearby	Heads of the household must be virtuous and not engage in roads to ruin
Amenable Dhamma Teachings	Just law and customs	Good educational system in worldly and spiritual matters	Monks pass on almsround, temples and schools in area	Atmosphere of learning and teaching Dhamma in the home, having at least one communal meal daily

Blessing Four: Living in an Amenable Location

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Amenability of Location in general

Generally speaking, an appropriate or amenable location is one which facilitates success in what we set out to do. If we are a fisherman then it might be a place on the coast closest to the fish breeding grounds. If we are in business then it might be a place with all the hustle and bustle of the crowds where our business will prosper. And what if we are monks? Monks need a place with special characteristics — a place that is both peaceful and quiet but not too far from the homesteads of the village. For soldiers, an amenable location is a strategic one. In conclusion, each and every profession and activity has its own appropriate location for facilitating success. The word 'location' can equally well be applied to the microcosm the setting of a particular activity as it can to the macrocosm. Even if you are sitting at a dining table, sitting at one side of the table might be more or less amenable than sitting at the other. The location that most concerns a person or his activities is his immediate environment or neighbourhood- but the more distant environments of his locality or country also have a part to play.

A.2 Amenability in Dhamma practice

The sort of location to be examined in this Blessing is the location amenable to refining the mind or put another way, the location that facilitates the depth by which we can understand the Teachings of the Lord Buddha. In such an amenable location, even though a person may initially lack wisdom, he can make a success of his life. On the contrary, in an unamenable location, even though he may have a high IQ and be capable, given no support, there is no way for him to achieve his full potential. Even though someone might get a Ph.D., if he is marooned on a desert island, all his knowledge goes to waste. You might be the world's greatest tactician, but if you are forced to live in the forest with primitive tribal people, all you knowledge will go to waste.

The factors that mark an amenable location also apply to appropriate areas to live. The Lord Buddha highlighted four factors which make a location amenable — these are:

1. Amenable location
2. Amenable food
3. Amenable neighbours
4. Amenable Dhamma teachings

A.3 Amenable is not the same as materially prosperous

In many materially prosperous countries, life can be physically convenient. Often the infrastructure is well developed. Employment is easy to find and it is easy for residents to save up their wealth. On the surface, such a country might look attractive to live in, but one is wont to forget that although ma-

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terial poverty might be hard to find, spiritual poverty might be rife (*see §.B.4 below*). In such a country, the opportunity and the means to develop spiritual maturity might be very hard to find. The chance to accrue merit might be almost nonexistant. Residents in such countries think only of work from the time they get up in the morning to the time they go to sleep at night. Thoughts of generosity, self-discipline or meditation might be the last thing on their minds. Even for those who have some spiritual calling, often they can find no-one to give them useful advice. To live in such a country might be life wasted from the point of view of spiritual development. It would be better to make some sacrifices of material convenience in choosing the place you want to live, in order to live in an environment of spiritual richness — which is truly an amenable environment for one's spiritual progress.

B. Components

The components of amenable location cannot be defined globally because they mean different things at different levels of explanation (*see diagram p.66*):

B.1 Amenable Location

B.1.1 National Level

At the geographical level, it may mean an amenable climate that is not too hot and not too cold. It might mean that the landscape is not too rugged or liable to flooding — but at the same time with convenient communications towards the rest of the world.

B.1.2 Local Level

At a more local level, an amenable climate means ease for the populace in earning a decent living, good communications, proper social infrastructure and a plentiful supply of clean drinking water.

B.1.3 Neighbourhood Level

On the level of the neighbourhood, the things that make the environment amenable are a proper water and electricity supply, a good road system to avoid traffic jams, good communications and no flooding in the wet season.

B.1.4 Household Level

On the level of the household, the things that count for making the environment amenable are a properly planned house with sufficient space, good ventilation, enough trees round and about to give shade, nearby open areas or parks and no disturbance from noise. Applying the same principles to a temple, amenable temple grounds is sufficiently spacious for the number of templegoers, with enough shade to allow the congregation to meditate in comfort and without disturbance from the hustle and bustle of urban life.

B.2 Amenable Food

B.2.1 National Level

On a national level, amenable food means being self-sufficient in one's food supply, not having to rely on neighbouring countries for one's food supply, or drinking water.

B.2.2 Local Level

On local level, amenable food might mean the proximity of a market for foodstuffs. It might also mean being able to grow home-produce. In any case, anyone who lives in an area liable to flooding should try to be self sufficient with their own cottage garden. It doesn't matter how you go about growing the vegetables. For some villages, when the floods come, if the government doesn't send in supplies by helicopter for two or three days, the whole village will starve. These are always the villages which are too lazy to grow their own vegetables. If they had grown their own vegetables, even though the floods come, it doesn't particularly bother them. By contrast, those places that plant only cash crops like maize, lose everything they have as soon as the floods arrive. Just having a few vegetables like onions in the garden allows one to survive for over a month even when the floods come.

B.2.3 Neighbourhood Level

Amenability of food at the neighbourhood level might mean the proximity of the market.

B.2.4 Household Level

An amenable food supply at the household level

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can be summarized with just a few brief hints:

1. You should have a supply of vegetables used around the kitchen in reserve in your cottage garden in case of times of need.

2. Your house should be located close to the market. If it is too far from the market, this will become an obstacle to obtaining food.

3. Your house ought to have a good cook. A good cook is the heart of a successful kitchen. There was once an army general who commented in front of his wife (whether he meant to praise her or criticize her is uncertain) saying, "the only reason that I've been able to put up with her all these years, is her only single good point

> — apart from this point there is nothing good about her. She neglects the children. She is useless at receiving guests. She takes little care of the household finances — I have to do the accounts myself. The only reason that I've been able to put up with her all these years, is that she makes a tasty meal. If it wasn't for her being a good cook, we would have gone our separate ways years ago." Anybody who thinks they can rely on instant foods, convenience foods and take-aways should think again. Everybody should attempt to learn how to cook. If ever you have to take care of someone who is ill or lonely or anxious, who have lost their appetite, and you can't get out to the market — that will be the time when your ability to make a proper meal will really make a difference.

For as long as we still have defilements in the mind, we still have an appetite and we still have our favourite foods. Were not all like crocodiles which can survive on gravel. For as long as we're still human, we are still choosy about the food we eat. Too sweet or sour, salty or oily and the food loses its attraction. Thus if the food we eat is to be amenable there is no harm in food being tasty.

B.3 Amenable Neighbours

B.3.1 Definitions

The various characteristics of a location or a neighbourhood, whether good or bad, are only general characteristics. Even if the general characteristics of a location are abysmal, but the place is inhabited by virtuous people, then the drawbacks of the location can be overcome. On the other hand, in a good location with good housing and employment prospects, if the inhabitants are dishonest, however beautiful the buildings, it can be no better than a den of thieves. If the inhabitants are peaceful and well mannered, like monks, then the buildings are a refuge as good as a temple.

B.3.2 National Level

At the national level, amenable personnel means a population who eke out their existence by honest means. It means a population that lacks criminals, terrorists or anarchists who threaten the solidarity of the country.

B.3.3 Local Level

At the local level, if the populace are interested in nothing more than earning their living, society will not be a happy one.

B.3.4 Neighbourhood Level

At the neighbourhood level, in addition to a hardworking populace there must be those who make a direct contribution to the well-being of the society.

1. Doctors are necessary in any society. Without them, every illness will entail death. Even if a location is the most profitable of marketplaces, without doctors in the background, it can never become an amenable society.

2. Patrons and benefactors. Patrons and benefactors arise in a society where there is trading. Those who live in a mercantile society reap the benefits of having capital and such a society breeds rich benefactors and millionaires. Compare a society of people where there are only paupers and beggars and you will see how hard it is for such a society to become amenable to the study of Dhamma. In the time of the Lord Buddha, if a king decided to establish a new city, even if he had sufficient labour, craftsmen, without being granted a benefactor or patron from a neighbouring city, to be the patron of the new city, the king wouldn't dare to build a new town.

(*see §.D.2 below*) The reason that having a patron was so important, apart from being a capitalist who would stimulate trade and growth, he would act as the economist who would help the king with his financial policy-making so that the new city would be able to keep its financial head above water.

3. Wise men. Many of the reasons for the importance of the wise have already been covered in Blessing Two. In brief, the wise have a special discretion which allows them to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, what's appropriate and what's inappropriate, what is meritorious and what is downright evil. Even if you're illiterate, but you can tell the difference between right and wrong, you can still be considered a wise one. Thus if you are choosing a place to live, avoid choosing a place where no wise ones live, because in such a place society is not amenable to the study of Dhamma.

4. Righteous Monarch who is established in the Ten Virtues of a Monarch. Without going into detail, it can be said that a qualifying monarch must be just and moral. Of course the country's leader doesn't *have* to be a king to make it an amenable place to live. The same virtues in a president will make his country as amenable as a country governed by a virtuous king.

B.3.5 Household Level

Amenable personnel at the level of the household means the leader of the household must be virtuous. The husband should abstain from drinking alcohol, the wife from gambling. Both should be earnest in earning an honest living. Their children should be earnest in their studies and should be obedient to their parents' command. In this way the household will be united as the smallest unit of an amenable society.

B.4 Amenable Dhamma

B.4.1 Definitions

Dhamma is the culture or principles which governs the lifestyle of a society that lives in an amenable location. At the most basic level amenable Dhamma in a society means the governing principles of law and order that the society abides by. Amenable Dhamma is lacking from countries where outlaws run amok. At a deeper level, amenable Dhamma equates with culture and tradition that is one of virtue. The law protects society only from acts of violation through the channels of body and speech, but has no effect on the quality of peoples' minds.The minds of a nation can be shaped for the better only by culture or traditions that raise the quality of mind. Examples of this might be the attitude of respect that a child should have towards his parents or a student towards his master. For as long as such traditions are still perpetuated and passed down from one generation to the next in a particular society, that society is still an amenable place to live.

By contrast, you should avoid going to live in a barbaric society where man has no respect for his fellow man. An example of this would be the primitive society which idolize the man who is able to kill his own father — seeing him as the epitomy of hard-heartedness and fit to be the leader of the tribe.

At a yet deeper level, amenable Dhamma in a society means a good educational system which allows the citizens to make a thorough study of both worldly and spiritual matters — where both schools and temples form the educational infrastructure of society — and all citizens are equipped with sufficient rationale not to be credulous.

Deeper still, Buddhism should be well rooted in that country. The Lord Buddha taught that some people are born empty-handed and die empty handed — because they cannot distinguish between good and bad deeds. They just do whatever they feel like doing. When they are young, their parents bring them up. When they are full-grown, they get married and have a family — and their children get married and have their own children and the family name is perpetuated for another generation. In the end they pass away and they have no merit or demerit to take with them when they go. It is this sort of person that Buddhism recognizes as being born empty-handed and dying empty-handed. Put another way, life has been fruitless for them.

Even though some people are born on the doorstep of Buddhism, they still leave the world empty-handed — so what chance do people who have never even come across Buddhism stand? The Lord Buddha thus laid down guidelines for life, teaching that having taken human birth, you must seek benefit both for this lifetime and the next. Benefit can only accrue if you use your body and mind for positive good deeds that will give worthwhile returns on our having been born human. The Lord Buddha taught that at the very least, you ought to be able to set yourself up in life. If you are in debt or still have to rely on others for the roof over your head, you have not yet suceeded in even the most rudimentary of human duties. If you are a man (and not a mouse) you must be able to stand on your own two feet. This is what we call benefit for the present lifetime.

From our description so far of the features of an amenable location, whether the inhabitants know Buddhism or not, they will manage to succeed in fulfilling benefit for the present lifetime. Where those who don't know Buddhism miss out, is through not knowing how to fulfil benefits for the next lifetime. Without a knowledge of Buddhism, you can do no better than use up the merits accrued from previous lifetimes. No additional merits are accrued this lifetime and at the end of this life, your after-life destination will be one of suffering. Those who accrue benefit for future lifetimes, when they die will not go to hell or be born as animals. Whatever the proportion of good and bad deeds they may have done, at the very least they will take human birth again — even though they may be handicapped in one way or another.

B.4.2 National Level

Amenable Dhamma Teachings at National Level means having just laws and customs as the national identity.

B.4.3 Local Level

Dhamma for the children means having a good school. If our children have the chance to study at a decent school, it will give them a head start in life because there is such a great variety of quality in the teaching given at different schools. Dhamma for the adults means having a good temple near at hand. At the very least, if there is a temple near to our house there will be monks who pass near to our house on their almsround and we will have the opportunity to make merit every morning. If we want to listen to a sermon, we won't have to go far. If a site is close to both the school and the temple it will earn plenty of points for amenable Dhamma.

B.4.4 Neighbourhood Level

Amenable Dhamma Teachings at the Neighbourhood Level means that monks pass on almsround and having temples and schools in the vicinity.

B.4.5 Household Level

This means an atmosphere of enthusiasm for Dhamma learning and teaching in the home.

B.4.6 Profit in for next life (A.iv.284)

The special characteristic of Dhamma teaching that prevents a person from "leaving the world empty-handed" are the sort of teachings that lead to "profit in the hereafter". The Lord Buddha taught that the minimum of virtue required is the four virtues for benefit in the hereafter as follows [sampÅyikattha-payojana] (*see detail from Bl.2 §C4.2*).

1. Faith [saddha]: means confidence in things you ought to have faith in — being a person of discretion especially in the operation of the laws of karma — that doing good deeds will lead to good outcomes and that doing evil will lead to bad retribution. Without such well-founded faith you have little chance of well-being in your future.

2. The Precepts [sÈla]: You must keep the minimum of Five Precepts as the baseline of one's virtue because the Precepts measure the degree to which you are a person as opposed to being a savage.

3. Self-sacrifice [cÅga]: Self-sacrifice has many levels of meaning from the superficial to the deep. At its simplest, it means avoiding being so stingy that you cannot bear to see anyone else sharing your possessions or getting any benefit from them. It means the habit of liking to share with

others. At its deepest level it means giving up even the destructive feelings we might feel towards other people or more generally, letting go of anything that encroaches on our quality of mind — i.e. all thoughts of evil and unseemly habits until none remain.

4. Wisdom [paññÅ]. To be specific, diligence in studying both worldly and spiritual knowledge

— so that we can earn a decent living efficiently and at the same time know the difference between good and evil — in order to win the path to heaven. Once people are able to identify what is merit and what is demerit, they will gain the inspiration to do only good deeds. Thus knowledge paves the pathway to heaven.

C. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

C.1 Choosing the location of a new home

Having studied the four main principles of a location which is amenable to the spreading of the Dhamma, we have at the same time discovered a recipe for success in choosing the location of a new house. In the olden days, no-one would dare to build a new house without first seeking the advice of a teaching monk or at the very least of a fortune teller. They would always advise the oracle in question to look at the lie of the land. In fact, the most successful oracles were not interested in the lie of the land at all, but were interested in how many of the four principles of amenable location were present at the proposed site of the new house. If you want to tell as much about the potential site of a new house as the oracles of old did, start by drawing up a grid with five rows as follows:

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4
1. Location				
2. Food				
3. Neighbours				
4.Dhamma				

Once you have drawn up the grid, supposing you wanted to build a house and you have a choice of four or five locations, but cannot decide which to choose, then award points to each of the different locations according to the four principles of an amenable location: location, food, neigbours and Dhamma. Give each principle points out of twenty-five. When we add up the total points for each different location, we will be able to choose the most amenable location by choosing the site with the highest point rating. Use the following guidelines for giving points:

1. Amenable location: We should look at the neighbourhood and give points if the place has good facilities including access, running water, electricity and a telephone line. If there is already a house on the site, the more spacious the better. The quality of the construction work will also guide you as to your awarding of points. Look at the subdivision of rooms to see whether it is habitable or not. Give the location points accordingly.

2. Amenable food supply: Consider that if you should choose a particular site for your home, you will be living there for a long time and therefore should give adequate thought to the availability of food. Make sure that the location isn't too far from the market or from a shop selling food and various other 'perishables'. If any of these sources of food are close at hand, you can award that site plenty of points for the food supply.

3. Amenable neighbours: Inspect the location to see whether it is near to or part of a slum. Do people gamble there or nearby? Is it close to a liquor factory? Is it a den of thieves? If it is any of these things, then keep your distance. Choose somewhere else. If on the contrary, all the neighbours are respectable, socially distinguished and of Right View (such as doctors or teachers) of good social standing and of good conduct, then this should attract us to live nearby. At the very least, those good neighbours will give us peaceful surroundings and in times of need they will be able to help us. Give the neighbours the appropriate point rating.

4. Amenable Dhamma: In order to give points for this particular factor, it is necessary to divide the

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factor into two contributing parts: Dhamma for the children and Dhamma for the adults.

When you add up the total points for each site, you should choose the location with the maximum points as the site for your new house. Next time you move house there is no need to call in the fortune teller — or a monk either, because armed with an understanding of the factors that make a site amenable for habitation, you can choose the site for new house without anyone else's help. This is certainly a good example of Dhamma that is immediately applicable to everyday life.

C.2 Making your present home amenable

For those who do not ordain and leave the home life, usually, the home and family form the hub of life. In this connection, what should be done to the home to make it amenable to the prospering of the Dhamma? According to Thai tradition, even though we might have three meals a day, there should be at least one of those meals when the whole of the family is together (*See Blessing 12, §B.3.1 heading 3.2*).

Some people claim that they are overburdened with work. However if you consider that the only reason that you spend so much time at work is to be a breadwinner for your family to send your child to a private school — then think again. If you are left with no time to bring up your children properly and your child gets addicted to heroin because of your negligence, a million dollars would be insufficient to rectify the problem. If on the contrary, you can get by while still finding sufficient time to give full attention to your child's upbringing, then you will be rewarded when your child grows up into a virtuous example of a human being.

Many parents have been reduced to tears by disappointment. They're upset that their child cannot go to university because of becoming a junkie. They cry about their awful child — but it would be more fitting to cry about having been such an awful parent who didn't take the trouble to bring up their own child properly!

Therefore, remember that bringing up a child means more than just seeing that there is food on their plate. You need to instil your child with virtue and to this end, both children and parents should see each others' faces across the dining table at least once a day, and discuss Dhamma, instruct one another and comment on the habits which each should be improving upon. If you can't manage to meet at mealtimes, you should make sure that the family come together before bedtime, perhaps for Evening Chanting — but even bedtime cannot beat mealtimes. A child will never miss a meal, and a good telling off before dinner will stay in his mind for a long time.

Thus if you are to give a good example of Dhamma which is amenable to the household, then a family being together at mealtimes will certainly fit the bill.

C.3 Relative importance of the Four Amenable Location Factors

In conclusion, an amenable location has four characteristics: an amenable location, amenable food supply, amenable personnel and amenable Dhamma. If you put these four characteristics in order of importance, you will find the following: Amenable Dhamma is the most important, followed by amenable personnel, followed by amenable food supply and an amenable location is the least important of the four.

Even though the location may not be ideal, but the food is plentiful or neither the location or the food supply are ideal, but the inhabitants are amenable, they can soon improve the quality of the location and the food. However, the thing that makes the inhabitants amenable is having Amenable Dhamma it that location. This is the reason why Amenable Dhamma is the most important attribute of the four.

C.4 Amenable Location outside, Amenable Location inside

There are two different types of amenable location:

1. Amenable Surroundings: the quality of location which is determined by the four factors already discussed.

2. Amenable Location within: This is the most important influence on the quality of our well being — i.e. a healthy body and mind — a body

and mind that are in no way disabled or infected by disease. Some people are born with a silver spoon in their mouths. They are brought up properly by their parents, but when they grow up, instead of feeling grateful for all the efforts made by their parents, they inflict illness upon themselves by turning alcaholic. There are a myriad diseases that come as a result of drinking alcohol. Even lying can be the source of disease (*see Blessing Nine, §C.1.4*) causing your memory to become blurred and eventually leading to senile dementure as the result of the bad karma you have accumulated throughout the course of your life.

Thus as we have seen from the examples of breaking the Precepts of lying or drinking alcahol, all of the Precepts, if broken, will be the source of illness. Thus you need to protect your internal environment. If you pollute the quality of your internal environment, success will elude you for the rest of your life and your future lifetimes will be even worse. Take care of your Precepts and they will take care of you.

Now that you know the four factors of an amenable location if you are still a child you should look for a location that is going to be amenable to your own education. If you are an adult then you should try to *make* your location into an amenable location, wherever you go. As an adult, it isn't good enough simply to go looking for amenable locations, you should be working actively to *improve* the quality of the environment.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Metaphor: Bonsai Bodhi Tree

It is said that if you plant a tree in fertile soil, it will grow until it is many metres in diameter. If you take the same tree and plant it in a flower pot or a barrel, it will end up as a root-bound bonsai tree instead. Even if it is watered and carefully tended for several generations it will never grow higher than a few inches. Asked why a thousand-year old tree reaches only a few inches in height, we come back to the conclusion that it has been planted in an unamenable location. Even though it doesn't grow tall, it doesn't die.

D.2 Ex. Establishing Saketu (DhA.i.386)

When King Pasenadi built the new city of Saketu in the time of the Lord Buddha, he sent a letter to King BimbÅsara to ask for permission to move one of the patrons from that kingdom to live in the new city. King BimbasÅra sent VisÅkhÅ's father as patron to the new city. Before long, the patron got all the finances of the city properly organized and Saketu became one of the most prosperous city-states in India at that time. This goes to show that an amenable city doesn't just consist of buildings but it needs the presence of amenable neighbours such as benefactors and patrons.

D.3 Ex. Ariya the fisherman (DhA.iii.396ff.)

Even though some people in the time of the Lord Buddha had no worldly knowledge — they were completely illiterate and were of the lowest trades — but they had the good fortune to be born in an amenable location (i.e. in the same time and place as the Buddha) and because of this fact alone, were able to attain enlightenment to level of a stream enterer [sotÅpana].

There was a fisherman called"Ariya" (lit. "noble one") who lived during the time of the Buddha. As a fisherman, he caught and killed fish every day. One day in meditation, the Buddha saw Ariya's potential to attain the fruit of stream-entry [sotÅpattiphala] and went, with a number of other monks to where Ariya was fishing. Seeing the Buddha approaching, Ariya became ashamed of his action and hid his fishing line. When the Buddha arrived, while standing in front of the man, he asked SÅriputta his name. "SÅriputta", replied SÅriputta. The Buddha then proceeded to ask the name of each of the monks and overhearing, the man wondered whether after asking all the monks' names, the Buddha would ask his. The Buddha knew what he was thinking and asked the man his name. "Ariya" replied the man. In fact, the Buddha didn't need to be told the man's name. The Buddha gave Ariya a teaching that anyone who still harmed other living beings could not be called 'noble' on account of his actions. He said that one's nobility comes from not harming other living be

ings. Hearing the Buddha's teaching, Ariya attained stream-entry and from that day onwards never killed a living being again, having transcended the very intention to kill — in spite of the fact that he was illiterate. He lived in the depths of poverty, but he had one auspicious advantage in his life, and that was to live in a time and place where there was the opportunity to come face-to-face with the Lord Buddha — and this alone allowed him to become enlightened to the level of a stream-enterer.

D.4 Ex. Ghosaka's lifetime as a dog (DhA.i.169, PsA.504ff.)

Another example of a similar phenomenon happened in a time before the Lord Buddha. At that time, the only Buddhas in existence were *paccekabuddha*s who although enlightened, were unable to teach for the benefit of the manyfolk. These *paccekabuddha*s came on almsround in the city. Having collected alms, they would return to the forest to take their meal. This would be his normal daily routine. Seeing that the *paccekabuddha* had to walk such a long way each day, one of the more faithful supporters invited the *paccekabuddha* to dwell nearby his own house and would bring food for the *paccekabuddha* every for every morning and midday meal.

Any day when the householder was not free to make the offering himself, he would send his well-trained dog to carry a tiffin set of food to offer to the *paccekabuddha* at his place. As the dog grew more familiar with the *paccekabuddha* it took a liking to Him because the deportment and manner of the *paccekabuddha* was so gentle. If the dog was at home and failed to mind firewood for its master it would be beaten. However, in the dwelling of the *paccekabuddha* it was a different story. When the dog came close he could listen to the chanting of the *paccekabuddha*. There was no risk of being beaten and the *paccekabuddha* would even divide part of the food to give to the dog as well. The dog became more and more familiar with the gentle manner of the *paccekabuddha*.

At the end of the rainy season, the *paccekabuddha* bid the householder farewell and returned to the forest. The *paccekabuddha* made his journey by floating through the air. The dog watched the *paccekabuddha* go with regret and howled as loudly as it could because there was nothing else for it to do. It was a sad farewell for the dog who still had the *paccekabuddha* on its mind. The dog was so sad that as it came to the end of its howling, it dropped dead. However, as the result of the faith of this dog in the *paccekabuddha* and from howling at the departure of the *paccekabuddha*, the dog was reborn immediately as an angel called Ghosaka — whose duty was to be a spokesman for the rest of the angels.

In the time of the Lord Buddha, Ghosaka was reborn in the human realm as Ghosaka the Millionnaire and was one of the greatest patrons of Buddhism. The result of living in an amenable location and taking the chance to be an attendant to a *paccekabuddha* led him to become an angel on dying from rebirth as a dog and from his rebirth as an angel to be reborn as an important patron of Buddhism.

D.5 Ex. Monk and Five-Hundred Bats (Vagguli Vatthu SadS. 81ff.)

Another example comes from the time of a previous Buddha. There was a monk who had retired to a cave in order to train himself. The monk would rise early each morning and chant the Abhidhamma.The monk shared the cave with five-hundred bats. During the day the bats would return to the cave but at night they would fly outside to feed. Thus the bats would hear the chanting of the Abhidhamma every day. Even though the bats had no way of knowing the meaning of the chanting, they became familiar with the sound of the monk's chanting and became inspired with faith.

When it came to time for the bats to pass away, they died with faith in their hearts and were all reborn as angels. Passing away from their existence as angels, they were reborn as men in the time of the present Buddha. All five hundred men became ordained as monks and hearing the chanting of the Abhidhamma only once, unlike normal people who might remain indifferent to the chanting, could re-

member the words of the Abhidhamma which were ened as arahants. still impressed in their minds from that previous Thus, it is easy to see that simply living in an amelifetime, and recollecting the words of the nable location is not just advantageous for people Abhidhamma were soon able to become enlight-— even lowly animals can experience the benefits!

Blessing Five: Having done good deeds in one's past

A. INTRODUCTION

With Blessing Five we are still exploring the virtues which comprise "turning towards wholesomeness" as exemplified by the second grouping. Last blessing we have already mentioned the "naturenurture" dichotomy of scientifically understood development. Last blessing already covered the "nurture"aspect of the environment — and so this Blessing we come to the factor of "nature" — the aspects of our character and personality which we bring with us into the world. In this Blessing we attempt to explain the variety of material and spiritual success between different people in the world

— differences which are not accountable in terms of the Blessings we have already studied up to this point. How for example can we explain the differences in disposition and life success of identical twins (with the same genetic components), brought up by the same parents in the same environment?

How about newborn children, who far from being a clean slate have different personalities, different potentials and different speeds of learning. Science would attribute these things to genetic differences between their grandparents. This might work out for some things such as how people look or their physical strength, but I think you would agree that there are many other things that genetics cannot explain. No scientist has ever found a gene for intelligence for example. All that are found are the abberations that make people handicapped — and these are in spite of the fact that neither their parents or their grandparents were handicapped in such away. Thus it must be something about the child himself brings with him into the world.

This Blessing attempts to account for the disparity in terms of the residue of life experience picked up by individuals in their past — particularly the *positive* life experiences.

In order to understand the rather lengthy matter of having done good deeds in one's past, it is necessary to study the subject of merit in general and to touch also upon the subjects of retribution and mind quality. Some people study the *Manual of Peace* from Blessing One (Not Associating with Fools) through Blessing Two (Associating with the Wise), Blessing Three (Paying Respect to those worthy of Respect). They are able to accept all the reasoning of these first three Blessings, and are able to follow them in their everyday life. They even find that Blessing Four (Living in an Amenable Location), makes sense in their everyday lives — because in any case they have to choose the location for their home and the place where they go to school, college and university. However, they may have difficulty with the claim that the sort of deeds we have done in the past can affect our quality of life and even the quality of society. It is obvious that with with this Blessing we are starting to deal with more subtle phenomena than before.

A1. Success and Failure in Life

Success and failure might appear on many different levels — on the level of society, the level of lifestyle, the level of personality or the level of the mind itself — but basically it comes down to quality of mind on four levels

A person blessed with success on the level of the *mind* will have a *quality* mind — that is a mind that

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is stable and unwavering, hard to distract, pure and radiant, spacious and light, adaptable to any sort of task and implicitly happy and peaceful. Those who are less lucky might have a mind that is dull, inert and easily distracted.

A person blessed with success on the level of the *personality* might may find that people believe every word of what they say. Those who are less lucky might find that even if they tell the truth solidly for a month, no-one will believe them.

A person blessed with success on the level of the *lifestyle* might seem to be born smart. Their discretion is reliable. Those who are less lucky might have such bad judgement that they become too afraid to make any decisions, always hesitating or provaricating instead — and they miss life's opportunities as a result. Even though they might do their best at work and take painstaking care never to make any error — they may be disliked and discriminated against by their boss.

A society blessed with success can muster all its human and natural resources to become a world leader. Less lucky countries, even those with educated citizens and abundant natural resources can be reduced to deserts by corruption and civil strife.

B. DEFINITIONS

B1. "Merit": Definitions and Characteristics

This residue of positivity or strength of mind which we have built up for ourselves in their past, is called by the technical term, 'merit'. The Pali word 'puññÅ' from which we derive the word 'merit', can be translated in different ways according to context just like the word 'well' can mean 'healthy' or 'properly' depending on the context. Thus, the word 'puññÅ' has many meanings — it can mean goodness, purification, cleansing, happiness or full. This spectrum of definitions, tell us not only the characteristics of merit, but also something of the function of merit too. The word 'merit' in English [puññÅ] can sometimes be confusing because it makes us think of being honoured or praised or approved of by another person. However, all that is intended in this case is that it is 'deserved'. It occurs spontaneously without needing a third party to award it to us. A general definition of merit is: 'the result of doing a good deed'. It has the following characteristics:

1. It is distilled in the mind as soon as we perform a good deed;
2. Is the agent by which the quality of the mind is improved;
3. It can be accumulated;
4. Merit belongs to the one who performed its originating deed;
5. As we use it, normally it will become exhausted;
6. The amount of merit depends on strength of intention, amount of effort and amount of gratitude and ingratitude of the producing action.
7. Gives effects attracting favourable circumstances at four levels: mind, personality, lifestyle and society.

If you are an advanced meditator you can use your meditation to see what merit is like. However, the most that a normal meditator can see of the merit is like its shadow. We see its effects and so deduce that it must be present. We can compare merit to electricity (i.e. something which we cannot see or feel because it is nothing more than a source of power which cannot be observed with the naked eye). Normally, we cannot see electricity, only the effects it causes such as the heat from an iron when electricity is connected, or the electric shock which ensues if one grasps a live wire; it enters a light bulb and gives us the light by which we can read in the evening; it goes into a radiator and brings us warmth; it enters a refrigerator and stops our food from decaying and it enters a motor and makes it to spin. In the same way that we can use electricity without really ever having seen it, most of us have to be able to content with accruing merit without seeing it for ourselves. Merit cannot be observed with the naked eye, nevertheless we have the feeling that when we perform a meritorious deed, that the mind is refreshed and loses any sense of irritation or crampedness leaving the mind spacious, light and content. Most people in the world have never seen the real nature of merit itself, and thus have their doubts as to whether doing good deeds

really creates merit or not. However, those with more experience of meditation, who have seen the real nature of the merit for themselves, will see the merit as clearly as others see the rain falling from the heavens.

B.2 "In the past": Defined

At this point we have to examine the meaning of the merits that we have performed in the past — and this may apply to anything in your past whether it means yesterday or many years ago. In fact our past can be divided into two periods:

1. Our Recent Past: which means the time from which we were born from our mother's womb, and opened our eyes for the first time to look at the world right up to yesterday.

2. Our Distant Past: which means all of our existences and experiences up to the time when we entered the womb in the most recent lifetime.

To describe both of these periods of our past in a simpler way we can say that the merit in our recent past is all the good deeds we have done this lifetime since our childhood onwards. Examples of such good deeds might include helping our parents wash the dishes when we were young. We might have helped with the family business as we became older. Eventually, when we completed our education, and got down to a steady career, we have divided our time between earning a living and accruing good deeds for ourselves. All these good deeds right from the time when we were born can be referred to as merit in our recent past.

As for the merit in our distant past, this refers to the merits that we have accrued in our previous lives, whether it may be last lifetime or a hundred lifetimes ago.

B3. Quality of Merit

Apart from categorizing merit according towhen it was accrued merit can be categorized according to its quality: mundane merit [lokiyapuññÅ] and transcendental merit [lokuttarapuññÅ].

1. Mundane merit is the merit that people are generally familiar with — that is to say for people for whose mind is not completely pure at the time they do the good deed. Such merit can run out. When the merit is used up, it will no longer give its benefits — just like a tank full of petrol which has a limited range.

2. Transcendental Merit is the merit that arises in the pure mind. Such merit is steadfast and will never diminish or be exhausted.

Thus the purity of the mind also has an important role to play in dictating the quality of the merit we are able to accrue for ourselves.

C. ACCRUING MERIT

C1. Three Major ways to Accrue ***Merit***

There are Ten Major Ways to Accrue Merit. As mentioned in the preceding sections, merit arises as the result of doing good deeds. Unfortunately, simply knowing that "good" is "meritorious" doesn't explain how to go about doing good deeds. "Goodness" or "merit" can become meaningless and clichéd if they are not defined in the context of practice, and for this reason that Buddhism summarizes the different ways of practice of good deeds into a collection of ten types of practice in three categories through which merit canbe accrued. For the benefit of such people, the three categories of ways to accrue merit [puññÅkiriyavatthu] are — generosity, keeping the precepts and meditation.

1. Generosity includes merit generated through generosity, merit generated through service, merit generated through the transfer of merit to others and merit generated through rejoicing in the merit of others.

2. Keeping the Precepts includes merit generated through keeping the Precepts.

3. Meditation includes merit generated through meditation, merit generated through humility towards those of high virtue, merit generated through listening to Dhamma sermons, merit generated through giving a discourse on the Dhamma and merit generated through correcting our assumptions about the world.

C2. Ten Major Ways to accrue merit

If you expand these three categories into their ten types of practice we get the following:

1. Generosity: this means merit generated through generosity [dÅnamaya]. Some may wonder why merit can be accrued as the result of giving. Merit arises in the mind as explained above. The mind in its natural state takes the form of a clear sphere of diamond brightness, however, when polluted by defilements, these reduce the sparkling mind to dullness and weakness, lowering the potential of the mind. If a person does something generous, giving away some part of that wealth which is the source of their anxiety, the mind becomes more at ease. Merit arises and this merit lights up the mind for a while. The radiance gradually accrues in the mind. The brightness, or the merit accumulates in the mind as generous deeds are performed regularly. The merit that arises from generosity is generated by two actions of the mind: firstly, the removal of the defilement of greed from the mind — something which immediately upgrades the quality of the mind and of our character too; secondly, as a result of the benefit obtained from the gift by the recipient — the more benefit is obtained by the recipient, especially from a gift that is hard-wearing, the more merit will be accrued by the giver.There are many different forms of generosity.

1. Giving useful material objects to others, whether it is food, clothing, shelter or medicine, will generate merit for the giver. The most basic act of generosity is the gift of something that is beneficial to the recipient [vatthudÅna].

2. Giving worldly knowledge [vidhayadÅna] Merit is also generated if you give the gift of knowledge that is beneficial to the recipient. of benefit to any recipient. Knowledge may be vocational skills — such as how to set oneself up as a tailor.

3. Giving spiritual knowledge [dhammadÅna] of benefit to the recipient is knowledge of the Dhamma such as the advice contained in this book.

4. Forgiving: There is also a way of giving where you don't have to make any physical effort at all — when you are angry with Mr. A, Mr. B and Mr. C. All of them have at some time or other contributed trouble to your life. Suppose that one day, you decide to put an end to all the anger and forgive them for all the upsets they have caused you in the past — and start afresh. In such a case, as soon as the thought crosses you mind to forgive them, merit will arise in your mind. Even though you haven't expended even the slightest physical effort, you have managed to earn yourself merit though giving 'forgiveness' [abhÅyadÅna]. Even giving others a smile instead of a scowl will bring you merit according to the same principle of forgiveness!

2. Humility: This means merit generated through Humility towards those of High Virtue [apacÅyanamaya]. You may be surprised that even without expending any physical effort, simply possessing the attitude of humility can cause one to accrue merit. The person who, instead of finding fault with others is both humble and respectful, has a virtue that will allow him to find the good in each and every person he meets. He will put others' faults to one side. Such humility will lead the owner to accrue merit, because at the very least, they will always see the world in a positive light, allowing them to remain in a pleasant mood the whole day long. If they are perceptive they will have the wisdom to see the virtues in the hearts of others and instil themselves with those virtues which they see in others — accruing even greater merit for themselves.

3. Service: This means merit generated through Service [veyyÅvaccamaya]. This is the domain of those who immediately rush to assist others who they see doing good deeds. For example, if they find out that their neighbour is preparing a meal to offer the monks, they will prepare all the seasoning needed for the meal and and give that to the neighbour making the meal.

4. Transfer of Merit: Merit generated through the transfer of merit to others [pattidÅnamaya].

Whenever someone does a good deed and his mind is full of merit as the result of his goodness, and he transfers some part of his merit to another person, or to his deceased relatives, these are all counted as ways of generating merit through the transfer of merit.

5. Rejoicing in the Merit of others: Merit generated through rejoicing in the merit of others [pattÅnumodanÅmaya]. This sort of merit is accrued by those who, whenever they see that someone else has done a good deed, is pleased for them and rejoices with them in the merit that they have made. Even if they are unable to contribute anything more to that person's merit making, by rejoicing with them or congratulating them on doing their good deed, they will earn a part of the merit for themselves too. It is in this connection that you often hear the word '*Sadhu*!' in Buddhist circles.

6. Keeping the Precepts: Merit generated through keeping the Precepts [sÈla]. Keeping the Precepts ensures that we never take advantage of others through our physical or verbal actions — and at the same time we bring no harm to ourselves. You might wonder how keeping the Precepts can possibly give rise to merit. When we abandon all thoughts of taking advantage of others, in their place arises the radiance of merit that has accrued in the mind. This will have the effect of quenching heart-felt troubles.

7. Meditation: This means merit generated through meditation [bhÅvanÅmaya]. Meditation is a way of training the mind to become wiser. There are many different subdivisions to what can be considered as mind training and these include reading books on Dhamma, chanting and meditation itself. Meditation has the effect on the mind of causing the arising of radiance and distancing the mind from disturbance by anxiety, limiting its habitual wandering, bringing peace. Whenever the covering of defilements is banished from the mind, especially the defilement of ignorance which usually imprisons the mind in darkness and undermines its true potential, wisdom will arise in the mind as the brightness of merit.

8. Listening to Dhamma Sermons: This means merit generated through listening to Dhamma sermons [dhammassavanamaya]. Listening to Dhamma lectures or sermons on the Dhamma will enhance our wisdom. Before, we might have had only a rudimentary understanding of the real nature of the world, but now as a result of hearing Dhamma Teachings, we know how to tell the difference between good and evil. Such an improvement in the level of our wisdom will result in our accruing merit for ourselves.

9. Giving a discourse on the Dhamma: This means merit generated through giving a Discourse on the Dhamma [dhammadesanÅmaya] Teaching the Dhamma by giving a sermon will bring merit to the preacher in the following ways:

1. Preaching will rid the mind of reluctance to teach others. Some people are reluctant to share their wealth with others. Others are reluctant to share their knowledge with others. Giving a sermon, instructing others about to lead their lives virtuously, will help to uproot the trait of keeping valuable knowledge to oneself.

2. Preaching helps you to revise the different groups of *dhamma*s. As you preach, you are able to revise the different groups of dhammas, increasing your mastery of them. As you recollect those dhammas, you will be inspired by them and this will bring radiance to the mind. Mastery also comes through the necessity to revise from the Dhamma texts, sometimes two to three weeks in advance of actually giving the sermon, in order to obtain a profound understanding of the Dhamma topic in hand before having to teach it to others.

10. ***Straightening One's Views:*** This means merit generated through Straightening out one's views: [diÊÊhujukammamaya]. As the result of listening to a good sermon, the listener will have the discretion to tell good from evil, right from wrong. They will no longer doubt that doing good deeds gives good results or that doing evil will bring bad results. Before long the mind is steadfast in the pursuit of good deeds and in the avoidance of evil. This process is what we mean

by correcting our understanding of the world. Once our understanding is proper, then the deeds of mind, speech and body will be good and proper too. The determination will arise in the mind that you will pursue good deeds for evermore — no longer being sidetracked into evil or unproductive ways.

Thus if you it hard to remember all ten categories of meritorious deeds, you can summarize them down to three major categories: generosity, keeping the Precepts and meditation.

D. FUNCTIONS OF MERIT

D1. Level of mind

The first benefits that merit will bring when it arises are benefits at the level of the mind. This is one of the most important benefits because there is no need for one to wait for the after-life in order to see the results. Whenever we perform a good or meritorious deed, merit will arise immediately. If you do a good deed at night, merit will arise at night. If you do a good deed by day, merit will arise by day. If you do a good deed on an aircraft in mid-air, then the merit will arise in our mind there in mid-air. Wherever you are, if you perform a meritorious deed, the effect will arise in the mind instantaneously — it doesn't need much expenditure of energy for such merit to arise — even just thinking to do a meritorious deed will cause merit to arise and will put the mind at ease. There is no need to wait a long time in order to see the results at the level of the mind of your meritorious deeds. You don't even need to wait for someone to admire you for doing such a good deed. The results of merit will arise automatically in the mind without you having to do anything more than good deeds — and the benefits that arise are as follows:

1. ***Merit cleanses the mind:*** When the mind is clean it is ready to pursue even greater degrees of good deeds. In the days before we started accruing merit, we considered that our mind was already pure. However, as soon as we start doing meritorious deeds, we realize that our mind has become purer than we ever expected. Before our mind was as bright as the morning star — but now our mind is even brighter, with the radiance of the full moon. No matter how clouded and dull the mind might be beforehand, when merit arises in the mind will clarify the mind just like soap or detergent cleans the dirt out of a cloth leaving it pristine and white.

2. Merit raises the quality of the mind: Merit that arises in the mind helps to filter out defilements which might otherwise operate in the mind. Merit will neutralize such negativity in the mind, not allowing them to affect the spaciousness and lightness or to slow down the operation of the mind — and having filtered the mind in this way, the mind is left ready to serve us in all types of task. The meritorious deeds we do therefore upgrade the quality of our minds.

3. Merit brings us happiness: When the mind is purified and filtered by the arising of merit, it gives rise to radiance and refreshedness of mind which is the precursor of happiness. Such happiness is not fleeting, superficial happiness. It is an overflowing of happiness like on the days we make an offering or a donation at the temple and we feel refreshed by the goodness of our action, as if our heart was so big that it filled the whole of our being.

4. Merit will make the mind more stable: Merit will make our mind more stable in the face of the worldly vicissitudes such as being praised or insulted.

5. Merit will make the mind more flexible: The mind will have increased potential for success with the task in hand, whether the task be large or small, gross or refined — whatever the nature of the task, the mind made flexible will be ready for all eventualities.

6. Merit will make the mind more radiant: It will increase the potential of the mind to gain insight to overcome all manner of obstacles that arise in the course of performing any task.

7. Merit will increase the potential of the mind: You will begin to notice the difference whenever you apply your mind to any task. You might overcome the tendency to lose your temper easily. The mind that is free from anxiety and

cloudedness, that is spacious and pure and steadfast will be the mind of the highest potential.

8. Merit will allow better decisions to be taken: Decisions can be made quickly and accurately without hesitation.

9. Merit will allow a more insightful analysis of any situation: Thoughts will be 'on the ball' and a correct analysis of the situation every time.The mind dwells only on subjects that are skilful. You find yourself unable to think over anything potentially damaging to your high state of mind.

10.Merit will make your thinking thorough and comprehensive: You will not allow your thought to be dragged down into shoddiness.

11. Merit will help to make your thought both noble and deep: Merit will incline your mind towards the higher things of life and away from the baser side of life.

All of these features illustrate the general beneficial effects of merit at the level of the mind. They are effects that take place equally no matter which of the ten ways you use to generate merit. However, the benefits of merit go further than this. They are more than just a feeling in the heart — leading to rebirth in more fortunate realms live to come.

D2. Level of Personality

This level of the effects of merit is easier to observe than the effects on the mind. As we accrue more and more merit, the general benefits, no matter which way in which we accumulate merit, will spread to the level of our *personality* and will gradually change it for the better. The changes in our character originate from the changes mentioned above in the quality of the mind.

1. Merit will bring you physical grace: from your complexion to your voice and even your physical proportions — all are attractive and appropriate to the task of pursuing perfection.

2. Merit will bring knowledge, wisdom and mastery: because the illumination whch merit brings will awaken us to the nature of the world as it really is. Anyone who has set their heart on being smart should start by cultivating merit.

3. Merit will help to upgrade our tastes and values: As the mind dwells on matters that are only virtuous and leaves aside evil thought, thinking things through thoroughly and in depth, our tastes and values will change in favour of virtue and morality.

4. Merit will develop our character and personality: These changes of attitude and and discretion will express themselves in changes of character and personality.

5. Merit causes our speech to become skilful: skilful thought becomes habitual and this causes our speech to be skilful too.

6. Merit causes our behaviour to improve: Good speech has its effect on our physical actions and we find that our behaviour gradually changes for the better. The way that we express ourselves, our deportment when in company, no matter where we mix socially, will be impeccable instead of being vulnerable to all forms of temptation.

7. Merit strengthens our patience: We no longer drool over others' possessions. In the olden days, others might have been suspicious even at the sight of us, worrying about when we were going to rob them of their beloved possessions — but now that there is no more drooling, they can enjoy their wealth in peace.

8. Merit causes us to have more control over our temper: You certainly wouldn't let yourself be drawn into a conflict any more. This is another way in which one's personality changes as the result of upgrading the quality and potential of the mind.

9. Merit improves our personal appearance: Personality includes your personal appearance. Merit accrued will cause our complexion to be soft and radiant — so much more refreshing than before when you weren't interested in merit.

10.Merit will reduce our anxieties: All your misgivings and bones you had to pick with others, which before used to keep you awake at night, will now be forgiven.

D3. Level of Lifestyle

Merit will take its effect on our mind and our personality immediately whenever we perform a meritorious deed. At the third level, that of the *lifestyle*,

however, we cannot be sure how quickly the benefits will be manifested because our quality of lifetime arises as the result of both present and past deeds. The effects of good and bad deeds are mixed together inseparably. When there are so many contributing factors, it becomes very complex to determine the exact source of the merit that has given particular benefit in a particular lifetime. It is just the same as looking at a particular cell in our body and not knowing which item of food we ate has nourished that cell. This is part of the reason why we are often hesitant to believe that doing good deeds brings good results or that doing bad deeds brings bad results. Some of the general results of our merit are as follows:

1. Merit will attract success: We will be successful whatever we turn our hand to.
2. Merit will bring us praise: You will be praised (at least by the wise);
3. Merit is like a protective armour: which protects us from dangers and misfortunes like a guardian angel.

4. Merit can lead us to attainment: allow you to make continuous progress in your meditation.
5. Merit brings us the things that we wish for: Merit acts like a wish-fulfilling gem.

Another thing which makes the results of merit difficult to understand at the level of the personality is that apart from the general benefits, there are also differences in the way the outcome of merit manifests itself, rather like different 'flavours' associated with the ways by which merit has been performed.

D.3.1 Examples of Merit Outcomes

D.3.1.1 Generosity and KÅlyanamittata

The benefits that merit brings to different people differs according to the differences the merits they have performed. To take a good example — that of generosity, the likely results of the merits they have done are as follows:

1. Those who make lonely donations without encouraging their friends will be born rich in future lives, but won't have many friends. They will have to look hard to find anyone to give them their friendship or even understand them;
2. Those who make donations themselves and encourage others to join them in making merit too will be born rich in future lifetimes and will have plenty of friends;
3. Those who don't make donations, but they encourage their friends to make donations will have plenty of rich friends, but they will be poor themselves. If any of your friends are in need, you will be able to tell them how to solve their problems instantly — but if you are in need you can do nothing to help yourself;
4. Those who don't make donations and don't encourage others to make donations either have a begging bowl waiting for them in their next life. They will have no friends either.

D.3.1.2 Long life: Long life versus short life

Some people are long-lived because in previous lives they avoided killing or harming animals. Long life is useful because it allows one plenty of time to perform good deeds.

D.3.1.3 Illness: Freedom from illness versus sickliness

Some people are always in good health. They seem invulnerable to disease and hardly even know their doctor. Again good health is the result of having not been cruel to animals in previous lifetimes.

D.3.1.4 Complexion: Radiant versus dull complexion

Some people never seem to lose their temper. They seem to be happy the whole of the time. Such people have a radiant complexion. By contrast, those who are moody and whose faces are always in a frown will have a dull and rough complexion like that of a frog, however many lifetimes they are born. Thus if you know yourself to be moody by nature, then try to improve your character as soon as you can — try doing the chanting and meditation before you go to bed each day. If you are angry with anybody in particular, try to find a way to forgive them and spread loving

kindness towards them. If you are angry with anybody, don't let the anger last overnight. It's bad enough to be angry all day — don't let it last to the next morning.

D.3.1.5 Power: Powerful versus powerless

Some people are born to rule. Wherever they go others treat them with the utmost respect because in the past they have always been quick to express their congratulations [muditÅ] whenever they have seen anyone else achieving success andgiven them their support. As for those who are born powerless and cowering, the real reason for this is because of their jealous habits in previous lifetimes. Even if they are born king, they will be king of a mere vassal state or if they are born queen, they will be no more than a secondary consort. If you have the luck to receive a gift it will be second hand!

D.3.1.6 Riches: Rich versus poor

Some are born with a silver spoon in their mouth. Some are born into a wealthy family. Others families are poor but start to prosper as soon as they are conceived so that by the time they are born, their family is already rich. Others' families are poor but they start to prosper as soon as the baby is born. Such occurrences can only happen to someone who has been generous in his previous lifetimes. Whatever one chooses to do, it will make one rich. By contrast, if one has lived by robbery in previous lifetimes then this lifetime, they will have a begging bowl waiting for them.

D.3.1.7 Social Standing: High v. low social standing

Some people are born with high social standing — such as being born king or a member of the royal family or as member of a house of high standing. By contrast, some are born a beggar's son. They are on the lowest rung of the social ladder. The Lord Buddha taught that those who are humble and respectful of the virtuous will be born in a family of high social standing. If in this lifetime you pay respect of high virtue and listen to their teachings, you will be born in a family of high social standing next lifetime and others will have the chance to pay respect to you. The reason why some people are born with low social standing is that they have lacked humility and reverence in their dealings with the virtuous in their previous lifetimes and have been stubborn and unyielding instead.

D.3.1.8 Intelligence: Intelligent v.s ignorant

Some people are born clever. As soon as they have the chance to study, all it takes is a single lesson and they are able to stand up and teach in the teacher's place. For others, the teacher teaches them the same thing two or three times and still they can make no sense of it. They have to rely on their friends to explain it to them outside lesson time. Even after so much trouble, they have only a superficial grasp of what they have learned. They will have to read through the lesson another ten times if they are to understand it as well as their peers.

D.4 Level of Society

This is the next level at which merit takes its effect. The result of having done only good deeds all our life together with the good deeds or merit accumulated over course of a long time will certainly bring peace, happiness, harmony, justice, progress and prosperity to themselves and the people around them. This happens especially as the result of the collective merit accrued by the majority of people in society. Merit takes its effect instantly at the level of the mind (if we are observant enough to notice it), however the time the effects take to filter successively though to the levels of personality, lifestyle and society take proportionally longer.

E. CONSIDERATIONS

E1. Speed of Merit Taking Effect

All we have talked about are basically the principal forces. In fact, as with the dynamics of the karma which we studied in the previous lesson, all are to some extent modified by supplementary factors or concomitants, especially with reference to the speed with which they give their fruits. The degree to which meritorious deeds will give their benefits in our lifestyle depends on four factors which wecall the Four Accomplishments or Catalysts [samapatti].

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The Accomplishments are the factors favourable to the ripening of good karma just like catalysts which facilitate a chemical reaction — there are four of these in all:

1. Catalytic Circumstances [gatisampatti] and means that you are born in favourable circumstances or amenable surroundings in terms of a place to live, a birthplace or a neighbourhood which will affect us for the better. To give an example suppose you are born as someone who is not particularly clever, but fortunately for you, you are born amidst catalytic circumstances — born in a prospering community with a good standard of education available to everyone. Thus with the application of a little effort in your studies, you can make up for your lack of innate cleverness with cleverness learned from your surroundings — the clear result of the catalytic circumstances.Those in possession of such circumstancses make it easier for themselves to further their good deeds during their life — and this is one way by which merit is self-catalytic.

2. Catalytic Gift of Wellbeing [upadhisampatti] These refer to the characteristics of one's physical and personal makeup that facilitate the arising of good karma. Examples of such "gifts" might be a golden voice which makes everybody want to listen to what you have to say (no matter whether it be good or bad!), a good singing voice (that sounds good even if you cry!), a beautiful or handsome physique (which can make you Miss Universe without having to do anything more than be born and grow up!) Someone who is gifted in this way, but who instead of sitting on his laurels, continues to do good deeds all his life will find that good deeds give their results instantly, before their very eyes.

3. Catalytic Timing [kÅlasampatti] To be at the right place at the right time in the same way that we talked about the era of a world cycle when people are born. In an era where people value virtue manifest themselves right from the time you are born. You will associate with the wise right from your childhood. You need never come under the influence of fools. Throughout your life, no matter whether you are generous, keep the Precepts, meditate or do chanting, you will hear only words of encouragement from the people around you, making it easy for us to excel at any of these practices. Thus the results of one's meritorious action will be much quicker to see.

4. Catalytic Discretion [payogasampatti]. To be born with good discretion and more importantly, the moral fibre to keep to one's principles and apply one's discretion to one's lifestyle will facilitate the ripening of good karma. This catalyst is centred on the ability to teach yourself to improve in all aspects will make you a born leader never having to wait for others to persuade you or force you to do beneficial things. Besides being able to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad you will be able to put your ethics into practice. Such a personal endowment will quicken the speed with which you see the fruits of your meritorious actions at the level of the lifestyle.

In conclusion, performing merits will give the fruition of good deeds instantly at the level of the mind and the personality. There is no need to waitfor the afterlife for these things. However, at the level of the lifestyle, you may have to wait much longer if you have accrued only a small amount of merit in your past. However, for those who have a lot of merit in their past lives, they will see the fruition of merits very quickly in the present lifetime. Thus those who are still skeptical about whether doing good deeds will really bring benefits to us at the level of our lifestyle, should study the mechanism of catalysts and inhibitors to the fruition of good karma as outlined in this section.

E2. Why is care needed in the study of merit?

Merit is difficult to understand because the effects of merit thatwe can see are the result of compounded causes. Some of the good luck or good coincidences that we see come from the merit we have stored up for ourselves from long ago. Some of the good luck will come from the acts of merit which we have done recently and which remain in mind. Thus we need to have an understanding of

merit otherwise, looking at the outcomes we might come to the misunderstood conclusion that good deeds don't give rise to merit and might give up too easily. The other aspect is to understand correctly how to do the sort of good deeds that accrue merit otherwise, again, we might come to the conclusion that our efforts to do good deeds have nothing but a disastrous effect on our future.

Some people have such a strong conviction in merit that they think that merit and demerit is the only valuable way of evaluating actions in the world. However, such a narrow view can lead to some shortcomings of understanding. To take merit seriously, can inspire you to do good deeds, avoid evil and purify the mind. However, as one of the main characteristics of merit is that it accrues exclusively to the doer of a good deed, it tends to make Buddhists disinterested in what the people around them are doing. They may become interested only in their own personal destiny without thinking to try and upgrade the state of society or show concern for the destinies of those around them. Thus, the benefit of understanding merit is to make the best of our *present* to ensure a bright *future*.

E3. Overcoming shyness to accrue Merit

It is obvious from the examination of our present circumstances that we are living in a time when the circumstances of society are not very catalytic anymore. Because of the difficulty in discerning the fruits of meritorious action, the majority of people in the world today:

1. don't know the importance of merit;
2. know the importance of merit but don't know how to go about accruing it;
3. know how to accrue merit, but because they have not made merit making an implicit part of their lives, they are not particularly motivated to accumulate merit.

Some people want to do meritorious deeds, but are too shy. Some people know that it is good to bow down in respect to one's parents, but because they didn't make bowing to their parents part of their everyday life since they were children, by the time they are old enough to realize they are too shy to start something new.

The important thing to overcome the shyness we might feel in accruing the merit in our lives is to make it a part of our daily routine so that we don't lose touch with merit or become unfamiliar. In this respect there are three important pieces of advice for the practitioner coined as mottos for those attending Wat Phra Dhammakaya:

1. Any morning when you have not given alms, you shouldn't allow yourself to take breakfast: You should get up in time to give alms to the monks on their almsround at dawn every day. If there is no monk on almsround you can always collect up small donations on a daily basis in a piggy-bank and offer them at the temple the next time you go. If you can manage to achieve this, you will avoid poverty in the long-term. Even if you are not particulary well off in the present lifetime, you can be assured that if you give alms every day, eventually you will put an end to the hardship of financial insecurity.

2. Any day when you don't intend to keep the Precepts you shouldn't dare to leave the house: Once you have taken the precepts, you should revise the intention to keep them every day for the Five Precepts. At the very least you will always be within the protection of the Five Precepts — like an armour of morality. This merit is the second major investment we have to make in our life to ensure our enduring wellbeing.

3. Any evening when you haven't done your chanting and meditation, don't dare to go to bed: If you can manage to do your chanting and meditation every day, no matter how tired you are, you will be like the warrior who is ever ready for battle, with his sword already sharpened by his side.

If you start today and train yourself in all three of these ways, you will be like a soldier ready for battle with strength, a supply of provisions, a suit of armour and a weapon already sharp and ready for battle. However many times you go to war, you will be victorious every time. If you start living a lifestyle by which you accrue merit *today*, you will start

to get the benefits *today*. There's no need to wait for next lifetime before starting your good deeds because whether you will have the chance to do good deeds or not in your next life is dictated by the amount of good deeds you do in this lifetime. Thus start doing good deeds today, this very hour, at this very second.

In addition to the merit you cultivate as a matter of course in your everyday life, you should look for opportunities to increase your store of merit on special occasions such as offering saḶghadÅna (offering a meal to the monastic community), go for a longer meditation retreat, ordain temporarily for the course of the rainy season. Don't go thinking that you already have plenty of merit stored up from your past. You may be wrong. If you really had a lot of merit in your past, you would be able to sit comfortably for the whole of the hour long meditation session. If you still feel uncomfortable when you meditate or feel that you have to change posture, that is the sign that you still have room for improvement in the merit you have stored up for yourself. You need to use the precious life of yours to rectify your faults and weaknesses — and the best way to do this is to do as many good deeds as you can. Otherwise the hunger of the mind will go on unabated

F. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

F1. Metaphor: Merit in the Past - Pedigree

The nature of the differences is not the same as the pot-bound *bonsai* of the previous Blessing. It is not caused by the environment— the difference lies within the person himself — it is a personal attribute which differs in strength from one person to another. Compare a wild strawberry with a domestic breed of strawberry. You can water and fertilize a wild strawberry all you like, but in the end it will only produce a lot of leaves and a few tiny bitter fruits. By contrast, a domestic strain, even if neglected will produce numerous and succulent fruits. The difference is factor which belongs to the plant itself. With plants it is the pedigree, but with people it is the residue of the behaviours they have built up for themselves in the past — not a reputation because that needs a third party to remember it — it is something they build up inside them whether they have witnesses for their behaviour or not.

F2. Metaphor: Merit - Food for the Mind

All dynamic things in the world have fuel on which they feed. Fire burns on brushwood. A tree needs food, but the food that nourishes it is sucked up through the roots. The body burns on physical food. To get the food we need for our body we must find ourselves a job or a career. A light bulb burns on electric current. Sometimes the energy is stored up in the object itself at a previous time (like the bulb of a daffodil or a car battery), sometimes the energy is used as it is obtained. All of these things must be provided with the fuel they need or else one day if the energy they have stored is exhausted, they will become useless or even die.

All of these objects have their own food or fuel to nourish them, but as meditators, the object we are most interested in is the mind. The mind too, must have a food which can fuel its efficient activity, but what could possibly function as a sort of energy which the mind could store or use?

Indeed, the personal residue we are talking about has the special quality of being like food which nourishes the mind — so that the mind can, to itsfull potential attract good opportunities and things on all four levels of success mentioned above. If mind is well fed it has repurcussions for all the other levels too — sooner or later.

F3. Ex. Siri JÅtaka*(J.284)*

The bodhisattva was once an ascetic and had an elephant trainer as a patron. A stick-gatherer, sleeping at night in the hermitage, heard two roosting cocks abusing each other. In the course of the quarrel, one cock boasted that whoever ate his flesh would be king, his skin commander in chief or chief queen and his bones, royal treasurer or king's chaplain. The man killed the cock and his wife cooked it, then taking it with them, they went to the river to bathe. They left the meat and rice on the bank, but as they bathed, the pot holding the food was blown into the river. It

floated downstream where it was picked up by the elephant-trainer. The bodhisattva saw everything with his divine-eye and visited the trainer at meal-time. There he was offered the meat and divided it, giving the flesh to the trainer, the skin to his wife and keeping the bones to himself. Three days later, the city was beseiged by enemies. The king asked the trainer to don royal robes and mount the elephant, while he himself fought in the ranks. There the king was killed by an arrow and the trainer, having won the battle, was made king, his wife being queen and the ascetic his chaplain. The story was told in reference to a brahmin who tried to steal AnÅthapiÁÎika's good fortune [siri]. He perceived that the good fortune was embodied in a white cock for which he begged. AnÅthapiÁÎika gave it to him, but the good fortune left the cock and settled in a jewel. He asked for that also, but the good fortune went into a club. The club was also asked for, and AnÅthapiÁÎika giving it, asked the brahmin to take it and be gone. However, the good fortune now settled on AnÅthapiÁÎika's wife. The brahmin thereby admitted defeat and confessed his intentions to AnÅthapiÁÎika who told the story to the Buddha.

Blessing Six: Setting oneself up properly in life

A. INTRODUCTION

A1. Place of Blessing Six in the order of things

This sixth blessing is the last of the second grouping of blessings concerned with "turning towards virtue". It builds upon what has gone before with the "nurture" of Blessing Four and the "nature" of Blessing Five — bringing spiritual development to a point where the third grouping "making oneself useful" can start to become meaningful.

A2. Objectives of the Sixth Blessing

Studying this Blessing can be considered to have fulfilled its true purpose if after reading it, the reader feels:

1. ***inspired to stand on their own two feet:*** that is, to promise themselves that this lifetime they will never again lower themselves to relying on anyone else as their refuge — no longer using others as crutches for their own weaknesses. The people of old used to say 'Even a bird builds its own nest — even a mouse digs its own hole — so who is a man not to stand on his own two feet? It is not fitting always to be leaning on others, borrowing from them or living in someone else's house. Otherwise one is no better than a sparrow living in the rafters of someone else's house. If you are the sort of person who is not ashamed of being dependent but who is on the other hand proud that there are always others who wants to help them, it will probably be a long time before you realize the reality of the world. It's no problem if you happen to live in your big sister's house, but what happens if one day her husband has a disagreement with you and wants you out of the house? You will find it hard to speak up in your own defense. Even if you have a disagreement with their children or grandchildren or friends, you would never dare to say anything to contradict them because you depend on their parents or grandparents for the roof over our head. You end up being someone who will not even dare to stand up for yourself

— therefore, if at all possible, try to avoid depending on others — try to be self-sufficient. No matter whether you are male or female, you have to try to be independent. If you are put in the position where you are abused as a dependent, you have no choice but to put up with it. When you have put up with it until such abuse becomes engrained in your mind, you can no longer think of anything meritorious any more. All you can think of is getting your revenge. Better then, to build up your own standard of living by becoming self-sufficient in your earnings.

2. inspired never to provaricate about accruing merit henceforth.

If after studying this Blessing the reader gains anything more in addition to these two advantages, it can be considered as a profit. For anyone to understand about the importance of being your own ref-

uge and to see the value of accruing merit, you need a foundation of experience, and that foundation is specifically one's *aim in life*.

A3. Definition: Setting oneself up properly in life

Setting yourself up in the proper way refers to setting up both of the inseparable parts of our being — setting up our body and setting up our mind. As the mind governs the setting up of the body, to set ourselves up in life means setting up our mind correctly. Setting up yourself means setting up your mind. If your mind can be properly set up, then the body will follow suit. For example if your mind is overcome with laziness, the body will be overcome by laziness too, lying around in a post-prandial sleaze. If the mind has a clear idea about what it is aiming for in spiritual development, then the body will comply with the mind's ambitions. Thus to set yourself up properly in life, you must set up your mind properly, and that means specifically making up your mind to pursue a pathway of self-perfection.

A4. Aim in life helps us set priorities, overcome obstacles

Did you ever feel that you would like to achieve more from life but you never seem to have to the time — or you never seem to get round to doing them? Sometimes you have so many great plans in mind, but when you come round to doing them, there is always something else to help others with. There is always something else more urgent or seemingly more important? Do you find yourself exhausted at the end of the day with no strength left to do your meditation? All of us know that meditation makes a significant difference to the quality of our minds, but even though we know it, it is sometimes difficult to find the time to meditate each day.

Part of the reason for this is that our priorities and aims in life are not clear. Sometimes there are urgent things in life which are urgent but not important, like a ringing telephone or interruptions and they can upset the whole pace of our lives. They can be the things that make us unable to organize our time as we would like to. Sometimes these interruptions are really unavoidable, but usually, it is because we give them too much importance and put them too high on our list of priorities that they rob us of our time — the reason in turn, why we are unable to set our priorities as we mean to, is because we lack a clear perspective of our own priorities. With meditation, we are dealing with a practice and a tradition, which has lifelong consequences for us. Therefore, for the practice of meditation and for the setting of complimentary priorities in life, we cannot afford to overlook a clear perspective of our own lives. We call such an overview our 'aim in life'. If as meditators, we have a clear aim in life, as intelligent human beings, we will be able to use our wisdom to lead our own lives according to our principles. If we have no principles and no direction, more often than not, instead of leading our lives, our lives tend to lead us!

A5. Everyone has an aim in life

Life seems to vary in its perceived value fromperson to person. Some people have had the ambition since primary school to become a millionaire. Some have always wanted to become primeminister. Some want to be a soccer champion. Aim in life seems to be different for different people, however, if you look at the deeper nature of all people, ultimately all people aim improve themselves. Some people want to improve themselves to the utmost by purifying their mind within the space of their lifetime to a point where they can enter upon Nirvana. Others might not be in so much of a hurry — but it doesn't mean that their spiritual path will not pass the same way some day.

A6. Virtues for creating purpose in everyday life

Anyone who wishes to create and maintain focus and purpose in their life needs to train themselves in the following five virtues called 'core virtues' [sÅradhamma] by the Lord Buddha:

1. ***Faith or Confidence*** [saddha]: This means believing in the appropriate things. It means training yourself to be reasonable — not to be gullible. The difference between being faithful and being gullible is that the latter has no reason for their confidence. Thus wisdom is always an im

portant component of faith. From the Buddhist point of view, the basis of faith is:

1. the existence of the Buddha
2. the working of the Law of Karma — that doing good deeds really gives rise to good results (with the proviso of doing those good deeds properly, sufficiently and not in excess)
3. that the result of one's good or bad karma will follow one until it gives its retribution.

2. The Precepts [sÈla]: You must keep the minimum of Five Precepts (*for more explanation see Blessing Nine*).

3. Having heard much [bahËsËta]: be specific, this means being diligent in the acquisition of knowledge both spiritual and worldly by listening to many teachings.

4. Being a person of self-sacrifice [cÅga]: This means being able to sacrifice and let go both of material possessions (given to others) and also to let go of our grudges and bad temper by forgiving others

5. Training Oneself in Meditation [samÅdhi]: We need to train ourselves in meditation if we are to have any chance of attaining wisdom. Wisdom is the most essential element in having a well-planned aim in life and being able to keep ourselves to it. If the mind is trained in meditation it will have the determination to remain unscathed in the face of temptations to "lower our sights" and settle for less ambitious aims in life.

B. THREE LEVELS OF AIM IN LIFE

1. ***Exclusively Materialistic Aim In Life:*** Everybody comes into the world with nothing, but everyone has the same basic needs for survival whether it be the food on their plates, the clothes on their backs, the roof over their head or the medicine they need to keep them healthy in times of illness. If any one of these things are lacking from people's lives, they cannot survive. Man can only go for a single day without water. He can only go for seven days without food. Thus it is only natural that the very least that people should aim for in their lives is to fulfill these basic physical needs. If their aim in life is any lower that this they cannot survive. Of course some people want more that this. Some people are not satisfied with the basics of survival. They want to be millionaires, they want luxury, they want the freedom in life to choose what they buy. In fact however much you want, whether it is just to fulfill their physical needs or to satisfy their physical wants, their aim in life is only quite short term. It is based on immediate rewards. They think of no further requirement of life beyond death. In their youth they seek experience, in their middle age they amass wealth. Towards the end of their lives they try to find an heir for their wealth. Thus we call such aims in life "earthly" because they extend no further than this world and this existence. Those who entertain only such an aim in life will usually (but not always — some people cut corners) want to earn their living in an honest way, by earning, saving, using their earnings in a responsible way and entrusting honest people to look after common wealth.

2. Spiritual/Material Aim In Life: At the same time in the world, there are those who recognize that they must fulfill the physical needs of the body, but their aim in life runs deeper than that. They recognize that they need to earn their living, but earning that living is only a means to an end. They recognize that there exists not only a physical hunger, but the hunger of the spirit or the mind too. They realize that if the mind is left hungry it will tempt them to do things they don't want them to do. They need to find time in their lives to reach for a higher spiritual dimension.

3. Exclusively Spiritual Aim In Life: Last of all in the world there are those who realize the hunger of the body and the mind — the body for physical needs and the mind in its hunger for a higher spiritual dimension to life. For such a group of people the sensitivity towards the hunger in the mind is so great that they find that they have the vocation to deal with source of the hunger at its root. So great is the intensity of their calling that they will see the need to devote themselves full time to the pursuit of spirituality. To purify themselves completely so that hunger may be completely extinguished. They have the

time to devote to spiritual study without having to compromise their time in order to earn a living. They will spend their time learning the spiritual way and teaching it to the best of their ability so intensively that the life of the householder and the family no longer holds any attraction for them. We call such an aim in life ultimate because is seeks to come to an end of all further suffering and to help others to do the same.

B1. Exclusively Materialistic

Setting yourself up in a proper way for those with an exclusively materialistic aim in life consists of two components:

1. avoiding evil
2. standing on your own two feet The Buddha's short teaching of the way to set yourself up in the proper way is probably too short for

the reader to know how to practice it so we have to expand a little further on the subject matter

B1.1 Avoiding Evil

Avoiding evil means specifically to avoid the six 'roads to ruin' [apÅyamukha]. We must avoid them in order to avoid falling into any of the unfortunate realms in future existences. 'Ruin' [apÅya] here means 'low-down', 'dirty', 'decaying' and 'lacking prosperity'. The word 'road' [mukha] means 'path', 'front' or 'face'. There are six different types of 'roads to ruin':

1. ***Drinking alcohol or taking intoxicating drugs:*** like opium or heroin;
2. ***Nightlife: such as frequenting brothels;***
3. ***Frequenting shows:*** that have content that is romantic or frivolous;
4. ***Gambling:*** and lotteries
5. ***Associating with evil companions***
6. ***Being too lazy to work***

We will not go into further detail of these'roads to ruin' here. In some places only four 'roads to ruin' are referred to instead of six as mentioned already in Blessing One (*§E.3*) as the sort of thing that fools like to persuade you to do.

B1.2 Standing on you own two feet

In the time of the Buddha, there was someone who asked the way to set himself up in life. The four practices he taught are sometimes called the four chambers of the millionaire's heart. They are the prerequisite virtues for accruing benefit in the present life (in Pali the diÊÊhadhammikatthapayojana). For revision take a look back at Blessing Two (*§C4.1*). In conclusion, anyone who is diligent in acquisition of wealth, in stewardship of their earnings, who associates only with good friends and who uses their earnings to support themselves in a modest way will before long achieve riches. All of this hard work will only be of benefit to us in the present lifetime however. If you also want benefits in future lifetime, you need to know how to accrue merit too.

B2. Material/SpiritualAim

Setting yourself up in a proper way for those with a spiritual/material aim in life consists of three components:

1. avoiding evil
2. standing on your own two feet

3. cultivating virtuous speech and action Avoiding evil and standing on your own two feet are the same as for those with the exclusively materialistic aim in life. However, on this level we have the addition of virtuous speech and action. This means immersing our mind fully in meritorious speech and action. The way this is achieved is to practice the Ten or the Three Major Ways to Accrue Merit [puññakiriyavatthu] already discussed in Blessing Five (*§C2*). The guiding principles for accruing merit are the prerequisite virtues to accruing benefit in future lives [sampayikattha

payojana]. For revision take a look back at Blessing Two (*§C4.2*) and Blessing Four (*§B4.6*).

B2.1 Warnings about prevarication

On the subject of setting oneself up in life, there are several common misconceptions which you ought to avoid:

1. Don't wait until you are old before getting spir***itual:*** You should devote yourself to spiritual practice starting from the time when you are still young and healthy. In fact even to start temple-going from the time you are twenty is still too late. If you start temple-going from the age of

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five or six, like RÅhula in the time of the Buddha, it is your advantage. You should start studying the spiritual side of yourself early in life so that you don't make grave moral errors. How many of us spend many years drinking alcohol and damaging our minds before we realize what we are doing to ourselves? You can bypass the problem completely if you attend the temple from your youth.

2. Don't prevaricate about setting yourself up in life: You should work hard to make yourself self-sufficient in life at the earliest possible opportunity — anyone who is still a parasite living in someone else's house should be quick to make yourself independent.

3. Don't prevaricate about paying off your debts: Don't let your debts be something you carry with you to your next life! The interest on loans that span into the afterlife are too high to be worth risking slow repayment. Thus pay off your debts and make sure that you don't put yourself in debt any more. You should build up your own financial reserves before making an investment, not rely on borrowing from others or from the bank. If you die before you have paid back your loan, next lifetime you will have that debt hanging round your neck like a dead albatross. Suppose you borrow a dollar but die before you can pay it back — supposing you are an angel for a thousand years — just think what the compound interest will add up to during that time! You might never manage to pay it back.

4. Don't prevaricate about improving on your bad habits: If you know anything about yourself is a bad habit, give up doing it immediately. Check your own behaviour as a regular part of your practice and improve on yourself instead of wasting time finding fault with others.

5. Be careful of bad deeds in the guise of good ones: When you have done a good deed, don't go wishing for things that are irresponsible.

B3. Exclusively spiritual

Even the Bodhisattva himself needed an aim in life when pursuing perfections in preparation for Buddhahood. Thus it comes as no surprise that on the exclusively spiritual level of aim in life, it is still important to have an aim in life, in order to waste no time in pursuing the goal of purifying the mind to a point where it can enter upon Nirvana. On this level, even material convenience is sacrificed in order fully to cultivate spiritual development.

B3.1 Human Realm as the crossroads of existence

The clearer one's aim in life, the more clearly one will understand the preciousness of human life — and that we cannot afford to waste a moment. Even if you look around your house, of which you pride yourself as being the owner, if you count the number of fleas, mosquitos, ants and mice, you will realize that you are in the minority — even though it's your house! This is intended to give you an inkling of how rare it is to be born human and what a precious opportunity our human lifespan is in forging our destiny. In our human company there are basically four sorts of pathway of human destiny forged during a lifespan (A.ii.85):

1. Out of the darkness into the darkness: Born with all the disadvantages of nature and nurture, they did what came naturally and made a worse mess out of their lives;

2. Out of the darkness into the light: In spite of ample disadvantages of nature and nurture, they struggled against hardship until being able to make some sort of success out of their lives;

3. Out of the light into the darkness: In spite of all the advantages of nature and nurture, they became complacent and made a mess out of their lives.

4. Out of the light into the light: Avoiding the trap of complacency, they built on the advantages of nature and nurture they brought into the world, storing up a yet brighter future for themselves.

The human realm is like a crossroads where destiny can be transformed for the better or for the worse. For sure, transforming one's destiny for the better means going against the tide. Spiritual cultivation is often hard in the beginning, but pays off in the long-term — something that may not be immediately obvious to someone who sees everything

in the short-term. Therefore a proper aim in life is vital for anyone navigating the human crossroads who wants to make a success in forging a brighter destiny.

B3.2 Prerequisites for fulfilling the Highest Aim in Life

In a Buddhist context, fulfilment of Highest Aim in Life, the fruition of all levels of cultivation is to purify the mind completely or to enter upon Nirvana. In order to fulfil this goal six conditions must be fulfilled—without these six prerequisites, all our effort in setting an aim in life will be in vain. These six prerequisites are:

1. You have to have been born in an amenable location i.e. Blessing Four
2. You must have done good deeds until used to them i.e. Blessing Five
4 - 6. The Four Accomplishments already met as catalysts determining the speed with which merit can take its effect as described in Blessing Five

These six factors go together as a set of conditions known as the Six Catalysts or Accomplishments:

1. Catalytic Circumstances [gatisamapati]
2. Catalytic Timing [kÅlasampatti]
3. Catalytic Location [padesasampatti]
4. Catalytic Family [kulasampatti]
5. Catalytic State of Well-being [upadhisampatti]
6. Catalytic View [diÊÊhisampatti] If you find that you are hampered in setting yourself up in life in the way you would wish, perhaps you have to consolidate Blessing Four and Blessing Five to contribute sufficient Accomplishments

to your spiritual quest to give you the 'escape velocity' you need to forge your destiny to the full!

C. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

C.1 Metaphor: Boat must have a rudder

If the ship that must struggle to make way in the ocean waves is to reach the far shore, its captain must have a clear destination in mind and keep the ship firmly on course, not allowing the ship to drift — no less important is an aim in life to those wishing to achieve success and profit in their lives.

C.2 Metaphor: The one-eyed sea turtle (S.v.455)

The Lord Buddha taught that the birth of someone as a human is as rare as the chance of a blind turtle in the ocean which surfaces for air once a century popping its head through the middle of the only flower garland which happens to be floating in the sea. The chance of a being which is a denizen of hell, an animal, a ghost or a demon attaining human birth is even slighter still.Therefore having obtained yourself a human birth make sure you make the best of your life.

C.3 Metaphor: Saving for the Future

Just as a wise merchant must keep aside someof his money for investment in the future, the wise man must keep aside some of his time for the practices that will allow him to renew his merit for future lifetimes. Just as the wise farmer keeps aside some of his rice crop for next year's sowing, the wise man will take the opportunity while his old merit is still giving its fruit, to accrue new merit for use in future existences.

C.4 Ex.: The Retribution of Kapila Bhikkhu DhA.iv.37ff.

In the time of the Lord Buddha named Kassapa, there was a gang of five hundred thieves who were bringing misery to the whole of the kingdom. The householders, together with the police and the army thus hunted down the gang and when the thieves saw that they could no longer defend themselves, they escaped into the forest. The vengeful householders did not give up chase and so the thieves went deeper and deeper into the forest until they came to a clearing in the heart of the forest. There they met a monk, and seeing the monk, they started to see the error of their ways. They were receptive to what the monk had to say, and the monk taught them that they must keep the Precepts even if it cost them their lives. In any case, if they were to be caught, no-one would spare their lives be

cause they had already murdered so many people. The thieves took the Five Precepts and didn't try to escape any more. They concentrated all their attention on keeping the Precepts pure. They would not hurt even a mosquito or a leech. Even if the soldiers were to catch up with them and attack them with swords and knives, they swore not to put up a fight.

Before long, the soldiers discovered the thieves and attacked. The thieves kept their word and put up no resistance — they were so devoted to keeping their Precepts pure. All five hundred thieves were executed, but through the power of keeping the Precepts to the degree they would sacrifice their lives, their bad deeds didn't have the chance to catch up with them. They were born instantly as angels. The evil of their past did not disappear, however, but was waiting for the opportunity to give its retribution.

When they were reborn from the celestial world into the human realm, the influence of the killing they had done in the past still affected them. All five hundred were born as fishermen in the same village. However, even though their livelihood was to kill fish, through the power of their good deeds in the past, they all still had faith in Buddhism. Even so, the fishermen continued to collect demerit as a result of their habitual killing.

One day a group of fishermen caught a giant, golden-coloured fish — as big as a boat. No-one had ever seen such a fish in their lives. They captured the fish and took it to offer to King Pasenadi of Kosala — who in turn took the fish to the Buddha. As soon as the fish opened its mouth, a foul smell spread all around the Jetavana monastery. The king then asked the Buddha why such a beautiful fish should have such a foul smell.

The Enlightened One then revealed that in one of his past existences, the fish had been a learned *bhikkhu* named Kapila during the time of Kassapa Buddha. Because of his deep knowledge of the Dhamma, he had gained much fame and honour. He also became very conceited and looked down upon the other *bhikkhu*s. When the other *bhikkhu*s pointed out to him what was proper or not proper, he invariably retorted, 'How much do you know?' implying that he knew much more than those *bhikkhu*s. In the course of time, most of the *bhikkhu*s avoided him. On one occasion,the *bhikkhu*s did not join him when he was reciting the Fundamental Precepts for the *bhikkhu*s (i.e., the PÅÊimokkha). Observing that the bhikkhus remained silent, Kapila said, 'There is no such thing as Sutta, Abhidhamma or Vinaya. It makes no difference whether you listen to the PÅÊimokkha or not' and left the congregation. He had taught the Dhamma to others in a way that was biased in the monk's self interest — in a way that made his teaching deviate from the truth. His misrepresentation of the Dhamma was thus perpetuated amongst his followers.

There were many others including his teacher and *arahant*s who had warned that monk of the danger of his misrepresentation of the Dhamma — however he would not listen. He insulted them in return for their advice. As a result he developed False View and when he passed away, these False Views dragged him down into the Unfortunate Realms for a long time. Only then could he be born as a fish. The Precepts of a monk gave their fruit as the beautiful golden appearance of the fish but the retribution from insulting arahants and his teacher gave him his stinking mouth. Hearing the previous karma of the fish, the five-hundred fishermen considered all the evil deeds they had done as a result of their livelihood since their youth. They realized that their time in hell would certainly be no less than the fate of the fish they had caught — so they decided collectively all to become monks and to devote themselves to Dhamma practice. From the power of having sacrificed their lives for their Precepts in a previous existence — i.e. having set themselves up properly in life — before long they could all become arahants and were no longer subject to the retribution of the evil karma of their past.

C.5 Ex. Akkosaka BhÅradvÅja ***Vatthu DhA.iv.161ff.***

In the time of the Buddha there was a Brahmin couple. The husband called BhÅradavÅja was very strict in his Brahmin observances. He had never shown any interest in Buddhism. By contrast, his wife was a person with no further doubt in Buddhism because she had heard one of the teaching of the Buddha and had become enlightened as a stream-enterer as the result.

One day the husband wanted to hold a feast for all the most high standing Brahmins — worshipped as 'arahants' in their religion. Thus the husband and wife started their elaborate preparations for the feast, but when it came close to the 'big day', because it was the habit of the wife always to exclaim '*Buddho!*' whenever something surprised her, her husband appealed to her on the day of the feast not to mention anything about Buddhism or to say anything in praise of the Triple Gem. The wife said, "My mind is unified with the Dhamma, therefore whatever I say will also be Dhamma — there is nothing you can do to stop my mind from being that way!"

"And what about if I take a sword and cut you into small pieces — will that help you to educate your mind?"
"Even if you were to make mincemeat of me," said the wife, "I could not help myself from having the Dhamma as my refuge!"
The husband didn't know what more to say — so they got on with the work of providing the feast. Everything went well until the wife slipped over on a pile of spilled rice. She exclaimed, "Namo tassabhagavato arahato sammÅ sambuddh-assa!"

Everyone present heard the wife's exclamation. The assembled Brahmins were angered by what they heard. When they had received the invitation, they understood that the wife had respect for them. Now they had found out that she respected not them but the Buddha. They were specially angry because they were opposed to everything the Buddha did. Those who had finished their meal immediately stood up and shouted insults at the couple. Those who had not finished eating overturned every plate of food on the table. They stamped their feet and walked out on the couple.

The husband was so angry he didn't know what to say. He couldn't do anything to punish his wife — so he thought to take out his anger on his wife's teacher — the Buddha himself. He buckled on his sword and turned in the direction of Jetavana monastery with the intention to put an end to the Buddha and his teachings. The husband walked straight up to the Buddha without paying respect and in his anger shouted the rhetorical question at the Buddha, "Do you know what a man has to kill in order to get a good night's sleep...?"

The Brahmin thought that putting an end to the Buddha was the only way he could save face and sleep soundly that night. Without waiting for an answer, the Brahmin continued, "... and what a man has to kill to cure his sorrow? . . .".
And still without waiting for an answer, the Brahmin asked the Buddha, ". . . and so what form of killing would you support?"
The Buddha knew what was on the mind of the Brahmin and coolly answered the first question with the words, "A man must kill his anger in order to get a good night's sleep. If you don't kill your anger, you will do things that you regret later, being put in prison or punished — but if you kill your anger, you don't need to undergo the sorrowful consequences of your angry deeds. The Noble Ones praise the killing of anger — whose root is poison and whose crown is sweet."

When the Buddha said that the root of anger is poisonous, he meant that anger has suffering as its result. When he said that the crown is sweet, he meant that we get a strange, twisted satisfaction out of expressing our anger to others or losing our temper.

After hearing only these few words, BhÅradavÅja was impressed. He was impressed that the Buddha was not angry in response to his anger. He had prepared his sword to chop the Buddha to pieces at the first unwelcome

word, but instead of hearing anything to irritate him further, the Brahmin had been impressed by every one of the Buddha's reasoning. He threw away his sword and invited the Buddha to teach him further. In the end, he was motivated to practise the Dhamma further and ended up ordaining as a monk.

Killing your anger is one way of setting yourself up in life. To ordain as the result of a teaching is to set yourself up in faith, in the Precepts, in Wisdom or in Meditation. It was in this intense way that BhÅradavÅja set himself up in life, and before long could practice until attaining arahantship

The Third Group of Blessings

"Setting Oneself up in Life"

The third group of the blessings of life is often referred to as "making yourself useful". This doesn't just refer to making oneself a citizen who can contribute something positive to society, it means being able to be of independent means — to earn one's own living without having to rely on outsiders for help. The principle of "being a refuge to yourself" is one very important to Buddhism — not just a virtue to oneself in spiritual ways but in worldly ways as well. Not burdening oneself on society is seen not only as the basis of self-confidence, but also as a positive virtue to be encouraged. Earning one's living requires both knowledge and skills (found in Blessings Seven and Eight respectively) but as usual to earn one's living in an unscrupulous way to the detriment of others is not acceptable. Sociable application of our knowledge and skills is taught in action and word respectively in Blessings Nine and Ten respectively to make sure that we don't make ourselves self-sufficient at society's expense. This foundation of lack of worry concerning one's daily bread will serve as a foundation for a harmonious family life and public works to be found in subsequent Groups of the Blessings. All of the previous six Blessings we have studied, have concerned the adjustment of our quality of mind. The first few Blessings have concerned protecting our mind from damage and finding the most basic virtue of discretion with which to instil the mind. In the sixth blessing we already set our sights on the aim in life we require — now in the third grouping we start to walk toward that goal.

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TABLE 7.1 COMPARISON OF QUALITIES FOR THE LEARNED & THE WISE

The Learned	The Wise
much knowledge maybe not much virtue maybe do not apply knowledge to do good deeds must have good memory must be educated no guarantee that they will not make a mess out of their life	maybe not much knowledge much virtue use what knowledge they have to do good deeds not necessary to have good memory irrespective of literacy or education will not make a mess of his life

Blessing Seven: Artfulness in Knowledge

A. INTRODUCTION

In fact the subject matter of the seventh Blessing also concerns our mind but it deals with the way we can find knowledge to instil in the mind.

Knowledge has many implications both for our own life and for the quality of life in society. Without worldly knowledge we could not set ourselves up in life by earning our own living. Without spiritual knowledge, we would leave the thirst of the unanswered spiritual questions in life unquenched. For society, knowledgeable people contribute to the quality and standard of living in general. If students are demotivated or inefficient in their efforts to study, the repurcussions can bring damage to the whole educational sector and the youth in particular. Incidence of gang-fighting between schools, student drug-addiction and 'hanging out' on the street in search of trouble are all signs of social problems originating in an incapacity to study properly. Even the depreciation of the credability of the teaching profession has something to do with an inability to inspire children to enjoy learning. The problem is not entirely to be blamed on schools however — as we have seen in preceding blessings, a negative parental role model or a bad home environment can damage a child's character so severely, even before starting school — to an extent that the best of teachers can do nothing to rectify the situation.

A.1 Problems & risks facing students in general

The ideal student is someone who never tires of learning new things either about worldly or spiritual matters. It is not enough just to be curious — to learn in depth, a student needs to have a real respect for the knowledge they are learning.

The reality of student life is that there are many things to interfere with the students' enthusiasm to learn. The student's disillusionment can be summarized into three different groups: loss of sense of responsibility towards their own sense of human dignity; loss of sense of responsibility towards the sense human dignity of others, and; loss of sense of responsibility towards a fair economy:

1. Loss of responsibility towards own sense of human dignity may lead to:

1. Early Signs of False View: Not bothering to keep the Five Precepts, ignorance of the Five Precepts or even going so far as to protest against the keeping of the Five Precepts — as a result of the example or persuasion of teachers;

2. Expression of the Defilements of Action: Taking the lives or being cruel to people or animals, stealing, committing adultery or sexual intercourse outside marriage and telling lies.

3. Loss of 'aim in life': leading to a general lack of motivation to study or develop oneself and consequent lack of preparation to learn new skills, fit into society or work for a living.

2. Loss of responsibility towards the sense of human dignity of others: if teachers or lecturers fail to inspire the students by their example of ethical living, students will have no feeling of responsibility towards the human dignity of others or of society in general. Consequently they may:

1. Profit from natural resources at the expense of the environment: if the students are only interested in the short-term gains of a particular item of knowledge, but fail to consider or be taught about the long-term consequences (e.g They may pull up trees to facilitate access by profitable farm machinery, but in so doing cause erosion of the top soil)

2. Always put the blame on others: This is a very basic form of bias often arising as a result of never having been praised by their teacher or lecturer. Never having seen their teacher praise the good points of others, they assume that picking on others' faults is normal and they are the only infallible person in the world.

3. Persuades friends to be delinquent: For the convenience of keeping company with those of similar habits as themselves, disillusioned students persuade their friends to participate in various forms of delinquent behaviour such as truancy or "doing drugs".

3. Loss of responsibility towards the sense of economic fairness: If teachers fail to instil self-discipline in their students, the students will have no sense of responsibility towards a fair economy, specifically by:

1. Unwholesome Livelihood: like selling drugs, petty theft, telephone prostitution or gambling;

2. Addiction to the Six 'Roads to Ruin';
3. Worshipping Money: When money becomes the most important thing, it is unlikely that a person will have any concern for the state of their family, of the nation or the religion. It is like the aphorism often heard on the lips of modern youth that "ideals don't keep the wolf from the door".

A.2 Definition: Artfulness in Knowledge

The word 'bahËsËta' in the Pali means literally 'one who has heard much'. It refers to being learned by having heard much both in spiritual and worldly ways. A 'bahËsËta' is someone who is:

> "artful in knowledge" — choosing to study only the things appropriate for study — being a person learned in those subjects and observant — personal qualities that lie at the trailhead of the path to wisdom. Such knowledge allows one to be independent in earning one's living and will be the key which unlocks the door to worldly success.

B. The Nature of Knowledge

B.1 The Three Levels of Knowledge

If we want to identify the features of learning that will give rise to wisdom we have to distinguish wisdom from other sorts of knowledge. All sorts of knowledge help to illuminate the mind. When we don't understand something it is as if we are left in the dark about that thing. When we understand something it is as if light has been thrown on that matter. Knowledge in its most basic form, like the ability to do arithmetic or knowing where to catch the bus sometimes will feel as if it creates some illumination in the mind but it is just a feeling — because such an ability is restricted to the higher sort of knowledge we call "wisdom". In all we can differentiate three levels of knowledge:

1. ***Theoretical knowledge*** [sutamaya-paññÅ] The most basic sort of knowledge arises via the five senses, that is through the things we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, smell with our nose, taste with our tongue or feel by our sense of touch. You could call this sort of knowledge raw data. Touching fire tells us that it is hot. A child might want to know what fire is like. Their mother tells them not to touch it because it is hot and will burn them. The child will not believe their mother so easily. The mother might tell them not to touch it twice, but on the third time she will have to give in to the child's curiosity and let him touch the flame so that the child will know for next time that heat goes together with

brightness. This sort of knowledge also includes the knowledge we receive by listening to information and what you can remember from what you have heard in lectures and read from textbooks. If you have never had the chance to apply the knowledge that you have learned then it may still be of limited use;

1. ***Hands-on Knowledge*** [cintamayapaññÅ]: The second sort of knowledge which is slightly more advanced is hands-on knowledge, the knowledge that has been reflected on, tested and applied. However, even if you are the world's best professor, your knowledge will not exceed this level. With this sort of knowledge you are like someone stands on the water's edge and sees ripples on the surface of the water. From knowledge or experience they would be able to assume that the ripples are caused by fish under the surface of the water. Whether the fish are large or small or whether there are shrimps or crabs or shellfish moving under the water, you could probably notice from the size of the ripples. But because you cannot see the fish directly you are able only to make an educated guess;
2. ***Insight*** [bhÅvanÅmayapaññÅ]: A third and higher sort of knowledge is insight into deeper truths or more challenging truths. However if we study meditation further we will discover that even finding the solutions to simple problems in this way is actually causing there to be illumination arising in the mind. The characteristics of wisdom when it arises in the mind:

1. ***It will give rise to brightness in the mind.*** Wisdom is the light which will chase away the darkness of ignorance. This is not just a metaphor for the knowledge but when we train ourselves further in meditation, we will see that brightness really is the operant feature of wisdom. The illumination of the more advanced sorts of knowledge is so bright that is is like compressing the brightness of a hundred suns into a single spot. It is by virtue of such brightness that we can identify and uproot the defilements usually hidden in the mind. For those who are new to meditation, the brightness is not yet continuous and is dim like a glowworm. Such brightness is not yet sufficient to identify defilements, but it is a good start;

2. It allows us to transcend defilements: When wisdom arises, it allows us to transcend defilements previously active in the mind. Problems which used to exist will be overcome once and for all. Evil in the mind is uprooted. It allows us to probe deeper into problems and cut off problems at their roots. It allows us to overcome our own faults and weaknesses. It allows us to change our bad habits. Such knowledge is able to overcome suffering and to change our own habits. It allows us to get to the root of problems. Such knowledge can actually kill negativity in the mind once and for all. Such knowledge no longer comes via the five senses but will come instead directly via the mind that is still. It is not knowledge that comes from thinking. It is knowledge that arises in the still mind together with brightness. It is a sort of knowledge we sometimes call wisdom or insight. If we go back to the scenario with the man standing on the edge of the water, where through conventional knowledge the man could do no better than make an educated guess, if we were to use insight to assess the same situation, it would be as if the water was clear and the man could see the fish, the crabs, the shrimps or the shellfish without having to think about it.

The ability to harness the knowledge that arises from the still mind is an ability for which you have to train in meditation.

B.2 Contrast between the Learned and the Wise

There are several important differences between the learned who know only the theory of how to do good deeds (but may not practice it) and the wise who may not know much but use everything they know to boost their opportunity to do good deeds. Unfortunately, knowledge in the hands of a fool (or even a learned person) can be a dangerous thing. If your only knowledge is academic knowledge, no matter how clever you might be, there is always a

risk of making a mess of your life. For example, if you have a knowledge of nuclear physics, you can use it for peaceful applications as an energy source — on the other hand you can use your knowledge to produce atomic bombs and the resulting holocaust towards human life. Thus ethical considerations need to go hand in hand with our academic knowledge, like a guiding light to give us clarity as to whether the application of our knowledge is good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate.

Those who are interested only in academic learning, no matter how clever, rich or powerful they may be, can never manage to make themselves endearing or worthy of the respect of others and in the end they cannot make a success out of their lives.

C. THE NATURE OF THE STUDENT

C.1 Sense of Responsibility for own Human Dignity

In order for a student to protect their own sense of human dignity, they must refrain from the Four Defilements of Action:

1. taking the lives or being cruel to people or animals;
2. stealing;
3. committing adultery or have sexual intercourse outside marriage;
4. telling lies.

Also concerning a person's responsibility to their own sense of human dignity, a person should:

- ***avoid sentimentality about learning:*** those who are not strong-minded in their pursuit of learning will not manage to succeed in becoming learned;
- ***avoid obsession with appearances:*** if you want to be to be a learned person in the future — you should model yourself on the stereotype of academics or monastics who emphasise only two things about their dress — modesty and cleanliness.
- ***avoid childishness:*** those who play around, never take responsibility for anything and never taking anything seriously, will never succeed in becoming learned.

C.2 Sense of Responsibility for others' Human Dignity

Bias gives us negative attitudes which may reduce our chances of success in study. If we are able to overcome these items of unfairness in the mind from the outset then the mind will be a much more fertile receptacle for knowledge:

1. Learning based on Desire [chandÅgati]: Desire doesn't need to be so strong that you are a Casanova. Such a person would have no chance of being a good student anyway. However, to a lesser degree even someone who is excessively fussy about what they do and what they wear would be unlikely to succeed in their studies. Those who study simply because they would like to become famous will find it hard to succeed in study. If you see possessions as an end in themselves then we will have no incentive to study.

2. Learning based on Hatred [dosÅgati]: If you want to study successfully then you mustn't be someone who loses their temper easily. You must be able to accept criticism without being scared of appearing foolish. Some people are angry only for an instant and then they recover quickly. Others are angry and it takes them a long time to get over it. They find it hard to forgive. Even later on, although they can't remember *why* they were angry with someone, they *still* feel angry with that person. They forget their respect for others. They think that they are superior to everyone else. Thus they can never learn anything from anyone else. By meditating, such people can train themselves to be less impatient. If they also keep a baseline of morality such as avoiding killing animals and insulting then they will find it much easier to acquire wisdom.

3. Learning based on Ignorance [mohÅgati]: If you are still acting on your own ignorance instead of giving things careful consideration before you do them, then you will find it hard acquire new knowledge. If your old ways of looking at the world are faulty then you need to let go of them before you can expect to acquire new ones.

4. Learning based on Fear [bhayÅgati]: Some people lack confidence in themselves and their own

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knowledge. They are always afraid of the criticism of others. If you are afraid of taking decisions yourself, then you will be destined to always be led by other people instead of standing on your own feet. You will have no creative or original thinking of your own. If even you don't trust your own knowledge then how can you expect to make anyone else confident.

C.3 Sense of Responsibility for Economic Fairness

In order for a student to protect society's sense of human dignity, they must refrain from the Six Roads to Ruin:

1. Drinking alcohol;
2. Roaming the streets at unseemly hours;
3. Frequenting shows;
4. Gambling;
5. Association with bad company;
6. Laziness to work for a living.

Furthermore a person who is obsessed with personal financial gain will find it hard to make progress in their studies. A person should not "worship money". Those who see that material rewards are more valuable than wisdom will never go very far in acquiring wisdom. We don't overlook the importance of wealth — but on the way that it is best to apply one's wealth — that will be the subject of Blessing Fifteen.

D. THE LEARNING PROCESS

D.1 Coming into contact with someone knowledgeable

One of the hardest things is to find a teacher who will give the necessary encouragement to bring one's studies to fruition. The Buddha taught in the SiĮgalovÅda Sutta that successful studies are established on the base of reciprocal duties that a student practices towards his teacher and that a teacher practises towards their student (duties collectively referred to as duties to the Southern Quarter). If a student finds a teacher that they think they can learn something from, they should start to learn from them. The teacher should practice the following five duties towards their pupil, by making sure:

1. the student is well trained;
2. that the student is taught in such a way that he understands and remembers well what he has learned;

3. that the student is thoroughly instructed in the lore of every art without holding knowledge back;

4. to give praise to the student which raises his esteem amongst his peers;
5. that the student's security and safety in every quarter (i.e. towards parents, wife, children, employees, friends and spiritual mentors) is ensured, while pointing out the loopholes and weaknesses present in any body of knowledge.

Meanwhile the student should minister to his teacher by:

1. rising to receive them;
2. by serving them (in things which facilitate the teacher's convenience)
3. by obedience to the teachings or an eagerness to learn;
4. by personal service
5. by attentively and respectfully learning the arts and sciences

If a student fails to fulfil their duties but the teacher does their part, the student is unworthy of the teacher — and it will be no surprise if the student can never become "skilled in knowledge" — catastrophe will await the student.

If the teacher fails to fulfil their duties but the pupil does their part, then the teacher is unworthy of the student — and perhaps the student should look elsewhere for a better teacher
— and catastrophe awaits the teacher.
If neither the student nor the teacher fulfil their duties, catastrophe will await both student and teacher and their failing will have negative consequences for society at large.
However, if both student and teacher fulfil their duties to one another, both parties will have a bright future and their behaviour will have positive consequences for society at large.

D.2 Finding the opportunity to hear what they teach

If you are still the sort of person who skips lectures and copies the notes later, you are unlikely ever to make a success of your career as a student. This applies both to the contact with your teacher and reading from the textbooks. It means questioning in order to further your knowledge.Whatever knowledge you learn, try to divide it up into these four aspects and study all four. Only then can you say that you have mastered that knowledge. Such an assessment of your own knowledge will prevent you from slipping into the premature overestimation of the amount you know and give you the encouragement to keep listening to people of knowledge.

1. Knowledge in Depth: You need to make sure that you understand deeply what you have learned. You need to know the roots and origins of everything you study (its past). If you are a doctor and you see a patient ill with certain symptoms by looking at their face you can tell immediately about the prognosis of their illness right from ten or twenty years ago. Don't go believing things simply because they are traditional or customary without understanding the reasons for such belief.

2. Knowledge in Breadth: You need to have a broad knowledge (the present) not only of your own narrow specialism but also about all the things that concern your everyday life. Even if you study the arts, you still need to know the elements of electricity because you use electricity in your everyday life from the time you get up in the morning to the time you go to bed. If you have studied science, you still need to know about the arts otherwise you will not understand how to communicate emotions, feelings and ideas from one person to another in different forms whether it may be written or visual. If you don't study then you can be the best engineer in the world but if you have no gift for communicating with people you will just be digging holes for the rest of your life.

3. Thorough Knowledge: Not only will you know your own narrow subject but you will know the connections which it has with other issues as if you know the influences of that knowledge all the way from the mainstream up to the edges.

4. Long-sighted Knowledge: You need to have a long-sighted knowledge. You need to know how things will turn out in the future. You need to know how one thing leads to another.

D.3 Listening attentively

You need to listen to remember — not just sit in the lecture picking your fingernails and chatting to your friends, with no idea what the lecture was about at the end;

D.4 Memorizing knowledge learned [vÅcÅsa-paricitta] If you make no effort to memorize what you have learned, you will never become a person 'who has heard much' (A.v.26). Memorization is an implicit part of the duty of a monk and it is expectedof monks by the lay congregation. If the knowledge stays in the books, it is like having money, but having lent it all to someone else. If you want it back instantly, even though it is yours you cannot get it back instantly. Even though you know which textbook you can find a certain piece of knowledge in, you will go reaching for the book one day and find that worms have eaten just the page you needed.

D.5 Reflecting on knowledge memorized [manasÅ-nupekkhitÅ] You have to digest new knowledge in your mind and look for causes and effects Meditating is the mostefficient way of 'digesting' new knowledge.

D.6 Applying knowledge for one's own benefit

(see Blessing Eight)

D.7 Applying knowledge for the benefit of oneself and others

(*See Blessing Eight*)

E. PRACTICAL TIPS FOR BECOMING LEARNED

Here are some practical suggestions for budding scholars:

1. Choose only appropriate subjects to study which will not have negative implications for the hu

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man dignity of yourself, others or society at large;

2. Dedicate yourself — studying your chosen subject to the utmost of your ability;
3. Always be enthusiastic to learn new things;
4. Study spiritual knowledge hand-in-hand with worldly knowledge;
5. Remember what you have learned so that it is always at your immediate disposal

F. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

F.1 Metaphor: Lamp lighting the path for a long journey ahead

Just as illumination is necessary to light the path ahead on a long journey, artfulness in knowledge is the pioneering virtue leading to prosperity in life.

F.2 Ex. Buddha advises a brahmin to pay respect to Ånanda (J.296)

There was once a brahmin who sought the advice of the Buddha. He said that it was obvious how one could pay respect to the Buddha and the Saİgha, because they were already a sort of personality. However, the Brahmin didn't know how to pay respect to the Dhamma which seemed more abstract.The Buddha replied that if you want to pay respect to the Dhamma, you should pay respect to those who are learned in the Dhamma. The Brahmin asked around to find which of the monks was the most learned and everyone agreed that Ānanda was the most learned because more than any other monk, he had heard the teachings of the Lord Buddha. Thus the Brahmin went to pay respect to Ānanda above the other monks, many of whom had more advanced spiritual attainments.

F.3 Ex. MahÅsutasoma JÅtaka (J.537)

There was a certain Buddha who while pursuing Perfections as the bodhisattva, was born as a king called MahÅsutasoma. The king was so keen to learn new teachings of the Dhamma that he would invite anyone who had knowledge of the Dhamma to come and teach him in the palace. On one occasion, MahÅsutasoma was captured by an ogre. The ogre was going to put him to death. On just the day the ogre was going to collect him, it was also the day when he had made an appointment with a knowledgable Brahmin Nanda to teach some teachings left over from the Kassapa Buddha. In that day and age, there were no living teachings to be followed any more. There were no monks left any more. Later even if the king offered the prize of a heap of gold as tall as the person to give the teaching, there would still be no-one who had any teaching to give the king. Even if the king offered the prize of a heap of diamonds as tall as an elephant, still nobody could be found to give a teaching to the teacher. However, in the time of king MahÅsutasoma, the decay of Buddhism was not so much that there were no teachings left any more. The day when the king was to be captured, someone had accepted an invitation to come and give a teaching in the palace. On that day, out of respect for the Dhamma, the king had first gone to freshen up and change into a new set of clothes in preparation for hearing the Dhamma. It was as he was washing that he was captured. The king made a deal with the ogre that it could do with him as it liked, but it should first let him listen to the teaching of the Dhamma, because he had already made an appointment with the teacher who was coming. The king promised the ogre that after hearing the teaching he would allow it to take him away for sacrifice. Even though the people of that time didn't know about the Precepts, they still knew about the importance of truthfulness. The king was allowed to return to the palace where the Brahmin was waiting. The Brahmin didn't even know how to explain the Dhamma, all he could do was to read out a piece of the scriptures. The Brahmin also had to wash himself before giving the teaching. He rinsed his hands with perfume before picking up the scriptures. He bowed three times to the scriptures and only then did he open up the scriptures in the most careful possible way. The subject matter of the scriptures were the words of a previous Buddha. The Brahmin could read the words and translate them, but he didn't know the meaning:

> Associating with the noble ones just once,
> One can be protected by that contact for
> the rest of one's life.

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However, associating with fools even many times, Will fail to protect you for the rest of your life. If you associate with the noble ones, You should associate with them closely, Because anyone who can learn the virtues of a noble one, Will know only prosperity and never know decay.

Even a royal chariot that is beautifully decorated, Must eventually deteriorate and decay, In the same way the body that we possess Must eventually decay and die.

However, the Virtue of the Noble Ones Never goes out of date and never decays. It is only the Noble Ones together Who can know each others' minds.

The earth and sky are far apart. The two sides of the ocean are far apart. But they are not so far apart, As the behaviour of the nobles and that of fools.

Before putting the scriptures away, the brahmin bowed to them again. Hearing just these teachings, the king was so moved that he cried tears of joy. The king asked the brahmin, "Usually when you read this scripture to other kings, how much do they give you?"

The brahmin replied, "They give me a hundred for each verse."
"These verses are not a 'hundred a verse' but are a 'thousand a verse'" said the king, and presented the brahmin with five thousand.
The king remembered the appointment he had made with the ogre and thought to himself, "If I were to break my promise, it would only make my mind dull and guilty and I would certainly have an unfortunate afterlife destination — better that I go to my death with that ogre while my mind is still radiant from having heard the Dhamma." The king gave himself up to the ogre. The ogre was surprised that the king didn't show any sign of fearing death. It asked the king why he had no fear of death. When the king told them the Dhamma he had learned, the ogre was so impressed that it asked to take refuge in the king as its teacher and had no more thought about sacrificing him.

F.4 Ex. Tuccha-PoÊhila (The Blank Scripture Monk)(DhA.iii.417-21)

In the time of the Buddha there was an elder monk who was so learned in the Dhamma teachings that he had many disciples of his own. Many of his disciples had become arahants as the result of what he had taught — but he, himself, had not achieved anything. He had heard a lot of teachings but he had never showed any interest in practising for himself all the theory thathe had taught. All he had was knowledge — he had no attainments.

Out of compassion,the Buddha wanted the elder monk to realize that he must practice for himself, so he always called the elder by the name 'Blank Scripture'. If the elder came to see the Buddha, the only thing the Buddha would say to him was "'Blank Scripture'— so you're here again?" For other disciples the Buddha would ask questions or give encouragement, but instead of giving encouragement to this elder for having so many students he just said 'Blank scripture'. Apart from this he would ignore the elder completely until everyone else was taking their leave. Again, the only thing the Buddha would say to him was "'Blank Scripture' — so it's time for you to go?"

One day, the elder saw through his feeling of being slighted bythe Buddha and thought to himself, "What the Buddha says is really true — I really am a 'blank scripture' — because I know all the scriptures by heart, but I have never used any of it in practice for my own benefit." He thought to himself,"I have spent all my life teaching others, but I have never taught anything to the stubbornest person in the world — myself."

(Sometimes, even though you know what is good and what is bad, you still don't make any effort to change your behaviour. When the alarm clock rings in the morning, instead of getting up, you switch it

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off and go back to sleep. This is the reason why it is necessary to teach yourself regularly).

Thus the blank scripture elder went to the most senior arahant he knew and asked for his help in teaching the practice of Buddhism. The arahant, knew what was in the mind the elder and knew if he made life too easy for him, he would never give up the arrogance he needed to shed in order to learn anything. Thus the arahant did not agree to teach him, but sent him to a more junior arahant saying, "That monk is still young and healthy — he will have the strength to teach you what you want to know."

The 'blank scripture' elder went to the younger arahant, but the younger arahant knew the character of the elder again. He knew with his seniority, the elder would not pay much attention to anything taught to him by someone half his age. Thus the young arahant sent the elder to study with a novice who was an arahant. The elder was tempted to give up his search for knowledge because of the humiliation of having to be taught by a young novice! However, the warning of the Buddha still rang in his ear and he gritted his teeth and went to see the novice.

The novice knew the arrogant character of the elder so he told him that to get a good result from the teaching, the elder must be up to his neck in river water to get any benefit. The elder thought, "I am really at my last resort — if I don't do as this novice tells me, I will maybe never have the chance to learn any more."When the elder was up to his waist in water, he had completely given up his dignity and hence his arrogance. The novice said, "Up to your waist is enough!"

The novice taught, "There is a termite mound with six entrances. A water monitor is inside the termite mound. The way to catch the water monitor is to block five entrances and to put your hand through the sixth and you will be able to catch the water monitor as you wish." The novice didn't need to say any more. Because the elder was an experienced teacher he immediately knew that the water monitor in the teaching is the mind itself which is constantly thinking of things that are of no benefit, losing its energy via the six sense doors. If we want to train the mind we have to control the five outer senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body) and purify the sixth sense which is the object of the mind. As soon as the elder understood, he immediately trained himself in sensual restraint and purification of the mind.

By the end of the novice's teaching, the elder was an arahant, even standing there up to his waist in water. Because the elder had been artful in knowledge for so long, to become artful in practice was no difficulty. All he needed was to have a little reminder to make him think a little. Thus we can see that to be artful in knowledge is essential for one's personal development.

Blessing Eight: Artfulness in Application

A. INTRODUCTION

Since Blessing Seven, we have already discovered the value of being artful in knowledge — but it is not good enough — it is also necessary to be artful in the application of what we know — the subject of this Blessing.

A.1 People confuse knowledge with ability

Many people confuse knowledge with ability. Artfulness in the application of knowledge means that if you have learned an occupational subject, if you have learned all the necessary theory, you have to transform that theory into practice allowing you to earn your living. If you have learned Dhamma theory, you have to transform that knowledge into Dhamma practice.

It is like someone who reads a manual of swimming who can memorize every page of the manual. He knows how many types of swimming styles exist and what all the differences are. When he has read the book, he puts it at the side of the swimming pool and jumps in — sinking without a trace!

A.2 Why no-one wants fresh graduates

This is one reason why many graduates are unemployed — they have only knowledge from examinations or from copying their friends. They have no practical knowledge. They expect to get a prestigious job in keeping with their prestigious degree and look down on almost every type of work. When they have only academic knowledge, no practical knowledge and they expect to choose where they want to work, who can they expect to want to take them on? If you don't want to be an unemployed graduate, you should take on any work you can find, to get the practical experience ever since you have not yet graduated. If you can transform your academic knowledge into practical skills even before you graduate, you will make an very attractive prospect for employers. There will be employers asking after you even before you graduate.

Some people get themselves a prestigious degree in accounting. They take a job as a lecturer in university and because they can teach accounting in a way that allows their students to become successful accountants, they think that they are also a capable accountant. The lecturer sees that his students are richer than he is, so he gives up his job to start a business himself. Before long, his business is bankrupt and he has to go back to teaching! Only then would such a person find out the reality that knowledge and application of knowledge are completely different attributes.

B. DEFINITIONS

B.1 Definition: Artfulness in Application

The Pali word 'sippaÕ', meaning 'one endowed with artistry' means someone who is skilled in application of their knowledge. The 'bahËsËta' of Blessing Seven is one who is skilled in knowledge,

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but the person who has mastered this Eighth Blessing is one who can apply that knowledge fruitfully too.

B.2 Six Components of Artful Application

Not all performances or displays of application of knowledge qualify as 'artfulness in application'. You can learn skills, but it doesn't guarantee that using the skill will bring you merit — therefore, before committing yourself to a skill you want to learn, you have to consider the merits of it first, for the harmony of society: If you are a sculptor, then why not use your skill to sculpt Buddha images that can bring inspiration to others? If you can draw then why not draw the sort of pictures that will inspire others to do good deeds? Even little skills like being able to make toys for one's children can help to stop wastage of family income on imported dolls and cartoon characters — as a guideline, bear in mind the following six qualities of applied work that demonstrates artistry:

1. Must be refined

2. Adds to the value of the raw materials

3. Product of the work leads to creative thinking, not aggressive or destructive thinking: A motor engineer should use his skill to build engines to help people in their everyday lives rather than to build weapons to wage war.

4. Product of the work doesn't lead to sensual obsession: Don't go studying the sort of arts that will stir up the passion of others — like cabaret dancing or strip-tease.

5. Product of the work doesn't lead to illwill or vengefulness

6. Product of the work doesn't lead to aggression: Don't engage in arts that will cause people to seek vengeance such as inventing war slogans.

B.3 Three Categories of Artful Application

Don't think that only artistic applications you can 'see and touch' qualify for fulfilment of the Eighth Blessing. Such skilfulness can be applied to body, speech and mind:

1. ***Artistic Application in Body:*** This applies to various sorts of specialism or applied expertise, whether it be plumbing, mechanics, painting, design, sculpture, photography, printing or other vocational skills such as gardener, farmer, author or nurse — and further than that, having the manners to walk, stand, sit and lie down politely, dressing appropriately, being hospitable, expressing respect and behaving in a 'cultivated' way;

2. Artistic Application in Speech: This applies to communication skills, knowing what to say and how to say it in a way to inspire the hearer towards virtue (*more in Blessing Ten*)

3. Artistic Application in Mind: This applies to skillfulness in thinking, having one's wits about one and creative thinking.

In a nutshell, Artfulness in Application is artfulness in body, speech and mind.

C. CULTIVATING ARTFUL APPLICATION

C.1 Transforming Knowledge into Skills

If you want to transform your academic knowledge into applied ability, you have to possess the following qualities (PatthanÅ Sutta A.iii.154):

1. Believe in what you do [saddha]: You have to believe that you what you are doing is really beneficial and virtuous. You should be enthusiastic about doing it and have the confidence that you can make a success out of it. Some doctors graduate in medical science, but have no confidence in their ability to heal people. Some are more confident in their own ability to construct buildings. In the end, they become building contractors! They can achieve more success that way than they ever could by being a doctor! You need to have to believe in what you are doing if you are to be able to dedicate yourself to it.

2. Safeguard your health: Don't be the sort of person who bursts into coughs and sneezes when exposed to the merest cold draught. If you let your efforts destroy your health, it will be hard for you to succeed in learning a trade. A practical way to safeguard your health from all the possible risks is very simple — keep the Five Precepts strictly. If you neglect your health and go looking for things to destroy yourself by doing

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unhealthy things, you will find it hard ever to achieve success in learning a trade.

3. You must avoid arrogance and boastfulness: Those who spend all day speaking about what they will do, but never getting round to doing it, will never manage to master a trade. No-one wants to accept someone who is boastful as an apprentice. The only skill which boastful people manage to develop is the ability to find fault with other people in order to let other people know how wonderful they are themselves. By pushing others down they are able to hoist themselves up in the estimation of others. The habit of a boastful person is to take a very minor virtue or ability and magnify it beyond all proportion.

4. You must avoid laziness: If you have only knowledge but you are too lazy to do anything with it, then you will be no more than knowledgeable for the rest of your life.

5. Cultivate wisdom: Wisdom is cultivated by being observant and reflecting on new skills and techniques.

C.2 Instilling yourself with "Artfulness in Application"

You cannot acquire wisdom just by eating and sleeping. You have to be *active* in your search for wisdom according to the following steps:

1. ***Be observant of yourself and the things around you:*** It is all very well to say 'be observant' but in fact, it is important to know what to observe! In a nutshell, our powers of observation should always attempt to seek out the good and useful characteristics of the things we observe.You have to start by observing *yourself* first — because to observe yourself is theoretically the simplest. You should start by noticing aspects of your lifestyle, (for example our habits of eating or sleeping) to try to define what is appropriate or inappropriate and where the point of equilibrium lies for various factors. If you eat too much it will make you sleepy. If you eat too little, your stomach will rumble at night. You have to notice what happens to us if we go to bed late. You have to notice what happens to you if you get up late. What is better for you — to go to bed at ten at night and wake up at dawn, or to go to bed at midnight and to wake up at seven in the morning? Once you know how to be observant of yourself, you can gradually extend your observation to the things around you. We notice our clothes. How our clothes get dirty at the collar or around the cuffs. Notice what sort of clothes are suitable for what sort of situation. We gradually extend our mindfulness to the things more distant from us — noticing how to speak to people in an appropriate way, how to speak to people to inspire them instead of making them lazy. Notice the characteristics of the things around you. If you train yourself to be observant even of yourself, the skill will soon be developed and wisdom will follow.

2. Train yourself to do everything better than best: Never look down on any work that comes your way. Never think any task you do is unimportant. Even simple things like your handwriting should be done with care. From the time when a child is young, they should be trained to write neatly whatever they do so that 'being careful' about whatever work they are to do in the future will be ingrained from the earliest age. Some people write with such messy handwriting that others can only barely decipher what has been written. Someone who writes like that since their youth until adulthood will soon get themselves in the habit of doing everything in a shoddy way — never achieving anything better than 'passable' quality. If you do everything to the best of your ability, skills and abilities will soon come your way without you even having to spend time looking for them. Even if you don't study the specific qualities of a particular art, if you are always observant of quality, and do things cleanly and in a detailed way, even though you cannot produce artwork for yourself, you will be able to tell quality in the work of others. Once you have trained your mind to be refined and to notice details, even the way you speak will start to be of higher quality — more based on reason and more confident (because your train of thought will be more systematic).

3. Be refined in all you do: Some might accuse you of 'nit-picking' but if you insist on high quality in your work, even in the details, before long, you will start to pick up artfulness in application.

4. Always look for better ways to do the same thing: Sometimes you can already do a task, but if you always look for quicker, more efficient, more cost-effective ways of doing the same thing, it will force you always to improve on your skills, never sitting on your laurels.

5. Apprentice yourself to a craftsman: Seek out craftsmen in the field which you want to master and become apprentice to them. Be respectful and helpful to him so that he will have the compassion to push you further in the direction of craftsmanship.

6. Meditate regularly: The art of training our capabilities of action and speech is rooted in our capability to train the mind. Systematic thinking and observation can only be developed when the mind is well-trained. Training the mind through meditation will make the acquisition of other capabilities easy, because to be able to meditate is the ultimate skill — because it deals with refinement at its root.

C.3 Applying knowledge for your own benefit and the benefit of others

In continuation of the "Learning Process already described in Blessing Seven", Blessing Eight concerns the last two steps of the knowledge acquisition process which involve the application of that knowledge for the good of ourselves and others.

Some people use their knowledge and skills only for their own selfish benefits. Sometimes they are afraid that if they teach all they know to anyone else then they will be giving away their trade secrets or that that other person may overtake them and make more progress than they have done.

The attitude which is the most healthy for rounding off a body of knowledge that you have learned is to use your knowledge *both* for your own benefit and the benefit of others too. Like the example of the College of Surgery with the policy "See One Do One - Teach One" where capable students were not only those who could witness and perform surgery — they were also able to teach surgery to others too! In that way, all your mastery of the knowledge will not be limited to overcoming your own shortcomings — the application of knowledge can also be used to overcome the shortcomings of others.

C.4 How <u>not</u> to instil yourself with "Artfulness in Application"

If you want to learn artfulness in application quickly, you have to make sure that you are not the sort of person who can do nothing better than find fault with the work of others — unless you are training yourself to be a professional critic! If you have done nothing but criticise others, when it comes to your turn to show off your craftsmanship, you will not have the confidence to let others see what you have made or done — for fear they will criticize you in the same way as you have done them. In such a case, you will end up as someone who never achieves anything.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Proverb: He who knows but a single skill. . .

He who knows but a single skill can eke out his livelihood with ease.

D.2 Metaphor: Just as twigs . . .

If you plant a mango tree, the benefit you get from it depends entirely on the amount of fruit. Even though the tree might grow a trunk, branches and leaves — these are no more than precursors for any benefit which may come later. In the same way, even though a person may be learned, this knowledge is no more than a precursor for the benefit that can accrue if the knowledge is applied.

D.3 Ex. Swimology (traditional)

Once a young professor was making a sea voyage. He was a highly educated man with a long tail of letters after his name, but he had little experience of life. In the crew of the ship on which he was traveling was an illiterate old sailor. Every evening the sailor would visit the cabin of the young pro

fessor to listen to him hold forth on many different subjects. He was very impressed with the learning of the young man.

One evening as the sailor was about to leave the cabin after several hours of conversation, the professor asked,"Old man, have you studied geology?"

"What is that,sir?"

"The science of the earth."

"No sir, I have never been to any school or college. I have never studied anything."

"Old man, you have wasted a quarter of your life."

With a long face the old sailor went away. "If such a learned person says so, certainly it must be true," he thought. "I have wasted a quarter of my life."

Next evening again, as the sailor was about to leave the cabin, the professor asked him, "Old man, have you studied oceanography?"

"What is that, sir?"

"The science of the sea."

"No, sir, I have never studied anything."

"Old man, you have wasted half your life."

With a still longer face the sailor went away: "I have wasted half my life; this learned man says so."

Next evening again as the sailor was about to leave the cabin, "Old man, have you studied meteorology?"

"What is that, sir? I have never heard of it."

"The science of the wind, the rain, the weather."

"No sir. As I told you, I have never been to any school. I have never studied anything."

"You have not studied the science of the earth on which you live; you have not studied the science of the sea on which you earn your livelihood; you have not studied the science of the weather which you encounter every day? Old man, you have wasted three-quarters of your life."

The old sailor was very unhappy: "This learned man says that I have wasted three-quarters of my life! Certainly I must have wasted three-quarters of my life.

The next day it was the turn of the old sailor. He came running to the cabin of the young man and cried, "Professor! Have you studied swimology?"

"Swimology? What do you mean?"

"Can you swim, sir?"

"No, I don't know how to swim."

"Professor! You have wasted the *whole* of your life! The ship has struck a rock and is sinking. Those who can swim may reach the nearby shore, but those who cannot swim will drown. I am sorry, professor sir, you have surely lost your life."

You may study all the "-ologies" of the world, but if you don't learn swimology, all your studies are useless. You may read and write books on swimming, you may debate on its subtle theoretical aspects, but how will that help if you refuse to enter the water yourself? You must learn how to swim.

D.4 Ex. SÅlittaka JÅtaka(J.107)

In ancient times, there was a child with polio. His legs were so weak that he couldn't walk anywhere unaided. He had to stay wherever his friends put him. He couldn't even get up. Although his body was deformed, his intelligence was bright. He didn't look down on any subject. The child would practice flicking sand until he could flick sand a long distance very precisely. The boy used his skills to earn favours from others. The boy could flick sand so accurately that he could shoot holes in the leaves of trees above. Not only holes — but he could shoot holes in the shapes of anything he wanted — whether they be the shape of rabbits or tigers or deer. The boy would shoot holes in leaves to the order of the other children in return for sweets. The boy with polio had never studied in school, but through his skill, he had more sweets to eat than the other children every day.

One day the boy was flicking sand on the sand heap for the other children when the king passed by. All the other children ran away, and the boy with polio was left alone. The king came to rest in the shade of the tree by the sandheap and when he looked up, he was surprised to see that almost every leaf of the tree had been perforated in the shape of different animals. The king asked how the tree had come to be that way, and found out that it was due to the skills of the boy with polio. The king thought, "the skills of such a boy should not be wasted at the sandpit." The king happened to have a something on his mind — every time he had a meeting

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of his counsellors, there was a particular counsellor who would interrupt and dominate the discussion regularly wasting the time of everyone in the meeting. The king asked the boy, "if someone were to open their mouth, would you be able to shoot goat dung into their mouth in the same way you shoot sand through leaves?"

The boy said, "It would be a piece of cake." The king had the boy taken into the palace. Those with all health and strength never got the chance to go to the palace, but this poor crippled boy did. Every time there was a meeting, the boy was put behind a curtain in the room. Every time the counsellor in question opened his mouth to speak, the boy flicked goat dung into his mouth. The boy was so fast, that the counsellor didn't even know where the taste in his mouth had come from. The counsellor would want to speak but change his mind as a result every time, because he would have to swallow what was in his mouth. One day, the counsellor had opened his mouth so many times that the boy had used up a whole litre of goat dung. The king felt sorry for the counsellor and was afraid he would get dysentery. He ordered the counsellor to go and wash his mouth out immediately and told him to reduce the amount he said or else in future he would get two litres of goat dung in his mouth! On future occasions, the counsellor had to consider carefully before saying anything in case he fell prey to flying goat dung. As the result of having more effective meetings, the economics of the kingdom improved considerably. The king rewarded the crippled boy by allocated all the money earned in taxes from a certain province to him as pin-money. The cripple became a rich man as the result of a single skill — because he put his mind to perfecting his skill.

Blessing Nine: Artfulness in Usage

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Place of Blessing Nine in the order of things

The Seventh Blessing concerned artfulness in knowledge. We should be enthusiastic about finding any new knowledge either in spiritual or worldly ways as long as it doesn't have any negative implications for the human dignity of ourselves, others or society in general. Once you can avail yourself of such knowledge, then it is a blessing in itself.

The Eighth Blessing concerned artfulness in the application of knowledge or "artfulness in learning skills". We should be enthusiastic about learning any new skills either in spiritual or worldly ways as long as they don't have any negative implications for the human dignity of ourselves, others or society in general. Once you can avail yourself of such skills, then it is also a blessing in itself.

Already mooted in the previous two Blessings has been the difficulty of knowing whether the knowledge or skill we are learning has any negative implications for the human dignity of ourselves, others or society in general. The purpose of the Ninth Blessing is to give us the guidelines we need — to allow us to judge our own behaviour in action and word, so that the way we use our intellectual resources and craftsmanship bring no detriment to society around us or to our spiritual furtherment.

A.2 Objectives of studying 'Artfulness in Usage'

In our consideration of the value of artfulness in usage towards human dignity, we must always consider three levels of description: our own personal human dignity, the human dignity of others and the dignity of the whole economic system in society. Being disciplined or being "artful in usage" has benefits on three levels:

1. Personal Level: Being disciplined protects and furthers one's own human dignity by protecting our health from self-induced illness, reducing possible obstacles in our spiritual vocation (especially those arising from unintentional blunders with the "defilements of action" [kammakilesa] and allowing us to develop our level of virtue from mere "discipline" [vinaya] to "selfdiscipline" [sÈla] which is the foundation for the subsequent development of meditation [samÅdhi] and wisdom [paññÅ]. It is said that being disciplined is the one major difference between humans and savages — thus by preserving our level of discipline we protect ourselves from decline into savagery;

2. Interpersonal Level: Being disciplined protects and furthers others' human dignity by stopping people taking advantage of each other.

3. Social Level: Being disciplined protects and furthers the humanity of the fair economics in our society by promoting compliance with the law and general harmony for society.

Of course it is an advantage for the reader to know about artfulness in usage (or more briefly "discipline") and how to acquire it — but it is not until you *become* a disciplined person that you will really start to gain benefit from this Blessing.

A.3 Knowing where to draw the line

From person to person the intellectual resources and the level of craftsmanship may not be the same — however, the more the knowledge and skills a person has, the more potential damage they can do to themselves, others and society if they have no ethical discretion about how to use that knowledge and skill. Thus it is vitally important that everyone has "virtue" to go hand-in-hand with their knowledge

— specifically the virtue to know the negative implications of any deeds they may do or words they may say. In society in general, we tend tothink that if what we do or say is not illegal then it is acceptable to our human dignity — however, the Law is really only a very loose guideline for what should or should not be done in society. To give a firm example, if a person can perpetrate a murder, but has no witnesses, he cannot be prosecuted in a court of law. Furthermore, the Law from country to country is different — does this mean that the ethics can also be localized? In some countries, the Law might even be undemocratic — so the Law alone doesn't give us sufficient guidelines for the preservation of human dignity at any of the levels of description. More detailed guidelines were provided by the Buddha in the form of a checklist of four items to be considered in order from the first to the last:

1. The Five Precepts: Does the action or speech contradict break the Five Precepts 1. killing; 2. stealing; 3. adultery; 4. telling lies, and; 5. drinking alcohol (*see below*) — i.e. the baseline of humane behaviour? This form of discipline is spiritual discipline, concerning our quality of mind and the quality of mind of those who share society with us. We find that these Five Precepts are at the heart of codes of discipline of many different religions, whether it be the Christian Ten Commandments, Islamic law, the 16 rules of Hindu conduct.

2. The Five Virtues: Does the action or speech contradict the Five Virtues [*pañcadhamma*] of 1. compassion; 2. right-livelihood; 3. sexual-restraint;

4. truthfulness, and; 5. awareness? — *see Blessing Sixteen*. This form of discipline is spiritual discipline, concerning our quality of mind and the quality of mind of those who share society with us.

3. Local Law: Does the action or speech contradict the local law? This form of discipline is worldly or material discipline, concerning our quality of life and the quality of life of those who share society with us.

4. Local Custom: Does the action or speech contradict the local custom? This form of discipline is worldly or material discipline and concerns social harmony and solidarity.

Thus if an action goes against the Five Precepts, even if it doesn't break the Law, it should not be done. Also, even if it doesn't break the law notto do something, but omitting to do something goes against the local custom, perhaps this is a good reason to comply, at least for harmony on the local level (but of course, it should not break the Five Precepts).

B. DEFINITIONS

B.1 Definition: Artfulness in Usage

The root of the Pali word for 'artfulness in usage' or 'discipline' is 'vinaya' comes from two stems '*vi*' and '*ney*'. '*Ney*' means something that leads you. '*Vi*' can mean any of three things: 'good', 'revealed' or 'different'. Thus in compound the definition of the word '*vinaya*' means 'leads you to good' or 'leads you to brightness' or 'leads you to something different'. Leading one to goodness, means that it takes you away from evil. Leading one to revelation means that it allows us to see a person as they really are. Leading one to be different means that it raises one above people in general.

The actual meaning of the word is 'rulesor regulations to restrain ourselves in body and word to avoid causing suffering to ourselves or others'. Notice that '*vinaya*' doesn't restrain the mind directly, but in effect, it has a positive effect on the mind too because bodily action and speech originate in the

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mind. When we can avoid causing suffering to ourselves or others, we set ourselves on the path to goodness, revelation and difference from others in general. '*Vinaya*' will be the virtue that tells us what is appropriate and inappropriate to do or say or look at or eat.

B.2 Definition: Self-Discipline

When people think of Precepts, they often mistakenly think that Precepts are nothing more than prohibitions. In fact the meaning of the Pali word for 'Precepts' i.e. 'sÈla' means 'the norm' or 'cooling'. Precepts mean the level of virtue that is normal for human beings to have. It is a norm that distinguishes men from savages or from animals. It is for this reason that we differentiate '*vinaya*' from 'sÈla' by calling the latter "self-discipline". As we shall see "self-discipline" is the result of training yourself in "discipline". It is a *state of mind* rather than a set of rules to follow.

B.3 The Difference between Discipline & Self-Discipline

Discipline is the means by which we restrain (the manifesting of) unwholesome actions and speech. When one is new to discipline, the mind is usually still reluctant. Many thoughts will go through the mind to protest at the inconvenience of behaving in a disciplined way. Such thoughts do not constitutea breach of discipline because they are not manifest. Apart from protecting the practitioner from degradation of behaviour into any of the Four Defilements of Action [kammakilesa], discipline will gradually channel the mind into the development of "self-discipline". Self-discipline is the attainment of restraint of unwholesome thought as well as unwholesome action and speech. At this point there is no further reluctance in the mind any more. One has managed to be "a teacher to oneself" sufficiently well to be able to police one's body, speech and mind without the need for any further rules or regulations to force such behaviours.

B.4 Different Types of Discipline

There are different sets of codes of conduct which can be used for training in discipline. Some are suitable for laypeople. Others are suitable for monks. They work on the principle of the "principle of limitation" because as Kierkegaard wrote in *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life: Part One* (1843):

> "The more a person limits themselves,the more resourceful he becomes" (p.289-91)

In Buddhism, it is not by arbitrary rules that we limit ourselves — we choose rules that also ensure protection of the human dignity of ourselves, others and society — but it is true that the more intensive the level of practice, the more rules of training we tend to keep.

B.4.1 Discipline for Householders

B.4.1.1 Five Precepts

The Five Precepts [pañca-sÈla] are the basic set of discipline advocated for every Buddhist. The Five Precepts are much older than Buddhism, but were adopted by Buddhism amongst many other religions as the core practice for moral conduct. Elements of the same principles are found in the Ten Commandments, Islamic Law and even Hindu practices. This is because the Five Precepts protect against a person taking advantage of the weaknesses of himself and others. There is nothing that people love more than their own life, their possessions, their spouse and trust. There is nothing that disables people more than the loss of their own clear conscience. These five weaknesses in human relationships are guarded by the Five Precepts. Such weaknesses are not exclusive to Buddhists, but apply for all people in the world, therefore the Five Precepts are the fundemental bedrock of all morality. The Precepts themselves consist of five rules of training:

1. Not to kill living beings
2. Not to steal
3. Not to commit adultery
4. Not to tell lies
5. Not knowingly to drink alcohol or consume intoxicants.

By keeping the Five Precepts people can ensure harmony for society and also prevent many of the roots of suffering. The Precepts bring coolness to the mind and body — there is no burning caused by suffering in body and mind as the result.

The Five Precepts share the same Pali word "pañcasÈla" as the five principles upon which Sukarno founded the Indonesian Constitution — but don't go thinking that Indonesian Law is founded on Buddhist Principles because on closer examination, the five basic principles of the Indonesian Constitution turn out to be something else completely.

The Five Precepts are intended to be kept by Buddhist householders on a daily basis.

B.4.1.2 Eight Precepts

The Eight Precepts are a set of rules of training which expand on the Five Precepts with adjustment of the third and fifth precepts and addition of the sixth, seventh and eighth. The Precepts themselves consist of eight rules of training:

1. Not to kill living beings
2. Not to steal
3. Not to be uncelibate
4. Not to tell lies
5. Not to drink alcohol or consume intoxicants
6. Not to take meals between midday and dawn
7. Not to indulge in romantic entertainment or immodesty
8. Not to be indulgent in one's sleeping habits

They are intended to be kept by Buddhist householders during times of intensified training, especially on meditation retreats or for self-purification on a periodic basis, such as one or twice a week**.** Eight precepts is sometimes called 'uposatha-sÈla' where the Eight Precepts are kept for three days before, during and after one of the quarter moon days. The only real difference is the length of time one expects to keep them. The content is the same but for uposatha-sÈla, usually, one will only keep them on the full moon days with the possibility of one day before for preparation and one day after for debriefing. For Eight Precepts the length of time the precepts are kept has no special duration.

B.4.2 Discipline for Monastics

B.4.2.1 Ten Precepts

The Ten Precepts are a set of rules of training which expand on the Eight Precepts with adjustment of the seventh precept and addition of the tenth. The Precepts themselves consist of ten rules of training:

1. Not to kill living beings
2. Not to steal
3. Not to be uncelibate
4. Not to tell lies
5. Not to drink alcohol or consume intoxicants
6. Not to take meals between midday and dawn
7. Not to indulge in romantic entertainment
8. Not to indulge in immodesty
9. Not to be indulgent in one's sleeping habits
10. Not to handle gold or silver

They are intended to be kept by Buddhist novices on a daily basis

B.4.2.2 Two-Hundred & Twenty-Seven Precepts

As Buddhists train themselves as laypeopleand as monks, Buddhist spiritual discipline can be divided into two parts accordingly: discipline for the homeless [anagÅriyavinaya] and discipline for the householder [agÅriyavinaya]. The monks have special discipline in keeping with their aim to reach an end of defilements within the shortest possible time. For the monastic community, eradication of defilements in the mind is intensive, so the self-discipline of monastics is intensive accordingly. The 227 Precepts are a set of rules of training which expand on the Ten Precepts. They are intended to be kept by fully-ordained Buddhist monks on a daily basis.

C. DISCIPLINE: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

C.1 Components of Five Precepts

In the keeping of Five Precepts, householders often feel guilty when they mistakenly do unwholesome things — they don't know whether it means they have broken their Precepts. Some people accidentally run over a stray dog while they are driving because they happen to be in a hurry and wonder whether it breaks the Precepts. Some women know that they have never taken the possession of others without asking (i.e. they have never stolen) but they wonder if taking money from their husband without asking is breaking the Precepts. The Components of Five Precepts explained below are an attempt to answer this genre of questions.Below you will find descriptions of the factors involved

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in breaking each of the Precepts. All factors must be present in order for the Precept to be broken.:

C.1.1 First Precept: Not Killing

In order to break the Precept of not killing, your action has to consist of five components:

1. The victim must really be alive: Suppose there is a certain dog we have hated for a long time. Every time we see it it has barked us, chased us and bitten us. We think that the dog is alive, but in fact it has already died. Someone else had just shot the dog dead that very morning. It is lying dead in the road, but we were not to know that. Seeing it lying in the road we think to ourselves, "This time we can get our own back on the dog," and we reverse the car over the dog. In this case we have not managed to break the Precepts because it had already died long ago of other causes.

2. We are aware that the victim is alive: Sometimes we misunderstand that an animal is already dead, so you think that a cremation is in order. You throw the body of the animal into the flames

— but it is not really dead. However we were not to know that. This time the animal does really die! Again, such an action does not break the Precepts.

3. We have the intention to kill the victim: Supposing you run over an animal killing it accidentally, because there is no intention to kill (you could not avoid it), again the Precepts are not broken.

4. We put in the effort to kill the victim: You have to put in the effort to kill, if you are to break the Precepts. You have to really aim the gun and pull the trigger if you are to create the necessary conditions to break the Precepts.

5. The victim dies in the way intended: As the result of our efforts, the animal must really die if the Precepts are to be broken. If you shoot to kill, but the result is only to break an arm or leg, the Precepts are not yet broken.

C.1.2 Second Precept: Not Stealing

In order to break the Precept of not stealing, your action has to consist of five components:

1. There is an owner who is possessive about that object: If you are in the forest where there are objects of which no-one is the clear owner it is all right to take them.

2. The perpetrator knows the object has someone possessive of it: People can even be possessive of a favourite rag. If for some reason you cannot find the rag you usually use, often you feel irritated or angry. In the past there was an agreement between market gardeners as follows — whatever they plant, whether it may be bananas or sugar cane or aubergines or chillis, if anyone walks through the field and feels they want to eat some of the crop, they are allowed to help themselves to as much as they can eat, but it is prohibited to take any in your pockets or in a bag to eat in the home. It is said that there is only one eater of stolen food who steals food and takes it home to eat and that is a stray dog.

3. The perpetrator has the intention to steal: Even the intention to steal starts to cloud the mind.

4. The perpetrator makes the effort to steal the object: This means trying to find devious strategies and actually putting those strategies into practice.

5. The perpetrator obtains the object in keeping with his intention.

C.1.3 Third Precept: Not Committing Adultery

In order to break the Precept of not committing adultery, your action has to consist of four components:

1. The object of the affection must be a man or woman who is prohibited: So what do we mean by a partner who is prohibited? There are four sorts of women who are prohibited to men

- married women;
- women who are still in the care of their parents;
- women who lifestyle prohibits sexual intercourse, such as nuns or female prisoners.
- women related to us such as our mother or

our sister or our daughter and three types of men prohibited to women:

- any man who is not your own husband;
- men whose lifestyle prohibits sexual intercourse such as monks.

- men who are related to us

2. The perpetrator has the intention to have sexual intercourse with that person;
3. The perpetrator makes the effort to have sexual intercourse (e.g. removes his clothes)
4. There is a joining of the sexual organs.

In fact there is no man or women born in the world who has no connections except for the one who is already married to you. No-one else is the legitimate subject for sexual intercourse — not in the bar nor the night club — even prostitutes are prohibited (consider respect for human dignity and fair economics and you will understand why) — there are no such things as 'wayside flowers' free to be picked by anyone.

C.1.4 Fourth Precept: Not Telling Lies

In order to break the Precept of not telling lies, your speech has to consist of four components:

1. Saying something that is not true
2. Having the intention to misrepresent the truth
3. Making the effort to misrepresent the truth.
4. The listener understands what you have said.

The damage of lying comes from the chain reaction it causes: inorder to lie to someone once, you have to lie to yourself first three times. The first time you lie to yourself is in order to prepare yourself to tell a lie. You have to make up the story and convince yourself first. The second time you have to lie to yourself is when you meet the person who you are going to lie to. Thirdly, you have to remember what lies you have told to who, because next time you meet them you have to tell them things consistent with that first lie, or else your dishonesty will be discovered. If the lie is an important one, sometimes you will have to remember it for years. The result of being a liar is that eventually you will lose your self-confidence because you have lied to yourself until you have become used to it. At the end of your life, your memory becomes so blurred to the truth that you end up suffering from senile dementure as the result of the mental hypocrisy you have accumulated throughout the course of your life.

C.1.5 Fifth Precept: Not Drinking Alcohol

In order to break the Precept of not drinkingalcohol, your action has to consist of five components:

1. The liquid drunk must be alcohol
2. The person must know that it is alcohol.
3. The person must have the intention to drink it
4. The person must make the effort to drink it
5. The alcohol must be swallowed.

For the purposes of the fifth Precept, not only alcohol and heedlessness-inducing intoxicants are prohibited, but also such drugs such as heroine, opium, maruana etc.. If you consider tobacco from the point of view of this Precept in an objective way, you will find that smoking tobacco must be avoided too. Those who become addicted to anything like tobacco will find themselves in difficulty when they come to practice meditation on a retreat where there is no opportunityto smoke. Some people say that they smoke without being addicted — and they have been smoking without addiction continuously for the last ten years!

C.1.6 Seriousness of Breaking Precepts

In addition, breaking a Precept may be more or less serious dependent on an additional three factors:

1. the amount of effort invested in breaking the Precept: the more the effort invested in a deed, the more serious is the breaking of that Precept. To kill a large animal is more serious than to kill a small animal because it takes more effort.

2. the gratitude or ingratitude in breaking the Precept: the more an action expresses ingratitude, the greater will be the seriousness of breaking the Precept. Wringing the neck of the cock which crowed to wake you up every morning at dawn to go to school until you got yourself a university degree is worse than wringing the neck of another cock you have never known before. Thus one should be very careful not to disregard the debt of gratitude owed to others. If that person or animal is one that is useful — especially if it has been helpful to us personally in the past.

3. The strength of the intention behind breaking the Precept: if you kill an ant by pulling each leg out

one by one and then killing it, it is worse than killing the ant outright in one fell swoop. To kill a mosquito by slapping it is not as bad as putting a candle flame to the wings of the mosquito and leaving it in pain to wriggle to death for the next three days. If a person kills with vengeance and cruelty, it is more serious than for killing out of vengeance in cold blood. If someone kills someone with a single shot, it is not so bad as someone who tortures someone to death. Thus even in the past, they would try to find quick ways of execution so that they could reduce the evil accrued by the executioner. (Best of all is not to have to kill the prisoner at all).

C.2 Components of Eight Precepts

C.2.1 Differences between Five and Eight Precepts

The following differences are found between the components of Precepts shared between the Five and Eight Precepts:

The Third Precept: Unchastity : The first difference between the Five Precepts and the Eight Precepts concerns the Third Precept. Immoral sexual relations [kÅmesu micchÅchÅra] are replaced by abstention from any sexual relations (brahmacariyÅ — lit. Brahma-faring). For the Third Precept of the Eight Precepts there are only two components:

1. You have the intention of having sexual relations.
2. There is a joining of the sexual organs. In this case it makes no difference whether your partner is your husband or wife. It will cause your Precepts to be broken. If either or both husband and wife are training themselves in the Eight Precepts it is usual for them to sleep apart. This form of training is important because for most people in the world who lack control over their own minds, for most of the time, their thoughts and action are dictated by the defilements of sensual indulgence. The five precepts already teaches you to be contented with your spouse. The Eight Precepts goes further with this training by offering sixth, seventh and eighth Precepts to help play a supporting role in the reduction of attachment to sensual stimuli.

The Fifth Precept: Not Drinking Alcohol : Another difference between Five Precepts and Eight Precepts concerns the fifth Precept. For Five Precepts the fifth Precept has five components, but for the Eight Precepts, there are only four components as follows:

1. The liquid drunk must be alcohol
2. The person must have the intention to drink it
3. The person must make the effort to drink it
4. The alcohol must be swallowed.

You will see that for the Eight Precepts it is no longer necessary to know that the drink is alcohol in order to cause the fifth Precept to be broken.

C.2.2 Sixth Precept: Refraining from Untimely Eating

It is commonly asked by housewives who keep the Eight Precepts whether they are allowed to taste the food they are preparing for their husbands in the evening. Sometimes to taste and to eat food are not the same (except for the person who tastes half a plate of food and still doesn't know the flavour!)

1. It must be midday of one day to the dawn of the next: The dawn signals the changing of the day for Buddhists — technically the earliest time that if you go out into the open, and stretch out your arm, you can see the lines on your hand clearly without having to use a torch or the time at dawn when you can first distinguish the leaves of trees as being of different shades of green.

2. The substance eaten is solid food (chewable): This second component has some exceptions i.e. chewable food that is allowed. Exceptions include refined sugar, sugar cane juice, tamarinds, embolic myrobalan, nutgall or pickled ginger. For those who might have dietary problems if their stomach is completely empty, cheese or butter is allowed (but not cheese sandwiches!)

3. The effort is made to eat the food
4. The food is swallowed.

If all four of these components are present then the

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sixth Precept will be broken.The point of keeping the sixth precept is to remove another possible risk of sleepiness as a hindrance to one's meditation practice by avoiding a heavy evening meal. If we eat too much, it will give us more energy than we can use and this contributes to ease of sexual arousal. If you were to miss a meal once a week by forgoing an evening meal, you will find that the excess food will be burned up.

C.2.3 Seventh Precept: Not indulging in entertainment or immodesty

Indulging in entertainment means specifically: singing, dancing or playing musical instruments yourself, watching others doing the same (excepting the national anthem or music in honour of the monarch). Immodesty means wearing perfume, jewelry, flowers or makeup (except talcum powder for medicinal purposes). Some people ask if they can watch the television when keeping the eight precepts — the answer is that you have to be selective about what you watch. You can watch news but don't go watching a cabaret or certain sorts of advertising. You have to avoid contact with cosmetics that are meant for beautification instead of for health. You shouldn't wear perfume, make-up, flowers, hair dye. Wearing talcum powder should just be to prevent athlete's foot or abrasion — not for beautification. The components of this seventh precept are any of the following:

1. Playing musical instruments, dancing or singing romantic songs yourself.
2. Watching entertainment consisting of singing, dancing or romantic music.

or all of the following:

1. There are cosmetics or perfume
2. The reason is not because of poor health
3. You wear the cosmetics or perfume

C.2.4 Eighth Precept: Not engaging in Indolent Sleeping Habits

The following are the components of the eighth precept:

1. The sleeping place is large or high
2. You know that the sleeping place is large or high
3. Sitting or lying down on that place

You will notice that not only lying on a soft mattress is forbidden but also sitting on such a mattress, because they contribute to making the mind wander.The softer the mattress on which you sleep, the less you feel like getting up in the morning. As you sleep without mindfulness, it will start to undermine the purity of your third precept. However, nowadays houses commonly have sofas which are soft. If you were to be strict, sitting on a sofa would be forbidden, but for the sake of manners, it is better to accept others hospitality than to take all the cushions off the sofa and throw them away. At the same time we should take good care of our presence of mind. We have to think of both our Precepts and the appropriateness in any situation. Sometimes hotels have nowhere but beds upon which to sleep. In other places it may be too cold to sleep on the floor without anything under you in the way of insulation. Thus consider appropriateness in each situation.

C.3 Monastic Discipline

C.3.1 The Objectives behind Monastic Discipline (Vin.iii.20, A.v.70)

The Buddha created the monastic discipline for ten reasons:

1 To maintain peace in the monastic community;
2 To restrain stubborn and shameless disciples;
3 To maintain the happiness of the monastic community;
4 To maintain the happiness of monks who love discipline;
5 To give protection from defilements that might increase in the present time (for example if monks are allowed to speak one-to-one with females, there may be many new problems resulting);
6 To give protection from defilements that might increase in the future (for example if monks are allowed to speak one-to-one with females, later it may lead the monk to spend all their time thinking of that female.);

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7. To instil faith in the public who are not yet faithful;
8. To increase the faith of the public who are already faithful;
9. To maintain the Teaching of the Buddha steadfast;
10. To maintain discipline itself;

C.3.2 Components of Monastic Discipline

Although it would be possible to give the components for each of the 227 monastic Precepts (same principles apply as for those of the Five and Eight Precepts) there is insufficient space to do so. However, to demonstrate that monastic discipline is more than just the code of conduct, the four components of monastic practice are described below:

C.3.2.1 Restraint according to monastic code of conduct [pÅÊimokkhasaÔvara]: The 'pÅÊimokkha' is the set of rules of training which the Buddha gave to monks for the restraint of their bodily actions and speech. As soon a monk ordains, whether he knew the rules or not previously, it is immediately his duty to make sure he knows and abides by the 227 rules of conduct. The 227 Rules therein can be divided into three degrees of seriousness:

1. Rules entailing defeat [pÅrÅjika]: There are four rules in this category: killing people, stealing, sexual intercourse and claims of mental attainments. Any monk who infringes the rules of this category immediately in no longer a monk any more. Whether he is disrobed or not, he is no longer a monk any more. It is the heaviest infringement of monastic conduct possible.

2. Rules entailing an initial and subsequent meeting of the order [saÌghÅdisesa]: This category of rules of training is less serious than the previous, but can still be considered evil and coarse. When a monk breaks one of these rules, they must confess their transgression to the rest of the monastic community. If a monk who has infringed such a rule still has not admitted his fault to the rest of the monastic community, then he is still not returned to purity. The reason for this is to show that you are aware of your fault and will not do it again. Only then can the monk be re-admitted to the monastic community.

3. Rules entailing confession: These include "Rules entailing confession" [pÅcittiya], "Rules entailing forfeiture and confession " [nissaggiya-pÅcittiya]; "Rules entailing acknowledgment" [pÅÊidesanÈya]; "Minor Transgressions" [dukkaÊa], and;"Wrong Speech" [dubbhÅsita]. For these infringements of the monastic conduct there is no need for monks to confess in front of the monastic assembly. By confessing to another monk the offending monk can be returned to purity again. In fact, confession doesn't wash away the evil caused by infringement of the discipline, but it helps to give the monk the mindfulness not to infringe the same rule of conduct again. Confession is like the healing of an open wound — but the scar still remains. Best of all is never to break the rules of monastic conduct.

C.3.2.2 Restraint of the senses [indriyasaÔvara] This means specifically the restraint of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin contact and mind. Monks should not look at inappropriate things: if a monk sees a couple petting at the side of the road, he shouldn't stay and watch them but should quickly go somewhere else. Monks should not listen to inappropriate things — there is no need to go listening to gossip that doesn't concern him. Monks should not smell things that are inappropriate or taste things that are inappropriate: mostly this concerns food and not just eating things for the taste. Monks should not touch or have skin contact with things that are inappropriate: not using rubbing creams just for the smoothness of the skin or to take pleasure in touching soft and comfortable things. Monks should not use their mind to think of inappropriate things. In other words monks should not find pleasure or displeasure from the use of the senses.

C.3.2.3 Purity of livelihood [ÅjÈvaparisuddhi] Monks have to make their living, but not by cultivating fields or earning a wage. The proper way of making a living for a monk is to go on almsround.

All monks know this but some think that almsround is inconvenient because sometimes alms are donated, sometimes not. To set oneself up as a fortune teller or a seller of lottery tickets somehow seems more convenient! — but it is not pure livelihood for monks. Lotteries are a form of gambling and gambling is one of the roads to ruin. Thus if monks encourage and make their living out of lotteries or lottery numbers, don't go supporting them

— they are in breach of monastic discipline. Fortune telling by monks is no better than lottery tips. Fortune telling is a pseudo-science of statistics and is not grounded on truth. Thus fortune telling is a sort of guesswork which is not much better than lying.

C.3.2.4 Reflection on the Requisites [paccaya-paccavekkhaÁa]**:** This is the practice by monks of recollection or reflection on the four different sorts of requisites before use. The requisites of clothing, food, shelter and medicine are the basic needs of life. Monks must reflect that the requisites are nothing more than needs to keep the body going, in the same way as fuel keeps a car mobile. Most people use the requisites of life without distinguishing between need and want — but for monks the proper practice is to use the requisites to train oneself in the consideration of moderation.

D. ATTAINMENT OF SELF-DISCIPLINE

D.1 Levels of Avoidance

Properly practised, discipline will give rise to self-discipline. Where discipline is the avoidance of unwholesomeness by external means, self-discipline is the avoidance of unwholesomeness by internal means. To distinguish between the two, we identify three different ways in which unwholesomeness can be avoided [virati]:

1. Avoidance on the spur of the moment [*sampattavirati*]: this is a form of discipline whereby one refrains from unwholesome action or speech spontaneously without having requested any Precepts in advance. If you see a fish washed up on the beach and you decide on the spur of the moment to throw it back into the water out of compassion, rather than killing — this is the sort of avoidance which we call 'avoidance on the spur of the moment'. Perhaps you would turn in a lost wallet with all of the money instead of keeping it for yourself, for fear of being accused of stealing. Such avoidance of evil occurs as the result of fear and shame of evil or the consequences of evil [hiri-ottappa];

2. Avoidance having requested the Precepts [samadÅnavirati]: this is a form of discipline whereby one refrains from unwholesome action or speech for fear of breaking Precepts one has previously requested from a monk. Some people simply make a vow to keep the Precepts each day in front of the shrine. Even if someone were to give you a bottle of beer, because you have taken the five precepts that day, you will turn down the offer for fear of breaking your vow;

3. Avoidance through transcending [samuccedavirati]: this is a form of self-discipline whereby one no longer has any temptation to do evil, because the mind has reached a stage of purity and transcendental attainment whereby no unwholesome intention can arise in the mind any more to drive unwholesome speech or action. This is absolute avoidance of evil of the type achieved by those who have attained the stages of Buddhist sainthood.

D.2 Refraining from the Tenfold Path of Unwholesomeness

The result of practising discipline until attainingself-discipline is to remove oneself from the influence of the Tenfold Path of Unwholesomeness [akusala-dhammapatha], the first four of which can be recognized as the Four Defilements of Action [kammakilesa]:

1 ***Killing:*** e.g. killing people, fishing, hunting and cruelty to animals

2 ***Stealing:*** e.g Thieving, mugging, shoplifting, corruption and deceit

3 ***Committing adultery:*** unfaithfulness to one's spouse, rape, pre-marital sex

4 ***Lying:*** eg. telling lies, exaggeration, forgery

5. ***Malicious or divisive gossip:*** e.g. gossip in a

way to turn one person against another, mud-slinging

6. ***Harsh or insulting speech:*** e.g. name calling, swearing

7. ***Idle chatter:*** e.g. purposeless babble, raving, boasting

8. ***Covetousness:*** e.g. considering to get something one wants in a dishonest way, coveting others' possessions

9. ***Vengeful Thought:*** e.g. wanting to get revenge or get your own back

10. ***False View:*** e.g. thinking good and evil to be nonexistent, thinking you have no debt of gratitude to your parents, thinking death to be the end of the story, not believing in the Law of Karma

and to establish oneself in the Tenfold Path of Wholesomeness [kusaladhammapatha]:

1. absolutely not killing.
2. absolutely not stealing
3. absolutely not committing adultery
4. absolutely not lying
5. absolutely not gossiping
6. absolutely not speaking harshly.
7. absolutely not idle chatter
8. absolutely not thinking to take the possession of others
9. absolutely remove yourself from wrongfulness
10. absolutely possession of Right View

E. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

E.1 Metaphor: Vinaya to knowledge is as a scabbard to a sword

Even if you have theoretical knowledge and experience, you need to have an extra virtue to protect you from using that knowledge in the wrong way — that virtue is self-discipline. Without self-discipline, you will apply your knowledge to do immoral things. The people of old had sayings that:

> "If a sharp sword lacks a scabbard, it can harm even the owner. If a hand-grenade lacks a firing pin it can kill even the owner. A person of knowledge and experience can come to an unfortunate end, if he lacks self-discipline"

E.2 Metaphor: Value of clay is in the value of the mold

The people of old remarked that a humble lump of clay in the middle of a field is a strange thing. Unshaped, in the middle of that field it is without worth. However, if you put it into moulds of various sorts, it acquires worth depending on the nature of the mould. If you put the clay in the mould for a plate or a cup, when it comes out of the mould, it has acquired some value — it is something you can use on the table. If you put it into the mould for a doll, then the resulting doll is of value and can be used to decorate the house. If you put the clay into the mould for a Buddha image, the clay is suddenly transformed into something superior to household use, but something to be the object of respect for all who see it. Thus you can see that the better the mould you subject the clay to, the more value it acquires. When we come to talk about people instead of clay, we find that in the same way, the thing that gives people their value is the self-discipline they abide by. The greater the degree of self-discipline, the ewmore they are worth.

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Blessing Ten: Artfulness in Speech

A.INTRODUCTION

Some might think the words coming from our mouths are relatively unimportant when compared to the artfulness in "knowledge", "application" and "usage" discussed in the previous blessings of this grouping. However, when it comes to "making oneself useful to society"one cannot avoid communicative skills for team-building and for passing one's knowledge on to others.

A.1 Buddhism founded on the tenet of correct speech

Furthermore, it is only due to the care taken in "communicative skills" that the Buddha's Teaching can have been passed down across the space of 2,500 years to the present day and still inspire people. Words can be true but they may not be pleasant to listen to. If words are both true and polite, the ancients said that they were both worth listening to and also worth hearing. If words, apart from being both true and polite were also useful, the ancients said that such words apart from being worth believing and worth hearing are also worthy of respect — it is hard to find any religion which analyses speech to such depth.

A.2 Verbal karma easier to produce than Physical karma

If you compare the possibilities for doing and saying good things, you find that the possibilities for good speech are almost unlimited, more than what we can do with the body. You can really do many more good deeds with your speech than your actions or if you make the mistake of doing evil, you can do much more evil with your speech than with your body. This is the reason why the Buddha had to give the art of speaking its own separate blessing, because of all there is to be studied.

A.3 Why one mouth is ample

Without understanding the principles of artful speech, we are wont to say too much. The people of old would teach small children the way to look at yourself in the mirror. They would say, don't go looking at how beautiful or handsome you are — because before long old age will rob you of all these things. Take a good look at your own face. You will notice that even though your eyes have only one function, to look, nature has given you two. You will notice that even though your ears have only one function, to hear, nature has also given you two. You will notice that even though your nostrils have only one function, to breathe, nature has given you two. However, your mouth has two functions, to eat and to talk, but nature has given you only one mouth. It is as if nature is telling us to use our mouth in moderation — not to eat too much and not to say too much!

B. UNWHOLESOME SPEECH

From our study of self-discipline in Blessing Nine, we already know to avoid the different sorts of un-wholesome speech described in the Tenfold Path of Unwholesomeness [akusaladhammapatha] —

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these go beyond lying to enumerate no less than four different sorts of unwholesome speech which should be avoided:

1. Telling lies
2. Divisive Speech
3. Harsh Speech
4. Idle Chatter

B.1 Telling Lies

Telling lies means saying or writing words that are untrue in order to take advantage of someone else. As this subject has already been dealt with in Blessing Nine, no further detail will be repeated here.

B.2 Divisive Speech

Divisive speech or malicious gossip is speaking divisively to set one person against another. There are four components to malicious gossip:

1. There is someone to set against one another;
2. You have the intention to set one side against the other.
3. You make the effort to speak divisively;
4. You manage to make yourself understood;

The amount of evil involved in speaking divisively depends on severalfactors:

1. The Debt of Gratitude between the Perpetrator and the Victim: If you speak in such a way as to cause your own parents' marriage to break up or to set up one of your teachers against another or to set one monk against another, the evil will be very heavy.The degree to which the victims are divided: If the victims are completely unable ever to get back together again, the evil will be very heavy.

2. The Strength of the Intention behind wanting to cause a division: The stronger the divisive intention, the heavier will be the evil.

3. The amount of effort put in to making a division. The more the effort the heavier the evil

B.3 Idle Chatter

Idle chatter is speaking purposelessly just to pass the time. There are two components to idle chatter:

1. To have the intention to talk about something meaningless: Meaningless words are the sort of words that don't lead a conversation anywhere.
2. Speaking those meaningless words

The seriousness of retribution of idle chatter depends on the importance of the meaningfulness that you impede be speaking. Even those who always speak in a joking way that lacks seriousness don't have to wait for next life to see the results of their misdeeds — no-one will take them seriously. The amount of evil involved in idle chatter depends on several factors:

1. Amount of chatter: The heaviness of the retribution depends on whether you chatter a lot or a little.

2. How much the speaker is believed: The more others are taken in by what we say, the worse will be the retribution.
3. The strength of the intention: The stronger the intention the worse the retribution.

B.4 Harsh Speech

Harsh speech includes swearing or insultingothers to the degree that it upsets them. Harsh speech even includes sarcasm and sarcastic comparisons.There are three components to harsh speech:

1. There is someone to insult
2. The speaker has the angry intention to insult that person
3. The speaker gets down to insulting that person

The amount of evil involved in speaking harshly depends on severalfactors:

1. The Debt of Gratitude between the Perpetrator and the Victim: If you speak in such a way as to insult your own parents or teachers, the evil will be very heavy.The evil is also heavy if the victim is of high mental attainment.

2. Whether the insult is to their face or behind their back. An insult to someone's face is worse in its retribution than an insult behind their back.
3. The strength of bad intention behind the insult. The stronger the bad intention, the worse will be the retribution.
4. The amount of effort behind the insult

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B.5 Retribution of insulting those of virtue

There are eleven forms of disasters befalling monks who (unfoundedly) verbally abuse others who have already attained the stages of sainthood:

1. failing to attain the due mental attainments;
2. falling away from the previous mental attainments;
3. their Sadhamma will become clouded;
4. will delude themselves into thinking they have already attained Sadhamma;
5. will become discontented with pursuing the Brahma-faring;
6. will commit monastic transgressions;
7. will give up the training and fall back into the low (household) life:
8. will be struck down by grave illness;
9. will be struck down by madness or mental distraction;
10. will commit mortal blunders, and;
11. has the hell realms as an afterlife destination.

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Thus if at all possible, whether concerning a monk or not, never be someone to find fault in others. Always try to look for the good in others. You may notice the weaknesses of others. Observe them, remember them but don't use them as the subject of conversation. If you are always immersed in the good deeds of others then even if you try to think of evil things you will be unable to. You won't be tempted to find fault with that person or that person to the degree that you end up finding fault with people who have no fault.

B.6 Disadvantage of saying too much

Most people in the world believe that they are men of principle. However, when it comes to speaking, many find that they just say what they feel like. If people *do* have a governing principle about the things they say, then usually they just try to say the things that are pleasing for the other person to hear. The trouble with such a principle is that people will always say what is *easiest* to say instead of saying the things that *need* to be said. Such a principle, when you come to speech at the level of politicians or those in power will impede the progress of the country because politicians are always saying what is easiest to say instead of speaking out about the things in society which ought to be changed.

If one has no clear principles then the more you speak, the more damage you do. The people of old had the saying that, "The more you say the more trouble you create." The reason is that when we have already said all that is beneficial and necessary to say and we keep on speaking then the next things to come out of our mouth are worthless or harmful speech such as gossip, slander, abuse, chatter and lies. Thus the people of old said, "keep what you have to say to mimimum and you will mimimize your problems. However if you refuse to speak at all then no-one understands you!" Thus we all have to say something, but for our own benefit we should clearly understand the nature of speech and the principles of artful speech that is beneficial so say so that we can be confident in selecting the things we say or keep to ourselves.

C. ARTFUL SPEECH

C.1 Definition

By artful speech we mean speech that has been carefully filtered and distilled by the mind as good, before it is allowed to pass our lips. It is not only speech that is better than nothing. It is speech that has been carefully selected by many criteria. It must be good from every viewpoint — so good that it cannot have any fault found in it. The reason why we must be careful with our speech is that however good our intentions if we say something in the wrong way we can still upset the people around us because they cannot see what we are thinking. All they can pick up is the words by which we express those intentions.

C.2 Components of speech

From the meaning communicated by the things people say we can identify three major components:

1. ***The Intention behind the Words:*** You can see whether the intention behind the things someone is saying is based on greed (e.g. they would like to get something from someone), hatred (e.g. in order to try to harm someone) or delusion (e.g. out of the envy of someone). These are all dam-

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aging forms of speech. If speech is used in a good way then the intention must be good. Good speech may be said out of compassion.

2. The Sort of Words Chosen: The more true they are the less false they are. The more polite speech is the less rude it is and vice versa. If the usefulness of words is reduced then they become more superfluous. Thus you can classify the speech of anyone in the world in terms of these three variables no matter what language it is spoken in:

1. True or Untrue
2. Polite or Rude
3. Useful or SuperfluousWords are either true or false.

3. The Occasion Chosen to say them: Sometimes this means whether what is said is appropriate to the time available and the place where it is said.

C.3 Qualities of artful speech

Applying the general components of speech toartful speech, we find that there are five components. If speech is truly good it must be good to five levels. It is not like a one-star hotel which is better than a hotel with no stars. If we are truly principled in the things we say, then every word we say must be 'five star'. If it is any less, we will not let it pass our lips.:

1. Speech must always be based on the intention of compassion: If the intention behind our speech is not compassion for the hearer then those words are better not said. Think for example of the sort of things you say when you are angry with someone and you will see that if you are angry its better to keep your mouth closed.

2. Speech must be true: (*sort of words spoken*) Supposing we would like someone to do a good deed (i.e. we have compassion for them) but to get them to do so we tell a white lie then it is no longer artful speech. Some people would like to cheer up a child so they say "Oh! Here comes the most precious boy in the world!" This could not yet be counted as artful speech — it is no more than words to fool children. The same thing even goes for telling "white lies" to fool people into doing beneficial things or the meaningless words exchanged between people in love.

3. Speech must be polite (*sort of words spoken*): If it is not polite it can never be artful speech. It is speech which ought to stay in the market place.

4. Speech must be useful (*sort of words spoken*): It should not something be said just to float on the breeze. Does it create benefit by making the mind of the speaker and the listener brighter? Does it create benefit both in this lifetime and the next? This doesn't mean that we tell lies for our own benefit but by doing so we take advantage of others. Both speaker and listener must benefit as the result of the words spoken. Why bother telling someone that Mr. So-and-so is involved in corruption when everyone throughout the town already knows it to be a fact.

5. Speech must be at the appropriate time and occasion (the occasion chosen to say them): Even if you say the right thing but it is at the wrong time then you cannot consider it to be artful speech. You might want to give your husband or wife or friend a useful piece of criticism but if you do it in front of their boss it turns advice into a disgrace for that person. If you want to give your boss a warning you have to choose the appropriate time or else it might be seen as insult.

C.4 Special Considerations when giving criticism

The subject of appropriate occasion is something that is very hard to judge. In societies where there must be quality control and there does need to be evaluation and criticism of sloppy practices, then often one cannot wait for the right opportunity to come along by accident. In such a case you have to do your best to *create* the opportunity. Apart from keeping to all the five principles already mentioned, there are two extra considerations which you should bear in mind which can help to create favourable circumstances for giving criticism:

1. ***Praise them before you criticise them:*** A piece of criticism may take three pieces of praise to balance up the good feeling lost. The praise should always come first. Don't forget that others have feelings too and even if someone has made a lot of faults you shouldn't criticise them for any

more than two faults per day or else you may have a resignation on your hands.

2. Smile when you give the criticism: Don't criticise out of anger.

If you ever say something to someone and you are surprised that it makes them angry, try checking the words that you said using the 'five-star' measure of artful speech mentioned above. If you do not filter your use of words carefully, then your wordsmay cause harm to others. On other occasions, like a cup and a saucer must be of a matching quality, sometimes situations require words of a matching quality too. Sometimes it is good to speak in a way that is polite, but sometimes a situation doesn't require it because in some *exceptional* circumstances, five star language is not appreciated.

C.5 Those who don't appreciate artful speech

It is not as if you should speak in the most polite possible way to every person you meet. Some people cannot stand to hear polite language and may even criticize you because of it. They hear someone speaking clearly and accuse that person of being 'affected'. In such cases you might need to lower the grade of politeness of the language you use to make your language more direct, to shock the person into awareness. However, the rest of the four components of good speech must remain intact. The following sort of people might need to hear direct speech:

1. Those who have a superiority complex or like to pretend that everyone is equal: Those who think they are God's gift to the world. Such people will not profit from flowery speech. Sometimes they need to be shocked by the words they hear in order to change themselves for the better.

2. Those whose mind is blinded to the virtues of the speaker by their lack of faith for that person: This is especially true if someone's mind is still attached to practices that are diametrically opposed to the ones you are advocating. Thus you can speak flowery words until you are red in the face and they will still not be inspired by your words. Even so you must not give up trying to help such people!

3. Those who are in the midst of depression: For such people, flowery words are of no more use than flute music to a buffalo.

C.6 Praiseworthy Talk

In Buddhism, the most useful sort of talk istalk of virtue by one who exemplifies the virtue they are talking about. The Buddha taught that ten types of conversation which are praiseworthy are:

1. one who wants little and talks on wanting little [appiccha];
2. one who is contented and talks on contentment [santuÊÊhi];
3. one who is loves seclusion and talks on seclusion [paviveka];
4. one who loves solitude and talks on solitude [asaÔsagga];
5. one who strives energetically and talks on energetic striving [viriya];
6. one who is self-disciplined and talks on self-discipline [sÈla];
7. one who has attained concentration and talks on concentration [samÅdhi];
8. one who has attained wisdom and talks on wisdom [paññÅ];
9. one who is has attained liberation and talks on liberation [vimutti], and;
10. one who is has attained seeing and knowing of liberation and talks on seeing and knowing of liberation [vimuttiñÅÁadassana].

C.7 Characteristics of a peace envoy

One of the most useful applications of artful speech is to make the world a more peaceful place. Whenever there is conflict in society the reasons for people to do evil things are multiplied manyfold. If we ever have the opportunity to encourage people to live together in peace and harmony it is something very meritorious for us to do. Anyone who is fitting to be an envoy of this sort should have eight characteristics which we should learn and train ourselves in so that we may be ready if ever we have the opportunity to take on this duty. In the future, no matter how many lifetimes we are born for we will always have friends and relatives who are peaceful and harmonious:

1. You must be able to listen to others opinions and not refuse their point of view: Some people like to hear only the sound of their own voice. They don't let others get a word in edgeways. Of course they can never find anyone to listen to them. Before becoming a good speaker you must train yourself to listen to other people first. Whether what another person is saying is right or wrong, at least give them the chance to say what they have to say and in that way you will be able to pick up the jist of what they have to say.

2. When you do speak, you must be able to capture your listener's attention and hold it: That doesn't mean just spending all your time listening to what others have to say but when it comes to your turn to speak then you should see to it that what you are saying is listened to. Don"t go speaking in a way that is irritating so that no one can listen to you for long.

3. Know how to set the boundaries for what you have to say to the minimum: If you are not able to limit the scope of what you have to say then it is like driving a cart along to chase a rabbit. This is what it is always like if the objective of what you have to say is not clear. There will be no end to what you have to say. Political negotiations will go on for seven days and seven nights and still reach no conclusion.

4. You must be able to remember what you have to say: Never use a forgetful person as your emissary.

5. Understand the detail of everything you have to say: It is not enough simply to be able to memorize the details.

6. Having the ability to make others understand what you have to say: This really takes a lot of ability. You must be artful in the use of metaphor and artful speech.

7. You must be skilled in selecting to say only useful things and cutting out the rest.

8. By habit you must be someone who is not fond of starting arguments: Never send anyone with a short temper as your ambassador unless you are planning to start a war.

Finally, in the words of the Buddha

> "An ambassador is one who even in the company of the harsh-spoken, can remain unscathed and unruffled, makes no mistake in his use of words, doesn't conceal information, has the ability to alleviate the doubts of others and who is not angered by questioning."
>
> (Vin. Culavagga 7/201)

C.8 Buddhist Principles of Public Speaking

There are many different recipes for success for public speaking in the world — including those of the Toastmasters or Carnegie, but in general, they do not have principles which deviate far from the principals already outlined above — except for aspects of the delivery. Buddhist principlesof public speaking emphasize the following components:

1. Sound body: This includes all aspects of non-verbal communication

2. Sound speech: This means speech that is pleasant to the ears, eyes and mind of the listener:

1. Being pleasant to the ear means possessing "Five Star" speech and includes the use of words, use of intonation and the rhythm of what is said.

2. Being pleasant to the eye means the speaker having a pleasant personality and use of expression.

3. Being pleasant to the mind includes appropriate choice of subject, being prepared, having one's thoughts organized and structuring the speech into three parts: an introduction, main body and conclusion.

3. Sound mind: Exemplifying the virtues which you talk about.

Buddhist public speaking is not just talking to be understood or believed, but for the enjoyment and the inspiration of the listener *to do good deeds*.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Metaphor: A fish lives & dies because of its mouth

A fish can have long life dependant on its mouth which it uses to feed. However, because the selfsame mouth and its greed for bait, it swallows the hook which brings its life to an end. In the same

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way, if we use our mouth for artful speech, it can bring us success and prosperity in life, but sometimes even a word of unwholesome speech from the same mouth can cost us our lives.

D.2 Metaphor: It is not just knowing the right thing to say
A smart person is not a person who knows when to say the right thing — they must also know when to keep their silence. A knowledge of the things not to be said is more important for an artful speaker, even more than a knowledge of the things to be said.

D.3 Ex.: Condemned manwho said too much
The less you say, the less risk you run of saying something foolish, even dangerous. In 1825 a new czar, Nicholas I, ascended the throne of Russia. A rebellion immediately broke out, led by liberals demanding that the country modernize — that its industries and civil structures catch up with the rest of Europe. Brutally crushing the rebellion (the Decembrist Uprising), Nicholas I sentenced one of its leaders, Kondraty Ryleyev, to death. On the day of the execution. Ryleyev stood on the gallows, the noose round his neck. The trap-door opened — but as Ryleyev dangled, the rope broke, dashing him to the ground. At the time, events like this were considered signs of providence or heavenly will, and a man saved from execution this way was usually pardoned. As Ryleyev got to his feet, bruised and dirtied but believing his neck had been saved, he called out to the crowd, "You see, in Russia they don't know how to do anything properly, not even how to make a rope!" A messenger immediately went to the Winter Palace with news of the failed hanging. Vexed by this disappointing turnabout, Nicholas I nevertheless began to sign the pardon. But then: "Did Ryleyev say anything after this miracle?"the czar asked the messenger. "Sire," the messenger replied,"he said that in Russia they don't even know how to make a rope!" "In that case,"said the Czar, "let us prove the contrary," and he tore up the pardon. The next day Ryleyev was hanged again. This time the rope did not break. Morale: Once the words are out, you cannot take them back. Keep them under control. Be particularly careful with sarcasm: The momentary satisfaction you gain with biting words will be outweighed by the price you pay.

D.4 Ex. NandivisÅla JÅtaka (J.28)
A tale which has become most famous as one of Esops' Tales, in fact originates from the JÅtaka Tale of NantivisÅla, the ox which pulled 100 carts for a wager. This young ox was miraculously strong ever since it was born and so the owner had the ox pull 100 carts. When he found that the ox could pull the carts, the owner made the ox's ability subject to a wager to a millionnaire who didn't believe it. However, when it came to the time to prove the bet, the master said, 'Go ahead and pull the carts, ox!'. Because the ox didn't like the direct language it refused to move. Even oxen have feelings. Thus the owner lost the bet. Later the owner made a second bet, spoke politely to the ox and won the wager making a profit.

D.5 Ex. MaÔsa JÅtaka (J.315)
There were once four sons of a millionnaire who wanted to compare their skills of persuasion and competed with each other in asking for meat from the cart of a butcher. When the four brothers saw the butcher's cart they thought to themself that they would like to eat some meat and they decided to see who could persuade the butcher to give them some meat.

The first son shouted out to the butcher,"Hey butcher! Bring me some meat!" The butcher was a kindly man and he said "Of course but because your words are not sweet to my ears" he threw the boy some trotters. Everybody asked him why he gave the boy trotters and he replied that trotters are tough and have no taste just like the words of the one who had requested them.

The second son said, "My brother! Please give me some of your meat to eat." Because the second son had had the respect to call him his brother then he cut off some choice meat to give to him.
The third son said, "Oh my father! Please give me some of your meat to eat." Because the third son had had the respect to call him his father he cut the heart out of an ox to give to him.
The fourth son said, "My friend! Please give me

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some of your meat to eat." The butcher heard his words and felt pleased. He said that when our ages are so similar like this, it is closest to the truth to say that we are friends. To call me 'father' is too much. To call me 'friend' is the most appropriate. So with those words he gave the whole of his cart to the fourth son. The fourth son was true to his word and took the butcher to his house. He said if you have this much generosity to me then I will be generous to you too — come and live here if you like — I have a reasonable amount of wealth to my name therefore if any of your friends are in distress just tell me and I will help. Well, it turned out that the butcher had a few unpaid debts so he was able to pay all those off. The fourth son was a friend to the butcher for the rest of his life.

This is the benefit accrued to the fourth son who didn't speak harshly, or patronizingly but appropriately to the truth of the situation.

The Fourth Group of Blessings

"Harmony in the Family Life"

The fourth group of blessings contains Blessings Eleven to Fourteen. Nearly all of these concern how we take care of our close family and therefore the grouping is sometimes referred to as "Harmony in the Family Life". Nested between Group III concerning "Setting Oneself up in life" and Group V concerning "Becoming a pillar of society", it is obvious that harmony at home is something we have to get right if we are truly to be of use to society at large. It is many an important businessman who has not managed to go as far as he ought in his career because of being upset or unfulfilled in his family life. This does not mean that it is necessary to have a husband or wife and children to make a success in one's life — but if one *does* have one's own family, than one *has* to fulfil one's duty to them properly. In any case one must fulfil one's duty to one's parents.

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Blessing Eleven:
Cherishing our parents

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Introduction to Blessing Eleven

As we shall see for this blessing on cherishing our parents, much more than for cherishing husband, wife or children, the factor of "gratitude" is very important. According to Buddhist definition, "gratitude" is an active virtue and to be fulfilled, should be practised in all of the following stages:

1. Appreciating our Debt of Gratitude to Our Parents [kataññÈ]

2. Repayment of our Debt of Gratitude to Our Parents [katavedÈ] by:

1. *repaying our debt of gratitude to our parents:* physically and spiritually both before they pass away and after death too
2. *Announcing the Goodness of Our Parents*

Only when we have done all of these components of gratitude can we be said to have fulfilled this eleventh Blessing — and the remainder of the discussion in this blessing describes the practicality of putting all three components in practice. In some Buddhist literature, practising such duties is known as 'filial piety'.

B. WHY SHOULD WE WANT TO CHERISH OUR PARENTS?

B.1 Rationale

When we start out in our career of self-development, it is not obvious what goodness is. In the initial blessings, we have had to orientate ourselves to virtue without really knowing what virtue is — let alone being able to identify virtue in ourselves. In the beginning, even to be able to associate with good people is a blessing, because some of their virtues might brush off on us too. In the beginning we might not be aware of the virtues in ourselves — it being much easier to perceive the virtues of others. The Buddha intended us to take a hard look at our own parents who have done so much for us — because *everyone has parents* and everyone has *received benefit* at their hands. Thus, for our parents more than for others, virtue will be easy for us to identify. If we are able to recognize, repay and announce the goodness of our parents, our familiarity with such virtue will become all the stronger. Later when we are able to see the good in our parents, we will be able to see the good in others. When we are able to see the good in others we will be able to see the good in ourselves and develop it further — according to the techniques found in the higher blessings. Unless we are sensative to a greater or lesser extent to the goodness other people express to us, we have little chance of increasing the sensitivity to the goodness that lies within ourselves. There is no-one in the world who has done as much for one as one's parents, so if one is unable to respond to the good they have done one, then it is unlikely that one will be able to perceive good in anything else at all. If our debt of gratitude to our parents is as large as this and we are unable to see it, that shows that we must be severely blinded to the good of others.

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B.2 Taking care of our parents is the most fundamental of virtues

Repaying the debt of gratitude to our parents is such a fundemental virtue, that the people of old used it as a benchmark for judging strangers. Sometimes one has to know someone for a long, long time before one can really say we know such a person in depth. However, if you meet someone for the first time and you find out that they neglect their parents, you can be sure that they are unlikely to have any interest in helping anyone less closely related.

B.3 We will be cared for by our children

If you recognize and repay the debt of gratitude you have to your parents, apart from gaining personal virtue, you will also set a good example for your own children — and they in turn will want to take care of you when you become feeble in your old age.

B.4 Richness of heart helps meditation progress

Many people meditate for many years without being able to make any progress — sometimes their mind has a continuous feeling of "dryness". However, if upon learning about the debt of gratitude they have to their parents, they take steps to repay it, it often creates a "richness" of mind which allows them to progress again in their meditation.

C. APPRECIATING OUR DEBT OF GRATITUDE

C.1 Why must we have gratitude in our lives?

We didn't get where we are today entirely by our own efforts. We are the result of considerable investment of food, care, protection, training and teaching by others. All these resources have come to us through the pure intentions of others in society— intentions without which our civilization would soon collapse. It is not that people have helped us because they want something from us in return, but if we, who have been on the receiving end of such altruism, are able to appreciate, return or praise the favours they have done us, it will help to create an atmosphere of "give and take" in society instead of deterioration into "every man to himself".The appreciation of good deeds is very important to Buddhist culture and cherishing our parents is our first and most fundamental opportunity to express gratitude.

C.2 Theories of non-gratitude to parents

Where sons and daughters neglect their parents, often it is not intentional, but because of having received influence from some of the theories rife in our society, none of which are entirely true:

1. Selfish Genes: Some people think that the only reason that parents are kind to their children is that they want to see their character and genes passed down to the next generation. This theory has even led to a genetic theory called '*The Selfish Gene*' (Dawkins) by which it is proposed that man is nothing more than a mechanism by which genes replicate themselves! In such a case, parents don't show kindness to their children out of compassion but out of the selfish desire to propagate their own genes. If such a theory were really true, if you were walking down the street with four brothers who were all identical twins with at least half of the same genes as you have then you would rather that yourself were eaten by a monster in order to protect the greater part of your genes depending on the safety of your three brothers. Such theories have their limitations because they cannot explain why such traits as homosexuality which hamper the replication of genes might grow and spread in the population. The practical outcome of this theory is that instead of thinking to repay their parents for all the good things they have received, they think that they are bringing their parents fulfilment by bringing up grandchildren for their parents! This is logic equivalent to borrowing money from a bank to open a new business and paying back the loan to your customers! Instead of thinking how best to look after their poor parents, most children spend their time thinking how best to get themselves a boyfriend or girlfriend to look after for the rest of their lives instead.

2. Hereditary Sin: Some philosophies of life such as those advocated by the Unification Church (Moonism) go further to suggest that all the bad things in our life are passed down to us by our parents and therefore only be abandoning your parents and marrying into their religion can you escape from sin. Such thinking has led to many broken families and accusations of kidnapping and brainwashing.

3. Patricide Cults: Some philosophies of life such as those found in some African tribes are even more destructive for the family. Only a boy who is brave enough to kill his own father is eligable to become the chief of the tribe because it is taken that only such a person is cruel and brave enough to lead a tribe.

Although our thoughts about our parents might not be so serious as some of the theories described above sometimes we find it hard to really comprehend how much our parents have done for us. Superficially we think that the good our parents have done for us is easy to describe but in fact we don't usually don't look very deep. Many people are confused as to how the debt of gratitude to our parents could possibly be as large. Just thinking of how they have brought us up and how they have fed and schooled us surely could not add up to such a large debt. However we should try our best to look for that goodness, because if you can't see the good in other people who have done so much for you, don't expect to be able to see any of the good or positive things that arise in yourself as a result of your meditation.

C.3 How a Child is indebted to his parents

Of all the people in the world there is no-one closer to us than our own mother and father. Why should we choose our parents as subject to our own good deeds before thinking of others? Our parents are those to whom wehave one of the largest debts of gratitude. We can choose whether or not we have a spouse or children, but all of us have parents of whom we must take care. All through our childhood we have been in debt to them and even when adult that debt is no less than it was when we were young. But how many children go to school thinking to study their hardest, do their best to pick up skills so that they can get a job to pay their parents back for their kindness as soon as they complete their education? As soon as they get their first job how many think of using thier first wage to buy a present as a token of gratitude for thier parents and how many buy lipstick instead?

C.3.1 Before conception

If we look at the root meaning of the word 'parent' it means 'one who brings forth their offspring'. Thus our parents are responsible for having given us the gift of life. Some parents are a mother or a father to their children. Even if they wait until their child is born and then abandon it — i.e they give rise to children but don't bring them up — they have still given the child the most valuable thing it has — its own life. Parents serve as physical mold. A mold increases a material's value (*see Blessing Nine §E.2*). In a similar sense, the birth of all animals in the world depends on the parents as their physical mold.

We are overwhelmingly indebted to our parents for their genes that give us our healthy physical shape. If our parents were those who didn't take good care of their own health then we might have been born handicapped physically. But as many of us are in good health, today, with strong physical bodies, if we were to have no gratitude to our parents for the things they have given us, it would show that we are blind to the good things that people do for us. Even if our parents had abandoned us at birth and did nothing else to bring us up, we should already be overwhelmed with the gift of life that they have given us.

Thus don't go thinking that to be born human is an automatic entitlement. Even in your own house, the number of people living in the house is still small compared to the number of worms, mosquitos, ants, geckos, birds etc. There are maybe a hundred or a thousand more non-human living beings even in our own house than there are humans for whom the house was actually built. This tells us that to be born human is a difficult thing but to be born as an animal is easy. And if you were to be born as an animal — what use do you think you would be to the world?

C.3.2 From conception to birth

For the period we spent in the womb, we must mostly thank our mother but also our father who may have taken extra care of mother during pregnancy. Throughout the forty weeks of pregnancy, the mother needed to take regular medical check-

ups. Even though she may not have liked to eat certain sorts of nutricious diet suitable for her baby's health, she had to eat those things, nonetheless. Even though she might have wanted to eat certain sorts of food but knowing that these things may have been damaging to her baby, she had to go without them (e.g. avoiding the temptation of spicy (etc.) foods, drink and cigarettes) during the pregnancy, wearing loose clothes and having to leave strenuous work to others.

Not only physically must the mother protect the child in her womb, but even the serenity of state of mind of the child in the womb must be protected by avoiding quarrels, conflict and anxiety.

C.3.3 From Birth to adulthood

A second word used for parents is 'father' or 'mother' which means 'the one who brings up their offspring'. Thus there are three types of parents — the ones we have already mentioned who bring forth children but don't bring them up, those who are step-parents who bring up the children of others and lastly, those who both give rise to children and bring them up too. Most of us find it is easier to comprehend their debt of gratitude to their parents for the care they have received from the time they are born to the time they are old enough to take care of themselves. What do you think is the time of your life when you are the most vulnerable and you can do nothing to help yourself? It is not when you have no money as a student. It is not during a war or when you are ill. None of these can compare to the risk which you underwent on the day you were born. Normally in the face of danger we would use the powers we have (physical strength, connections, wealth or wisdom) to overcome the danger — you are able to help yourself. However, on the day you were born, if your parents didn't decide to take you as their child to bring them up do you think you could survive? Could you put up a struggle when you don't even have the strength to open your eyes? Would you have had connections enough to get you out of trouble when even your own parents hadn't wanted you? Would you have had any wealth to buy yourself out of the situation at a time when you didn't even have a scrap of cloth to wear? Would you have had the wisdom to work out solutions to your problems? The reality of the situation is that we could only survive because our parents were kind enough to accept us.

Normally if someone is to adopt a child they would have to take a long, long time to make that decision. If you were going to lend some money to someone, you have to have your conditions and your contracts — but for us there was only unconditional acceptance. Thus even that moment of acceptance at the most vulnerable time of our life is more than we can easily reimburse.

Even when the child is in the womb, even though they don't know how the child would turn out, they would lay down their life to protect the child in their womb.

C.3.4 Physical Care

If you compare man with the animals, there is no comparable animal which takes so long or expends so much effort in the care of its young. Usually the larger the animal, the longer it must stay in the womb (gestation period) and the longer it must rely on the care of its parents after its birth. Even an elephant with its huge size and a gestation period of three years will only look after a baby elephant for two years. Man although much smaller in size than any elephant often looks after his children for twenty years. They have done the job of protecting us like a guardian angel ever since we were born. Even after that we expect our parents to organize our marriages and pass their legacy on to us.

Parents provide food, shelter, clothing, education and medical care for their children, supporting us in every way. Parents often have to put themselves at risk or in debt in order to look after their children. If you find a woman catching fish or shoplifting, 99 times out of 100 she is doing it only to feed her child — if it was for herself she would never take such a risk.

C.3.5 Spiritual Care

Keeping us healthy and educated was not the only responsibility which our parents had to shoulder. Even our own basis of moral understanding had to come from our parents. If our parents had relied

always on the saying "do what I say not what I do", by now we would surely have grown up into hypocrites. Our parents were an example for us to follow as well as scolding and punishing us for doing unacceptable things, keeping an eye on our friends and choosing only the best books for us to read. Who taught us to speak and walk? Who taught us all the basic virtues of life and had the patience to remind us when we were lazy or forgetful? Parents are a child's first teacher because they are the first to teach a child his manners and how to behave.

Even when we are grown up and supposedly responsible and independent, the generosity and care of our parents doesn't come to an end but we find that they are always there to help when we have important questions like that of marriage and the last thing our parents do for us before they die is to pass on their accumulated wealth for us.

These are just a very brief summary of some of the ways in which we have been helped by our parents. Even the most tough and insensitive man or woman, when they become parents manages to find in the deepest part of their hearts the most tender and unlimited love for their own children and because of the purity of parental intention which fathers and mothers manage to find, ther people of old used to say you don't need to go any further than your own house in order to find an object of worship.

C.4 Practical recollections to appreciate your debt of gratitude

According to the SiĮgalovÅda Sutta (D.iii.180), the practicality of realizing one's debt of gratitude to one's parents can be effected by habitually reflecting:

1. "I have been supported by my parents — I will support them in turn" (such a recollection helps the cultivation of Right View)
2. "I will do their work for them" (such a recollection helps the cultivation of patience, responsibility, knowledge and ability)
3. "I will keep up the honour and traditions of the family"
4. "I will make myself worthy of the family legacy" (such a recollection helps one to extricate one self from the Six Roads to Ruin)
5. "I will make offerings, dedicating merit to them after their death" (such a recollection helps the cultivation of Right View and responsibility)

Such recollections will not come naturally to any child who has not been raised with self-discipline, responsibility and Right View. Thus the gratitude a child has is part of a reciprocal relationship a parent has with their children — a subject explored in more depth in Blessing Twelve (*§B.3*).

D. REPAYING THE DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO OUR PARENTS

D.1 Expectations of Parents

Poor parents would rather put themselves in debt than to see their own children suffer. Considering seemingly little things like carefully and rationally will allow us to see through to the magnitude of the debt of gratitude we own our parents. Realizing how good one's parents are is a simple but necessary precursor to the repayment of gratitude to our parents — because it is not immediately obvious or easy to understand for every person.

There was once a man who, together with his brothers and sisters, had been looking after their mother throughout a constant period of two years nursing her and paying for her kidney transfusions at a cost of 20,000 per month. Such a cost was certainly quite difficult for all the brothers and sisters to bear, but if they could not pay then surely their mother would die. Because the mother was also suffering from mental-disease, as soon as she was stronger after the transfusion, she would complain continuously disturbing the sons and daughters looking after her in the middle of the night. Looking after the mother was an ordeal for everyone concerned and at the end of two years, the thought occurred to all the brothers and sisters that two years was enough. They thought that all their efforts were surely enough to repay their debt of gratitude to their mother. In actual fact, if their mother had thought the same thing of her sick sons and daughters early on in life then surely none of them would have survived to the present day. Their mother would have used the last of her earnings to

see her children well again and even have gone into debt rather than seeing her children suffer.

All parents have only five expectations of their children (in keeping with the five recollections of the SiÌgalovÅda Sutta mentioned in the previous paragraph) — all of which point to ways in which children can handle the debt of gratitude they owe to their parents:

1. that their children will look after them in their old age;
2. that their children will perpetuate the good work for society they have already started;
3. that their children will carry on the good name of the family;
4. that their children will use the family wealth in a responsible way
5. when they pass away their children will perform funeral rites and continue to dedicate the positivity of good deeds for their parents .

The extent to which a child manages to do all five of these things varies from person to person — but in general you can categorize children into three types:

1. The child whose virtue exceeds that of his parents and who brings more prosperity to the family as during the time of his parents [abhijÅtaputta]

2. The child whose virtue equals that of his parents and who brings the same degree of prosperity to the family as was brought during the time of his parents [anujÅtaputta]

3. The child whose virtue is less than that of his parents and who brings less prosperity to the family than during the time of his parent [avajÅtaputta]

D.2 Service

Repaying to our parents' goodness through service is divided into two parts:

1. ***Service when they are still alive:*** When they are still alive help them in their daily chores. look after them when they are old, make sure that they are well fed, and care for them when they are not well. If they still have debts when they are in their old age then try to pay these debts off before they die. Serve them by making life more convenient (e.g. building an extra toilet for aged parent)

2. Service after their death: When they pass away host their funeral and habitually offer the positivity you generate as the result of your meditation for their benefit: (even if we transfer merit to them and they are unable to accept it we have still done our duty to the best of our ability like giving a car to someone who cannot use it or cannot use it immediately)

D.2.1 While parents alive

D.2.1.1 Honour

In order to show your respect for the pure intention which our parents have always shown us it is fitting to offer clothing, housing or medicine. Sometimes we might give a gift to our parents, not out of necessity, but in order to honour our parents. Sometimes out of their goodwill for us aged parents or old people will seem to be very fussy or critical because they have a lot of life experience (more than us). Sometimes they *are* really too fussy, but you need to be able to tolerate what they are saying and think that they still have that goodwill for you. If we are patient, we can learn a lot from their experiences. Also there may be some things we should keep to ourselves instead of burdening old parents. Old people are weak and cannot do much for themselves. Only their mouth is in good working order

— so be patient when old people talk a lot.

D.2.1.2 Protection

Protect your parents from things that you know annoy them or tire them. If you can alleviate stressful duties which might fall upon your parents, you can help them to enjoy the last years of their life more and preserve their dignity.

D.2.1.3 Spiritual Ways of Repayment

All the above we are not enough to repay our debt of gratitude in all the ways above then does that mean that we have no way of repaying our gratitude? In fact the way which it is possible to repay our debt is though 'internal support' by giving them heaven as their afterlife destination.

1. inspiring them to faith in the Triple Gem and nurture them further to;

2. be generous and keep a baseline of morality

3. persuade them to listen to spiritual teachings: Some old parents are unable to go to a place where they can hear spiritual teachings for themselves but you can help the situation by reading them spiritual books to them or record a cassette of teaching for them to hear

4. teach them how to meditate

5. ordaining to pay debt of gratitude: In Thai culture especially, there is a tradition for sons to ordain temporarily at the age of twenty in order that the parents may gain merit from organizing their ordination. It is said that the sponsor of an ordination ceremony will gain half of the merit of the ordinand himself, therefore, as a dutiful son, finding the opportunity to ordain in order to repay one's debt of gratitude to one's parents, is an important part of cultivating the eleventh blessing.

D.2.2 When parents have already passed away

Even if your parents have already passed away, your duty as a grateful son or daughter is not finished. Apart from taking responsibility for organizing a fitting funeral, Buddhist sons and daughters will do meritorious deeds regularly and transfer the merit from the deeds for the benefit of their deceased parents.

E. ANNOUNCING THE GOODNESS OF OUR PARENTS

Some people mistakenly think that a large family is interchangeable with a family of good repute. Thus they have many, many children thinking that in this way they will bring happiness to their own parents. However, whether one has an heir or not is not something that will make your parents or anyone else in the world laugh or cry. What is better — to have a hundred sons and daughters who do nothing to better the family reputation, or to work yourself bringing fame and fortune to the family yourself by the good and beneficial things you do for the rest of society — a person who is so good that their love is not limited to just a few sons and daughters but to the whole of the world (a parent to the whole of the world). Whether you have an heir or will not make the earth will not laugh or cry. Thus if you want to announce to the world the goodness of your parents, you don't need to shout about it. The goodness of your parents will shine through your *own* behaviour, manners, the way you speak without you even having to mention your parents. We represent our parents and the way they have brought us up. We are their flesh and blood. Our mannerisms also come from our upbringing. That is why our behaviour is the most vivid way of announcing their goodness. It is not in their biography that we hand out at their funeral, but rather by our own behaviour which matters. Everyone loves their parents. Having this love one should announce their goodness through our good behaviour starting while they are still alive. In doing so, we will make them very happy. This is more important than writing their goodness in their biography which is of minute importance. It doesn't matter whether we intentionally want to announce our parents, goodness through our behaviour or not. Our actions speakfor themselves. It is up to us to create a good name for them through our behaviour. In doing so we make ourselves worthy to receive our parents' legacy.

F. RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENT & CHILD

In the SiÌgalovÅda Sutta we learn that a child has duties towards his parents and parents have duties towards their children (*see detail Blessing Twelve SB 3*). In the ideal world, both the parents and the children will fulfil their side of the bargain and in doing so, no danger will grow up in the relationship or for society at large — there will be happiness and prosperity both for parent, child and society at large.

If the child fulfils their duty according to Blessing Eleven but the parent doesn't fulfil their duty according to Blessing Twelve, harm will come to the parents and eventually to the child and society as well. There are some exceptional cases where a child has been so mistreated at the hands of his own parents that he or she finds it near impossible to imagine anything good about their parents. In such a case, we must remind ourselves that even if our parents abandon us at birth, we still have a huge

debt of gratitude to them for giving us our physical form as a human. In a case where one has been beaten or abused by one's parents, it is important to make a separation between the good things they have done to you and the bad. We must repay our debt of gratitude for the good things and do our best to forgive the bad things, without mixing them up or thinking that one cancels out the other. Sometimes a dutiful son or daughter knows that giving their parents money will only fuel them into doing irresponsible things (like gambling) — in such cases, they should still be supported, but the support should be in the form of food or clothing that they cannot change into money. Such parents should be treated like a patient who is ill and sometimes can not be given what they crave for — but our parents should never be insulted by us because of their weaknesses.

If the parents fulfil their duty according to Blessing Twelve, but the child does not fulfil their duty according to Blessing Eleven, harm will come to the child and eventually to the parents and society as well.

If the child doesn't do their duty according to Blessing Eleven and the parents don't fulfil their duty according to Blessing Twelve, immediate harm will come to both and to society too.

G. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

G.1 Metaphor: Parents as God [Brahma]

Our parents have been compared to our "God" or "Brahma" because they exhibit towards us all the underlying virtues exhibited by a God, i.e. the four Divine Abidings [brahmavihÅra]:

1. loving-kindness [mettÅ]: parents have the limitless wish that their children should remove themselves from suffering in every respect.

2. compassion [karunÅ]: the parents make every effort to diminish the suffering of their children, never neglecting their child

3. sympathetic joy [muditÅ]: whenever the child experiences success or happiness, the parents are sincerely happy on their child's part

4. equanimity [upekkhÅ]: when the child has their own family and is able to look after its own affairs, the parents no longer interfere. If the chil

dren make mistakes, the parents refrain from saying "I told you so", but give their opinion when asked for it.

G.2 Metaphor: Parents as one's first Guardian Angel

The parents are the first people known to the child to *offer their protection* to the child in every way

G.3 Metaphor: Parents as First Teacher

The parents are the first people known to the child to *teach and train* the child, whether it be how to walk or talk or how to cultivate good manners.

G.4 Metaphor: Parents as Arahant

The parents are as the child's *arahant* because they have four qualities:

1. They bring the child great benefit: The parents fulfil the challenging duty of caring for the child in every way — something it would be hard to find anyone else to do in their place.

2. They command respect but are endearing: protecting the child from all dangers, they also manage to bring gentle warmth to the child's life.

3. They are the child's field of merit: They have completely pure intentions towards their children, making them a worthy object for the child's merit-making

4. They are worthy of being bowed to: a child should express his respect for his parents by bowing or saluting them.

G.5 Metaphor: Gold plate v.s Solid Gold

Just as you can tell the difference between a gold-plated object and one that is solid gold by passing it through a flame, you can tell whether someone is truly virtuous by whether or not he cherishes his parents.

G.6 Proverb: Carrying one's parents on one's shoulders for 100 years

The Buddha taught that even if we were to carry our parents, one on each shoulder, for one hundred years, spoon-feeding them and allowing them to urinate and defecate on us, it would still be insufficient fully to repay our debt of gratitude to our parents.

G.7 Proverb: A skyful of parental praise

If we were to use Mount Sumeru as our pen and all the water of the ocean as our ink, even if we were to write the virtues of our parents in the sky until there were no place left to write, the mountain were worn down and the seawater dry, we would still not have reached an end of our parents virtues.

G.8 Ex. The monk who went on almsround for his parents(MÅtuposaka Sutta S.i.181)

Normally when a monk has gathered food on his almsround, he must take his meal from that food first before passing the remainder on to any lay supporters. In the time of the Buddha there was a monk whose parents were so poor they had nothing to eat. The monk went on almsround and gave the parents first choice of the food he managed to gather. Later, he was criticized by other monks who reported his behaviour to the Buddha. The Buddha said that what the monk had done was correct and that in the case a monk's parents needed food from his almsround, they may be served first and the monk himself take the remainder — an exception to the rule in keeping with the debt of gratitude even a monk should repay to his parents.

G.9 Ex. KaccÅni JÅtaka (J.417)

After his father's death, a young man devoted himself entirely to his mother, until the latter, much against his will, brought him a wife. The wife plotted to estrange mother and son, and the old woman eventually had to leave the house. Having given birth to a son, the wife, went about saying that if the mother-in-law had been with her, such a blessing would have been impossible. When the old woman heard of this, she felt that such words showed that Dhamma must be dead. The woman went to a ceremony and started to perform a rite in the memory of the dead 'Dhamma'. Sakka's throne became heated and hearing her story used his powers to reconcile the old woman with her son and daughter-in-law.

The story was related to a young man of SÅvatthÈ who looked after his aged mother until his wife came. The wife helped to look after her mother-inlaw at first, but later grew jealous of her husband's love for his mother and contrived to make the son angry with his mother. Finally she asked the man to choose between herself and his mother. The young man, without hesitation stood up for his mother and the wife, realizing her folly, mended her ways.

J.iii.422ff.

G.10 Ex. The Begging Bowl (traditional)

Once upon a time, there was a family where the mother and father were already old. The only son loved his father and mother and took good care of them running errands and helping in the house throughout his childhood. Then the son came of age got married and had his own children. Unfortunately, as soon as he got married he found that his wife's love for his old parents was far less than his own. His wife chided him,"Don't you love your own children? Looking after your parents wastes time that could be better spent earning a good wage

— let your parents look after themselves."At first he took no notice of his wife, but since his wife would complain and insist on this matter every day, eventually he forgot his debt of gratitude to his parents. He purchased a pair of clay bowls for his parents and instructed them, "Mother and father, from now on you must beg for a living," and went about earning his own living as best he could. The son's own children grew up to the age of five or six.

One day their father came home from work to find his children decorating a coconut shell with the finest of ornaments. He asked, "What do you think you're doing with that coconut shell?" The children said said, "We're getting a begging bowl ready for you — to help you when you get too old to work!" Seeing his own children with the coconut shell, the father realized his own ingratitude and from that day forth invited his old parents to stay in his own home and looked after them in the best of comfort until the end of their days. This illustrates how powerful the parent's influence on his child and shows that the child's standard of good deeds comes directly from his parent's example. The Lord Buddha taught that the debt of gratitude we owe to our parents is so great that it would

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be hard to repay that debt of gratitude within a single life-time. Thus it is one of the duties outlined inthe SiÌgalovÅda Sutta and the MaÌgala Sutta to cherish our own parents especially in old age. By doing this we not only repay our endebtedness to our parents for giving us life — but we strengthen the structure of society to make it free from alienation especially for the senior citizens in society some of whom receive more comfort from their pet cats and dogs these days, than they do from their own sons and daughters.

G.11 Ex. Even Buddha must care for his parents

Even the Buddha himself devoted considerable time and effort to repaying the debt of gratitude he had to his parents. The Buddha spent the whole of one rainy-season retreat in TavatiÔsa Heaven, through the might of his mental powers, in order to teach his late mother the whole of the Abhidhamma. His mother Queen MÅyÅ had passed away only seven days after the birth of Prince Siddhartha.

G.12 Ex. The Abandoned Brahmin

Once, there lived in SÅvatthÈ an old brahmin who was extremely rich. He had four sons and when each of the sons got married, he gave him a share of his wealth. Then, he gave away half of his remaining property to them. Later, his wife died. His sons came to him and looked after him very well and they were very loving and affectionate to him. During the course of time, somehow they influenced him to give them the other half of the remaining property. Thus, he was left penniless. First he went to stay with his eldest son. After a few days, the daughter-in-law said to him, 'Did you give any extra wealth to your eldest son? Don't you know the way to the house of your other sons?' Hearing this, the old brahmin got very angry and left the eldest son's house for the house of his second son. The same remarks were made by the wife of his second son and the old man went to the house of his third son and finally to the house of the fourth and youngest. Thus, the old man was left destitute and taking a staff and a bowl he went to the Buddha for protection and advice. At the monastery, the brahmin told the Buddha how his sons had mistreated him. The Enlightened One taught him some verses and advised him to recite them wherever there was a large gathering of people. The gist of the verses was as follows:

> 'My four foolish sons are like ogres. They call me 'father, father' but the words come only out of their mouths and not from their hearts. They are deceitful and scheming. Taking the advice of their wives they have driven me out of their houses. So, now I have been reduced to begging. Those sons are of less service to me than this staff of mine.'

When the appointed day came for the brahmins of SÅvatthÈ to hold their meeting and knowing that his sons would be there, the old brahmin also attended the meeting. Now at that time, the prevailing law dictated that "whoever ill-treats his mother or father and does not support or look after them shall be punished". Many people in the crowd, on hearing the verses recited by the old brahmin, went wild with rage at the ungrateful sons and threatened them for neglecting their father. Then the sons realised their mistakes and knelt down at the feet of their father and asked for pardon. They also promised that from that day forth, they would look after him properly and would respect, love and honour him. They also warned their wives to look after their father well. Each of the sons gave him proper food and clothing. Thus the brahmin became healthier. So, he went to the Buddha and humbly requested him to accept two food-trays out of the four he was receiving every day from his sons. One day, the eldest son invited the Buddha to his house for almsfood. After the meal, the Buddha gave a discourse on the benefits to be gained by looking after one's parents.

The Buddha related to themthe story of the elephant called Dhanapala, who looked after his parents. Dhanapala when captured pined for the parents who were left in the forest.

DhammapadaÊÊhakathÅ, XXIII: 3

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G.13 Orphan with a Debt to Pay (traditional)

There was once a woman of the streets who was with child. By profession she knew that if the child was born a boy, she would be unable to keep him. Her anxiety only increased day-by-day until at the end of nine months, her fears were realized. The new-born babe was a boy. Many times she took the baby to the river's edge with the full intention to drown him and finish the whole business, but with tears in her eyes from having borne him in her womb for so long, she could not bring herself todo it. At the same time, she could not keep the child or else she would destroy her livelihood. She left him in a bundle by the roadside with the thought that there might be some chance of a compassionate passer-by seeing the child and adopting him. The first passer-by that morning was the abbot from the local temple on his almsround. He spotted the baby and afraid that he starve, took him back to the temple. The abbot guessed how the baby had come to be there but in the absence of anyone coming to claim him back, provided all the food, shelter, clothing and education the child needed to grow-up to teenage. The boy could run and play with the other children and do everything expected of him but he had a chip on his shoulder and would run and hide if any of the others teased him for not having a mother and father. The boy would blame his unseen parents for the predicament in which he found himself. One day the abbot heard the boy complaining out loud about the parents who had abandoned him. The abbot thought, "the time has come to talk to this boy about his life."

"If someone were to give you a dollar, would you curse him?" the abbot asked the boy.
"Of course not," replied the boy, "I should bow to that person, or at least thank him and I would not forget my gratitude to him!"
"And if someone were to come along and offer you a dollar for your life would you take it?"
"Of course I wouldn't," replied the boy indignantly."Do you think that's all my life is worth?"

"Ten dollars then?"
"You must be joking!" The abbot raised the sum to a hundred, a thousand, ten-thousand, a hundred-thousand and a million dollars, but the boy would not part with his life. Asked why, the boy replied, "even a million dollars is useless if you have no life left to spend it."

"Well, what about if someone were to come along and offer you a dollar to cut off your right arm? Would you take it?"
"Of course I wouldn't," replied the boy indignantly."Do you think that's all the integrity of my body is worth?"

"Ten dollars then?"
"Daylight robbery!"

The abbot raised the sum to a hundred, a thousand, ten-thousand, a hundred-thousand and a million dollars, but the boy would not part with his right arm. "Don't you want to be a millionaire?" asked the abbot. The boy said,"even a million dollars is no substitute for the loss of one's physical integrity."
"And if someone were to come along and offer you a dollar to cut off your little finger? Would you take it?"

"Of course I wouldn't," replied the boy indignantly." Do you think you can put a price on part of the human body?"
"Ten dollars then?"
"Forget it!" The abbot raised the sum to a hundred, a thousand, ten-thousand, a hundred-thousand and a million dollars, but the boy would not part with his little finger. Asked why, the boy said that even a million dollars could not replace the thing most precious to him — a healthy, human body.

"Just now you said that if someone gave you a dollar, you would thank him, bow to him and never forget your gratitude to him — yet your parents have given you your healthy, human body free, even the little finger of which you would not part with for a million dollars — how come you sit here cursing them for not having given you more?"

Blessing Twelve:
Raising our children

A. Introduction

A.1 The Harm of Bad Parental Upbringing

The SiÌgalovÅda Sutta teaches us to develop respect for human dignity towards ourselves, towards others and towards a fair economic system in general. Sometimes we have to work on ourselves throughout our lives to develop these qualities, but for sure, the seeds of these qualities for every "global being" need to be planted by the parents during childhood as part of that child's upbringing. If the child is neglected when growing up, they will grow up to lack any sense of responsibility for:

1. their own human dignity
2. the human dignity of others
3. the human dignity underlying the economics of society at large

The catastrophe brought to society by such parental neglect can be enlarged asfollows:

1. lacking responsibility for their own human dignity means: if the parents lack self-discipline and don't fulfil the minimal duties laid down by the Buddha, the first signs of harm will be that their children lack any sense of responsibility for their own human dignity — this being expressed in four different ways by the child's behaviour:

1. *False View:* the child will not know the difference between virtue and evil, good and bad, appropriate and inappropriate and therefore will have no shame of evil [hiri] or fear of the consequences of evil;

2. *Lack of aim in life:* the child will have no spiritual aim in life, and therefore will tend to material extravagence and selfishness. Such a person will take every opportunity to do evil deeds that their circumstances and needs demand;

3. *Lack of health and hygene:* the child will be incompetent in looking after their own health, perhaps being promiscuous, thereby destroying their own health and human endowments;

4. *Lack of interest in self-development:* Because of having no clear aim in life or perhaps because of bad health, the child will be discouraged from any efforts to study either worldly or spiritual knowledge. As a result they become even more entrenched in False View and may bring catastrophe to society — perhaps going even so far as to betray their own country.

2. lacking responsibility for the human dignity of others: if the parents lack self-discipline and don't fulfil their own duties, the second sign of harm will be that their children lack any sense of responsibility for the human dignity of others sharing society— this being expressed in three different ways by the child's behaviour:

1. *Bias:* Having perhaps been on the receiving end of parental bias, when older and finding themselves in positions of responsibility, the

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child's tendency to bias in decision-making, because of greed, hatred, delusion or fear, may do important damage to others in society;

2. Narrow-minded and selfish: If the child grows up into someone narrow-minded and selfish, they might be alienated in society for the rest of their life because no-one wants to associate with them.

3. Lacks any signs of altruism: Having perhaps not had any parental training in altruism, when coming in contact with a wider society, when the child's patience is tried, they might lose control of themselves, expressing themselves in a rude or violent way.

3. lacking responsibility for self-discipline (economic fairness): if the parents lack self-discipline and don't fulfil their own duties, the second sign of harm will be that their children lack any sense of responsibility for self-discipline (economicfairness) — this being expressed in three different ways by the child's behaviour:

1. Frivolous with money: not seeing the value of money, and lacking restraint in expenditure, when a child is no longer able to ask money from their parents, they look for new sources of income, the easiest of which are usually those concerned with the Six Roads to Ruin.

2. Addicted to the Six Roads to Ruin

3. Unable to uphold the family name: Even while still young, the badly-raised child can destroy the family name and when older, they will be unable to act as a steward for the family fortune.

In conclusion it can be said that two major problems stem from bad upbringingof children:

1. Problems of Juvenile Delinquency: Problems concerning young people in every country are becoming increasingly serious and aggressive with every year that passes. In the olden days, the problems of young people would affect only those of age fifteen upwards, but now the problems are evident from primary school upwards.

2. Parental Problems: Neglect of parental duties would appear to hold a large stake in the problems of young people — when parents lack the self-discipline to fulfil their own duties, it is no surprise that their children have no self-discipline either and lack any sense of responsibility for human dignity. Juvenile delinquency starts in the home and goes on to exacerbate all other sorts of social problems. Most people fail to see the connection between the problems, but the Lord Buddha recognized the importance of the parental duty in bringing up their children properly — and in the SiĮgalovÅda Sutta, accordingly put the parents in the most prestigious Eastern Quarter (where the sun rises) as a reminder of the importance of this relationship. The implication of the Buddha's teaching is that anyone unwilling or unable to fulfil the duties of a good parent according to the Buddha's teaching, should consider themselves too immature to marry or have a family — because if they go ahead and have a family while still unable to be a good parent, they are sowing the seeds of immediate social catastrophe.

Realizing the seriousness of the duties upon the shoulders of any parent, it is obvious that we must take care in studying exactly how the Buddha taught parents to raise their children and the means by which these can be achieved. In doing so,we can guard against becoming the sort of parents who look back on what they have achieved during their life and feel nothing but regret — because there is nothing more heartbreaking than having brought up a child who makes a mess out of their own life, life of others or of society at large.

A.2 The True Meaning of the Word 'Child'

The Pali word for 'child' is 'putto'. This word is still found in some European languages and usually means a sort of 'cherub'. However, if you look a the root of the word, it doesn't just mean 'child' but also 'unstained', 'pure' or 'fulfilling'. Thus the real meaning of a child is to be the *one who purifies the family name*. The word also means the one who brings joy to the heart of his parents.

The child we bring up may be of our own flesh or blood, or the child may be adopted — the Buddha categorized children according to their origins:

1. ones born of our own flesh [atraja]
2. ones born on our property [khettaja]
3. adopted children given to us by others [dinnaka]

4. our students [antevÅsika] KaÊÊhahÅri JÅtaka (J.i.135)

— but it makes no difference to the thoroughness with which we must practice our parental duties towards them. It is implied that no matter how the child in our care comes to us, we must still practice and fulfil our parental duties towards them.

Some people who still have a lot of defilements want to have a lot of children. Luang Phaw Wat Paknam said that if you want to have a lot of children who are full of virtue you should ordain as a monk because you will have many students as your children. If you have children of your own flesh and blood who turn out troublesome they you have to put up with looking after them the whole of your life. However, if they are your students and they are troublesome at least you can make your selection.You can say goodbye to the troublemakers and choose the good ones. Look at the Buddha's example — even after 2,500 years after his ParinibbÅna there are still children of the Buddha being born today.

B. THE COMPONENTS OF GOOD UPBRINGING

'Would be' parents must prepare themselves, both inworldly and spiritual ways so they are ready to bring a good child into the world and bring him up to be a good person. The parent needs to prepare themselves for three different stages bringing a good child into the world:

1. before conception
2. from conception to birth
3. from birth to adulthood

The task is not easy — really it can be considered a full-time job — but the benefits of success will be the lifelong pride of the parents.

As already mentioned, 'good child' from the parents' point of view, covers abroad range of meanings: in brief, possessing all sorts of virtues, good physique and sound mind. However, it is hard to find a person perfect in every sense of the word.

Generally, a child held to be good, will have three qualities; they will be brainy; well-behaved (i.e. be able to follow the Precepts), and good hearted (i.e. generous and compassionate). These are the basis of a child's virtue. Any other goodness in which the parent can train their child, are all well and good and will add to the parents' pride in their child.

B.1 Before Conception

The parent must be both physically and mentally prepared to bring a good child into the world. For Buddhists, physical preparation alone is not sufficient because our human being consists not only of a body, but also of a mind: necessitating careful spiritual preparation for parents. The knowledge which Buddhism gives to 'would be' parents goes far beyond the frontiers of even modern medical science. According to Buddhist Teachings, each and every creature has their own individual kamma (i.e. store-house of potential results of good and bad deeds performed in the past). According to the Buddhist proverb (S.i.227):

> YÅdisaÔ vappate bÈjaÔ
> TÅdisaÔ harate phalaÔ
> KalyÅÁakÅrÈ kalyÅÁaÔ
> PÅpakÅrÈ ca pÅpakaÔ
>
> One reaps the fruit from the (type of) seed one sows: lovely out comes from lovely ac tions, ugly outcomes from ugly actions.

Buddhist teachings also show that those who have done good deeds will be reborn in heaven after dying from the human realm, and when he is reborn in the human realm, he will be born to wealthy and morally proper parents. A person who has performed a lesser amount of merit, when being reborn into the human realm, will be born to a less wealthy or even poor family, according to the degree of his merit. The being always carries its past merits with it, even between births, and this merit has a determining effect on who its next parents will be. A being awaiting rebirth into the human realm will be born to parents with a level of merit equal to its own. It cannot be born to parents whose merit is greater or less than its own. Therefore, in order to bring a child into the world that is good, *a*

'would be' parent must perform as many meritorious deeds as possible, by making donations, keeping the Five Precepts and, most importantly, by meditating regularly. The result of such meritorious action will be to attract a being with a good level of merit to be born into their family. By these very actions, a 'would be' parent prepares themself spiritually, ready to be a good father or mother — pure in body, speech and mind, beautified by the wisdom of meditation and ready to welcome the birth of a child perfect in personality and Dhamma.

In the time of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam there was a merchant who came to Luang Phaw Wat Paknam complaining that for many years he had being trying to have a child without success. Luang Phaw Wat Paknam asked him what sort of child he wanted. He said he wanted a good and virtuous child who was rich. He wanted a handsome child too. Luang Phaw Wat Paknam said that whatever you want your child to turn out like you have to make yourself as good as you want your child to be first — like a blueprint. Then he meditated to see which angel was about to run out of subtle merit (and die from heaven) who had those sort of characteristics and would suggest which mother and father had a matching level of merit to be their new parents. If soldiers wanted a brave child then Luang Phaw Wat Paknam would give them the same advice to make themselves brave first of all.

Some people might wonder why in some cases good children seem to be born to parents who are horrible and cruel and why good parents sometimes have horrible children or idiots. Such cases don't mean that the Law of Karma has its exceptions, but first we must understand all of the causes and effects coming into play. It is like breaking through the net.

Supposing there is the case that a certain mother and father are good but they have an awful child. The circumstances for the birth might go something like this . . . supposing on the father's birthday all his friends assemble at his house to wish him a happy birthday. He thinks, "when in Rome you must do as do the Romans". Usually he never touches alcohol but on this occasion he makes an exception and opens a bottle of wine for all his friends. As the host he feels compelled to take the first sip of wine before passing the bottle on to his friends. A second sip follows the first and before long he feels slightly drunk (because he is not used to it). It happens that that very night is the night that he conceives a child. At the time both parents happen to be drunk, a being seeking to be born, a being with the karma of drunkeness in the past, finds just the right pair. Into the womb it goes and the (usually) good couple get themselves a baby that is going to grow up with the habits of a drunkard. The moral of the story is, if you do good deeds, do good deeds consistently and don't open the opportunity to mistakes. Thus for a couple who have been good the whole of their lives but slip up for a single day, they might have to spend the rest of their lives bringing up a mentally handicapped child or a child that is mute.

On the other hand there may be really terrible parents that have a good child. In Thailand of course there are some of the worst robbers and murderers. However, before they go out to do their duty they will always ask for the blessing from the Triple Gem so that they can do their duty in safety. When they have accomplished their crime, again they ask the blessing of theTriple Gem to protect them from the police. In their wicked heart, there is still a glimmer of goodness. Sometimes, especially in a Buddhist country, although they are thinking of evil almost the whole of the time, because the environment is an amenable one, there will be things to remind them of virtue from time to time (e.g. when they see a monk passing by, or there are sermons broadcast on the radio and TV). Thus sometimes when there is something to kindle the glimmer of goodness to a glow in heart of a mother and father who are usually never interested in such things then there is a slight possibility that they may conceive a virtuous child. However the chance is really remote — not enough to pin your hopes on.

B.2 From Conception to Birth

Even two thousand five hundred years ago, the Lord Buddha's own mother, Queen MahÅmÅyÅ knew how to take painstaking care of both her

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physical and spiritual well-being while she was with child. The queen ate only agreeable foods and frequented the harmony of the natural environment as she came close to the time of childbirth. Queen MĂyĂ also maintained purity and stillness of mind throughout pregnancy by keeping the Eight Precepts and meditating. It seems that for Buddhists, care of the child since conception is an implicit part of the 'art of motherhood', re-iterated anew in the present day when medical science is catching up with ancient knowhow...and seemingly coming to the same conclusions...

The mother who keeps the fifth of the five precepts will need not worry that her child be under weight or handicapped at birth because refraining from alcohol, intoxicating drugs and cigarettes cuts out a significant proportion of the risk in this respect. Even medicine taken by the mother, may have side effects for the unborn child, and medicines taken should therefore only be those prescribed by the family doctor.

Consideration of physical health alone is not sufficient — the mother needs to be spiritually healthy too, so that the child to be born is perfect in mind as well as body. Modern medical science has shown that the embryo is sensitive to its mother's moods and emotions. Indeed, during the time of being carried in the womb, the child is in the process of character formation. The art of having a good child is acknowledged these days, not to be merely a matter of genetic engineering, but of the suitability of the intra-uterine environment created by the mother during pregnancy; it is the key to raising one's children from the time of conception.
For this reason, the pregnant mother, the mother should attempt to keep her mind calm, undisturbed, stable and cheerful during the time of pregnancy. There is no end to the practical ways in which the mother can help the character of the child in the womb. While she is carrying the child, the mother should imagine pictures of how she would like her child to turn out. She should speak and sing lullabies to the child in her womb. She shouldn't worry whether the child can hear or not, but bear in mind that if the child is at ease when he hears the moth

er's voice, this influence will carry across to the time when the child is born. If the pregnant mother is at ease when she hears the word 'SammĂ-arahaÔ', the baby, when it is born, will immediately be at ease whenever it hears the words 'SammĂarahaÔ'. The mother should be a teacher to the baby she is carrying: a teacher of meditation. Just by creating, the mood of centredness and peace for the child, when he closes his eyes inside the mother's womb, he will see not darkness but a brightness inside himself — the brightness of the virtue of his own two parents.

There are certain things which the pregnant mother should avoid too. Just as good experiences by the mother can have a good effect on the child, during pregnancy, if there is any adverse influence on the mother's mind, the embryo will be adversely affected. If a child is born into the womb of a mother who often quarrels, the child which is born is likely to be morose and uncheerful by nature.

Thus, if the mother finds stressful conditions at work, or has other traumatic experiences, the child will be highly strung. Better then, for the mother to take maternal leave from work during her pregnancy Very negative thoughts by the mother, especially by those mothers who have contemplated abortion, are picked up by the child and may cause the child to have an instinctive distrust or fear of his mother throughout their life.

Better then, that the mother meditate every day, perform chanting, give alms and listen to sermons. The child whose mother is positive thinking and cheerful during pregnancy, is likely to be cheerful and positive thinking like her. Parents who make great self sacrifices, careful and wise in the support of their child during pregnancy, will gain a child who is an altruist, thorough and wise. The care taken by the mother during pregnancy will be transformed by the child into love and respect for his parents, a readiness to go on to the next stage of his development that will come after his delivery.
Even the attitude of the father has an influence on the well-being of the baby in the womb of his wife. The father will have to work harder when his wife is pregnant, helping her with the heavy work

she would normally do herself and being careful not to create situations that are going to irritate or upset the serenity of the mother. Even if normally he might bring the tensions and stresses of his work back home with him, now he must start to be more careful to leave his work in the office and not bring the chaos of his work home with him.

B.3 From Birth to Adulthood

There are five duties for the parent in bringing up their children from the time the child is born to the time he is old enough to look after himself (D.iii.180):

1. Not allowing your child to do anything evil
2. Teach your child to be established in virtue
3. See that your child is educated
4. Arrange your child's marriage
5. Pass on your legacy to your child

For all five of these parental duties (especially establishing the child in virtue) it is absolutely necessary that the parents have the following four qualities:

1. the ability to distinguish themselves between good and evil — i.e. they should be established in Right View.
2. patience
3. ability to recognize the characteristics of False Friends and Good Friends
4. self-discipline

If potential parents lack these prerequisites, perhaps they should wait until they manage to develop them before considering to have children.

B.3.1 Not allowing their child to succumb to wickedness

Not allowing your child to succumb to wickedness means to prevent your child exhibiting any of the sixteen traits already mentioned in the first blessing for "false friends". Whether a child grows up into a fool or a wise one depends on their teacher and their environment. The first and most immediate environment to the child are the parents themselves. So here are some practical tips for how to prevent you child from doing evil:

1. *Set a good example:* Thus the first thing you must do to teach your child to do no evil is not to say or do anything evil in front of your children. Hypocritical behaviour in front of your children will ruin their upbringing. Parents drink alcohol and smoke in front of their children and even send their children to buy liquor and cigarettes. They explain to the child "don't drink or smoke when you grow up — its bad for you!", but they think they themselves are too old to change and therefore don't even attempt to set an example. Such a lesson is of no value to the child. Even parents who teach their children to lie will suffer in the end because the parent will become a victim of their own insincerity.

2. *Keep devices for evil-doing out of the house:* You need to make sure the environment in the house is one which doesn't encourage evil, you should make sure that you don't allow equipment for doing evil into the house right from the time your first child is born objects such liquor bottles, wine brewing kits, gambling tables or pornographic materials should be cleared out of the house and no further such things allowed to enter into the house any more.

3. *Help choose your child's friends:* Parents need to have a close relationship with both their child and his friends. This is to make sure that your child is not associating with friends who are going to influence him in a damaging way. Here are two suggestions which may be useful in this respect:

    1. *Regular tea parties for a child and their friends:* child and his friends to come to play once a week. It may be extra work to prepare cakes for all those friends but while the friends are tucking in to their tea, the parents will learn enough about the character of the friends from the things they say to advise their child which friends to associate with.
    2. *At least one communal family meal per day:* There should be at least one meal a day when all the family come together — maybe the evening meal — to give the chance for the parents to notice any signs of guilt on a child's face. The first time the child does something wrong (such as lying, smoking or shoplifting), the guilt will be very noticeable, the second and

subsequent times, less and less noticeable, until in the end there is no guilt. If the family are all together once day each day, then the parent can correct a child's behaviour while it is still fresh in the child's mind If your child plays with friends who are evil, then he will absorb those habits as his own such as swearwords or unattractive slang. On a wider scale, bad friends may bring ruin to the family, as illustrated by the story of a chameleon playmate betraying an iguana tribe in the Godha JÅtaka (*see §C.4 below*).

4. *Dare to discipline:* For children who have done a lot of good deeds in the past, you will not have to give very many suggestions or spend too much time correcting their behaviour. Some children seem to know instinctively what is right and what is wrong and always keep themselves on the straight and narrow. For some children, being told off a single time will be enough to keep them from doing something evil all their life. However, there are some children who, take no notice however many times they are warned. If after sufficient criticism and reasoning the child is still stubborn or unresponsive or tries to see how far they can "try it on" with their parents' authority, they may need to be beaten. If they are not beaten they may be spoiled for the rest of their lives. Parents who need to punish their children must give serious consideration to what long term effects the punishment will have on the child. The long term aim in educating a child to avoid evil is to build up shame of doing evil [hiri] and fear of the consequences of evil [ottappa]. Many cultures think that beating a child is a necessary part of a child's education (viz. the English proverb "Spare the rod and spoil the child" — see §C.2 TilamuÊÈhi JÅtaka below), however, to beat a child, especially out of anger, teaches a child only to fear the parent or fear the stick, rather than fearing evil. Besides undermining parent child relationships, as the child grows bigger and stronger, the parent will be less and less able to control the child's behaviour by force. The objective parents should have in punishing a child is to shame the child from doing such an evil thing again.

B.3.2 Teach your Child to be Established in Virtue

The first "good friends" to each and every one of usin the world are our parents or guardians — they are the ones to instill the virtue of "being a teacher to yourself" [yonisomanasikÅra] in a child — and each parent must take responsibility for such a duty
— from the time their child first opens their eyes to the world onwards. There is ample medical and psychological evidence to suggest that every individual is impressionable right from the time of being a baby — for example a baby whose nappy is left unchanged regularly and soiled for long period of time is liable later in life to unhygienic and messy habits.

Thus parents should not be neglectful in setting-up the sort of habits they would like to see in their children — as for higher virtues— the importance is proportionally greater — you cannot just wait for teachers or schools to do the job for you — they will never be able to give full attention to the task because their students are many and the time for each is limited — and what's more a children's time spent at school is still less than the time spent at home.

For all of these reasons — the instilling of virtue in children is an important duty for the parents — right from the time the child is still a baby. It is a duty which requires perseverance and consistency and requires an understanding or sequencing and graduation in virtues taught to know what to teach a child first and what to keep until they are older. Just as mentioned for "preventing your child from doing evil", the parents can influence the child in a positive ways by:

1. Setting a good example to your child: parents should show their generosity, do chanting etc. in front of their child and be seen by their children to take an interest in reading books on beneficial subjects.

2. Choosing good friends for your child

It may seem trivial or overzealous to worry about so many aspects of a child'senvironment and de-

velopment. However, it should be pointed out that a child left to his own devices has a very slim chance of developing into a well-balanced adult. Just as a child left alone will choose junk food or convenience food rather than nutritious food and grows up physically weak, a child left to choose its own sources of knowledge with out any guidelines will develop a flawed character. Thus, every child who grows up with a genuine respect for the Precepts and meditation together with a generous heart, does so only as the result of unflagging enthusiasm by his parents for instilling the value of Dhamma practice.

Of course the possible virtues you can teach to a child are many, but the most important in the development of "being a teacher to yourself" are:

1. Knowledge of the highest aim of Buddhism (the highest aim in life of humankind). Buddhism teaches us to pursue perfection – when our perfections are fulfilled we will be able to overcome the last of the defilements in our minds – and we will be able to break free from the cycle of rebirth.

2. Knowledge of how to practice in order to achieve our highest aim in life: normally the threefold practice of self-discipline [sÈla], meditation [samÅdhi] and wisdom [paññÅ].

3. The four virtues for a householder: [gharavÅsa-dhamma]: 1. truthfulness [sacca]; 2. training oneself [dama]; 3. patience [khanti], and; 4. self-sacrifice [cÅga].

4. Supporting their religion: That Buddhists have the job of supporting their religion: Because man's highest refuge is the Triple Gem, it means that care should be taken to support the SaÌgha or monastic community who perpetuate and spread Buddhism. If any monastic member is deprived of the support of householders — before long he will be unable to continue in his duties -– and in turn that is the end of the life of Buddhism — in other words it is the job of Buddhists to support their religion.

5. The MaÌgala *Sutta:* Principles in keeping with (especially the first six) blessings of the MaÌgala Sutta:

1. not associating with fools: mother and father must teach children how to choose appropriate friends and spouse;
2. associating with the wise: i.e. those who are adept in self-discipline [sÈla], meditation [samÅdhi] and wisdom [paññÅ];
3. honouring those worthy of respect: especially the Buddha, monks who practice well, monarchs established in the Ten Virtues of a Monarch, parents and elder relatives and various teachers — even ones boss if he is honest. Having respect for such people means attempting to follow the good example set by such people.
4. Living in an amenable location: an unpolluted environment with good prospects for work and education both in worldly and spiritual ways — and even government — not somewhere dominated criminal underworld.
5. Get down to the pursuit of the Perfections. Our work in the present time will bring its fruits in the future. In the same way the happiness we receive in the present must be the result of our pursuit of perfection in the past, the merits we accrue will bring fruits ensuring our intelligence, prosperity and progress in our duties in the future — and happiness in life in accordance with the Buddhist proverb:

> The accrual of merit brings happiness (Dh.33)
>
> and Merit is the refuge of beings in the world to come (J.iv.62)

Furthermore, the faith of those who are steadfast the accrual of merit will be a shield to protect them from the temptation of evil ways.

6. Setting oneself up properly in life: especially having the correct aim in life.

Anyone who has accumulated all the foregoing virtues will be sure to have developedthe ability to be a teacher to themselves — with the flexibility to adopt appropriate to any circumstances – and will be able to earn their living successfully — life is happy and such a person has worth to society.

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Apart from the virtues mentioned above, parents should be ultra-critical of table manners, sleeping habits (especially fixing bedtime) and working habits (especially working hours) — because these are all fundemental ways of developing self-discipline. Without the parent's prodding, you can be certain that self-discipline will not develop by accident. A child should also be expected to make a contribution to the work of the household since they are small if theyare waited upon hand and foot and have too much time on their hands, in the end the child may be unable to help themselves.

B.3.3 Giving your child an education

Education is the gateway to knowledge and wisdom for your child. If a child has the chance for a full education. Then success will follow on in later life. Thus parents should instill in their children the love of education and reading by:

1. choosing good books for your child: The same thing goes for books which the children should read. Of course the books most suitable for the child to read are the ones that children are too lazy to read. Children would usually like to read any sort of book of cartoons or book with no serious content instead. It is up to parents therefore, to find ways to make useful books interesting to their children, such as getting the children to read such books aloud to their parents.

2. choosing good teachers for your child: means taking your child to study with monks or masters of secular subjects. Parents can also help their children by finding a good school for their children and special tuition.

Children might also need their parent's help in learning how to split their time between study and play. In study time children should study hard: in freetime, playhard. The problem with childrens' education is that all parents would like their children to be top of the class. They want their children to be accepted into the best school. Whether the child lives up to these expectations does not depend on their parent's wishes however, but on two important factors the child's past merits (gifted and wise from birth) and his environment. The parents have their strongest influence on the second factor. In any case the parents shouldn't expect too much from their child. Don't forget that childhood is short. Children cannot live by education alone; they must have time to play and need to have all sorts of experience of life, society and community in order to fully develop their capabilities. Children should have the chance to develop in all areas. If children do well in their studies they deserve praise from their parents. If children don't meet with much success in their studies, even though they have tried hard, there is no need to punish them or compare them with other children who have got better marks because it will undermine a child's self confidence. No matter what result the child gets, parents should be proud of their children for their diligence at the very least. The parents should notice if their child is gifted in any particular way or has any special interest art, music or sports for example. Parents should support their children in the things that take their interest in order to lead them to success and even if they aren't the best of students they will still be able to find happiness in life.

Having provided worldly knowledge for their child, parents must complement it with knowledge of Dhamma. Where worldly knowledge looks after the body, knowledge of Dhamma cares for the mind. Dhamma, the food of the mind, helps to make children resilient towards problems and obstacles, never 'chickening-out' or bored by their own tasks. Dhamma brightens childrens' minds giving them faith to develop their own virtue without end. Parents should introduce the Five Precepts to their children from an early age. Children should check for themselves each day whether their Precepts are intact or not, point by point. *Apart from keepingthe Precepts parents should encourage their children to study Dhamma literature, be generous, perform chanting and meditate on a regular basis.* Every good son should also have the chance to ordain as a novice or a monk at some time during his education in order to have first hand experience of the ideal Buddhist culture. Parents should always take the role of pointing out the applications of Dhamma knowledge in its connection with everyday life.

B.3.4 Approving an appropriate marriage partner

As if giving all manner of basic needs and education is not enough, children even expect parents to give free consultation when in doubt about who to marry.When one's children are fully educated and are well established in their careers, if they wish to marry, then parents have two important duties firstly to finance their childrens' marriage and secondly to advise and take the final decision in their childrens' choice of spouse. Really *who* your child marries is not the important issue — it is whether they have the sixteen qualities of a "good friend" (*see Blessing Two*) upon which to build their own family. In fact, if as a parent, you can pursuade your child *not* to marry, you will be doing them the biggest favour of all because at best the happiness of married life is only miniscule compared with all the suffering family life brings. One's opportunity to do good deeds is seriously curtailed by one's marriage.

The latter role of the parents is seen as an unnecessary intervention by many modern societies but Buddhists still feel it is justified because the choice of a marriage partner is a very serious decision to make and ideally should be at the discretion of someone with a lot of experience of the world. It is not the job of the parents to act as the matchmaker, especially when one's child is still not sufficiently well-educated or with enough work-experience to look after themselves.Young people in love tend to see the world through rose-tinted spectacles. An inappropriate marriage might ruin the rest of a couple's life and this is why parents are called upon by Buddhists to make the final decision as to the marriage partner. The reason is because it is no problem to find a good lover or a good wife, but to find a good mother for one's prospective family is much harder. Having hundreds of children is no problem. Even chickens can do it — but what to do to be a good parent — because a parent must give knowledge, thoughts and morality.

That a son or daughter leaves the final decision up to their parents is one way of repaying their debt of gratitude to them. In any case however parents should be lenient in their discretion, using as a rule of thumb "the partner who we don't like but our child loves is better than the partner we love but our child doesn't like". The only circumstances which may cause friction between the two generations is when one's son or daughter falls in love with someone criminal or otherwise damaging to their future.

B.3.5 Passing on your legacy to your child

In non-Buddhist countries, where social values dictate that sons and daughters shouldn't expect to look after their parents in their old-age, the expectation also arises that they shouldn't come asking for money either. However, in Buddhist culture there are reciprocal duties between parent and child. That the child does not become independent of their parents when adult, looking after their parents when those parents are old) also gives some meaning to the parental duty of passing on their legacy to their children before they die.

However, the child's worthiness to receive the legacy, certainly depends on their ability to have nothing to do with any of the Six Roads to Ruin [abhÅyamukha].

B.4 Summary: The Art of Bringing up Children

Bringing up children can be divided up into three periods: firstly, to conceive a good child in the first place by living our own life in a virtuous way. Secondly, to look after the embryo while it is in the womb, making sure it receives no physical or spiritual trauma. Thirdly, after birth to take care of the child's upbringing: not letting him do evil and encouraging him to do good by praise and remonstration, selecting good friends & books and setting a good example; giving him a decent education; helping choose a partner if he wants to marry and, lastly; passing on your inheritance to him at the appropriate time. Finally...

1. love the child but do not spoil him otherwise he may get into a bad habits;
2. don't love the child so much you don't dare to punish him;
3. don't overlook your duty of being a teacher to your child;

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4. be lenient and not overfussy;
5. give the child enough time, no matter how busy you are, you must try to find time for him or you will regret it later;
6. scold immediately when seeing the child doing something wrong however, be reasonable and do not lose your temper. Praise him when he does something good to encourage him to keep on doing good things;

7. train the child to work from an early age don't let him sit idle. Don't help him with what a child of his age should be able to do. Teach him to depend on himself as much as possible;
8. giving food, clothing, shelter and medicine is not enough — parents must give their child Dhamma too...

C. ILLUSTRATIVE TALES

C.1 Ex. Buddha passes on legacy to son

The person with the best human relations in the world must have been the Buddha. He taught his father King Suddhodana until he could become an arahant. He taught his wife YasodharÅ until she could become an arahant also. His son RÅhula also became an arahant. RÅhula asked to inherit the treasures of his father. Instead of giving him the throne he gave him the qualities of one free from defilement by having his child ordain from the age of seven.

All of the rest of his family and friends became arahants. His teachers died before he was able to teach them, but the group of five ascetics who had helped him in the past, all became arahants. Thus we must take a look at how he brought up his own children as well. What had the Buddha used to bring up his son to be so brilliant? He had given him the seven noble treasures [ariyadhana or bahukÅradhamma] (D.iii.163, D.iii.267, A.iv.5):

1. Faith [saddha] Believing in the things that are worthy of belief.
2. Self-Discipline [sÈla]
3. Shame of Evil [hiri]
4. Fear of the consequences of Evil [ottappa]
5. Knowledge [bahusacca]
6. Self-Sacrifice [cÅga]
7. Wisdom [paññÃ]

C.2 Ex. TilamuÊÊhi JÅtaka*(J.252): Necessity of punishment*

Brahmadatta, son of the king of Benares, was sent to Takkasila to study. One day, when going to bathe with his teacher, he ate some white seeds which an old woman had spread in the sun to dry. He did this on three different days. On the third day, the woman reported him to the teacher and he was beaten. When Brahmadatta ascended the throne, he sent for his teacher, wishing to avenge this insult by killing him.The teacher did not come until the king had grown older, but when he did arrive, the sight of him so kindled the king's hatred, that he ordered him to be put to death. The teacher however, told him that if he had not been corrected in his youth, today he would be a highway robber. Convinced that the teacher's action had been due to a desire for his welfare, Brahmadatta showed his forgiveness and showed him all honour. The JÅtaka was told in reference to a monk who showed resentment when advised.

J.ii.277ff.

C.3 Ex. AnÅthapiÁÎika bribes son to learn Dhamma

AnÅthapiÁÎika also had a son who was a troublemaker. He bribed his son to go to the temple. The son went to the temple and curled up and went to sleep there. He didn't hear any teaching. As soon as he woke up he went home again to claim his prize. He got his prize and a new bribe — this time more — to go to the temple, listen to a sermon and remember one teaching well enough to relate to his father when he got home. If he could remember more than one teaching he would get more money. His father paid up each time and before long the son was going to the temple regularly. At first the son was only interested in the money. Later, the teachings started to be absorbed into his heart. One day the Buddha saw that the son was becoming more ready to understand the Dhamma and so that day He taught on a very difficult subject. The son tried his hardest to understand. Because the son's mind was concentrated on only one thing then he could become a stream-enterer. That day when he went home and his father offered him money he wouldn't take it saying that he already had some-

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thing more precious within himself. DhA.iii.189ff.

C.4 Ex. Godha JÅtaka (J.141): Perils of not selecting a child's friends

At that time the baby iguanas and the baby chameleons were the same size. The father iguana warned his son not to play with the chameleons saying that they were of a different grade. The baby iguana answered back saying,"Oh Dad! Don't be such a snob. After all we're all reptiles together!"

The father advised,"it's not just that we are reptiles, but we have a different physique and different habits. If you keep on associating with them, in the end, danger will come to our door."

However, with the wisdom of a father, he knew that his stubborn son would not listen and the result would bring disaster not only to himself but to the rest of the family of iguanas too. Therefore the father set to work digging an escape route at the back of their burrow.

Before long, it was just as the father Iguana predicted — the baby iguana grew fast and strong. The chameleons grew only a little at a time. The baby chameleons were weighing a few hundred grammes but the baby iguana was several kilogrammes in weight. Now when they engaged in play-fighting as they used to do, the chameleon was beginning to get seriously hurt. The iguana didn't realize his own strength. This time the chameleon had no mercy left for his old friend and it called to some hunters who were passing by and pointed to the iguanas' burrow saying that they could catch something to eat there. The hunters pushed dry grass into all the openings of the burrow and set fire to it sending smoke deep inside the burrow. The baby iguana came running out of the burrow and was killed by the hunters. Many other iguanas in the family suffered the same fate. Only the father, smelling the smoke, immediately realized that his prediction had come true and made his escape by the escape burrow that he had dug for himself. (At that time the father iguana was the Buddha himself, the baby chameleon was Devadatta and the baby iguana was a bhikkhu who had associated with Devadatta and had caused a schism of the Saḭgha).

J.i.487ff.

Blessing Thirteen: Cherishing our husband or wife

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Aim in Life: Marriage versus celibacy

In some cultures, such as those of Indonesia, there are only two logical answers to the question, "Are you married?" — "Yes" or "Not yet"! Western culture might not see marriage as quite so much of an obligation, but it should be declared from the outset with, that just because the Buddha says "Cherishing One's Spouse" is a blessing, does not mean there are not superior ways to become blessed! Rather than advocating marriage, what the Buddha meant in teaching this blessing is to remind us to avoid the dire consequences of having a spouse and not cherishing them. Marriage can be a minefield — thus, if you don't have a spouse and don't plan on procuring one, you can skip this Blessing with a sigh of relief.

For westerners, marriage has traditionally been portrayed as the high-point of happiness in life. The fathers of western attitudes — the Ancient Greek philosophers — have seeded the delusion of idyllic matrimony with the sentimental idea about a man and women mutually searching for the "other half" who will make them complete (— oblivious to the fact that you could say the same about rabbits, ducks, crows or any other sort of animal fulfilling its urge to mate). Consequently, celibacy does not feature visibly as a demographic option in the west.

Buddhism, by contrast, bases its practices on the conviction that *every person can be complete in themselves* if they train themselves earnestly. As mentioned in Blessing Six, Buddhism idealizes the "exclusively spiritual" aim in life and thus the Buddha advocated a life of celibacy because life as a couple always leads to compromises in the intensity to which one can cultivate ultimate peace and purity of mind. In many non-western cultures around the world, celibacy is an option chosen more and more by professionals, especially women, who want to devote their time and efforts to their life's work — they realize that otherwise, because of the expectations of society, marrying would involve a conscious decision to drop their career. It is also traditional in many Asian cultures for couples to become celibate in their married relationship after their own children have grown up and left home. Those with the inner strength to renounce the married life can thereby enter the "fast-lane" of spiritual development — however, in practicality, renunciation of the married life is difficult, because it requires the ability to see through the illusory nature of the self and of the sense-pleasures. Most people realize the truth only when they are already married and are find themselves saddled for the rest of their lives with the more detestable side of their partner.

Buddhism accepts the reality that renunciation is not for everyone, and thus does not decry marriage. Even if the idea of renunciation appeals to you, once

married you cannot just shrug off the duties you have taken on yourself — you need to take proper responsibility for creating happiness in your marriage — to make a success of the path of life you have chosen for yourself. Although the married life doesn't correspond to the highest of aims in life, nonetheless, if one can cultivate contentment with one's spouse and thereby avoid promiscuity— it can give considerable leverage in one's self-development. Creating success in marriage is a major way of cultivating goodness of character. It is to such readers that this Blessing is directed. Wrongly approached marriage can be a nightmare turning the closest of lovers into the worst of enemies. By contrast a properly fulfilled marriage will be long-lasting, avoiding the bitterness of divorce and creating blessings both for that couple and for society as a whole.

However, be warned! Most of the content of the Buddhist Scriptures deals with monastic issues and thus tend to idealize those who see through the folly of their marriage, subsequently renouncing the world or those who marry only reluctantly out of respect for their parents' wishes, renouncing the world after the passing of their parents.

A.2 Long-term Relationships: Marriage versus "living together"

Buddhism advocates celibacy, it tolerates marriage, but prohibits promiscuity under its definition of "adultery". Although Buddhism's definition of marriage is not black and white (*see* §C. *below*) it is clear that Buddhism does not support sexual relations between partners who take no responsibility for one another or the possible consequences of their liaisons. Let us examine the worst scenario for some of the material and abstract issues touched upon as the consequence of sexual relationships:

1. sexually transmitted disease (possibly fatal)
2. pregnancy (possibility of handicapped child or subsequent miscarriage)
3. emotional trauma and regret
4. damage to reputation
5. general undermining of health
6. erosion of deeper meaning in the relationship by ephemoral pleasures

Buddhism prohibits abortion (murder of an unborn child) but does not prohibit contraception. Recourse to contraception might superficially seem to remove responsiblity for "1" and "2" above — but closer examination reveals that contraception does not offer 100% protection from either. Who is going to be there for the girl to comfort her if she has a miscarriage? Who is going to pay for the upbringing of a child born out of wedlock? Will he still love her if she is disfigured by infection with HIV? These are consequences which apply irrespective of the cultural traditions of the society you find yourself in.The reader can answer for themselves what sort of relationship a couple needs to have built for themselves to be willing to shoulder all six of these possible risks implicit in their sexual liaison. For a couple to face up mutually to the responsibilities of living together and having sexual intercourse, demands enormous sacrifices on both sides. It is these sacrifices and responsibilities the Buddha teaches about in the Thirteenth Blessing. On a brighter note, living together should not be the "end" of young peoples' idealism— it can and should be the start of something yet more beautiful.

At this point, it should be added however, that the western mass media consistently lull the public into a false sense of security concerning the risks of promiscuous sex.

A.3 Sexual discrimination in Buddhism?

In this day and age, many people are concerned about equal rights for men and women, but find that religions often harbour the worst of sexual discrimination. Before embarking upon the advice to married couples that follows, it is necessary to qualify the advice by saying the temprament of men and women are not the same in the eyes of the Buddha. Masculinity and femininity are distinct qualities equivalent to the elements of earth, water, fire and air that make up our bodies. One is not *superior* to the other, but harm can come about when one becomes enamoured these features of one's own or another's gender (e.g. SaÔyoga Sutta A.iv.57). It is the attraction between the genders that causes harm, not the gender qualities themselves,

because:

> "no sight, sound, scent or touch can over come the mind of a man like those of a woman and no sight, sound, scent or touch can overcome the mind of a woman like those of a man"
>
> RËpÅdi Sutta A.i.1

and for as long as a man or a woman is under the control of the attraction they have for someone of the opposite gender, they will fail to make use of their nobler virtues such as wisdom and conscience. They will tend to forget that love has a nobler side which is motherly, brotherly, selfless or universal in place of love which is merely sensual, emotional, sexual or downright selfish.

That women are often shown in a bad light in the Buddhist scriptures does not reflect the quality of women *per se*, but us because women are mostly referred to in stories used to threaten monks on the brink of disrobing (a relatively common reason for the Buddha to give a teaching). Elsewhere the Buddha shows women in a good light and admits that women have an equal chance of becoming enlightened as men.

A.4 Disadvantages of not cherishing one's spouse

With or without divorce, the consequences of marital neglect are far-reaching. If a husband and wife do not cherish one another according to the advice of the Buddha, the harm that will come to them can be concluded on three levels:

1. Losing a sense of responsibility for their own human dignity: If a husband and wife lack self-discipline and don't fulfil the duties towards one another prescribed by the Lord Buddha, the first level of disaster which will happen to them is that they will lose their sense of responsibility for their own human dignity — this loss giving rise (at the minimum) to the following three undesirable symptoms:

1. Breaking the Precepts: The husband and wife might be unfaithful to one another leading to family problems, divorce, vengeful aggression and violence;

2. Running out of inspiration to perform virtue: When someone feels disappointed with life, the last thing they want to do is to be a good husband or wife to their partner or a good parent to their children;

3. Displaying violence in front of their children: If a parent has no respect for themselves, they will feel no embarrassment about losing their temper or being aggressive in front of the children. Such aggression, even if it is only verbal, leaves an unerasable traumatic impression on the children's developing mind quenching any possible warmth they might feel for that parent in the future;

2. Losing a sense of responsibility for the human dignity of others: If a husband and wife lack self-discipline and don't fulfil the duties towards one another prescribed by the Lord Buddha, the second level of disaster which will happen to them is that they will lose their sense of responsibility for the human dignity of others — this loss giving rise (at the minimum) to the following three undesirable symptoms:

1. Pessimistic world-view: If a husband and wife habitually loses their temper with colleagues or friends outside the home, it will eventually retard career progress and promotion prospects;

2. Biased personality: The insecurity of family life will lead them to take refuge within a clique of sympathizers, thereby losing the ability to associate sincerely with a wider society;

3. Accumulation of anger and vengefulness: The husband or wife will start to accumulate negative emotions because they feel that everybody is against them — eventually they become preoccupied with looking for ways to "get their own back on these "enemies".

3. Losing a sense of responsibility for economic fairness in society at large: If a husband and wife lack self-discipline and don't fulfil the

duties towards one another prescribed by the Lord Buddha, the third level of disaster which will happen to them is that they will lose their sense of responsibility for economic fairness in society at large — this loss giving rise (at the minimum) to the following three undesirable symptoms:

1. Recourse to "Roads to Ruin": If husbands or wives lose their sense of responsibility for economic fairness, eventually they will turn to "Roads of Ruin" such as alcohol for solace, in an attempt to "blot out" their suffering.

2. Economic hardship for the family: When the finances of the family are misdirected, the ones who suffer the most will be the children who experience neglect in their material and educational needs — exacerbating problems of juvenile delinquency;

3. Lack of harmony in earning livelihood: when the relationship between husband and wife is plagued by mistrust and suspicion — if the couple eventually has to break-up, the certain victims will be the children in the family.

The problems of the western quarter can be summarized down to two main points:

1. Broken families: The manifest problem of broken families in our society exacerbates the already grave problems faced by young people as well as affecting a country's economic stability;

2. Misunderstanding of marriage: The covert social problem of misunderstanding of marriage stems from the fact that young people are getting married for the wrong reasons. Without any comprehension of how to lead a household, a majority of couples these days seem to be marrying merely to fulfil their sexual fantasies. However, once married, when the reality of the situation sinks in, they find themselves ill-equipped to make a success of the family life. It is ironic that "sex education" has become a compulsory school subject at a time when society is plumbing the depths of marital problems and promiscuity. In the olden days "sex education" was not taught, but somehow the "man-in-the-street" seemed to make less of a mess of his marital life! Maybe what they should be teaching in schools instead of "sex education" is "how to prepare yourself to be a good husband/wife" or "how to prepare yourself to be a good parent" ?

B. HUSBANDS AND WIVES

B.1 Seven Types of Spouse

In a teaching to SujÅtÅ, the daughter-in-law of AnÅthapiÁÎika who was causing considerable friction in her own marriage as a result of ill-chosen words, the Buddha enumerated seven different sorts of spouse — some desirable, some undesirable (A.iv. 91ff., J.269). We can use these categories as a mirror on our own situation — to throw light on possible room for improvement in our current or future relationships. The seven categories of spouse are as follows:

1. A spouse like an enemy [vadhaka samÅbhariyÅ]: such a spouse is partial to all sorts of violence. Always looking for the opportunity to kill. Sometimes a couple was not wholehearted about marriage or their marriage was arranged. Only after they have been together for a while does the real personality of the partner manifest itself and they will always be beating one another. Such a spouse is cruel to their partner instead of being compassionate, looking down on them, having no gratitude to them, and even going as far as attempting to kill their partner in some cases — a spouse with such characteristics is a spouse like an enemy;

2. A spouse like a robber [corÈ samÅbhariyÅ]: No matter how much wealth the couple has, if one of the couple has such a character, then it is like having someone in the house who is burning money the whole time until there is nothing left

e.g. by gambling or extravagence. The people of old used to say that seven robberies of your house are better than your house burned down (because at least robbers leave the house behind)

— and your house burning down seven times is

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better than being married to a gambler (because even though the house burns down, the land is still left). With gamblers, all your property is still not enough — they will even run up debts for you to service. Such a spouse is full of greed and tries deviously to extract as much of their partner's money as possible for their self-interest, without thinking how hard they have had to work to earn it — a spouse with such characteristics is a spouse like a robber;

3. A spouse like a boss [ayyÅ samÅbhariyÅ]: Where the categories of spouse above threatened your life or your possessions, the boss spouse will threaten your honour — the sort who pulls your ears or treats you like a child in front of your friends. They may be lazy — constantly awaiting the chance to sit down or lie down and rest instead of helping with their various duties, lacking helpfulness, and using threats and insults to goad their partner into doing their work in their place, but never accepting similar treatment from their partner — a spouse with such characteristics is a spouse like a boss;

4. A spouse like a mother [mÅtÅ samÅbhariyÅ]: A mother has unlimited love for her children, forgiving all of their mistakes. Such a spouse will forgive their partner for anything they do wrong. You will see the special features of such a spouse when their partner is ill or handicapped and they will look after their partner with the same care as they would look after one of their own children (without thinking of looking for a new partner). This is also true of a spouse whose partner dies when their children are still young, who carries on bringing up their children single-handed without thinking of taking a new partner. Such spouses tend to be full of compassion, loving their partner, helping and being a credit to their partner, looking after their partner's health when they are ill, like a mother would look after her own children — a spouse with such characteristics is a spouse like a mother.

5. A spouse like a little sister [bhaginÈ samÅbhariyÅ]: Such a spouse is almost the same as the motherly spouse, but a little more playful, lonely, moody and emotional — but at the same time truthful, honest and faithful. They tend to be ashamed of evil and fear the consequences of evil, respecting and looking up to their partner as if they were an older brother or sister — a spouse with such characteristics is a spouse like a little sister.

6. A spouse like a friend [sahÅya samÅbhariyÅ]: Such a spouse is one of similar background, tastes, education as their partner — maybe they have known their partner since childhood. Such a couple tend not to have much sense of respect towards one another. Their level of morality will be similar and they can live quite happily together. Such a spouse will tend to be generous and sincere — empathizing with their partner in all they do throughout their life like a friend who goes together through thick and thin — a spouse with such characteristics is a spouse like a friend.

7. A spouse like a slave [dÅsÈ samÅbhariyÅ]: Usually the intelligence of such a spouse is less than that of their partner. They will be honest, they may want to serve their partner to the utmost but they may make mistakes. Such a spouse tends to allow themself to be abused, slapped or beaten by their partner without becoming angry or vengeful and without blaming their partner

— being contented to be completely dominated by them — a spouse with such characteristics is a spouse like a slave.

Living together like these first three sorts couple is like being in hell from the time you are still alive. When such spouses die, then it will only be a continuation of the retribution from all the terrible things the husband and wife have done to one another. They will pass away into hell at the end of their lives as a result of the bad karma they have accumulated for themselves.

The remaining four types of spouse will pass away into heaven at the end of their lives as a result of the good karma they have accumulated for themselves. They all represent marriages which have the chance of working out. Both husband and wife have a baseline of morality and are flexible.

The marriages with spouses from categories "4" to "7" are in decreasing order of stability. Thus if you are already married then ask yourself which category you have worked yourself into — as "4" is the most stable of all.

C. DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES

C.1 Getting Married

C.1.1 Choosing a compatible husband or wife

In order for a couple to stay together, it is necessary that they are compatible in terms fo the level of virtues they possess — particularly the following four "virtues of compatability" [samajÈvi-dhamma]:

> ***1. faith*** [sama-saddha]: husband and wife should have the same level of spiritual faith and the same level of "aim in life"
> ***2. self-discipline*** [sama-sÈla]: husband and wife should have the same standards of Precepts, manners and etiquette as one another;
> ***3. self-sacrifice*** [sama-cÅga]: husband and wife should have the same level of self-sacrifice in selflessly devoting themselves to generous deeds or helping others;
> ***4. wisdom*** [sama-paññÅ]: husband and wife should have the same level of wisdom, creativity, empathy and common-sense — being on the same communicative "wavelength" — neither suffering overly from stubborness.

In addition, concerning compatability, the Buddha warned of the perils of an old man bringing home a young girl as a wife:

> (When) an old man takes as a wife a vigourous young girl and cannot sleep, because of his possessiveness for her, this leads to his downfall.
>
> ParÅbhava Sutta, SN.20 v.109-10

C.1.2 Marrying your spouse

In the time of the Buddha, there was no such thing as a legal registration of marriages. A man and a woman mutually decided to accept each other as husband and wife and thereafter they lived together. Their marriage was carried out in the presence of the lay-community rather than in the presence of the spiritual community.

In the present day, however, legal registration of a marriage is required. Details differ from country to country and Buddhism supports whatever complies with the Law. However, there remains no specific Buddhist ritual or procedure to conduct a marriage. Buddhism recognizes the traditions and cultures practised by people in different countries — hence Buddhist wedding rituals differ from one country to another. In general, there will be a religious service for blessing and to give advice to the new couple, performed either in the home or in the temple.

Some hesitate over becoming "officially" married over concerns such as whether their marriage vows will substitute for affection as the bonds to hold the couple together! However, this misses the point of legalizing a marriage which is publically to recognize one's spouse. How do you think a wife would feel if her husband were too embarrassed to admit he had married her? — or how would the husband feel if his wife refused to wear a wedding ring? Marrying is about showing each other due respect

— and this is the foundation of the trust which unifies the couple.

C.2 Maintaining a married relationship

C.2.1 The challenge of married life

Life in a long-term relationship is infinitely more demanding on one's store of virtues than that of dating and first love. How can a couple preserve the joy of their initial encounters while developing the love and understanding to ensure a happy and stable marriage? How can partners respect their own dignity and that of their "better half" instead of running off to get a divorce or abortion after their first quarrel or dispute?

C.2.2 Principles

In a recent piece of research on the emotions, it was discovered that immediately conflicts within a marriage lead to "stone-walling" (i.e. the husband and wife are no longer on speaking terms), the further life expectancy of the marriage will not exceed three years (John Gottman, *What Predicts Divorce*). Conflicts can not be avoided in a marriage — the secret of happy marriage relies on keeping open channels of communication to deal with them.

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A surprise for many modern-day readers is that the Buddha never recommended "making yourself more attractive" or "being sexy" as a way to maintain a marriage. He addressed instead the gravest enemies of marriage: "distrust" and "suspicion".

Maintaining good channels of communication according to the principle recommended by the Lord Buddha is to maintain a healthy "emotional bank account" [saḶgahavatthu] with one's marriage partner. There are four ways of maintaining a healthy emotional bank account with your partner as follows:

1. Giving resources [dÅna]: If two people are going to live together they must be able to share what they have with their partner. Any place that lacks giving will be parched like an emotional desert. Once married, all the property once individually owned should be shared. To "keep back" something as an individual asset will only create suspicion — and suspicion kills marriages. Thus it is important to keep open a channel of communication in the marriage whereby one partner can consult the other if they are suffering or are having problems with material resources.

2. Endearing speech [piyavÅcÅ]: A husband and wife should take care always to address each other with polite speech, even in the case they need to criticize each other. Sometimes if things become too informal, careless words may touch on the "views" of the other partner and disturb the peacefulness of the family. After marriage, one should use the same standard of polite of speech used before marriage!

3. Helpfulness [atthacariyÅ]: A husband and wife need to lend each other a helping hand. Also if one of the partners learns something new concerning spiritual knowledge, they should share it with their spouse. When a conflict arises in the marriage, there is a huge temptation to put all the blame on the other partner instead of taking collective responsibility — but if both are well-versed in spiritual teachings, the couple will tend to deal with the problem directly instead of merely looking for someone to blame.

4. Consistency [samÅnatatta]: Both husband and wife have implicit duties in the marriage (*see details below*) and to the degree they live up to these duties they will avoid the suspicions of their partner. If a husband has decided that his wife should take responsibility for the running of the house, he should not subsequently come interfering in the household affairs. Sometimes "appropriateness" is not immediately evident for every situation — sometimes it is hard to sense what your partner expects of you — but if both partners meditate on a daily basis, they will tune in more easily to consistently harmonious behaviours.

C.2.3 Five duties of a husband to his wife

Based on these four principles, in the SiḶgalovÅda Sutta the Buddha advised of five duties a husband should fulfil towards his wife and five duties a wife should fulfil towards her husband. The duties of a husband are as follows:

1. He must praise his wife: He should not keep a wife in secret. Once a man is married he should show off his wife in public, not keep his wife in secret. He should have a proper, lawful registration of his marriage. He should be careful to treat his wife with respect, not criticising her personally in front of inferiors.

2. He must never look down on his wife: Even though a couple is married doesn't mean that a husband will have an attitude of respect to his wife. Sometimes he may look down on her or even treat her like a slave or a pet animal. That a husband restrains himself from looking down on his wife in any way, shows his responsibility for the human dignity of others.

3. He must never be unfaithful: Because a Buddhist husband is a man of virtue it goes without saying that he refrains from the Four Defilements of Action [kammakilesa]: killing, stealing, adultery and telling lies. He would thus never be unfaithful to his wife, because doing so would destroy the human dignity of himself and his

wife. The feelings of a person who is found guilty be especially careful what she says to them be-of sexual misconduct are described in the Sutta cause a few ill chosen words can have serious Nipata: consequences.

> Whatever fame and reputation he had before, of course vanishes . . .in the grip of his fantasies, he broods like a beggar. Hearing the outrage of others, he gets depressed . . . hearing the spread of gossip, he then hides in his own embarrassment. He cannot accept the criticism of others on this count, and may lie to those who try to counsel him . . .
>
> Tissametteyya Sutta, SN.160 v.817-20

4. He should give his wife the responsibility for looking after the house: To demonstrate his sincerety and trust for his wife, a husband must give his wife the final word in the organization of the household and the family without interfering. If his wife is a "working mother" it doesn't make her any less responsible for the affairs of the home and the family, but husband and wife will need to come to an agreement, according to the principles of the "emotional bank account", whereby she can manage to keep on top of her domestic responsibilities without being overloaded.

5. He should bring his wife gifts of clothing or jewellry: Such gifts express the love of a husband for his wife and his appreciation of her virtues. Such generosity can mend many marriages. It breathes a new air of life into a relationship. A husband should take his wife shopping for things she wants to buy. He should encourage her to do the things she wants to do sometimes to allow her to get out of the house occasionally.

C.2.4 Five duties of a wife to her husband

The duties of a wife to her husband are as follows:

1. She see to the proper care of the household. The wife should see to it that the house become a heavenly mansion — the house should be peaceful, the food nourishing and appropriate in taste to the age and the health of the family members.

2. She must take proper care of the 'in-laws'. The wife must look after her 'in-laws' especially well (within the limits of her convenience). She must

3. She must never be unfaithful: Because a Buddhist wife is a woman of virtue it goes without saying that she refrains from the Four Defilements of Action [kammakilesa]: killing, stealing, adultery and telling lies. She would thus never be unfaithful to her husband, because doing so would destroy the human dignity of herself and her husband.

4. She must take good care of the shared wealth: A wife should look after the shared wealth of the household responsibly — being neither extravagent nor stingy. This implies that the husband goes out to work but entrusts his wife with the money for the administration of the family finances.

5. She must be conscientious in her responsibilities: Having been entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the household and the family she should see to it that these duties are properly fulfilled — rather than lazing around at home or doing other work to the neglect of the household.

C.2.5 Reciprocal relationship between husband and wife

From the SiÌgalovÅda Sutta we learn that a husband has duties towards his wife and a wife has duties towards her husband. In the ideal world, both the husband and wife will fulfil their side of the bargain and in doing so, no danger will grow up in the relationship or for society at large — there will be happiness and prosperity both for husband, wife and society at large.

If the husband fulfils his duties according to Blessing Thirteen but the wife doesn't, it can be said that the wife has done nothing to deserve such a good husband. In addition, certain harm will come to the family.

If the wife fulfils her duties according to Blessing Thirteen but the husband doesn't, it can be said that the husband has done nothing to deserve such a good wife. In addition, certain harm will come to the family.

If the neither the husband nor the wife fulfil their duties according to Blessing Thirteen, certain harm will come not only to the family but to society at large too.

C.2.6 Ten further principles of happily married life

Finally for the married couple we are fortunate to have passed down to us in the Buddhist tradition the ten-fold advice given to VisÅkhÅ by her father Dhanañcaya on the day of her wedding (DhA.i.384ff.):

1 ***Don't let the fire inside go outside:*** don't go spreading the secret problems from inside the house for people outside to know about;

2 ***Don't let the fire outside come inside:*** don't bring gossip of problems from elsewhere into the house, especially gossip that is of no benefit to know;

3 ***Give to those who give to us:*** help those who have helped us in the past especially the parents of both the husband and the wife. Let them borrow things. If you lend things to people and they return them punctually, you should lend things to them a second time;

4 ***Don't give to those who give nothing to us:***

Don't lend things to people who never return them or return them late or to those who in the past have refused to help us even though it is withing their capability to do so;

5. Whether they give or not, be generous anyway: Whether they have helped us before or not, if they are our relatives and they have fallen on hard times, you should help them anyway. It doesn't matter if they return money given or not because their inability to return it is through circumstances beyond their control;

6. Make sure that the food is amenable: Make sure the meals served to your family are nutricious — and serve your in-laws with good food too. You may have to eat after your children have finished their meal — but if all the family are well provided for in terms of food, you too will have no problems when it comes to eating;

7. ***Find an amenable place to sit:*** This means the wife must know relative level of respect due to others — for example it would be insulting to sit on a higher level than one's in-laws.

8. Find an amenable place to sleep: You should make sure that the sleeping place of everyone in the family is restful. Be prepared to get up before anyone else in the family and go to sleep when everyone else has already gone to bed.

9. Keep the fire going: that is to take special care of one's in-laws and husband when they are "on fire" (i.e. in a bad temper) — even if they should speak in an unpleasant way to us, it is necessary to hold our silence instead of answering back — to say the right thing at the wrong time will only make the situation worse. Sometimes the wife must wait until things have "quietened down" before explaining the real reason for a situation.

10. Be respectful to the angels: to congratulate one's husband or inlaws when they do something good or have experienced good luck. Our words of encouragement should lead them to ever better good deeds.

C.2.7 Sharing spiritual practice

You also need to be able to support your spouse spiritually. Any incompatabilities on a spiritual level discovered after marriage can by nurturing a mutual interest in spiritual self-development:

1. Persuade them to be generous, keep the Precepts, listen to sermons and meditate. Some are scared to encourage their spouse to have too much involvement with spirituality in case they turn professional and leave them to bring up the family alone. Some men say, "I want a wife in the home not a nun." However, if one's wife stays at home and also keeps the Precepts then we should be thankful (especially for the third precept). In the same way, wives can forbid their husbands from going to the temple more easily than they can prohibit them from unfaithfulness. At least if they go to the temple regularly they will be more motivated to be faithful to their wife.

2. Teach your spouse how to do chanting so that they have a refuge for the mind. If people have fear and shame of evil then they have virtually no vulnerability to adultery. Chanting and re-

spect for the Triple Gem is the basis of fear and shame of evil.

C.3 Analyzing marriage breakdown

In the olden days, if a piece of a equipment or a pair of shoes were worn or broken, the owner would always take care to have it mended as new. No matter how much effort it took to have it mended, the owner would be prepared to make the sacrifices — because it would be unthinkably extravagent to buy another piece of the same sort of equipment or a new pair of shoes for as long as there were even a remote possibility of mending the old. Our modern society however, has turned into a 'throwaway' society. We replace things merely because they are worn, or obselete or unfashionable — and it is even a pleasure when something breaks because at last you have "a legitimate excuse" to buy a new one. Such attitudes towards possessions at the worst are wasteful, but when they are applied not to objects, but to friendships and marriages, they tend to lower one's threshold of patience and loyalty.

Divorce is becoming so common in our society that in some countries, single-parent families are as common as those with both parents! How can we analyse a marriage that is breaking up in order to know whether a divorce is for the better or not?

Basically there are only two scenarios — being bored of *one's partner* and being bored of *marriage*.

In the first scenario one or both of the married partners feels that their marriage is not working and that they would be happier if they went to live with a certain other person. They want to "turn-in" their spouse in exchange for a new one! Such a divorce is a bad idea because what they fail to realize is that the faults they are trying to escape by divorce are not their ex-partner's, but their own! If they *do* divorce, they will take these faults uncorrected to their next marriage and history will repeat itself. Thus rather than asking for a divorce, the person should get down to improving their own character in earnest (starting with forgiveness and humility) thereby repairing the relationship.This scenario applies in 99% of cases. Be warned ! — you have no idea before going through with a divorce how destructive it will be for yourself, your children, your reputation, your spiritual development and for everyone else you and your spouse know.

In the second scenario, if after all efforts to ameliorate your marriage you realize that the problem is not with your spouse, but with marriage in general, this may be a valid reason for a divorce. In such a case, you see through the folly of being involved in a relationship at all. If the reason you want a divorce, is in order to upgrade the intensity of your spiritual vocation by leading a life of celibacy, with the genuine intention never again to enter into a new relationship,this *is* a valid reason to obtain a divorce. One should however, minimize the negative effects for any children you may have, by waiting first until they are old enough to be independent of you.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Metaphor: Tongue & Teeth in close proximity

When chewing one's food, if one's teeth and tongue fail to co-operate, biting one's tongue can be painful enough to bring tears to the eyes. In the same way, if a husband and wife fail to be helpful and understanding to one another, apart from making no progress in their married life, tears can be expected too in the long-term.

D.2 Ex. Love beyond the grave

In the Tang Dynasty an emperor who liked to perform a lot of merits. He had an empress who was not interested in any form of good deeds.Even when their country was invaded, the empress would not make any merit to help the situation. When her husband sent her to make a merit she only pretended to go. When she came back she lied saying that she had already made the merit he sent her to do. The empress died in advance of the emperor. One day when the emperor was sleeping he drempt he saw the empress as a ghost crying and calling for help. In the morning the king thus called an assembly. He asked the monks what could be done. The monks told him that he needed to make a merit and transfer the merit to the late empress. If the ghost was able to rejoice in the merit then she would escape from her ghostly rebirth for something better. The emperor thus organized a merit-making fit for

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an emperor. He donated all the gold in his treasury, all the servants, all the carriages, chariots and horses. He transferred merit for the next seven days. He slept again and drempt that he saw the empress now free from distress, thanking him.

The tale of the emperor was therefore told by many generations of Chinese until more recently the whole subject of transferring merit has been misunderstood. Because the normal people don't have the wealth of an emperor to make merit, they burn paper money, paper Mercedes, paper servants etc. to burn for their deceased relatives. It is tempting to think that nowadays deceased Chinese relatives get only ashes!

D.3 Ex. Reluctant marriage: the nun (DhA.iii.147ff.)

There was once a girl who had been going to the temple since the age of seven and had wanted to be a nun right from that time. Her parents didn't let her, saying that she must finish her studies. Thus as a child she did her duty to her best. When she finished her studies she asked her parents' permission to become a nun, but they refused saying that they wanted to see her married. Thus she was married and continued to do the best of her duties as a faithful wife. One day the husband was going to take his wife to a fair and said to her 'go and put on all your best jewellry so that you look the best at the fair'. The wife said, I don't see the point on putting on any more jewellry than this. The husband asked why not because he had already bought so many nice items of jewellry for her to wear. The wife said that really none of us have any beauty. The skin on our body just hides the putrescence inside ourselves'. The husband teased 'with that sort of thinking wouldn't you be better off as a nun?' The wife replied, 'actually it is my dearest wish if you would only give your permission.' The husband allowed her and after becoming a bhikkhuÁi within a very short space of time, she could become enlightened. Whatever duty she had had to do in the past she had always done her best, thus when she was a nun, before long she could achieve what she had set out to do.

D.4 Ex. Reluctant marriage: MahÅkassapa (Ap.ii.583)

Kassapa was the son of a millionnaire. His future wife was also the daughter of a millionnaire. Each of them lived in distant cities. The two families had heard the reputation of the other family's child and before long they sent messangers to arrange the marriage. Neither the bride nor the groom were interested in marriage. When they were both forced to marry then they did not rebel. However, because both of them were more interested in the Dhamma, after they were married they always slept in separate rooms. Later when both of their parents had passed away, they persuaded each other to ordain. The husband became a monk. The wife became a nun. They left their house, gave away all their possessions. When they came to a fork in the road, they agreed that if they went together they might cause gossip so they decided to go their separate ways. Before long both of them met with those who could teach them the Dhamma and both could become *arahants* with ease.

D.5 Ex. Married spite beyond the grave (DhA.i.47ff.)

There was once a good husband and wife. The wife was barren and felt sorry for the childless husband so she found a mistress for him. Both the wife and the mistress were good friends but all of us still have defilements and cannot be trusted. When the mistress got pregnant, the husband was so pleased that he lavished more affection on his mistress than on his wife. This made the wife envious because she thought to herself, "even when the child has not yet been born, my husband is already treating me with indifference. If the child is born, the husband will certainly treat me with no more respect than a pig or a chicken around the house." Thus she thought 'time is of the essence' and found some poison that would cause abortion and tricked the mistress into drinking it. The first child was aborted. When she became pregnant a second time, the wife did the same again. By the third pregnancy, the mistress worked out what was happening and refused to take the 'medicine' thus there was a fight between the wife and the mistress. The wife killed the mistress who was almost defenceless because of her pregnancy. When the husband saw what had

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happened he killed his wife. Before the mistress died she was so vengeful that she made the vow that she would kill and eat all the children of that wife in every future lifetime. When the mistress died she was reborn as a cat in the same house. The wife was born as a chicken in the same house. However many eggs the chicken laid, the cat would eat them all. The chicken was thus angry and before it died made the vow to eat all the children of the cat in the next lifetime.The chicken was reborn as a tiger and the cat was reborn as deer. The tiger ate all the baby deer. This carried on the same until the final lifetime when the wife was born as a man-eating ogress. The mistress was born married to the same husband again.The man-eating ogress ate up the first and second children of the couple. When the third child was born, the mother realized in time and quickly took the child to where the Lord Buddha was staying. As soon as the man-eating ogress followed the mother into the temple, its temptation to eat people disappeared. The Buddha summoned both of the two. The Buddha looked at their previous lives and made the pictures of their past visible for others to see as well. Having seen the pictures, both of the women knew the reasons for everything and so were able to forgive one another. The ogress was able to become a stream-enterer. The mistress attained faith in theTriple Gem.The ogress didn't know how to earn her living so the mistress brought her home and looked after her like a daughter. The ogress knew in advance what the seasons of the year would be like — whether there would be drought or flood and the forecast she passed on to her caretakers and they were able to become wealthy. The moral of this story is don't go looking for mistresses to help any situation because we all still have defilements.

Blessing Fourteen: Not Leaving one's Work Undone

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 The "work ethic" in Buddhism

Like many other spiritual traditions, Buddhism is a religion which supports the "work ethic". Buddhism is not a religion to tolerate lazy people. Even if you have already fulfilled all the blessings in this grouping by cherishing your parents, children and spouse, if you neglect to be lively in earning your living, harmony in the family will not come about because of financial difficulties. From a financial point view is necessary to devote oneself to earning one's living in order to support one's children, to have a legacy to pass on to one's children, to support one's spouse and cherish one's parents.

In Buddhism it is also seen as dutiful to work hard because out of gratitude, one recognizes that in order to come to working age at all, we are a result of considerable investment of time, money, education, love and patience by parents, teachers and state alike and if we don't put our skills into action, then that investment and good will would go to waste. Thus in Buddhism a lazy person is also seen as an ungrateful person.

Supposing you are already someone who has knowledge (*Blessing Nine*), practical skills (*Blessing Ten*), it doesn't mean that you will automatically be effective in doing your work. Some people with the best of education and experience, make no impact on their work if they never get round to doing it.

Many think that the reason for procrastination is laziness on the part of the person involved. However in recent academic studies, it turns out that the reason we don't do things even when we know it is a good idea is often much more varied.

- ***procrastination coming from fear:*** especially the fear of being judged to lack ability. Such people have an inferiority complex over their ability and would rather be seen to fail in a task because of procrastination (lack of time) that because of lack of ability. Thus the slip-shod work of the final minute rush means that procrastination is an excuse for mediocrity.
- ***procrastination because of perfectionism:*** some people have been brought up with the fear of doing too well, or appearing too keen, or being a "goody-goody". Consequently they procrastinate, not putting in their best, so that if the results come out well, it doesn't look intentional or magnifies the myth of 'latent ability'.
- ***procrastination from the misconception that work expands to fill the time available:*** Some people are disorganized to the degree that they feel they have no control over the time they spend on any task. Therefore they leave tasks to the last minute in order to 'save time'. However the results of the work often leaves a lot to be desired.
- ***procrastination because of resentment of control:***

  (e.g. when a person doesn't like their boss). Here procrastination serves as a way to give power to the underdog, to say "get off my back", as a sort of game where people try to beat the clock, or

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reminding others of things they are starting to take for granted (when the person is not assertive enough to say 'no' directly).

- ***procrastination is sometimes used to control distance in relationships:*** to make a person more or less reliant on another person or persons.

Whatever the reason, the Buddha taught that procrastination either in worldly or spiritual work will limit one's ability to earn one's living and the result will be to destroy harmony in one's family life.

B. WHAT IS WORK?

B.1 Definition of work: physical and spiritual

When we talk of 'work' in a religious context we mean 'a means of earning our living'. We cannot survive without money. We have to have something to eat — but don't forget that food is of many types . . . It is just like a tree needs food, but the food that nourishes it is sucked up through the roots.The food for a light bulb is electrical current. Because work is simply a means of earning our living we thus divide work into two main components, neither of which we can afford to leave undone:

- ***food for the body***: For our body we need solid food. To get the food we need for our body we must find ourselves a job or a career. Work (physical) means the means by which we can nourish our body and its scope also reaches to such things as maintaining harmony with the other people around us.
- ***food for the mind***: food suitable for the mind is "merit" i.e. the fruits of our good deeds and spiritual development. Working on the mind doesn't just mean feeling contented the whole of the time, but also to develop the mind to become wiser too.

C. UNFINISHED WORK

C.1 Why work left unfinished

Some people in an office get a reputation for leaving a backlogue of work. Every piece of work which involves them in any way can be easily found because it is always on that person's desk unfinished. They have two baskets on their desk, an 'in' basket and an 'out' basket. The 'in' basket is always stacked up higher than their head, but there is never any thing in the 'out' tray. Thus if you have lost a particular document people in the office say playfully "If you want to find finished work go to Mr. A but if you want find unfinished work go to Mr. B because it is all on his desk!" The same is true for students always leaving the revision until the exams are close. If you want to look at why work is left unfinished, in almost every case you can generalize down to four basic reasons:

1. **wrong timing**: Doing the work at the wrong time or with the wrong timing. If you do the work at the wrong time such as ploughing a field out of season, weeds will choke the bare soil before you manage to sow your crops (*hasty in things that don't require it*) or else wait until it's too late before you start doing something (*slow in things that should have been finished long ago*) e.g. someone who doesn't study when he has the opportunity as a child and has to do his studies when he too old to remember anything. (*'Make hay while the sun shines'* but *'More haste less speed'*). Same for people who wait until they are old before becoming interested in training the mind. Work which needs to be done patiently (e.g. throwing a pot of clay) or driving at the same speed as the rest of the traffic. Meditation needs you to be patient, like waiting for crops to grow or like a hen hatching an egg where the mother hen must wait thirty days whether the mother hen must wait thirty days regardless. If things have a fixed period or cycle there is not point rushing them. Also if you rush into something and do it wrongly as the result you will waste both time, money and morale because instead of doing it only once (*correctly*) you have to do it three times (*do it wrongly, undo it and re-do it*) and on every time there is no satisfaction from your achievement. Better to do things cautiously so you can get it right from the start. With meditation also you cannot rush to bring the mind to a standstill. You cannot achieve overnight success in meditation (except for 0.00001% of people in very exceptional circumstances).You have to be able to tell whether what you are doing is the sort of work where the time spent is fixed or whether it is

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something that can be hurried. If it is to take a fixed length of time, then you have to put up with waiting. However, if it is something that can be done more quickly then it can be hurried so that you have more time to speak to others.

2. wrong technique: An example of doing things by the wrong technique is trying to work individually when the task requires teamwork or dividing up your time wrongly spending too long doing any one question in an examination paper — the result is that you run out of motivation to do the work at all.

3. never getting started: There are many reasons why people prevaricate instead of starting to do things. One reason is those wait for the auspicious time by studying horoscopes. Meditators however, are those who take their destiny in their own hands and don't wait for astrologers to organize their lives for them. Any time when you get round to doing good deeds, then the simple act of getting down to doing it will be auspicious itself. If you want to know whether it is the auspicious time to do something or not, don't waste money to see a fortune teller but instead use your powers of observation and experience to see whether you are ready and prepared to do the task in hand. If by common sense you have discerned that you are ready to do something, there is a good chance that getting started will yield success.

4. not genuine in one's efforts: Not being genuine in one's efforts means getting one's priorities wrong. Instead of realizing how important your work is, you neglect it in favour of something more trivial. Common distractions that get in the way of our work are as follows:

- ***eating***. The way to cure such a habit is to go on a meditation retreat where you must eat food all mixed up together or eat only one meal a day.
- ***sleeping***. To train yourself to sleep no more than you need to you have to train yourself from an early age.
- ***alcohol***: because they are more interested in consuming alcahol or other intoxicants that dull the mind. To overcome such a tendency you need to abstain from consuming these substances.
- ***courting lovers*****:** Some do no work because they are more interested in boy/girlfriends and spend all day looking in their diary. . .
- ***entertainment*****:** some take their leisure time more seriously than their time at work to the neglect of earning their living.
- ***gambling***: because they are more interested in gambling — they have no time for working and burn up all their savings.
- ***bad friends*****:** modelling oneself on bad friends who neglect their work will make us more lazy
- ***laziness***: when people become lazy they have excuses for everything excuses — where work is concerned if it is not too hot it is too cold, if it is not too early it is too late.
- ***incompatible working hours:*** This is not the same as being more interested in sleeping but leads to failure in work because they work at a time which doesn't fit in with other people.

D. STRATEGIES FOR NON-PROVARICATION

D.1 Those who are successful in work

Thus if you want to be successful in whatever you do you must:

1. Do it at the right time
2. Do it in the appropriate way
3. Get round to doing it
4. Do it enthusiastically and conscientiously

The signs of someone who will be successful in their work are as follows:

1. Approaching work in the appropriate way [paÊirÊpakÅrÈ]. You must have learned from Mangala 7 and 8 before you can achieve this. When you are new to work you have to learn from your errors. You need to be observant and patient to obtain this characteristic.

2. Loving work and challenges to one's ability [dhuravÅ]. Not to look down on work of any sort.

3. ***Keenness and quickness in work and enthusiastic, lively & active*** [uÊÊÅtÅ]. If you do find

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that you are lethargic then maybe you should take up sport. (ÒavakaSutta S.i.214)

D.2 Recipe for success in worldly & spiritual work

Success in one's work will be attained more easily, whether it be worldly or spiritual work, if one is able to put into practice the following four principles called the "Four Foundations of Success" [iddhipada] applicable to all types of work, worldly or spiritual. Practising towards success comes in four stages:

1. initial motivation [chanda]: With work you need the willingness to get down and do the work. Without this, you will never get down to doing it. For spiritual practice it is also important to try to find the initial motivation to cultivate yourself. Don't wait for the mood to work or cultivate yourself to accidentally happen — look for ways to *create* the right mood! It means looking forward to the practice of meditation. Sitting down to meditate like a mercenery or even forcing yourself to do the practice will never give you the results for which you are seeking.

2. initial application [viriya]: The next thing which you require is actually to get down to work in the proper way — starting as you mean to go on. This often means achieving an optimal balance between productivity and enjoyment (mindfulness and comfort for meditation).

3. sustained application [citta]: Starting out well is not enough however, and you have to be able to keep up the good work if you are to succeed. You need to be consistent about your work or spiritual practice meditation setting aside time for both each day — and not giving in to exceptions and excuses. For work you need to keep going until you bring the task to completion, for meditation you need to cultivate mindfulness until it is something you can maintain twenty-four hours-a-day.

4. retrospective analysis [vÈmaÔsÅ]: you need to back over your work and give yourself feedback looking for ever better and more efficient ways to do the same task in the future. In spiritual practice you need to be observant. You need regularly to examine your own performance remedying your weaknesses as quickly as possible so that they no longer impede your worldly and spiritual progress. If you experience success, you should remember the reasons for your success so that you can apply it on future occasions.

D.iii.221, Vbh.216

If you can follow these four simple principles in your professional and spiritual work, success is only just around the corner.

E. ILLUSTRATIVE TALES

E.1 Metaphor: Those who are patient . . .

Those who work without interest whether it is hot or cold, persevering like the toughest of grass, dedicating their manly strength to their business, will not fall away from happiness.

E.2 Metaphor: Just as dung accumulates on a pig's tail

The nature of dung on the tail of a pig is to accumulate with the passing of the days making it increasingly difficult for the pig to find happiness in its daily life. The work a person leaves unfinished is of the nature to impede their prosperity. A person's value is proportional to the work they complete. The work they leave undone detracts from their value.

E.3 Ex. CuÒakaseÊÊhÈ JÅtaka ***(J.4)***

There was once a millionnaire and his servant who were travelling in a cart in the middle of India. The millionnaire saw a dead mouse at the side of the road and pointed it out to his servant saying 'if someone had proper principles of working as a salesman even with such a dead mouse as this he could set himself up in life.' The servant immediately got down from the cart and allowed the millionnaire to go home alone. He picked up the mouse and because he knew a lot of people in the area, he selected a house where he knew someone with compassion who kept cats was living and took the mouse there. He knew that compassionate people won't kill mice but at the same time the cat has

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to have something to eat every day. He sold the mouse to the householder for a few cents. He used the few cents to buy some sugar-cane juice from the people crushing the cane. He asked for another bucket of plain water. He took the water and the sugar cane juice to the gate of the town. He waited until the flower-gatherers from the palace came back from where they had been picking flowers outside the city wall. Of course they were tired and thirsty as they came to the gates. He gave them a glass of plain water to drink first of all. After they had slaked their thirst, he gave them a second glass of sugar-cane juice. The palace attendants didn't know how to pay the man so they gave him each a handful of jasmine flowers. The man took the flowers and sold them for a small profit. He had a little more money than before. He bought more sugarcane juice and collected a little more rain water, he sold all of it to the flower gatherers on the second day, and got enough money for a second round of sugar-cane juice — enough for the people collecting firewood. The people with the firewood drank the sugar-cane juice and each left him with a bundle of firewood. He sold the firewood and got even more sugar-cane juice. He kept his eyes and ears open and noticed that there had been a storm in the night. In the royal forest there were many broken branches and tree-trunks on the ground. He took his sugar-cane juice along to the forest. He offered to the forest keeper to be the one to clear up all the broken branches and the forester agreed because he would be able to have an easy day. He therefore offered sugar-cane juice to the children running and playing nearby and the children cut and gathered all the broken branches together into a huge pile. He sold the branches as firewood to a potter and bought a big barrel. Where he had sold sugar-cane juice by the bucket before, now he sold it by the barrel. He bartered sugar-cane juice for flowers, firewood and even grass-fodder. One day a big caravan of traders arrived at the gate with many hungry horses etc. He told the stable boys in the palace not to sell their fodder to anyone and he sold his own fodder at a high price to the traders. It was not enough and they even took the fodder from the palace to sell to them at the same high price so that everyone got a profit. He carried on working like this until before long he was able to put down a deposit on a trading ship. His ship kept trading until he had amassed a fortune of 100,000. In the end he returned to the old millionnaire who had been his master and presented him with the 100,000 saying that all of this wealth had come from the policy of seeing benefit in a dead mouse. The millionnaire was so impressed that he gave the man a fortune of a million and also his daughter's hand in marriage.

E.4 Ex. Nakkhatta JÅtaka (J.49)

There was once a bridegroom who was due to be married the next day. He was about to go to the wedding reception when a fortune-teller came and warned him that today was not an auspicious day for a marriage. The man believed the fortune teller and decided not to turn up for his own wedding. The bride waited and waited and then in impatience married someone else. The bride took all the first bridegroom's property in compensation for his having broken the marriage contract and married someone else.

The Fifth Group of Blessings

"Becoming a Pillar of Society"

The Fifth Grouping of the Blessings of Life is usually referred to as "Becoming a pillar of society". The Group consists of "Being Generous" (15), "Practising the Dhamma" (16), "Looking after your extended family" (17) and "Working in a blameless way"(18). In the Fourth Grouping, we have learned about harmony in the family life (where applicable) — doing things like recognizing and repaying the debt of gratitude we have to our parents will stimulate our awareness of good deeds and the harmony of the family life will be a foundation and a springboard to the real performance of virtue which we are to meet in this Fifth Grouping. Until now if we have fulfilled all the blessings we have learned from 1 - 14 we can say that we have done no more than 'break even' in our virtues. We have managed to steer clear of the minefields of everyday life that might cripple future efforts to accumulate merit. Thus in this fifth grouping we start to explore the virtues where we do truly start to give something back to society and the world about us. We are sufficiently mature in our cultivation of good deeds to start to produce virtue for ourselves — first in basic ways (in the Fifth Grouping) but subsequently in more and more advanced ways. The fifteenth blessing of generosity can be regarded the first stepping stone on the path of actively producing virtues. It will start to make us into the sort of person who society can trust and look up to. It will make us a person who can be considered a 'pillar of society'.

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Blessing Fifteen: Generosity

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Introduction to Blessing Fifteen

Buddhism places great importance on generosity because it is seen as the origin of wealth. The Law of Karma states that "we shall reap what we sow" and if we provide for the happiness of others through our generosity, the karmic fruit will be that we will always be provided for in our own happiness and convenience. Thus Buddhism sees generosity less in a material way (benefit for the recipient) than in its spiritual fruits (benefits to the giver).

A.2 The Importance of Giving

A.2.1 Generosity is a basic virtue

You may ask yourself why, if generosity is so fundemental, why it is not the *first* blessing. However, you must not forget that all the previous Blessings are necessary preparation for the actual performance of good deeds and recognizing and setting a foundation for their accrual. From Blessing Fifteen onwards, all the content of the blessings is concerned with real good deeds. There are five good reasons for choosing generosity as a first priority in doing good deeds (Siam Rath Edn. 33/2/428):

1. It is the first step on the stairway to heaven: It engenders the compassionate way of thinking characteristic of an angel even from the time one is still living in the human realm;

2. It is like provisions that you can take with you: If you have been generous to others in your past, then in the future you will be on the receiving end of generosity. No matter how far your spiritual journey may take you, with the provisions you have stored up for yourself through our generosity, you will be sure never to fall on hard times.

***3. It is the direct path to Nirvana*:** It clears the way for doing other sorts of virtue with ease. To give an example, when peasants slaughter animals it is not that they don't know the karmic retribution of what they do — it because of force of circumstances of their poverty. If you are poor it is hard to keep the precepts properly. If you are poor, the opportunity to sit and listen to a sermon is hard to find. Even the price of the bus to the temple is hard to find. If you are poor, then you have little chance of obtaining a good education. If you are poor, you won't see the point of sitting for meditation. If you are generous then it will stop you from falling into poverty and the other sorts of good deed will come naturally.

4. Generosity is a splendid means of escaping the cycle of rebirth. Anyone who is going to escape the cycle of rebirth must have faith in the performance of good deeds. As for the good deeds for which it is easiest to see the fruition in the here and now, there is nothing to beat generosity.

5. Generosity purifies the mind: The most direct way we can cure ourselves of stinginess lurking

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in the mind is to be generous. The more you give, the more you rid yourself from stinginess in the mind and the more and more control you gain over your desires.

A.2.2 Generosity makes the world go round

You can offer money to hire a person but if they don't want to do the job, you can offer the highest salary in vain. Generosity is like the downpayment needed to get a new project rolling. If if wasn't for the generosity of our parents, how could we have survived after the moment of our birth? If it wasn't for the extra hours of work put in by our teachers, would we be so able to make sense of the world around us today? Thus it is true that before all else one must practice generosity.

A.2.3 Respect for generosity makes you respectable too!

Some people complain that others show them less respect than they deserve. If we are moved by the value of giving, then others will respect us for that (i.e. we have respect for generosity) then when our generosity gives its fruit then we too will be the object of respect. If you find that others never treat you with much respect then the situation is telling you that your attitude to giving is a little reluctant. Thus if you find you are not being treated with enough respect, then don't go blaming others, put the blame on yourself first. Generosity is thus an indispensable prerequisite for being a 'pillar of society'.

B. GENEROSITY

B.1 Definition of Generosity

The Pali word 'dÅna' means literally 'to give'. In this Blessing, we take generosity to mean: 'sacrificing your own possessions for the benefit of other people, wholeheartedly, with the intention to honour the virtue of that person, or to assist a person of similar social standing, or to help someone who is worse off than ourselves.'

If you are not wholehearted about giving then it cannot be called 'dÅna'. The Buddhist usage of the word 'generosity' is therefore broader than the equivalent word 'charity' in Christian culture which isusually restricted to giving to the poor and the sick. In the spiritual sense, 'dÅna'sometimes refers to our intention to give, sometimes it refers to the thing we want to give, sometimes it refers to abstention from wrong-doing (e.g. not seeking vengeance from someone who has harmed you). In this particular blessing we will speak of only the first two instances of usage of the word, because we have already mentioned abstention from wrong-doing in Blessing Nine on "self-discipline".

B.2 Categories of Generosity (A.i.90)

There are two main categories of generosity

1 Concrete generosity [amisadÅna]
2 Abstract generosity [dhammadÅna]

Material generosity can be subdivided by the *quality of the gift*:

1 Giving things of worse quality than you would use yourself [dÅnadÅsa]
2 Giving things of equal quality that you would use yourself [dÅnasahÅya]
3 Giving things of better quality than you would use yourself [dÅnasÅmÈ]

Or by the *exclusivity of the gift* (M.iii.254-6, A.iii.392)

1 Personal [patipuggalikadÅna]
2 Community [saÌghadÅna]

Or by the nature of the gift (*see BlessingFive §C.2 for further details*), generosity can be divided into: giving useful material objects [vatthudÅna]; giving worldly knowledge [vidhayadÅna]; giving spiritual knowledge [dhammadÅna]; forgiving [abhÅyadÅna]; humility [apacÅyana]; service [veyyÅvacca]; transfer of merit [pattidÅna], and; rejoicing in the merit of others [pattÅnumodanÅ].

B.3 Reasons for Giving

Some reasons for giving are less noble than others —therefore it is useful to study the variety available to that we can select the noblest. According to the Buddha's teaching in the PaÊhama DÅna Sutta [A.iv.236] there are eight different reasons why people give gifts:

1. ***giving because in the hope of getting something in return*** [Åsajja dÅnaÔ deti]; Giving because wants something in return. Sometimes people

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give because they want others to see them doing so, or they want to become famous as the result;

2. giving out of fear [bhayÅ dÅnaÔ deti]; Giving out of fear. Some give gifts to others because they are afraid that if they don't give something the recipient will create problems for them (e.g. protection money). Such giving can even include being scared someone won't love us so we give them things to win their love;

3. giving in order to repay past favours [adÅsi me ti dÅnaÔ deti]; Giving in order to repay a debt of gratitude we have to someone else;

4. giving to procure future favours [dÅsati me ti dÅnaÔ deti]; Giving with the thought that the recipient will repay our favour in the future —

e.g. Mr.A gives Mr.B some sweets so that the next day he can invite himself to eat a meal at Mr.B's house;

5. giving for giving's sake [sÅhu dÅnaÔ ti dÅnaÔ deti]; Giving for the joy of it — perhaps because spontaneously inspired by a particular monk or seeing a group of children without transport to go to the temple and gladly paying the cost of hiring a bus for them.

6. giving out of sympathy for the monks [ahaÔ pacÅmi, ime na pacanti, na arahÅmi pacanto apacantÅnaÔ adÅtunaÔ ti dÅnaÔ deti]; Knowing that monks cannot cook rice or catch fish to feed themselves out of fear that the monks will starve one gives them food.

7. giving to improve your reputation [imaÔ me dÅnaÔ datato kalyÅÁo kittisaddo abbhuggacchatÈ ti dÅnaÔ deti], not just out of greed for praise, but because indeed generosity is a praiseworthy behaviour, and;

8. giving in order to improve the quality of the mind [cittÅlankÅra cittaparitkkhÅratthaÔ dÅnaÔ deti].

Two further possible reasons are noted in the DÅnavatthu Sutta A.iv.236:

1. Giving out of family tradition [dinnapubbaÔ katapubbaÔ pitu pitÅmahehi na arahÅmi porÅÁaÔ kulavaÔsaÔ hÅpetu ti dÅnaÔ deti]*:* Giving only because your ancestors have always made a tradition of giving and you don't want to be the odd one out.

2. Giving because you want to go to be reborn in heaven [imÅhaÔ dÅnaÔ datvÅ kÅyassa bhedÅ parammaraÁÅ sugatiÔ saggaÔ lokaÔ upapajjissÅmÈ ti dÅnaÔ deti]

The first four reasons are no more than ways to keep up good relationships with the people around us. We want others to remember us for our goodness — it is the only reason for giving. There is no merit in such giving. This is the sort of giving which politicians like to do in order to win votes or of shops wanting to boost their sales by giving away free gifts. The remaining reasons are all types of giving which are done for merit, however people differ as to the extent they see the true nature of merit in what is given. In this blessing we will try to go as deep as we can, i.e. to discover the sort of giving that is going to improve the quality of the mind.

C. HOW TO CULTIVATE GENEROSITY

Here is some practical advice for cultivating generosity in a way that fulfils all the requisite components. One should practice generosity according to the following steps:

C.1 Make an intention

Purify your intention by recollecting the virtues ofthe Triple Gem and the power of generosity to banish stinginess from the mind — filling your mind with faith and the joy of the act of generosity you plan to do. Once you have made your intention, make sure you fulfil it because according to the VaÁijja Sutta (A.ii.81), the Buddha taught that if someone has made a promise to offer a certain amount of requisites to a monk or someone who keeps the Precepts, or to parents who are virtuous, but when it comes to the appointed time:

- do not come up with the goods, then in business they will always lose money;
- come up with less goods than they said they would then they will always receive less than the anticipated profit;
- come up with the goods, no more, no less than they promised, they will always receive the anticipated profit;

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● come up with goods exceeding the promised amount then they will always receive more than the anticipated profit.

C.2 Seek out an appropriate gift:
Seek out or buy an appropriate and wholesome gift by your honest efforts. Some people expect to find joy in giving to something else something they have obtained in a dishonest way — such as picking daffodils in a public park to offer on a Buddhist shrine. However in his teaching on the Ten Ways of Consuming Sense Pleasure [kÅmabhogÈ] (A.v.176) the Buddha taught that there is no joy to be had in the giving of gifts obtained in dishonest or partially dishonest ways.

C.2.1 The Quality of the Gift
The Buddha enumerated three different attitudes to the quality of the gift chosen for an act of generosity:

1. Giving things of worse quality than you would use yourself [dÅnadÅsa]: This sort of giving which literally means "giving as a slave" happens when one gives a gift of worse quality than one would consider using oneself. An example of this would be selecting the smallest or most unattractive of three mangos to give to someone else. It is termed "giving as a slave" because at the time of giving, one's mind is still the slave of stinginess. Such giving is characterized by acts of generosity to those we consider worse-off than ourselves (*c.f. earlier comments §B.1 about the Christian definition of charity*).

2. Giving things of equal quality that you would use yourself [dÅnasahÅya]**:** This sort of giving which literally means "giving as a friend" happens when one gives a gift of quality equal to that one would consider using oneself. An example of this would be selecting any of three mangos you would be happy to eat yourself to give to someone else. Such giving is characterized by acts of generosity to those we consider equal to ourselves — such as friends.

3. Giving things of better quality than you would use yourself [dÅnasÅmÈ]**:** This sort of giving which literally means "giving as a boss" happens when one gives a gift of better quality than one would consider using oneself — choosing only the best to give to someone else. It is termed "giving as a boss" because at the time of giving, one's mind has stinginess under control. In general, Buddhists cultivating generosity try to make sure that their giving falls into this last category. When giving rice to the monks on their almsround, they will select the tender rice from the mouth of the rice-pot to give to the monks — before taking their own meal from the remainder of the pot. When offering food to the monks, supporters will offer delicacies they might never consider themselves worthy of eating — and when offering food, they might decorate and garnish the food with special attention. In fact, when we give to others we should always try to give things of a quality we would like to be give ourselves, no matter whether the recipient is of lower, equal or higher social status than ourselves. Such giving is especially characterized by acts of generosity to those we respect or to whom we have a debt of gratitude such as our parents, teachers or teaching monks.

C.2.2 The Nature of the Gift
Here are some "do's" and "don'ts" to help you with your choice — in general things which are worthy of giving are the four basic requisites: clothing, food, shelter and medicine. You have to be careful, however, because some forms of clothing are not suitable. These four are sometimes subdivided further into ten:

1. food (but not aphrodisiacs);
2. drinks (but not alcohol);
3. cloth or clothing (but not immodest clothes);
4. vehicles, shoes or fares for travelling;
5. flowers;
6. candles, incense;
7. rubbing creams;
8. bed clothes & beds;
9. shelter;
10. fuel. As for objects not suitable for giving:

1. Alcohol for the purpose of drinking (rather than rubbing alcohol or alcohol for cleaning).

Alcohol is the component of some medicines. This usage is good — but don't use this as an excuse to give alcohol with a little bit of medicine instead of giving medicine with a little bit of alcohol;

2. To give shows, entertainment;
3. To give a female animal to a male animal or vice-versa;
4. To offer matchmaking services to find a partner for others;
5. To give someone else erotic pictures or even a picture of yourself (so that they think of us);
6. To give weapons (especially when two people are in the middle of a fight);
7. To give poisons or drugs.

In addition the gift should be made clean, refined and attractive to receive. At the time of giving you should do your best to relinquish your attraction for the appearance, sound, smell, taste, texture or mood of that object (The meditation master Luang Phaw Wat Paknam suggested to bring you mind to a standstill at the centre of your body as a practical way of achieving this).

C.3 Make yourself pure before giving your gift

Purify yourself before giving the gift by taking the Five or Eight Precepts. Meditate to purify the mind, thinking of the recipient as if they were as pure as an *arahant*, or as a representative perpetuating the teaching of the Lord Buddha.

C.4 Make a resolution

It is customary to raise the gift one intends to offer to one's forehead while making the resolution. Making a wish or resolution is like setting up a long-term plan for yourself. If a government takes care of a country it must have a long-term plan. Even merchants have plans for what they will be doing in the years to come. In Buddhism we have merit as our budget and we have our resolution or ambition as our long term plan for doing good deeds over the course of the lifetimes to come. If we have made a resolution at the time we make a merit of some sort then when the merit gives its fruit it will give its fruit in the way we have made the wish. However we must also be careful about the thing which we wish for — supposing we make a resolution but our mind is still under the influence of defilements then it might be disastrous because we leave ourselves wide open to the working of evil. If we make a resolution about something skilful, by contrast then the merit will give its full fruit, shortening our path to Nirvana. An example of a skilful way of making a resolution is:

> "Through the power of this good deed, from this day forth may my mind never fall under the influence of greed or stinginess again and may I never be born in a family with stingy or greedy people ever again and may I never be born in a country where there is a shortage of basic needs for survival, and even when it comes to studying the Dhamma, may I never be stuck with a teacher of the Dhamma who is stingy with his teachings and wants to keep his knowledge to himself. May I never know shortage of anything skilful. May I always be well provided-for . . . and may the power of this generous deed help me to enter upon Nirvana [nibbÅna paccayo hotu]."

Or more briefly according to the traditional Pali:

> "SudinnaÔ vata me dÅnaÔ ÅsavakkhayÅ vahaÔ hotu" (May these alms that I have given on this day be for an end of all defilements.)

C.5 Harbour no regret in mind:

Having offered the gift, make sure the gift is *gone from your mind* too by thinking only of the joy of giving and not allowing any feeling of regret to enter your mind. It is also customary to transfer the merit of one's generosity [pattidÅnamaya] by making the intention that the merit of our good deeds might also benefit our deceased relatives wherever they might find themselves reborn — in accordance with the Pali verses:

> "IdaÔ ñÅtÈnaÔ hotu, sukhitÅ hontu ñÅtayo" (May this merit accrue to all my [deceased] relatives. May all my [deceased] relatives be happy).

C.6 Summary: Four 'Pures'

In conclusion, there are four things that will ensure

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that the giving we do will bring the maximum of merit:

1. Pure Gift. The thing which we give must be something we have come by in an honest way or bought with money that is honestly earned;

2. Pure Intention. A pure intention for giving means the intention to reduce the stinginess in your mind, or to reduce the number of defilements in the mind or cultivate your Perfection of Generosity or Loving Kindness. The Buddha also taught that if you want to gain the maximum of merit from a gift you must maintain the quality of the mind during three periods of time. Intentions which are not pure are giving with the wish for something in return e.g. giving for one-upmanship, giving to make yourself famous or giving to make someone else love us:

*1. before giving [*pubbecetanÅ*]:* make sure that you come to the act of giving wholeheartedly

*2. during the act of giving [*muñcanacetanÅ*]:* give with respect and a mind full of faith and without any trace of irritability

*3. after giving [*aparÅparacetanÅ*]:* make sure that the mind is still joyous not regretting what you have given away. Some people go home and sit thinking, "Maybe I gave too much. Maybe I should ask the monk for some of it back!"

3. Pure Recipient: The more pure the person receiving our gift, the more merit we will accrue. If the recipient is a layperson, they should be a layperson who keeps the Precepts. If they are a monk, they should be a monk who keeps the Vinaya, not just someone who is masquerading as a monk. If the monk is an arahant (i.e. has no further defilements) then he will be a supreme field of merit.

4. Pure Giver: Even you as the giver must be keeping the Precepts. If you think of yourself as a receptacle for merit in the same way as a bowl might contain water, then you mustn't be like a leaking or dirty container (Precepts incomplete) or else your merit will leak away or be sullied.

Nowadays, it is hard for us to earn enough money to both feed ourselves and to offer as donations — therefore when we do come to have the opportunity to give donations, make sure that you possess all four of the factors mentioned above.

D. WHO TO GIVE

D.1 Giving to an individual:

The Buddha taught in the DakkhiÁÅvibhaÌga Sutta (M.iii.253) that the amount of merit from a gift to an individual [puÊiyaÑ paÊiggÄhikadÅna] is in proportion to the purity of the recipient. If you give food:

1 ***to a humble animal*** it will give long-life [Åyu], good complexion [vaÁÁa], happiness [sukha], strength [bala] and intelligence [paÊibhÅÁa] for no less than 100 lifetimes;

2 ***to a person who does not keep the Precepts*** your gift will give the same fruits for 1,000 lifetimes;

3 ***to a person who keeps the Precepts*** your gift will give the same fruits for 100,000 lifetimes;

4 ***to a hermit or ascetic outside the Buddhist monastic community*** who has attained some degree of mental powers your gift will give the same fruits for 10^{12} lifetimes;

5 ***to a person who practices with the intention to train himself to become a stream-enterer***, the fruit is countless;

6 ***to a person has actually attained sainthood at the level of stream-entry*** [sotÅpana] then the merit is even more;

7 ***to a person who practices with the intention to train himself to become a once-returner***

[sakidÅgÅmi] then the merit is even more;

1 ***to a person has attained sainthood at the level of once-returner*** [sakidÅgÅmi] then the merit is even more;

2 ***to a person who practices with the intention to train himself to become a non-returner***

[anÅgami] then the merit is even more;

10. to a person has attained sainthood at the level of non-returner [anÅgami] then the merit is even more;

11. to a person who practices with the intention to train himself to become an arahant then the merit is even more;

12. to a person has attained sainthood at the level

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of arahant then the merit is even more;

13. to a paccekabuddha then the merit is even more;

14. to a fully-enlightened Buddha then the merit is even more;

If you favour a particular person when you are making your donation, then you the amount of merit gained as the result of the gift will be reduced. Some people go to a particular temple and single out a particular monk for their attention. It is almost like something personal between the giver and the recipient. The giver feels that there must be something personal between themselves and a monk before they will give that monk any support. They will not help strangers. They might look down on monks of low rank. Their mind is rather narrow. Of course they still receive merit from their good deed, but it is slightly reduced from what it could be — because the merit in all of these categories of recipient cannot beat the merit from offering a gift to the community of monks.

D.2 Offering to the monastic community

Offering to the monastic community [saḶghadÅna] means giving a gift which is not specific to any particular monk in a monastic community. Such a person does not mind who the monastic community delegates to receive a particular gift from them.Even if the community sent a novice to receive their gift they wouldn't mind. Their mind would be filled with faith before, during and after their making of the gift.The Buddha taught that anyone who is sufficiently broad-minded to support the SaḶgha in this way will receive countless merit.

E. HOW MUCH TO GIVE

E.1 Duty of a Buddhist to support their religion

The Buddha specified the duty of a Buddhist householder towards members of the monastic community in the sixth of the "six directions" of the SiḶgalovÅda Sutta, as follows:

1. kindly acts towards the monastic community
2. kindly words towards the monastic community
3. kindly thoughts towards the monastic community
4. by keeping an open house to the monastic community
5. supplying the monastic community with their material needs

In other words it is the duty of every Buddhist householder to perform acts of generosity towards the SaḶgha. The Buddha laid down the rule that monks must earn their livelihood by alms alone. Monks are not allowed to earn income by any other means. The Buddha's intention by this rule was that monks be able to devote their time to their real duties of study and meditation in order to be:

1. pure in body, speech and mind and to be a worthy field of merit for the householders

2. worthy teachers to the householders Of course the government could organize things so that people could support Buddhism out of their taxes in the same way the State finances the Church in many western countries, but because Buddhism has (like the Protestant Church) has always emphasized the importance of independence from "worldly" concerns such as political policy, the price of this freedom is that Buddhism must rely on the reciprocal relationship between monk and laity at a grassroots level which cannot be manipulated by any politician. By supporting the monastic community, the householders maintain the intactness of the Triple Gem for perpetuity — for the peace and harmony of society and the world at large. It is not difficult for well-intentioned householders to understand the importance of the first four duties of the householder towards the monastic community — however, in the society of the present day where even the media find it profitable to sensationalize the laxity of a miniscule minority of members of the monastic community — the repurcussions are having a negative effect on the whole monastic community throughout the world. No small number of formerly dutiful householders exposed to such sensationalism have discontinued their support for the monastic community out of uncertainty as to which monks are practising in earnest.

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Thus it falls upon earnestly practising monks to co-operate in trying to salvage the tarnished image of the monastic community — because if the faith of the Buddhist laity is allowed further to deteriorate, eventually the laity will lose their understanding of Buddhist principles — becoming capable of heinous social crimes or of defecting to other religions. Such people will only add to the fragmentation and internal divisions which already exist in society.

E.2 Managing your resources

When we talk of generosity [dÅna] in this blessing we mean giving those things which are surplus to our needs. Some people might doubt as to how much they really need or might be unable to distinguish between 'need' and 'want' and hence the Buddha gave guidance about how householders should budget their earnings so that their generosity is neither reluctant nor a burden on the family expenditure. The Buddha taught (Ãdiya Sutta A.iii.45) that the family budget should be divided into five as follows:

1. one part to support the immediate needs of yourself, your parents, your children, spouse, servants
2. one part to extend generosity towards your friends
3. one part which should be saved in case of emergency (for example fire, flood, excess taxation, theft or extortion by malevolent relatives)
4. one part which should be used for five sorts of dedication
    1. for one's extended family
    2. for hospitality
    3. for dedicating merit for the departed
    4. for taxes
    5. for dedicating merit to the things that you believe in according to your local custom
        (e.g. ascetics, animals, physical forces and elements, lower deities or higher deities depending on your culture)
5. one part to extend support to well-practising monks and ascetics The Buddha did not say that each part should be 20% of your earnings, but he taught that you should budget for each of these sorts of expenditure. As for the "working capital" which you have built up for yourself, the Buddha taught in the SiÌgalovÅda Sutta (D.iii.180ff.) that you should apply one-quarter of your earnings for your immediate needs, one-half should be reinvested in your business and the remaining quarter should be saved in case of emergency. It is up to each individual to decide how much of their income to use as "working capital" and how much to use for generosity. If you budget in this way, you will be able to practise generosity, giving neither too much nor too little.

E.3 Degree of Generosity

As mentioned above, generosity usually refers to giving away what is excess to one's needs. Generosity thus trains one to overcome the tendency to want more and more without end — and to be able to distinguish between 'need' and 'want'. If you have a big plate of food and you know that half will be enough for you, to give the other half to a hungry friend is generosity [dÅna]. However in some places such as the "Four Virtues of the Householder" [gharavÅsadhamma] (S.i.215; Sn.189) the Buddha exhorted his householders to train themselves even to be willing to sacrifice their own convenience for the good of others. In such a case, a hungry man might forgo the whole of his large plate of food for the benefit of a friend who has eaten nothing for three days. Such giving is a more developed form of generosity known as "self-sacrifice" [cÅga]. In pursuit of the perfection of generosity the bodhisattva cultivated self-sacrifice to the point he was willing to sacrifice all his material possessions, but also parts of his body such as blood and eyes [upa-dÅna-paramitÅ] and his own life [paramatta-dÅna-paramitÅ].

F. RESULTS OF GIVING

F.1 Speed of Outcomes

A final point about generosity concerns the reason why some people perform an act of generosity and receive the fruit of their deed immediately. For example, someone is generous and immediately comes into a fortune or is made king or attains en

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lightenment. What is the reason? There is an additional factor in the performance of generosity which influences the swiftness with which the merit will give its fruit. If you look at the set of teachings 'the giving of a noble one' (SappurisadÅna Sutta A.iii.172) you will find the answer. The Buddha taught that a noble man will give:

1. with faith (i.e. with full faith in the favour-able outcome of a good deed): will bring the giver wealth, attractive and trustworthy appearancewith a good complexion;

2. with respect: will bring the giver wealth and endowment with obedient children, spouse and servants;

3. at the correct time; will bring the giver wealth and the wishes of the giver will come to fruition without delay;

4. with the thought to help the recipient; will bring the giver wealth and higher enjoyment of the pleasures of the senses;

5. without coming into conflict with yourself or others: will bring the giver wealth and protection of possessions from fire, flood, misappropriation by tax-collectors, theft and exhortation by enemies of malevolent heirs.

F.2 Difference of fruit by difference of gift type

Whenever we do generous deeds, we reduce the influence of greed in the mind, however the degree of the reduction will depend on the purity of the gift, the intention, the recipient and the giver. Apart from these factors, the fruits of our giving is also influenced by the type of thing we offer is. To take the example some examples of offerings. The first five come from the KiÔdada Sutta (S.i.32) — *see table below.*

Therefore, if ever you have the opportunity to cultivate generosity, never let the opportunity pass by unanswered. Sometimes we think of waiting until we are more ready, but often if we wait until everything is ready, the opportunity is gone.

G. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

G.1 Proverb: MahÅpadayÈ Sutta (A.iii.51)

Those who give the things they like, are wont to receive things that they like; those who give the supreme, are wont to receive supreme things; those who give good things are wont to receive good things; those who give the ultimate are wont to attain the ultimate; persons who give the supreme, the good, the ultimate, will have long life and honour wherever they are born.

Offering	Example	Fruit
giving food giving cloth or clothing giving transport giving light giving shelter giving permanent property time-limited giving forgiving, giving life giving knowledge	meal for monks robes for monks vehicles, shoes, a lift, bus/ train fare candles, lanterns, fuel oil a place for the night, a building buildings, trees receiving guests, those preparing to travel, first harvest forgiving others, extending the life of condemned animals, releasing fish a lecture, needed advice	long-life, bright complexion, good health, strength, quickwittedness good complexion happiness outstanding eyesight everything! long-life, strength, security of personal property wishes will come true, lack of difficulty in times of shortage long-life intelligence, easy attainment of wisdom

TABLE 15.1: THE MERITORIOUS FRUITS OF VARIOUS SORTS OF GENEROSITY

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G.2 Metaphor: A burning house

If our house catches fire, the possessions we can manage to salvage before it burns down will be all we are left with. In the same way, the possessions that are really our own, are those we can convert to merit by the power of our generosity in the space of our lifetime, before the fires of old-age, sickness and death burn up this impermanent body of ours. Dutiya Jana Sutta A.i.156

G.3 Metaphor: Cow and Pig (trad.)

The pig was jealous of the cow because the cow seemed to be very popular with everybody.

Someone advised the pig,"Don't be jealous — popularity is in proportion to one's generosity. The cow gives her milk daily to make butter and yoghurt and cheese".

The pig was indignant saying,"Generous — I'm generous! Look at all the things mankind has to thank me for — my bristles make paintbrushes and my flesh makes all the pork dishes of the world."

"Don't confuse the issue," said the advisor, "— all the things the cow gives, she gives while she is still living!"

Ever wondered why the people who are only generous in their will are never very popular?

G.4 Ex. CËÒasÅtaka Brahmin (DhA.iii.002ff.)

There was once a couple who were so poor that they only had a loincloth each and between them they only had a single shawl. If the husband went out of the house with the shawl then the wife had to hide in the house. If the wife went out of the house, the husband had to stay home. They couldn't go anywhere together because they only had a single shawl between them. One day the husband went alone to hear the teaching of the Buddha. He was filled with faith and thought to offer the shawl to the Buddha. He took off the shawl, then thought of his wife at home and changed his mind. He listened to the sermon further until midnight and again he was filled with faith to offer the shawl — but when he thought of his wife, he changed his mind again. He listened to the sermon further almost until dawn and this time when he was filled with faith, he offered the shawl to the Buddha without any further hesitation, while exclaiming the words, "Cittame Cittame" meaning "I have conquered (it), I have conquered (it)." King Pasenadi was sitting nearby. If anyone shouts anything like this near a king, they will normally have their head chopped off — but the king was interested to know what he had conquered. The poor man said that he had conquered his stinginess. The king thought, "such a person is rare" and therefore set the man up in life with a standard of living fit for a millionaire.The man offered everything he had been given to the Buddha except for a shawl for himself and one for his wife. The king therefore gave the man even more possessions.

In the morning the Buddha revealed to the rest of the monastic community that if the man had managed to conquer his stinginess since the beginning of the sermon, he would have been made four times as rich. If he had conquered his stinginess at midnight he would have been twice as rich. His hesitation had blunted the power of his meritorious intention. The Buddha concluded that if anyone ever has the faith to do a good deed, then they should quickly do that good deed before the intention is overtaken by stinginess.

G.5 Ex. Sumedha Hermit (J.i.30ff.)

At the fruition of the ninth asaÌkheyya kappa of pursuing perfections the bodhisattva was born as a hermit called Sumedha. He trained himself in meditation until attaining magical powers — being able to fly through the air. One day he travelled in the air and saw all the people of a certain town building a road. He asked why they were building the road. They replied that the Buddha DipaÌkara had already arisen in the world so they were creating a road to receive the Buddha. Sumedha the hermit asked permission to rebuild part of the road for himself, and the people of the town permitted him. They thought he would use his hermit's powers to magic the road to completion, so they gave him a piece of road that ran over a piece of subsided ground, with a deep hole in it. Sumedha wanted to cultivate generosity the 'hard way' in order to fulfil his Perfections so instead of using magical powers he started to mend the road by the

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sweat of his brow. Consequently, he had not finished leveling his piece of road when the Buddha and his disciples reached the place. Sumedha thought, 'the road I have built is not finished — never mind, only two metres remains — so I will lie down in the hole in the road myself'. When the Buddha arrived, he bowed at the feet of the Buddha and invited the Buddha and all of his disciples to be his field of merit and allow him to be a human bridge for them all to traverse the unfinished piece of road. The Buddha and all the disciples walked over his body and instead of feeling aches and pains, Sumedha was filled with joy to have been of service to the Buddha. That was the lifetime in which the DipaÌkara Buddha gave Sumedha the prophecy of his own Buddhahood that he would need to go on to attain full enlightenment four asaÌkheyya and 100,000 *kappa*s later. It was also the lifetime that the bodhisattva recognized generosity as the foundation of all other Perfections (*as mentioned at §A.3 above*).

G.6 Ex. Aputtaka millionaire (DhA.iv.76ff.)

One day in the time of the Buddha, King Pasenadi of Kosala (of SÅvatthÈ) came for audience with the Buddha in the afternoon. King Pasenadi said that a miraculous thing had happened concerning a millionaire in his town. (Millionaires in our own time are simply rich people, but in those times 'millionaire' was a title bestowed by a king, on wealthy economists. Some in those times may have been wealthy but if they had no knowledge of economics, they would not qualify for such a title. Millionaires had the duty to be patrons who would use their knowledge and their wealth to support the king in the development of the nation. They were almost like bankers of the present day.) A millionaire had died without heir so the whole legacy of the millionaire became national property and had been taken for storage in the palace. When the millionaire was alive he had been so stingy that he would not even allow expenditure to feed himself decently. He would survive only on rice husks and over-ripe fruit sold at clearance prices. He would wear only rag clothes — anyone who saw him couldn't believe he was a millionaire. He would not even buy soap so he always smelled from never washing.

The King asked how such a person could be so rich but seemed unable to spend any money on himself. The Buddha looked at the previous lives of the man and told the king that in a previous lifetime, the man had donated food to a *paccekabuddha*. *Arahant*s, *paccekabuddha*s and *fully-enlightened Buddha*s are so pure of mind that anybody giving a donation to any such will accrue a lot of merit. On this particular occasion he had instructed his wife to offer food to the *paccekabuddha* and went to work. When he returned he found out that his wife had given all the best of their food to the *paccekabuddha*. He thought with regret, "If we had eaten that food ourselves, we would have had plenty to eat for many days. If we had given the food to our workers, they would have worked their hardest for us for many days." When the merit of the donation of food gave its fruit, he became a very rich man, but from his regret at a later time, he was always stingy in any expenditure for his own convenience. He was only able to use remnants because at that time when he regretted having offered food to the *paccekabuddha*, all he thought of giving the *paccekabuddha* was remnants.

G.7 Ex. Daddalla VimÅnavatthu (Vv.48)

In the time of the Buddha there were two sisters. The elder was called Patta and the younger was called Supatta. Both sisters did as many merits as they could throughout their lives. Patta intended to do more merits than her little sister. When Patta passed away, through the power of her merit, she was reborn as an angel and was born in the second level of heaven (TavatiÕsa). Patta the angel wondered where her little sister had gone. Only much later did an angel of very bright complexion introduce herself as her former little sister who was now an angel in the higher fifth level of heaven (Nimmanaradi). Patta the angel was confused. She had always done many more merits than her little sister — how come she had a lower rebirth? Supatta the angel revealed that even though she had had less chance than her elder sister to make generous donations to monks, whenever she did make a merit

it was always a donation to the monastic community [saİghadÅna] rather than the personalized merit [paÊipuggalikadÅna] offered by the elder sister. As the result of her donations, the elder sister's mind was not truly broad, and the merit she accrued was reduced. As for her little sister, although she had less opportunity to make merit, she always offered it with the thought,"May my gift be received by any monk who practices in earnest — any monk who is a representative of the monastic community will do." Thus when the younger sister passed away, as a result of her mind being broader and having fewer biases in her understanding of Dhamma, she took a more fortunate rebirth than her sister when she passed away.

G.8 Ex. JËjaka Brahmin & his wife AmittatÅpanÅ J.vi.521-4, 593

Some people like to ask about the story of Vessandara. In that particular JÅtaka,there is an evil man a hundred years old called JËjaka who has a young wife called AmittatÅpanÅ (aged 17). Some ask what this old man did to get himself a wife young enough to be his grandchild. AmittatÅpanÅ was someone fond of giving but instead of offering fresh flowers to the monks she would always offer only shriveled flowers. When the time came for her to marry, then her husband was also old and shriveled. As for JËjaka, he would always like to offer flowers to the monks that were fresh so when the merit gave its fruit the result was different. For a similar reason, if people habitually offer only second-hand things to the monks, maybe they will always get a widow(er) for their spouse!

G.9 Ex. Bhattabhatika the woodcutter (DhA.iii.87ff.)

There was once a millionaire called Gandha SeÊÊhÈ who inherited a fortune — and considering that he would be unable to take it with him when he died, made every attempt to use up his wealth within his lifetime by every sort of extravagence. He would spend 100,000 *kahapana*s each day alone on his own food. His extravagence became renowned and he would thus eat in public so that the peasants could come to watch what delicacies he would eat each day. One day a wood-cutter passed by and became so entranced by the millionaire's food that he realized he would die if he didn't get to taste such food. He pushed his way to the front of the crowd and begged the millionaire for a taste of the food. The millionaire refused, saying "If I give you a taste, the rest will be wanting one too." Instead the wood-cutter offered three-years of his work in the service of the millionnaire in order to earn a taste of such food, and the millionnaire agreed.

At the fulfilment of three year's labour,the woodcutter (in the meantime nicknamed Bhattabhatika — "the one who labours for a meal"), was sitting at the table about to tuck in to the delicacies he had earned for himself. At that moment a *paccekabuddha* passed into view on almsround. Seeing the *paccekabuddha*, the woodcutter hesitated thinking:

> "that I have had to work three years for this meal must be because I am lacking in merit to find myself subject to such poverty. If I eat this meal myself it will only sustain me for a day, but if I offer it to the *paccekabuddha*, it will sustain me for many lifetimes."

The woodcutter offered a large portion of the food to the *paccekabuddha* who then closed the lid of his bowl. The woodcutter appealed to the *paccekabuddha* to receive more food saying: "don't just help me for this lifetime — help me in the next lifetime too!" The *paccekabuddha* removed the lid of his bowl and the wood-cutter put all the remaining food into the bowl, while making the wish, "may this merit bring me happiness and success in every lifetime, may I know some part of the wisdom of this *paccekabuddha*". The *paccekabuddha* gave his blessing to the effect that the wood-cutter's every wish should be fulfilled.

The onlookers for the wood-cutter's meal were inspired by the wood-cutter's generosity and how he had given something that was so hard to give. They applauded him so loudly that the millionaire came out to see what all the noise was about. He too was inspired by the wood-cutter's example and shared so much wealth with him that he too was to attain the status of millionnaire.

He performed charitable works to the end of his days and was reborn as Sukha who ordained as a novice under SÅriputta at the age of seven and very quickly attained arahantship. This is an example of "giving things of better quality than you would use yourself" [dÅnasÅmÈ].

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Blessing Sixteen: Dhamma Practice

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Purification in Buddhism

On our path of self-development via the Manual of Peace there are many reasons on many levels of description why to purify oneself is attractive.

- ***On a personal level:*** it would be a rare person who isn't proud of the many strengths they consider they have in their character — purification can be the way in which one builds and improves the strengths already in one's character. At the same time, if one knows oneself to have certain weaknesses of character, by purification, one can overcome these weaknesses.
- ***On an interpersonal level:*** by purifying ourselves of weaknesses and building on our strengths we can become the sort of person who others feel privileged to consider as a friend
- ***On a social level:*** purifying oneself can contribute to overcoming the weaknesses and inequalities that are often so obvious in our modern society by being one less person who is prone to corruption, nepotism and fraud, while displaying the sort of compassion which makes our society a more pleasant place to live.

In Buddhism, according to the Law of Karma, we must receive the retribution of the good and bad actions that we do. (Usually) the only way in which karmic retribution becomes defunct is by giving its fruit. However, rather than just sitting and waiting for one's karma to run out, the Buddha suggested two ways to purify oneself:

- ***dilution of old bad karma with large quantities of new good karma:*** Supposing you compare the negative things in our past to a spoonful of salt and you compare the positive things in life to a container of water. Supposing you put the spoonful of salt in a glass of water — if you taste the water it will still have the salty taste. If you put the same amount of salt in a bucket of water you will find that the water still tastes salty but less so. But what if you put a spoonful of salt in a huge water tank? Now even if you taste the water, you will no longer be able to detect the salty taste — even though the salt is still there. In the same way although we may have things we have done in the past which we regret, we can start afresh in our lives by doing so many positive things in our life that the old negative things become insignificant.
- ***direct uprooting of the old bad karma through meditation:*** This method is described in the higher blessings of "Austerity" (31) and "Chastity" (32).

In this blessing we consider pure living at the level of the householder — leaving purification at the more intense monastic level to later blessings.

A.2 Buddhist Purification compared to that of other religions

In its approach to purification, Buddhism is rather unique when compared to other religions. In Christianity (esp. Catholicism), if a Christian breaks a commandment, he will go to confession with a

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priest in church. In that way, he can absolve his sins. Although confession has an important role in Buddhism too (primarily monastic) from the point of view of declaring one's intention to renew one's effort to overcome evil deeds after having broken a precept — it is not seen as a way of overcoming the consequences of the evil done. Supposing Mr. A punches Mr. B in the street and subsequently confesses it to someone he respects, Buddhists would see this as helping Mr. A to feel better about it, and to avoid repeating his behaviour — but it doesn't help Mr. B. feel any better about his swollen nose!
— i.e. the consequences, even on a superficial level, do not go away because of the confession. In Hinduism, there is also a way of purification
— bathing in the River Ganges on full-moon days. Hindus believe they can rinse away their sins with river water. If sin were really washable, then presumably it is a sort of bodily dirt, rather like dried sweat?

The Buddha however, concentrated on the residue of evil deeds left as defilements *in the mind*. He said that you can wash your mouth out a hundred times a day, but it doesn't get rid of the evil effects of the bad speech that comes from your mouth.You can wash yourself in the river a hundred times per day, but it doesn't get rid of the effects of the evil bodily acts which you have done. This blessing deals with the Buddhist approach to mind purification — specifically by the technique of "dilution".

A.3 Definition: Practising Dhamma

The Pali word we use for Dhamma Practice is "*dhammacariya*". This word is the compound of two words — '*dhamma*' and '*cariya*'. '*Dhamma*' is a word which has anything up to forty different meanings, but for our purposes in the study of Buddhism it means 'correctness', 'goodness', 'purity' or 'what the Buddha taught'. Sometimes '*dhamma*' means 'phenomena' — which is a neutral term applied to positive and negative things — for example, aging, sickness and death are all '*dhamma*s'. In English we capitalize Dhamma when it is meaning goodness, purity or the Teaching of the Buddha and leave it with a small 'd' when it refers just to phenomena or mental phenomena. The word '*cariya*' means 'conduct' — therefore, '*Dhammacariya*' means the 'practice of good deeds' or 'correct practice'.The sort of deeds that are good or correct are described in more detail below — however, to give practical principles for the purposes of this blessing, we can say that it is that the sort of deeds and conduct which comply with this blessing are those which promote our sense of responsibility for human dignity on three levels:

- the personal level
- the interpersonal level
- the level of society and the economy

In this particular blessing we will concentrate mainly on the first two levels of description — not because the social level is irrelevant, but because we will deal with it in more detail in Blessing Eighteen (Blameless Work) and Blessing Nineteen on not consuming the things that lead to economic unfairness.

The Dhamma Practice of this achieves two goals:

- protecting yourself from the effects of the evil we have done in our past (= practice for purity)
- furthering our good deeds (= pure practice)

A.4 Dhamma Practice in the Sequence of the Blessings

The Buddha chose to put "Dhamma Practice" as the sixteenth blessing (i.e. before "Looking after one's extended family" [17] and "BlamelessWork" [18] because looking after one's extended family and harmless work, both of which concern our dealings with a wider society (the members of which have a wide variety of dispositions) are possible minefields of conflict. Without particular caution in our dealings, we run the risk of spoiling our good intentions or coming into conflict through our own partiality. Thus before embarking on works of "social value" we have to prepare ourselves by studying the right approach to our worldly and spiritual work so as not to bring harm inadvertently to ourselves or others.

B. PRACTICE FOR PURITY

There are many ways of practising good deeds for your own benefit, but in this Blessing we emphasize the groupings of good deeds which boost our

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sense of responsibility for our own human dignity.

B.1 Avoiding the Defilements of Action

Firstly, it is vitally important that we avoid the four defilements of action [kÅmakilesa], namely:

1. Killing people or animals [pÅÁÅtipÅta];
2. Stealing or taking what is not given [adinnÅdÅna]
3. Adultery or sexual intercourse outside marriage [kÅmesumicchÅcara];
4. Telling Lies [musÅvÅda];

You will notice that these four forms of behaviour are diametrically to the decent behaviours described in the moral codes of almost any religion. In Buddhism restraint from these behaviours is covered in the first four of the Five Precepts. Keeping the Five Precepts is well known to be the underlying virtue that allows us to be born human. If we want to stay human (i.e. remain humane or respect our own human dignity) then it is necessary to live our lives according to the Five Precepts. Even compromising our behaviour for any single one of the Five Precepts diminishes our humanness by that amount

— but that is not the end of it— those human intuitions which we lose are replaced by the same amount of savage or animal instincts. If we are to give up all of our Precepts then we reduce our instincts entirely to the level of a savage [manusso tiracchÅno]. The missing fifth Precept, i.e. to restrain oneself from the consumption of alcahol or substances that cloud the mind [surÅmerayamajjapamÅdaÊÊhÅnÅ veramaÁÈ] is not included inthe Four Defilements of Action, but reappears later in Blessing Nineteen.

A person who cannot manage to restrain himself from these defilements of action compromises their own human dignity — they will have no scruples about constantly taking advantage of other people both in their presence and behind their backs. If they have neither fear nor shame of evil or its consequences then nothing will be left of their respect for human dignity.

Anyone who can abstain from the Four Defilements of Action is someone established in self-discipline because they are able to keep the Precepts

— they neither harm others nor take advantage of them. Because such a person does nothing to harm society, then it can be considered as social responsibility to a certain extent.

B.2 Cultivating the Five Virtues [***pañcadhamma***] If we want to go further than simply avoiding taking advantage of others, in Thai Buddhist culture there is a traditional set of virtues called the "Five Virtues" [pañcadhamma] which build on the virtues of abstinence cultivated in the Five Precepts, namely:

1. Compassion (controlling all the nasty things that come from the body in a way that will not offend them (personal cleanliness to the eye and to the nose; well-spoken (courteous & express concern for others); good manners; going out of your way to help others; not doing things to create suspicion in others;

2. Generosity: This means giving resources, time, forgiveness, attention, teaching, advice (*see Blessing Fifteen for full details*);

3. Contentment with one's spouse: This means being faithful to one's spouse (if applicable) and actively practising the virtues that keep a marriage going (*see Blessing Thirteen for full details*);

4. Truthfulness in everything you say, honesty to yourself, earnestness in every task you do and earnestness towards good deeds. Train yourself to do your very best in every task that comes to you. Train yourself to be a person of principle, honest to yourself and honest to other people. You will find that all ten of the principles above will come automatically;

5. Mindfulness train yourself to keep your mind at the centre of the body the whole of the time whether you have your eyes closed for meditation or open for other duties you perform during your life. Meditate too to give yourself the encouragement to keep practicing because you are getting to the roots of the problems that crop up in life.

Cultivating any or all of these virtues will add to the strength of accumulated positivity in the mind

that will be able to change our mind from negative to positive on a more regular basis. Even if we have negative things in our past — the things we have done and which we may now regret — by building up more and more positive deeds in the way we mention above will allow us to dilute the regrets and anxieties we have in our minds.

B.3 Fulfilling the Tenfold Path of Wholesomeness

Our aim in cultivating these virtues is to establish oneself in the Tenfold Path of Wholesomeness [kusaladhammapatha] which we have already seen in Blessing Nine:

1. absolutely not killing.
2. absolutely not stealing
3. absolutely not committing adultery
4. absolutely not lying
5. absolutely not gossiping
6. absolutely not speaking harshly.
7. absolutely not chattering idly
8. absolutely not thinking to take the possessions of others
9. absolutely removing yourself from vengefulness.
10. absolute possession of Right View

C. PURE PRACTICE

A second facet of Dhamma Practice is behaving in *accordance* with purity. This means particularly in our decision-making we must establish our thinking in 'purity' and not allow impure things like defilements and temptation to interfere with what we know is good and fair. Pure practice instils respect for the human dignity of yourself and others. It includes:

- refraining from bias (*see §C.1 below*);
- avoiding the six roads to ruin (*see Blessing 19*);
- fulfilling one's duties in the six directions mentioned under the relevant blessing topic:
  - a child's duties to their parents (*see Blessing 11, §C.4*);
  - a parent's duty to their child (*see Blessing 12, §B.3*);
  - a student's duties to their teacher (*see Blessing 7, §E.1*);
  - a teacher's duties to their students (*see Blessing 7, §E.1*);
  - a husband's duty to their wife (*see Blessing 13, §C.2.3*);
  - a wife's duty to their husband (*see Blessing 13, §C.2.4*);
  - friends' duties to each other (*see Blessing 2, §D.2*);
  - an employer's duties to their employees (*see Blessing 18, §D.1*);
  - an employee's duties to their employer (*see Blessing 18, §D.2*);
  - a congregation member's duties to their clergy (*see Blessing 15, §E.1*);
  - a clergyman's duty to the congregation (*see Blessing 3, §C.2*);

C.1 Lack of Bias

The four forms of bias comprise:

1. Bias because of desire [chandÅgati]: e.g. parents who don't love their children equally because of bias based on desire, may treat their children unfairly;

2. Bias because of hatred [dosÅgati]: e.g. teachers suffering from bias based on hatred or anger will behave unfairly towards annoying students, perhaps awarding them less than their due grades;

3. Bias because of ignorance [mohÅgati]: e.g. someone who suffers from bias because of ignorance may take decisions based on his own stupidity or lack of information or put someone wicked or stupid in a position of responsibility;

4. Bias because of fear [byÅgati].e.g. someone who is biased because of his fears might bear false witness against someone he knows is innocent because someone he is afraid of told him to do so.

All forms of bias cause us to trample the dignity of the innocent. Trampling dignity through bias starts with trampling one's own dignity, by twisting the truth in one's own heart and mind. Such bias in our minds then twists the things we say and do to deviate from what is righteous and appropriate. Such behaviours are all the sign of a cowardly and wicked person who has no love of justice — and

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who neither respects his own human dignity or that of others.

Anyone who knows that they have been maltreated by someone else as a result of that person's bias cannot help but feel sad, angry or vengeful — and with the progressive accumulation of such negative emotions in the mind — might eventually lead him to act wickedly himself towards the person in question in any of the four categories already discussed above in the Four Defilements of Action. Thus we can see how one person's bias might undermine another's responsibility for the human dignityof others.

Thus we can conclude that bias undermines a person's responsibility towards human dignity whether it remains unexpressed in a person's mind, or whether it causes resentment in another in response to an unjust action.

Bias is very damaging to the cultivation of virtue because the best of intentions such as giving a gift out of "gratitude" can become interpreted as something base like nepotism or corruption if there is even the slightest suspicion of bias. If one can be sure that no-one involved in any situation is subject to bias — one can cultivate good deeds to the full.

Anyone who can abstain from the Four Forms of Bias is someone who abides in justice. They will be someone who follows strictly the guidelines of all that is fair.

C.2 The Ten Virtues of a Ruler

The Buddha taught the Ten Virtues of a Ruler [rÅjadhamma] as guidelines for the conduct of those in a postion of power (J.v.378):

1. generosity [dÅna];
2. self-discipline [sĖla];
3. self-sacrifice [pariccÅga];
4. integrity [Åjjava];
5. gentleness [maddava];
6. austerity [tapa];
7. non-anger [akkodha];
8. non-violence [avihiÔsa];
9. patience [khanti];
10. non-deviation from righteousness [avirodhana].

Thus whoever you are, you should not infringe the rights of others, twist the truth or bear false witness. You should follow social laws and regulations consistently — not intentionally breaking the law. One should neither slip into the Four Defilements of Action nor pressurize others into such behaviour. Even the simple adherence to consistent honesty, avoiding breaking social laws and traditions by protecting oneself from bias will stop one from stirring society into unrest. Thus anyone who abstains from the Four Forms of Bias can also be considered, to a slightly greater extent, to be a person with social responsibility.

D. CONCLUSIONS

D.1 Relative importance of Pure Practice and Practice for Purity

To the casual observer, the consequences of failing to "Practice Purely" (being biased and lacking the Ten Virtues of a Ruler) might appear less serious than those who don't "Practise for Purity"(i.e. with defilements of action, none of the Five Virtues and lacking the Tenfold Path of Wholesomeness) — but on closer examination, the two forms of wickedness have equally devastating consequences. Thus if anyone truly wants to develop responsibility towards human dignity, theymust practice purely and practice for purity — this is what it means to be truly responsible towards human dignity both in oneself and others.

D.2 Achieving Dhamma Practice in Everyday Life

Some people may wonder whether in the present day you can still find examples of people who can follow the Tenfold Path of Wholesomeness. What can you do if you are still unable to follow all ten perfectly?

1. Select your livelihood: If you want to help yourself, first of all, be choosy about the work that you do. Don't involve yourself in forms of work that involve Wrong Livelihood (*see Blessing Eighteen*). However, if you want to go further than these ten principles in life to shift from simply neutral actions to more positive ones then you have to make a further effort as follows.

2. Never allow yourself to be shoddy: Train your-

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self never to work on anything in a shoddy fashion. Always do your best in whatever task comes to you. This thoroughness will carry over when you come to training yourself in so that you cultivate virtue too. (e.g. preparing notes for a sermon instead of simply making it up as you go along)

3. Avoid bias: Train yourself to be unbiased and fair in whatever you do. You need to be sincere to principles, to your work, to yourself and to others too.

4. Meditate regularly. No matter how smart you are, without meditation you have no chance of being successful in your pursuit of the Tenfold Path of Wholesomeness. The reason is that, even though people know something is bad, they cannot stop themselves from carrying on in the way they have always done.

D.3 Overcoming obstacles to Dhamma Practice

For various reasons people find great difficulty in earnestly cultivating virtue in their lives:

1. Low Morale: Some try to practise but give in to themselves easily because they lack morale. Such people need to be close to those who are more experienced — i.e the Wise of the Second Blessing. If you are able then choose a sort of work by which you can avoid having to put yourself in negative situations every day of the year.

2. Bad Surroundings: Supposing you have the morale but your environment doesn't allow you to do as well as you want to, don't give up, but do as much as you are able to. e.g. someone who must work as a hunter for a living but who keeps the Precepts when he can. It gives the mind a rest and reduces the toll of negativity in the mind. Do good deeds whenever you have the opportunity. When it comes to the right time a better opportunity will present itself.

E. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

E.1 Ex. Kukku JÅtaka (J.396)

On the occasion of giving a teaching to the king, the Buddha related the story of his previous birth as the counsellor to King Brahmadatta who at that time was an unjust ruler. After waiting a long time for a tactful opportunity to correct the king's ways, one day the two visited a building under construction in the royal park.The roofing is not complete and the rafters had just been laid in place. The king asked his counsellor how the rafters could stay in place, and having found his opportunity, the counsellor said that just as the peak of a roof will fall, unless tightly held by the rafters, a king will soon fall from power unless supported by subjects who have been won over by his righteousness. As a lemon must be eaten without its peel, so must taxes be gathered without violence. Like the lotus, unstained by the water in which it grows, is the virtuous man untainted by the world — therefore his majesty should give up his extortion of unfair taxes and various other injustice driven by bias and defilements of action.

E.2 Ex. Temiya the Mute (J.538)

The bodhisattva was born as Temiya, son of the king of Kasi and Candadevi his wife. As a baby he lay in the lap of the king as he pronounced death sentences on robbers brought before him. Temiya recollected past lives when he had done the same and suffered for 20,000 years in Ussada Hell as a result, therefore he feigned dumbness to avoid having to take the throne. Eventually, when he was sixteen his execution was ordered. As his grave was being dug, he confided his resolve to become an ascetic to Sunanda the gravedigger. Sunanda was impressed by his words and released the bodhisattva to become an ascetic. His parents were informed and upon visiting Temiya's hermitage, they heard his preaching and all became ascetics too. Citizens of Kasi and three neighbouring kingdoms followed their example. Temiya's parents were identified with the parents of the Buddha, Sunanda with Sariputta.

E.3 Ex. MahÅdhammapÅla JÅtaka (J.447)

There is a story of when the Buddha went back to visit his father King Suddhodana. The King told him the story that someone had told him that his son had already died as the result of his practice of

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self-mortification. But the King had not believed him. He had more confidence in his own son than that. The Buddha told him that it was not the first lifetime that the King had had such confidence in him as a son.

In a previous lifetime when the Buddha had been studying in a town away from home with his teacher DisÅpÅmokkha, a young student died. The Buddha told his teacher that where he lived, no-one younger than 100 could die. The teacher didn't believe him, so took some goats bones and took them to the Buddha's father saying that he had returned the bones of his son who had passed away in the course of his studies. At that time the Buddha's father had not believed him either. Not even the children in that village would believe him. The reason why everybody in that village was so long-lived was that for seven generations, everyone in the village had been practicing all of the Tenfold Path of Wholesomeness described above.

E.4 Ex. RÅjovÅda JÅtaka (J.334)

Once the king of Benares, wishing to discover if he ruled justly, travelled about in disguise, and, in the course of his wanderings, came to the Himalayas, where the Bodhisatva lived as an ascetic. The ascetic gave him ripe figs, and, when asked why they were so sweet, explained that the king of the country was evidently a *just* ruler. The king returned to his kingdom and ruled unjustly for a while — returning again to the hermitage, he found that the figs had become bitter.

Blessing Seventeen: Looking After One's Extended Family

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Place of Blessing Seventeen in the sequence

A notable quality of the numerical teachings of the Lord Buddha are they become successively deeper in the order in which they are taught. There is never an example of teachings of the Buddha skipping details. Dhamma is like a coastline which gets progressively deeper as you go further and further out to sea until at its furthest extent it comes to the deepest point at the bottom of the ocean. (Uposatha Sutta: Ud.51) If you learn the teachings in the order they were intended, you will be able to discern the progression of complexity that is contained in the order. It is not like conventional work where you can do things in any order. Furthermore, in Buddhism we always start with ourselves and gradually expand the circle of influence of our good deeds for the benefit of those around us. With the Manual of Peace, we start with ourselves, learning about how to do good deeds, we learn how to make ourselves useful to society. Once we have taken care of ourselves, only then do we turn our attention to looking after others in our family. We start by looking after our own parents, offspring and spouse. Once our close family is harmonious and welloff,we can further enlarge the influence of our good deeds to look after our extended family. From our extended family we can spread the goodwill further and further until our goodwill extends to everyone in the world.

Looking after our extended family looks as if it ought to be easy but when it comes down to it, it is not as easy as we imagined. You may have heard examples of families where the whole of the family has always helped one another until everybody in the family manages to set themselves up properly in life. On the other hand you may have heard of families where the internal politics is so complicated that no-one dares to associate with them. One strange thing for "care of the extended family" is that instead of tacking it on to the end of blessings eleven, twelve and thirteen as the fourteenth Blessing, the Buddha first inserts teachings on how to earn our living (Blessing Fourteen), the art of generosity (Blessing Fifteen) and how to practice Dhamma (Blessing Sixteen) in between. Some people might dismiss this as insignificant, but there is a reason why looking after our extended family comes much later than looking after our close family:

- it is not so urgent as looking after the members of our close family.
- it is a major investment of time, energy and money.
- done in a clumsy way, it might be misunderstood as favouritism or nepotism.

Thus we need to know how to earn our living in the proper way first so that we will have a good enough financial position to help others. Also we have to practice Dhamma, ie. we must be fair, because otherwise favouritism will creep in as our mo-

tivation for helping those around us. Instead of making the world a more peaceful place, our bias will make the world worse rather than better. Thus when you help your extended family it must not be in things that are causing a break with the Precepts or with virtue — otherwise some will use this blessing as an excuse for corruption.

A.2 Definition: 'Looking after one's extended family'

We can divide all our acquaintances in the world into two groups: ● ***our close family:*** our parents, husband, wife, parents in law and our sons and daughters;

- ***our extended family:*** all of our blood relations apart from our close family (e.g. aunts, un cles, cousins, grandparents etc.), those who we trust and have concern for, close friends (but maybe not those who are no more than ac quaintances or colleagues), spiritual teachers and fellow spiritual practitioners.

For the group of our close family because of our debt of gratitude to our parents (see Blessing Eleven) or because if we have a husband, wife or children they are as a result of our own choice, as we have seen from Blessings Twelve and Thirteen our duties and our fulfilling of the "Emotional Bank Account" [saḷgahavatthu] towards these groups needs to be unconditional.

For your extended family, usually the degree of expected commitment is less. You don't see your extended family every day or have to live with them. Therefore you have space to breath between visits (unlike your close family where you have no space to breath). It may only be now and then that you have the opportunity to help a member of your extended family or a trusted friend, but when you do have the opportunity, you have to make a good job of it, or else it may destroy or make awkward your previously good relationship. Because you have not 'chosen' your extended family voluntarily/intentionally, the expectations for how much support you can give them, is less. It is usually expected to be 'conditional' i.e. to give support, something is expected in return. Thus when we talk of looking after our extended family, we mean giving assistance according to the Emotional Bank Account [saḷgahavatthu] on a conditional or 'one-off' basis.

A.3 Finding out who your extended family is

Sometimes we are not sure of the size of our extended family (both our blood-relations and our trusted friends), but we will surely find out when we are in our times of need.

Once close to Dhammakaya Temple, there was a boy who came and helped with the building of the temple road seven or eight years previously. When the road was finished, there was a lot of surplus timber. The boy had not yet set himself up in life and had no house of his own so the vice-abbot gave him the timber to build himself his first house. The young man was very appreciative of the timber but he admitted that if he had to work on the house himself (he could not afford to hire a carpenter) it would take him many months to complete. The vice abbot asked him how many people he had in his family. He said that he was related to practically everyone on the waterfront. The vice-abbot said that within a few days of starting to build his house he would know how many members he had in his extended family

— the vice-abbot asked him to go to everyone he thought was one of his extended family and explain that he was short of the wages he needed to employ a carpenter. The man went to everyone who he thought had goodwill towards him. It turned out that all along the waterfront no-one would help him except for two people — his stepbrother who lent him what he could and a farmer from another province who had stayed in the family house of the boy when he had first arrived in town and was looking for a place to stay. Thus from thinking that he had relatives all along the waterfront it turned out that in actual fact he had only two people who were his true extended family — one was a blood-relative, another was a neighbour who remembered a favour.

B. IMPORTANCE OF HELPING ONE'S EXTENDED FAMILY

B.1 We cannot remain independent throughout life

Sometimes we are young and independent and we think that we could live self-sufficient in the world without having to take an interest in anyone else. If

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we think we are independent, often it will cause us to think that everyone else should make themselves independent too and as a result we may turn a deaf ear to the pleas for help of others who are in need.

The reality of the situation is that (in spite of the presence or absence of a welfare state) it is only for part of our lives that we can expect to be independent. If we are a child who is too young to look after himself or a senior citizen who is too old to look after themselves, or a wife who is heavily pregnant or if we get ill, all of a sudden we realize that we need to rely on other people too. In times of disaster, such as fire or a death in the family or criminal proceedings, again we have to turn to others for help. Also during the rites of passage of our life, whether we are starting our first business or getting married or having our first child then again, it is unlikely that we will have a very smooth right of passage without the help of those who are closest to us. Like the lone pine exposed unprotected to the wind we will soon be uprooted if we don't seek the support and shelter of our friends and family. For some people these needs are just occurring from time to time. For others, the need may last for many years. And when the need occurs, the thing which causes people to suffer the most boils down to four main things: shortage of funds/ability to borrow things, shortage of encouragement, shortage of manpower/advice, lack of security. We already met these four needs in previous lessons, especially in the workplace. If we are able to understand the needs (entitled to) by each sector of our family, we will be better able to see the opportunities to help other members of our family in the things that matter to them.

B.2 Collective merit of a family needs unity

The important thing to understand about helping our extended family is that it promotes the unity and solidarity of our family and society at large. It allows the family or the society we live in to maintain a certain level of collective merit. However, if in a family or society there are a few troublemakers who do nothing to care for their extended family, they can destroy the good name of the family or the society and lead the collective merit of that so ciety to break down — in the way a small number of Thai drug-smugglers have given the whole nation a bad reputation.

B.3 Making the world a more peaceful place

There are many international organizations campaigning for human rights and world peace — however the Buddha's approach to creating peace was slightly different. He proposed that we should try to make everybody in the world into our extended family. If other people don't share this philosophy, it doesn't matter how many peace organizations come into existence, they will not be enough to solve the problems of world peace. We will not even be able to solve the problems of gang fights in the neighbourhood let alone world wars. The thing which really *can* help the situation are the minds of men who believe the other people of the world do be their true extended family. However, the Buddha didn't say that if everybody in the world is an extended family it will give rise to happiness, he said that 'help your extended family and it willbring its results'.

Thus if you come to the real reason for helping our extended family you will see that it is the basis of harmony/unity in society. It is the only value that will spread the feeling that the whole of the world is of the same family. To bring peace to the world you have to start with the smallest viable unit. You cannot start by making the world 'out there' peaceful. It is like someone who wants to build a large skyscraper. One might prepare many blueprints and designs but all this will come to nothing if you don't take care of the quality of the building materials such as sand and cement then no matter how good your design is the building will soon collapse. However, if you concentrate on the quality of the materials, so that there is no dust or splinters of wood mixed up with the sand, you make a careful control of the size of gravel, you make sure that the steel is not rusted or bent, then apart from building an attractive skyscraper you will also build to last.

In the same way, if we want to build a society which is one of quality then we have to start with the buildings blocks of society which are the clos-

est to us and that means our relations with our extended family.

C. LOOKING AFTER YOUR EXTENDED FAMILY

C.1 Appropriate times to help

We have already mentioned that there are certain times when people lose their independence and have special need of the support of the extended family around them. The following circumstances are times when it is particularly important for us to pay attention to looking after our extended family:

1. When our extended family fall on hard times and are without refuge. Supposing a child in our extended family is orphaned then perhaps we will take on such a child to look after for herself.

2. When our extended family needs investment to set themselves up in life. Sometimes a family cannot go as far in its education as it would like to because its own family is unable to pay its way into higher education, even though the child has the potential to go further.
3. When our extended family needs to travel but has no transport
4. When our extended family lacks necessary equipment for pursuing their livelihood.
5. When some of our extended family is ill
6. When there is some special occasion e.g. usually we don't pay much attention to our extended family, but on the occasion of the wedding of someone in our extended family, and they need to set themselves up in life, maybe we will help to be the sponsor. Maybe you will help with the expenses involved with a funeral in the family or an ordination in the family.

7. When someone in our family is unjustly accused of something they didn't do.
8. When someone in the family is affected by natural disasters.

C.2 Emotional Bank Account as the basis of help for one's family

There are four main ways in which you can assist your extended family. We call these the Four Bases of Sympathy [saṀgahavatthu]:

1. Helping with resources [dÅna]: This means giving or lending whatever we can spare which are useful to our extended family. All of these things sound easy but when we come to practising, they are not so simple. All it takes is one of our extended family to come borrowing 5,000 or 10,000 when our salary is hardly enough to cover the month's overheads. If they come borrowing 100,000 you would hardly take their request seriously any more. If we are still in difficulties about being generous to others at this point this is telling us that our cultivation of blessings at the level of Blessings Fourteen and Fifteen is not yet sufficient. If we are not really very earnest or efficient in the work that we do, and we never keep any savings then we still have our weaknesses. Thus if we are thorough in our thinking instead of thinking that it is enough just to cover our own basic needs, we have to think also of the eventuality of our extended family needing to rely on us as well. If you are skilful in the application of these principles you will find that the members of your extended family are always on the increase and you will never be short of help in times of need. Even if beggars come to our door, we should find something to help them with, according to our means. In the old days, men would always keep a little money in reserve for times of need. If anyone came to them in need, at least they would not lose their friendship. (*see budgetting scheme of Blessing Fifteen §E.2*) If you can't afford to lend them money, at least give them advice. Even if you can't give them advice, maybe you can give them the busfare to reach the houses of other friends who may be able to help more.

2. Endearing speech [piyavÅcÅ]: This means speaking in a way that is not at all upsetting to our extended family and not looking down on them either. Normally we are able to be polite to others the whole of the time. However if we are irritable or in bad mood, even though we may try to say things politely, they never seem to come out as we intended — especially when we have to give reasons for things instead of telling people "just do what I say". The other time when it

is difficult for us to speak politely is the time when others come asking for help from us but we have to refuse. Refusing in a way that is gentle is no easy thing. If you have never made the effort to speak politely before then it is at this point that you will say something thay you may regret for years to come. Maybe you didn't realize that the 300 or 500 that they have been giving us willingly all these years has been the last cents out of their purse every time. For them they didn't think that the money they gave was insignificant, but they thought of the fact that they were prepared to empty out their purse even to the last cent every time we came asking. If we speak insensitively every time when they have cause to come asking us for help, then that may be the end of any relationship we ever had to them. Just a few ill considered words may mean that we cannot look each other in the eye any more for the rest of our lives. It is very frightening what words can do. It is strange that when we are children we tend not to hide our feelings because we aren't concerned about what other people think of us. Our moods fluctuate between tantrums and laughs thoughout the whole of the day. However, when we grow older, the same is no longer true. A few ill chosen words from another adult and even if they were to come back asking your forgiveness with a gift of a million, you would still be reluctant to speak to them. Therefore start training yourself in endearing speech from this day on, so that when it comes to situations where you are taxed for words you won't risk being ostracised from your own family

3. Lending a helping hand [atthacariya]: This means helping our extended family out when they have work to be done. Even if you don't have money to lend, you are still strengthening the bonds of friendship within your extended family by giving them a helping hand.

4. Being consistent to one's duty [samanatthattha]: This means giving others familiarity and confidence — and not doing things that create suspicion. You need to conduct yourself in a way befitting your status in the eyes of your ex

tended family. Sometimes members of our extended family may have received only a low level of education. Sometimes they may not know the appropriate way to behave in a particular situation. Maybe all they know is that 'Whitey' is their grandson — but what they don't realise is that Mr. White is also the Managing Director of a firm. Thus when they visit Mr. White at his work and shout, "Come here Whitey!" at first Mr. White may have to listen patiently to the stream of things they have for him to help them with, but only later, when the situation is more relaxed on both sides will he be able to point out the reasons for things, step by step. If you are not able to help with everything they ask then you must find a way of helping them but in a more feasible way.

C.3 Spiritual ways to help 'extended family'

Apart from helping people with material things, we can also help people with Dhamma (teachings). To give Dhamma to people is often even more important than the physical things we give to people. It can be especially important when we come to help members of our extended family who are already materially self-sufficient but who are still a long way from spiritual pursuits such as generosity or keeping the precepts. You might invite your aunt to go to the temple but she complains of having too many aches and pains to go to the temple today. Therefore you give her a helping hand by driving a car to pick her up from her doorstep to take her to the temple and return her to her temple in the evening. So she complains that she doesn't have anything to give at the temple, so you say that you have already prepared all the food to offer at the temple and that all she needs to do is to offer it. Thus she agrees to go to the temple and later as she gets more familiar with the customs of the temple, later she will want to go without anyone prodding her — and before long she will want to be generous, keep the precepts and meditate without others having to give her encouragement all of the time. You might have a relative who has already got a good job but because he is still childish and irresponsible he is unable to set himself up properly in life. If you can

persuade such a person to take leave from work to ordain as a monk during the vacation, and you make all the arrangements for him and make him aware of all the advantages. Then that would be called looking after your extended family spiritually.

C.4 Choosing the sort of family to help

It is not every sort of family who will benefit from help you might try to give them. If you would like to maximize the amount of merit and satisfaction you gain from caring for your extended family, give priority to families who:

- Make an earnest effort to help themselves first — not the sort who come running to you every time there is a minor problem and never think to try to solve their own problems
- Those who are of good conduct, who are grateful, humble and courteous — and who aren't mixed up with the 'Roads to Ruin'

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Metaphor: Lone pine cannot survive in strong wind

The Lord Buddha taught that all of the trees that stand together in the forest will help each other mutually giving shelter from the gales and storms, sun and rain. By offering each other shelter, each tree is protected from being uprooted. On the other hand the largest tree (the king of the forest) in the forest must endure the strong winds alone and in the end it cannot survive every storm. In the same way if anyone tries to go it alone in the swift currents of society, without the help of any friends and relatives, will eventually come to a sticky end. On the other hand, even if someone in society is not particularly outstanding in any respect, if they have sufficient friends and family who can help them in times of need, they will be able to overcome all difficulties that cross their path. If they run for election, without much canvassing they can soon be elected without much trouble.

D.2 Ex. Va**ÊÊ**aka JÅtaka (J.33)

The bodhisattva was once a quail. There was a fowler who enticed quails by imitating their cry and then throwing a net over them. The bodhisattva suggested that when the fowler did this, they should all fly away with the net. This they did, day after day, and the fowler returned empty-handed until eventually his wife grew angry. One day, two of the quails started quarrelling and the bodhisattva, hearing their wrangling, decided to go elsewhere with his following. When the fowler came again and spread the net, the two quails started quarrelling and he was able to capture them.

D.3 Ex. War in Kali ***ga (DhA.iii.254ff.)***

Kapilavatthu, the town of the Sakyans, and Koliya, the town of the Koliyans were situated on either side of the Rohini River. The farmers of both towns irrigated their fields from this river. One year, due to severe drought their paddy and other crops were threatened, and the farmers on both sides wanted to divert the water from the Rohini River to their own fields. Those living in Koliya wanted to divert and channel the water to irrigate their field. However, the farmers from Kapilavatthu protested that they would be denied the use of the water and their crops would be destroyed.

Both sides wanted the water for their own use only and as a result, there was much ill-will and hatred on both sides. The quarrel that started between the farmers soon spread like fire and the matter was reported to their respective rulers. Failing to find a compromise, both sides prepared to go to war.

The Buddha came to know that his relatives on both sides of the river were preparing for battle. For their wellbeing and happiness and to avoid unnecessary suffering, he decided to stop them. All alone, he went and appeared in the middle of the river. His relatives on seeing him, laid aside all their weapons and paid homage to him. Then, the Buddha admonished them, asking, 'what do you think is more precious, irrigation water or your royal blood?'

They replied "Our royal blood is more precious"

"For the sake of some water, which is of little value, you should not destroy your lives which are of so much value. Why have you taken this

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unwholesome course of action? If I had not been here today, your blood would have been flowing like this river by now. You are living with hatred, but I live free from hatred. You are ailing with moral defilements, but I am free from moral defilements. You are striving to develop selfishness and enmity, but I don't strive for the development of selfishness." Both sides then became ashamed of their foolishness and thus bloodshed was averted.

The Buddha was also to help his extended family, the Sakyans by prohibiting ViÎËÎabha from massacring them out of anger, as many as three times (*See Blessing Thirty-Three §D.6*)

D.4 Ex. Kukkura JÅtaka (J.22)

Because his carriage straps, left in the rain, are gnawed by his own dogs, the king of Benares orders all dogs except his own to be killed indiscriminately. The Bodhisattva, who was the leader of the pack of dogs in the cemetary, visited the king and pointed out to him his iniquity, and reveals the truth by causing an emetic to be administered to the king's own dogs. In this way the Bodhisattva cared for his "extended family" by making sure justice was delivered to all of his kind. Having convinced the king, the Bodhisattva taught him the The Ten Virtues of a King and to avoid the Four Forms of Bias. Great are the benefactions thereafter made to dogs in the kingdom.

D.5 Ex. Buddha tends the sick monk himself (DhA.i.319ff.)

Once the Buddha happened to see the sorrowful state of a certain monk called 'Tissa'. The monk had been meditating diligently until becoming afflicted with a disease of stinking open sores covering his whole body. Because of the smell, he had been abandoned by his fellow monks.The Buddha knew that Tissa would soon attain Arahanthood, so he proceeded to the fire-shed, close to the place where the monk was staying. There, he personally boiled some water, went to the place where the monk was lying down, and took hold of the edge of the couch. It was only then that the other monks also gathered round him, and as instructed by the Buddha, they carried him out where he was washed and bathed.While he was being bathed his robes were washed and dried. After the bath, the monk became fresh in body and mind and soon developed one-pointedness of concentration. Standing at the head of the couch, the Buddha told him that this body when devoid of life would be as useless as a log and would be laid on the earth. At the conclusion of the sermon, Tissa attained Arahanthood. Soon after, he passed away into ParinibbÅna.The Buddha then directed some *bhikkhu*s to cremate his body and enshrine his relics in a stËpa.

Subsequently, the Buddha taught, '*Bhikkhu*s! You do not have your mother or father here who can tend to you. If you do not tend to one another, who will be there to tend to you? Tend a sick fellow monk as if you were tending me.'

Blessing Eighteen:
Blameless Work

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Blessing Eighteen in the Sequence of the Blessings

The workplace is somewhere we have already been familiar with since Blessing Fourteen — but last time we visited, we were interested in work only as a means to earn the salary we needed to support the close family (as covered in Blessings Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen). Now we have matured a little further in the sequence of the Blessings, we return to our work, not as simply something which needs to be completed, but to be completed *well*! Within the context of this Fifth Grouping of Blessings, 'Becoming a pillar of society', it matters not simply that we finish our work, but also *how well* we do it and *how beneficial* it is to society too! In this Blessing we are to learn about the quality and the ethicality of the work we do — important factors in being the sort of person others in society can look up to.

A.2 Buddhist Economics

'Economics' is not a term native to Buddhism. "Buddhist Economics" is a phrase coined by E.F. Schumacher — but the concepts involved (especially Right Livelihood at the mundane [*lokiya*] level) are very relevant to explaining a second visit to the workplace is necessary. Like the diligent but shoddy and corrupt worker tolerated by Blessing Fourteen, contemporary western economics tries to measure social well-being by financial transactions alone. Western economists try to avoid involvement of values when considering the 'economics' of different actions — and their approach is thus radically different from that of Buddhism. To give some examples of iniquities in the modern economic analysis, transactions which are considered . . . :

- *Economic non-events:* Any work which doesn't get paid a wage is a non-event to an economist — so much for voluntary work in the temple!
- *Economically equal activities:* The purchase of a bottle of whisky and or a sack of rice to feed a village of hungry refugees have the same economic value
- *'Negligible' economic by-products:* That vices are by-products of attending night-clubs, rampant consumerism the result of advertising, temptation towards unethical business practices the result of competition — have no place in the economic equation.

Costs given consideration in the Buddhist economic equation: To Buddhism, by contrast, the economics of livelihood has a human face (i.e. it acknowledges *values*). Below are listed some of the factors to be encouraged in the equation of Buddhist economics:

- Physical health and security of the popula***tion:*** If the public are made ill by unethical business practices, the medical costs it is the victims who end up paying the bill through

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their own taxes! When consumerism exacerbates crimes, guess who has to pay for police investigations and prosecution of the offenders?

- ***Spiritual Health:*** the ravages of over-consumption and over-production reflect unhealthy mental processes in the population generated by the superficial emotions of want, choice and material satisfaction — emotions which Buddhism does not encourage;
- ***Quality of work:*** Shoddy work is produced by shoddy minds. Buddhism foresees a working environment where workers are enthusiastic to give their best, because in so doing, apart from job satisfaction, workers will have the chance to train and better themselves and refine their minds through their working experience;
- ***Job satisfaction:*** If workers enjoy their work and are industrious, productivity will be high. On the other hand, if they are dishonest, disgruntled or lazy, this will have a negative effect on the quality of production and the amount of productivity.
- ***Respect for individual human dignity:*** To be ethically sound, economic activity must take place in a way that is not harmful to the individual,
- ***Respect for interpersonal human dignity:*** To be ethically sound, economic activity must take place in a way that does not encourage one individual to take advantage of another;
- ***Respect for fair economics/human dignity of society at large:*** society or the natural environment. In other words, economic activity should not cause problems for oneself, agitation in society or degeneration of the ecosystem, but rather enhance well-being in these three spheres.

A.3 Three types of Worker

Workers in the world have many styles and qualities, but in conclusion you can divide successful workers into three major kinds:

1. those who finish what they do without being interested in the quality;
2. those who finish their work to the best of their quality;
3. those who care that the result of their work is beneficial to society;

The Buddha taught that anyone who wants to be a pillar of society must pay attention to the quality of every piece of work they do as well as finishing it.

A.4 Three types of work

Work in Buddhism, as already discussed in Blessing Fourteen (a source of food both for body and mind) is a term which relates to a much wider scope of activities that that implied by our 40-hour week! Thus, before going into further detail as to which sort of work is blameworthy and which not, it is important to recognize the scope of this analysis. The term 'work' includes:

1. physical work (e.g. cooking or governing the country);

2. verbal work (e.g. training our children or grandchildren, business negotiation or chanting) (most of the details of this sort of work have already been discussed in Blessing Ten);

3. mental work (adjustment and development of our own thoughts to overcome the inbuilt tendency of our thoughts to degenerate into preoccupation with sensuality [kÅmavitakka], vengefulness [byÅpÅda-vitakka] or aggression [vihiÔsavitakka].;

The principles of 'blame' discussed in relation to work, although mostly dealing with the context of physical work here, can in fact equally be applied to verbal and mental work too.

B. JUDGING THE ETHICAL VALUE OF WORK

Often when people are looking to measure the standard of the work they are doing they rely too heavily on the amount of praise or criticism they receive from others (*see example §E.1 below*). The Buddha warned us that to use such an arbitrary measurement as our standard is not foolproof. In the world there are so many people of different viewpoints that you could never please all of the people all of the time. Some people cannot find a

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word of praise for anyone. Thus whatever the task you do, you cannot listen simply to the criticism of others — because some people's criticism is possibly without any foundation. You have to measure the quality of work based on reason. Therefore whatever work you are doing, never base your decisions on the criticism of others. What then can you base your decisions on? The Buddha taught that we should make sure any work we do is:

1 ***Not illegal:*** this is the grossest filter of blame in work — but it is too gross to cover all eventualities, and this is why we need to resort to the other three criteria too;

2 ***Not breaking with tradition:*** Some things don't break the law, but because they are out of keeping with local customs or traditions, they may bring you into conflict with others. Supposing a man wears women's clothes — will the police arrest him? Probably not, but it is certainly not very good. Or when you are eating, there is a division made between sweet and savoury food. Some countries eat savoury food before they eat sweet desserts. Some, like Japan, eat their sweet food first. Not all customs are universally good. They may be applicable only to the particular locality or climate in a place. So how can you tell if a custom is worth respecting or not? Supposing you want to choose what to wear to go to the temple. You know that it certainly won't break the law. As for customs, you know that in different places, the way people dress is not the same — to go to the market you dress in a cosmopolitan way, to go to the cinema you dress in a fun-loving way, to go to the seaside you dress to the minimum — but if you go to the temple, because the atmosphere must be peaceful, you should dress more modestly and conservatively. It is customary to dress in a modest colour like white to go to the temple because doing so forces you to be careful of your own level of cleanliness and such mindfulness aids you to meditate better.

3 ***Not breaking the Five Precepts*:** This ensures that you don't compromise the human dignity of others or of yourself (*as already described in Blessing Nine*).

4 ***Not compromising your Five Virtues [pañcadhamma]:*** This ensures that you don't fall into unwholesome ways which compromise virtue or justice (*in the ways already described in Blessing Seventeen*)

Thus, if in the future, you want to be a pillar of society, then give things careful consideration before you do them. You have to do things well — not just finish them. If you want to know if there is going to be any bad side-effects occurring as the result of something we do, check by using these four principles. Check the law, customs, Precepts and virtue.

C. AVOIDING WRONG LIVELIHOOD

The Buddha taught that we should earn our living by working for it and by working honestly too — otherwise the economy and society cannot truly prosper. Of course earning your living by thieving, shop-lifting or pick-pocketing is not supported by Buddhism — these forms of work have already been ruled out in our consideration of the ethical value of work above. But there is a grey area of what constitutes a fair profit, which the Buddha charted for us with the concept of Right and Wrong Livelihood. Those who make a success out of Right Livelihood in business will have a positive effect on the economic situation of their country too — but those involved in Wrong Livelihood enterprises, whether directly or indirectly are undermining the well-being of their country by so doing. The Buddha said that a person who earns their living by Wrong Livelihood is like someone who intentionally advises a traveller to take a dangerous road, saying that it is safe, but when travelling themselves, will always take another (safer) route. The main ways people earn a living are in either in the public or in the private sector — and we will look at the specific considerations of Right and Wrong Livelihood for each in turn:

C.1 Private Enterprise

Most work in private enterprise can be simplified

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down to trading a product or a service. For Right Livelihood in the trading scenario the Buddha taught us to avoid five specific types of Wrong Livelihood:

1. Dealing in slaves [sattavaÁijjÅ]: This means buying people at a low price and selling them at a higher price and supporting oneself from the profit made — or running a brothel where you are making a profit out of the loss of another person's dignity. Taking on such an occupation will change the quality of your mind

— it will cause you to see people as something inanimate. You will eventually lose your sense of humanity because you will no longer be able to appreciate others' human dignity.

2. Dealing in weapons [satthavaÁijjÅ]: This means weapons for killing animals or people and supporting oneself from the profit made

— selling weapons will make you see the world in a strange way. The quality of the wares you are selling all depend on the efficiency with which the weapons can kill men or animals — eventually it will cause your own Precepts to suffer.

3. Dealing in flesh [maÔsavaÁijjÅ]: This means rearing live animals (like buffalos, pigs, ducks and chickens) to slaughter oneself or have someone else slaughter for us and supporting oneself from the profit made — most people see animals with compassion, but if you kill them or trade with those in the abattoir, instead of seeing the nice side of animals, you will see animals as nothing more than a walking meat counter. Even though you might not be directly involved in such a trade, your appreciation of the preciousness of life will disappear. If ever you lose your temper there will be an increased intention for you to threaten people with the same murderous intentions that belong inside the abattoir.

4. Dealing in alcohol [majjavaÁijjÅ]: This means selling alcohol (or any other sort of substance causing heedlessness) and supporting oneself from the profit made — it doesn't break the law or customs — but it does break with Right Livelihood. If you sell alcohol you know that

it will lead to the drunkenness of the customer — it will destroy their reputation, their wealth, their health etc. etc. — however, you don't feel any compassion for such a person or responsibility for their human dignity. You know all the damaging consequences of buying our alcohol for the customer, but you look beyond these in your search for profit. Loving kindness becomes a stranger to your heart. The more evil of this sort you collect for yourself, in this lifetime or in future lifetimes, if ever you find yourself in difficulties yourself, your evil will prevent others from having any compassion for you — even those you have helped before — even your own children. The karma will block out the reality and you won't be able to blame them.

5. Dealing in poisons [visavaÁijjÅ]: This means selling poisons for killing animals (e.g. insecticide) and supporting oneself from the profit made. In many places where mosquitos are not even the vectors of malaria (like in Bangkok) people are dying not of malaria, but of self-poisoning from the DDT they spray on the mosquitoes. People think that insecticide will become benign again within a few hours but actually it takes about fifteen to twenty years to break down. If a bottle of such poison smashes on the floor, even if you clean up thoroughly, the smell still remains for two or three weeks. If you work in the poison trade, there are broken bottles and spillages nearly every day. Even if you never use the poison, you are inhaling it every day. Those in the trade die of respiratory disease and blood cancer almost without exception.

Those who do any of these trades, will find themselves increasingly unable to cultivate an 'Emotional Bank Account' [saḶgahavatthu] with anyone else.

Furthermore, those who work in commerce but who are dishonest (by for example fixing their weights and measures) also fall into the category of Wrong Livelihood. Another variety of Wrong Livelihood are the forms of deception used by forg

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ers — for example, they provide the first batch of their work all in solid gold — however, as soon as the order is placed, the remainder of their work will be in gold-plated brass.

C.2 Public Sector

It would be impossible for Wrong Livelihood enterprises to exist, whether on the large or small scale, without some form of cooperation from a corrupt Public Sector — whether it be the "soft drug" industry, gun running, casinos, forgery, prostitution, or assassination. Any such involvement shows that those implicated are devoid of any sense of responsibility for human dignity in the fairness of the economy of their own country. Usually the enemy of Right Livelihood in the Public Sector is bribery or corruption — for example surveyors in charge of measuring land for a buyer, if they are dishonest or corrupt and don't get paid protection money, will over-measure the land. However, if they are bribed, will undermeasure it. Judges who can be bribed to come to a verdict are no better. All come under the heading of Wrong Livelihood.

C.3 Special Occupations

C.3.1 Military

In addition to the work categories already explained, special mention should be given to the work of the professional soldier which comes into strong disagreement with any form of Buddhist practice. In the time of the Buddha there was a soldier who thought that soldiers who fought bravely for their king and country would have heaven as their afterlife destination. However, the Buddha explained that:

'those who kill will be killed in return'

Dutiya KÅmavatthu Sutta (S.i.83)

And that there are only two possible afterlife destinations even for those who (only) *consider* killing others — and those are hell and the animal realms — whether they be soldiers, cavaliers or soldiers mounted on elephants. [YodhÅjÈva Sutta (S.iv.308), AssÅroha Sutta (S.iv.310), HatthÅroha Sutta (S.iv.310)]

C.3.2 Doctors and Nurses

On the contrary, to be a doctor or a nurse can be a profession which can bring great merit if it is done well. If it is done badly, it can bring serious demerit. It was therefore for this reason that the Buddha gave guidelines on the abilities of those prerequisite for making a good doctor or nurse (in his particular context to look after sick monks):

1. Must have the ability to prescribe the appropriate medicine;
2. Must know the difference between what is for the comfort and discomfort of patients, being able to increase the comfort and decrease the discomfort of the patient by his or her actions;
3. Not just interested in the payment received from the treatment — healing should be done out of the prime motivation of compassion
4. Does not object to the removal/excretion of the patient's excrement, urine, vomit and saliva;
5. Able to cheer up the patient with timely Dhamma teachings Dutiya UpaÊÊhÅka Sutta (A.iii.144)

C.3.3 Devious Customers

Even customers can do it! Supposing a butcher has two deer for sale, a big one and a small one. He asks $20 for the big one and $10 for the little one. A devious customer comes up and buys the little one for $10. Some time later he comes back and says he changed his mind and he wants the big one. The butcher asks $20 for the big deer, but the customer says that he already gave the hunter $10 and that the small deer he is returning is also worth $10. Together they are worth $20, the price of the big deer. The customer therefore exchanges the big deer for the small one. Meanwhile the butcher is not smart enough to keep up with the customer's trick and is thereby cheated. On this occasion, the customer is guilty of Wrong Livelihood even though he might say the butcher deserved it.

Therefore, if you aim to be a pillar of society who is beyond criticism by any reasonable person in the world, measure your work carefully by the standard of Right Livelihood. Apart from avoiding criticism, all tasks which you do will be done to the

best of your ability. Others will regard you as an elder in society not only because of your advancing age, but also because of your wisdom and example to upcoming generations.

D. RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE

Apart from the ethicality of work, a second area of problems in the work we do may come from personal conflicts arising at work. Irrespective of the nature of the work, we need to cultivate good human relationships in the workplace otherwise we might risk blame and undermine our job satisfaction. We have to be able to get along with our colleagues whether they are true friends or false. Our relationship with this group of co-workers (whether they be our boss, employees, servants, inferiors or slaves!) are covered in the fifth grouping of relationships mentioned in the SiĮgalovÅda Sutta. From this teaching we find out about the reciprocal relationship between the boss and the employee.

D.1 Duties of an employer

The Buddha laid down five responsibilities of a boss to his employees as follows:

1. Delegating appropriate work: Work given to an employee should be chosen as appropriate to that person's age and gender and disposition and capability in order that they can work efficiently;

2. Give food and remuneration: A decent wage should be given which is not less than the legal minimum. There should be wage increase with time and bonuses. Employees who live "on site" should be provided with regard to appropriate food — not left hungry! A boss with such caring behaviour will be able to relinquish the effects of both bias and defilements of action;

3. Take care of employees in time of illness: Employees should be allowed to take leave if sick and enquiries should be made about their recovery to show the features of a "true friend" of the boss;

4. ***From time to time give delicacies:*** organize celebration for special occasions for the employees etc. — and this will give them the encouragement which will keep the boss-employee relationship an amicable one;

5. Allow holidays on occasion: employees should be allowed holidays according to the usual working calendar and national festivals

Employers and bosses who take responsibility for their employees in these five ways will in such a way cultivate a mind of loving-kindness and compassion instead of simply thinking to take advantage of others. A boss with all the features of a true friend — but such an attitude doesn't occur by accident — it needs for the boss to have been instilled with such responsibility since an early age, whosoever fulfil their duties to the "nadir" in these ways.

D.2 Duties of an employee

The Buddha also laid down five responsibilitiesan employee ought to have towards his employee:

1. Start work before him;

2. Finish work after him: If any employee who can practise both of these duties, it shows that they have a strong degree of responsibility towards their employer — a sincere respect, love and gratitude towards their employer — rather than having the hidden intention that their behaviour be conditional on their employer raising their salary;

3. Taking only the things (expressly) given to them by the employer: an employee who can have the control of himself to avoid the defilements of action will not help themselves to the things 'left lying around' in the workplace or steal the boss's belongings;

4. Doing their work better: Means giving their all to fulfil their duties for the greatest benefit — without having conditions to negotiate salary increases from their employer — such behaviour shows that the employee really has the generosity befitting a "wise one".

5. Maintaining and defending the boss's good reputation: employees with such behaviour do so because of their loyalty to their employers — they see their boss as similar to the ways they would regard a kindly relative or parent.

In general, it is the employer who controls the benefits and disadvantages coming to an employee. That an employee fulfils these five responsibilities towards an employer means that the employer must have treated the employee well in the first place — to want to show these responsibilities to repay his debt of gratitude.

D.3 Reciprocal Relationship between Boss & Employer

If the boss does not fulfil his duties but the employee does, the boss does not deserve such a good employee — in the end harm will come to that workplace because seeing the boss's attitude, before long the employees will imitate his example.

If the boss fulfils his duties, but the employee doesn't — the employee does not deserve such a good employer — the workplace will not prosper because the boss cannot control the employees.

If both boss and employees fail to fulfil their duties, the workplace will go bankrupt because it will become a den of thieves — having dire consequences for society at large.

However if both boss and employee fulfil their responsibilities, the workplace will prosper — both boss and employee will enjoy happiness and peace and society will benefit too.

D.4 Possible Harm coming from unfulfilled duties between boss and employee

1. When employees have no sense of responsibility for their own human dignity — if a boss or employer lacks the self-discipline according to the teaching of the Buddha, the first disaster coming to him is that his employees will have no sense of responsibility for their own human dignity, producing at least the following three character traits:

1. Chronic false view: Mostly employees come from an unwealthy and uneducated background and if they come into contact with an undisciplined boss who is a false friend, the employee will be discontent and will resist against the boss — an emotion which may exacerbate False View in the employee's mind.

2. Breaks the Five Precepts: Those of False View also tend to break the Five Precepts. Employees might deteriorate into the Four Defilements of Action in order to fight back against the employer, without any fear of the legal consequences

3. Brings disadvantage to the employer: in order to avoid breaking the law, employees band together to strike in order to claim rights and benefits for themselves. Any form of strike will disadvantage the employer.

2. When employees have no sense of responsibility for the human dignity of others — if a boss or employer lacks the self-discipline according to the teaching of the Buddha, the second disaster coming to him is that his employees will have no sense of responsibility for the human dignity of others, producing at least the following three character traits:

1. Looking for ways to take advantage of the employer: When bias arises in the mind of the employee — they will want to put the employer at a disadvantage — something they can do in many ways, e.g. by "going slow" (*if paid by the hour*) or producing shoddy work (*if paid for productivity*).

2. Mistreats employer: In order to get revenge for the resentment they feel, they produce shoddy goods or feign quality;

3. Ruin the employer: Sometimes the employee divulges trade secrets to competing companies etc.

3. When employees have no sense of responsibility for the human dignity of economic fairness

— if a boss or employer lacks the self-discipline according to the teaching of the Buddha, the third disaster coming to him is that his employees will have no sense of responsibility for the human dignity for economic fairness, producing at least the following three character traits:

1. Addiction to the 'Six Roads to Ruin': because of working to express animosity towards the employer, they will feel insecurity about working in that enterprise and immerse themselves in 'Roads to Ruin' to forget their woes by drinking alcohol or gambling;

2. Undisciplined in expenditure: When they are

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addicted to 'roads to ruin', they will lose the intelligence to use their earnings beneficially;

3. ***Consequent debt problems:*** The combination of addictions and lack of discipline in expenditure will lead them to indebtedness — producing problems not only for themselves but eventually for the employer too!

E. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

E.1 Ex. The Father, the Son and the Donkey

Once there were a father and a son who went to the market in a distant town and bought a donkey. They led the donkey back towards their home on a rope. On the way back from the market, they passed through the first village and all the villagers exclaimed, "What a stupid father and son, they have spent good money on a donkey and now they lead it along the road instead of riding it". The father and son thought, "What they say is true," and so the father sat the son on the donkey and they went on their way. They passed through the second village and all the villagers exclaimed, "What an ungrateful son to ride the donkey and leave his poor father to walk — if the son were to walk and let his father ride, it would show that the son at least repays his debt of gratitude to his father". The father and son thought, "What they say is true," and so the father sat on the donkey and the son walked and they went on their way. They passed through the third village and all the villagers exclaimed, "What a cruel father! He has hardly any more years of life in him, and he lets his poor son walk along the road in his place". The father and son consulted one another, "What they say is true," and so both the son and the father sat on the donkey and they went on their way. They passed through the fourth village and all the villagers exclaimed, "What a cruel father and son! Both of them together weigh more than the donkey itself and they are both riding the donkey — they're not interested even if they break the donkey's back". The father and son consulted one another, "What they say is true," — if they ride the donkey singly, together or lead the donkey, they get criticized — what can they do? They found a rope and tied the donkey so that it hung on the pole by its feet. The father took one end of the pole and the son the other and they went on their way. They passed through the fifth village and all the villagers exclaimed, "This father and son must be mad. What could be the reason they have bought a donkey to carry around like that. Wouldn't it be better just to walk empty-handed?" This story only goes to show that if you want to find something to criticize, you can always find something. However, unfortunately, those who spend their whole time criticizing others are very numerous in the world. The moral of the story is that you cannot rely on others' criticism to tell you the truth of a situation — you must have principles which are tried and tested to use as a rule of thumb.

E.2 Ex. Seriv ā .Jātaka (J.3)

The bodhisattva was once a hawker of Seriva and was called SerivÅ. Once, in the company of a greedy merchant of the same name, he crossed the TelavÅha and entered Andhapura. In that city was a family who had fallen on hard times, the sole survivors being a girl and her grandmother. The greedy merchant went to their house with his wares. The girl begged her grandmother to buy a trinket, and suggested that they should give the hawker the golden bowl from which they ate. The bowl was a valuable heirloom, but it had lost its lustre and the woman didn't know its value. The hawker was called in and shown the bowl. He scratched it with a needle and knew it was solid gold, but wishing to have it for nothing, he bluffed saying it was not worth half a farthing — so he threw it aside and left. Later, the bodhisattva came to the same street and was offered the same bowl. He told them the truth, gave them all the money he had and his stock too, leaving only eight pieces of money for himself. These he gave to the boatman and boarded the boat to cross the river. Meanwhile, the greedy merchant went again to the old woman's house, hoping to get the bowl in exchange for a few trinkets. When he heard what had happened, he lost command of himself, and throwing down all he had, ran down to the river to find the bodhisattva's boat in mid-stream. He shouted to the boatman to return, but the bodhisattva urged him on. The merchant, realizing what he had lost through his greed, was so upset that his heart burst and he fell down dead.

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E.3 Ex. SËci J ā taka (I.387)

The bodhisattva was once a very clever smith of Kasi, but was very poor. The principal royal smith had a beautiful daughter and the bodhisattva, wishing to win her, made a needle so delicate that could pierce anvils and float on water. For this needle, he made seven sheaths. He then went to the village of the head smith, stood outside the house and sang the praises of the needle. The smith's daughter, who was fanning her father, told the bodhisattva to go elsewhere as no-one in that village wanted needles. The bodhisattva answered that his were no ordinary needles and the head-smith asked him to show them. The bodhisattva suggested that all the smiths be summoned and in their presence, he gave the needle-tube to the head-smith. He thought it was the needle itself, because he could find no end or tip. The tube was handed back to the bodhisattva who took out the first sheath. In this way the seven sheaths were removed and when the needle was at last revealed, he made it pierce an anvil and float on water. The whole assembly was filled with envy and admiration and the head-smith gave his daughter to the bodhisattva.

The Sixth Group of Blessings

"Preparation of Mind"

The first eighteen blessings form the first half of the Maṅgala Sutta. They are all concerned with transforming our *lives*. It is only upon the foundation of security in life achieved in the first half of the Blessings of Life, that one can go on, in the second half of the Sutta to cultivate purity of *mind* in earnest by following Blessings nineteen to thirty-eight. When we come to the start of the sixth grouping we are concerned with the preparation of the mind.

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Blessing Nineteen: Abstaining from Unwholesomeness

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Introduction to the Nineteenth Blessing

The mind is fickle and easily influenced. A person who is virtuous today can easily relapse into bad behaviour tomorrow if his mind has not been cultivated to the point of steadfastness. When you realize the weakness of the mind it immediately implies that we have work to do in the constant upgrading of the mind towards something better. If you really want to be sure that you will never do unwholesome deeds again, then at the least you have to attain enlightenment at the level of 'stream-enterer' [sotÅpana]. For those who still fall short of this initial degree of enlightenment

— although you can always praise and encourage their good intentions — you can never entirely trust the working of the remaining defilements in their mind.

Cultivating virtue can be compared to climbing a tree. Trees have no branches at the lowest level. The lowest branches are several metres above the ground. Therefore if you want to start climbing a tree you have to shinny up the trunk before you can sit to rest on the lowest branch. If you don't make it to the first branch, whenever you get tired you will slide back down to the bottom of the tree again. Only if you are on the first branch can you be sure you will not backslide and can you be sure that you have a chance of eating the fruit from the tree. In the same way, in the pursuit of virtue, no matter how many years you have been cultivating good deeds, if you have still not managed to attain the body of enlightenment (DhammakÅya) inside yourself, you cannot be assured that one day, if you are short of encouragement you will not fall back to your old unwholesome ways.

For most people in the world, unfortunately it is much easier to do unwholesome (wicked) things rather than wholesome (good) ones. To do unwholesome deeds is like going with the flow — but in fact is is the tide of defilements in the mind. Instead of being ourselves, we become like a puppet to the defilements or demons [mÅra] in our minds — in the beginning it might seem easy, but in the long-term suffering and regret is the path to which it leads. By comparison to do good deeds is like travelling against the flow — it needs much more patience and precision to go against the tide of temptation and defilement in one's mind. However, although it may seem more difficult in the beginning, in the long term, it has true happiness as its destination.

Thus to gain the steadfastness of mind and resist the temptation of slipping into the convenience of unwholesome ways, we have to study Blessing Nineteen concerning the avoidance of all unwholesomeness. It is the first step in adjusting our quality of mind. Adjustments to quality of mind will continue in a way that becomes increasingly refined all the way to Blessing Thirty-Eight.

B. MORAL APPROACHES TO UNWHOLESOMENESS

When comparing different systems of ethics, usually you will not find much disagreement in the discussion of what constitutes a *good* deed — however, when you come to the morality of avoiding evil, suddenly there is a lot more controversy.

People like to do what they feel comes naturally and if you look at man to try to find out what appears to be the natural state of man you will come across a lot of surprises. If you were to describe what ought to happen to a rock when you drop it, it falls to the ground every time, so it is easy to make up a rule. However, if you try to make up a rule to describe what man ought to do in any situation, even if you expect the best of intentions from man, you will often be disappointed. Even if you take the most crude system governing morality, such as the law, you will find that many people disobey it. Even though people know perfectly well what is right and wrong, they still do misdeeds, and you might argue that if the nature of man is to be disinterested even in the most basic of morality, that it is not man that is the measure of morality, but it must lie elsewhere. Indeed, according to the rationale of Phramonkolthepmuni, the Great Abbot of Wat Paknam:

> "Force needs to be applied to improve peoples' virtues. The mind is like water which tends to sink to its own depth. Without effort, the mind's virtue, like water, will fall to the lowest level — that is the performance of evil deeds. If normal people are to develop their minds to the level of the arahant, then efforts need to be made. The mind has to be brought under control until it comes to a standstill. Thus, to govern others, there need to be rules. There needs to be something to force people to become better — and there need to be penalties for breaking the rules."

If the rules are to be better than man himself, to make him better, then the question arises *where* they should come from. The answer to the question is different in different ethical systems depending on what each takes as its ideal. In general, you can summarize the origin of these rules

under three headings:

1. Artificial Morality: artificial morality where the Law court decides what is right or wrong and retribution is man-made;

2. Theistic Morality: where decisions about what is useful or unuseful behaviour are attributed to a supreme supernatural being. In deified religions such as Christianity or Islam, sin originates from displeasure or disloyalty to the will of this supreme being and can also be nullified by confession and penance to that being. Supposing the Creator ordered Christians always to think of God and never to take His name in vain — if they were to blaspheme or use God as a swearword — because that is against God's will, it is a source of sin. Because God and not the perpetrator is the source of the sin, this logic can lead to strange beliefs such as that sin can be transmitted from parents to their children. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden and so committed the primordial sin. As a result of that action all subsequent generations down to the present day all have to suffer as the result.

3. Natural Morality: This does not mean doing 'whatever comes naturally'! It refers to guidelines for morality which are not attributed to any supernatural source, but which are passed down from a time when men were wiser, more insightful, perceptive and shameful than in the present day. The men did not make the rules but observed the long term consequences of the behaviours — thereby coming up with recommendations for how to behave in order not to risk regret at a later time. It is just like a person who vainly tries to wear shoes that are two sizes too small for them. No-one says such behaviour is good or bad

> — but the truth is that by wearing them, later they will suffer from pain as a result. Thus, natural morality is not a system of judgements, but a description of the likely consequences of behaviours in the long term.

As we shall see, the Buddhist understanding of

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wholesomeness andunwholesomeness accords to natural morality.

C. UNWHOLESOMENESS

The translation of the Pali word 'pÅpa' (which we translate glibly as 'unwholesomeness') in fact has very broad scope of meaning. The implication of the word is one of 'malfunction'. If you consider any other malfunctioning object such as a rundown house or a broken-down car or rotten food you might have a better idea of the unpleasant qualities of 'pÅpa'. However the important malfunctioning implied by the term is the malfunctioning of the mind. When the mind malfunctions it takes on the unpleasant qualities of cruelty, impurity and low quality. Anything *that detracts from the quality of the mind* is 'unwholesome' for the purposes of our understanding of the word 'pÅpa'.

C.1 Origin of 'unwholesomeness' in Buddhism

The Buddha taught that sin will not arise for those who do no unwholesome deeds. Unwholesomeness will only arise if you do unwholesome deeds, as we can see from the proverbs:

> Natthi pÅpaÔ akubbato
>
> No unwholesomeness accrues to those who do no unwholesome deeds Dh. v. 124 and

> AttanÅ pakataÔ pÅpaÔ attanÅ saÔkilissati,
> attanÅ akataÔ pÅpaÔ attanÅ 'va visujjhati
>
> Unwholesomeness accrues personally to those who do unwholesome deeds. Those who do no unwholesome deeds remain pure.
>
> Nd.[1]32

If you don't do any unwholesome deeds, there will be no unwholesome consequences. If you do unwholesome deeds you will receive unwholesome consequences. You don't find that one person does unwholesome deeds and another person receives the consequences. If a father eats a meal, he will be full. His son will be left hungry. It is never the case that the father eats a meal and his son has his appetite satisfied thereby! Thus in Buddhism unwholesomeness arises for a person as a result of the un wholesome deeds they do. Unwholesomeness arises in the *mind* of that person (not in their feet or hands etc.) Unwholesome will attach itself to the mind of the doer and will stain the mind of that person making the mind dull and clouded.

Unwholesome for Buddhists is produced by action of body, speech or mind which leads to unwholesomeness in the mind. The result of practising discipline until attaining self-discipline is to remove oneself from the influence of the Tenfold Path of Unwholesomeness [akusaladhammapatha] (*see Blessing Nine §D.2*). The Buddha analysed unwholesome states in a very detailed way, because he wanted us to be able to keep up with the changes occurring in our own minds. He expected us even to be able to recognize vengefulness arising in our own minds and withdraw from a situation before it worsens to anger, cruelty or aggression.

C.2 Characteristics of Unwholesomeness

In fact many of the dynamics of unwholesomeness are the same as for merit but they take their action in the opposite way. It is the residue of unwholesome karma which can be done with body, speech or mind. They are like poisons for the mind where merit is a food. Unwholesomeness will tend to cloud the mind, worsen the quality of the mind, it can be accumulated, it belongs to the person who did its originating evil deed, as it gives its fruits it will be exhausted, the amount of demerit depends on the strength of intention, amount of effort and the amount of ingratitude of the originating deed, and it will attract misfortune at four levels: mind, personality, lifestyle and society.

1. Level of mind: The first level of description at which unwholesomeness brings retribution is at the level of the mind. The retribution includes clouding the mind, decreasing the quality of the mind, bringing unease of mind, making the mind more unstable, making the mind less flexible, making the mind less radiant, decreasing the potential of the mind, obstructing decision-making, obstructing insightful analysis of any situation, make thinking less thorough and comprehensive, obstructing thought that is noble or deep;

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2. Level of Personality: Damage to the quality of the mind brings about the following general changes in personality — physical awkwardness, bringing ignorance, crudeness and clumsiness, causing a decay of tastes and val

ues, deterioration of character and personality, lack of skill in speech, deterioration of behaviour, more impatience, less control over temper, worsened personal appearance, more anxieties.

3. Level of Lifestyle: Unwholesomeness will take its effect on our mind and our personality immediately whenever we perform an unwholesome action. At the third level, that of the lifestyle, however, we cannot be sure how quickly the damage will be manifested because our quality of lifetime arises as the result of both present and past deeds. General disadvantages include failure, condemnation, vulnerability to misfortune, lack of attainment, disappointment in the things we wish for.

4. Level of Society: Beyond the level of lifestyle, accumulated collective results of the unwholesomeness of many people together will give rise to: Sorrow, disharmony, injustice, aggression, lack of progress, hardship at the social and family levels

C.3 Purifying oneself from unwholesomeness

In Buddhism unwholesomeness arises as the residue of our own unwholesome deeds. Unwholesomeness which we have accrued for ourselves will stay with us until it gives its retribution. To do good deeds does not even out the bad ones we have done

— they are like two separate bank accounts. However, if we would like to reduce the effect of unwholesomeness you have accrued for yourself in the past is to do as many good deeds as you can, thereby to dilute the relative amount of unwholesomeness in your karmic history (*as already mentioned in Blessing 16, §A.1, A.2*).

D. ABSTAINING FROM UNWHOLE-SOMENESS

D.1 Definitions

This blessing uses two words to describe the way in which unwholesomeness can be eradicated from the mind. '*Arati*' means giving up any unwholesome habits which we have picked up in the past

— i.e. eradication.'*Virati*' means not picking up any further types of unwholesome habit — i.e. by avoidance.

D.2 Strategies for abstinence

The way we practice eradication and avoidance of unwholesomeness depends on the exact type of unwholesomeness. Even medicine needs to be separated into different classes such as internal, external, vitamins etc. for convenience in using them to cure illnesses. In the same way if we understand the different sorts of unwholesomeness, we will be thorough in our giving up and avoidance of unwholesomeness behaviours and practice will be more convenient for us. Unwholesomeness is categorized according to its refinement and the appropriate way to avoid such unwholesomeness depends on their refinement.

D.2.1 Gross unwholesomeness

Gross unwholesomeness includes physical and verbal misdeed such as killing, stealing, committing adultery and lying. No-one stops doing evil by accident. One has to start with the intention to avoid evil. It is like the person who wants to give up smoking has to start with the *intention* to give up smoking first of all. The intention to avoid evil is called "virati" in the Pali or "veramaÁÈ" which you will recognize from the requesting of the Precepts. In fact there are three ways in which people avail themselves of the intention to avoid evil (DA.i.305, KhA.142).

1. ***Situational avoidance*** [sampattavirati]**:** This means avoidance of evil on a situational basis. There is no public declaration that a person will avoid evil in advance — he decides on the spur of the moment when confronted with the situation. If you see a fish washed up on the beach and you decide on the spur of the moment to throw it back into the water out of compassion, rather than killing it — this is the sort of avoidance which we call sampattavirati. Perhaps you would turn in a lost wallet with all of the money instead of keeping it for yourself, for fear of being ac

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cused of stealing. Such avoidance of evil occurs as the result of the important ability to teach oneself i.e. the fear and shame of evil or the consequences of evil [hiri-ottappa].

2. Planned Avoidance [samÅdÅnavirati]**:** This means avoidance of evil by formally requesting the giving of the precepts by a monk. Some people simply make a vow to keep the Precepts each day in front of the shrine. Even if someone were to give you a bottle of beer, not because you are ashamed to do so, but because you have taken the Five Precepts that day, you will turn down the offer for fear of breaking your vow.

3. Transcendental Avoidance [samuccheda-virati]**:** This is absolute avoidance of evil of the type achieved by those who have attained the stages of Buddhist sainthood. Their mind is on such a high level, that even the intention to do the evil doesn't enter into the mind, let alone the outcomes of evil thought like speech or action.

Although there are different ways of abstaining from unwholesomeness, in practice, keeping the Precepts is the most workable. The Precepts are the means by which gross unwholesomeness can be avoided. Thus we use the Five Precepts, the Eight Precepts, the Ten Precepts and the 227 Precepts.

D.2.2 Medium unwholesomeness

Unwholesomeness at the medium level is anything that causes the mind to wander away from the centre of the body. The further the mind wanders from the centre of the body, the more damaging will be the things which the mind will think about — and the amount of unwholesomeness will increase in proportion.This is the reason why we must practice meditation as the way to bring the mind back from all those negative thoughts to the centre of the body.

Supposing you are walking along and stub your toe on a step. When you are angry, your mind will go to the step. If you can bring the mind back to the centre of the body again, then the anger disappears. Even if you are not able to bring the mind back immediately, the sooner you can bring the mind back the sooner will you recover from the anger. If you are slow in bringing your mind back, before long your thoughts will elaborate onto who to blame and how to get your revenge.

The same principles apply to greed. Whenever you see something as beautiful, it will cause your mind to be pulled away from the centre of the body to be with the beautiful thing. If your mind is away from the centre of the body for long enough, the thoughts that follow on will be thoughts of envy and how to obtain the thing for yourself, even if it is by dishonest means. If you see something as beautiful, if you want to maintain your quality of mind, then you should quickly bring your mind back to the centre of your body, repeat the mantra SammÅ-ArahaÔ to yourself and be quickly on your way.

Therefore, when we talk about unwholesomeness at this level, we mean the distancing of the mind from the centre of the body andthe associated negative thoughts. These negative ways of thinking can be categorizedas five sorts of mental hindrance [nivaraÁa]. Most people overlook the damage of them. In fact they seriously impede your opportunity to do good deeds

1. **Sense-desire** [kÅmachanda]:
2. **Illwill** [byÅpÅda]:
3. **Sloth and Torpor** [thÈnamiddha]:
4. **Absent-mindedness** [uddhacca-kukkucca]
5. **Doubt** [vicikicchÅ]:

Hindrances can be overcome by the practice of meditation until one-pointedness [ekaggatÅ] of mind can be achieved. Some days we meditate well. Other days we have to compete with many obstacles. All this is part of the fight against impurities in the mind. Thus don't think that if your meditation still seems to have many obstacles it is of no merit. In fact it is a fight against the unwholesome in the mind. One day in the future you achieve total victory.

D.2.3 Subtle unwholesomeness

Subtle unwholesomeness is yet harder to observe. These fetters [anusaya] (D.iii.254, A.iv.8, Vbh.383) are like habits that stop us achieving the path to Nirvana:

1. Sensual grasping [kÅmarÅga]:
2. Irritability [paÊigha]
3. Wrong View [diÊÊhi]
4. Doubt [vicikicchÅ]:
5. Looking down on others [mÅna]
6. Grasping for existence [bhÅvarÅga]
7. Ignorance [avijjÅ]

You have to overcome such defilements by attaining the DhammakÅya and using the DhammakÅya for insight meditation to uproot them.

D.3 Developing Conscience as Protection from Unwholesome Behaviour

Sometimes we know that our behaviour is unwholesome, but we carry on doing it nonetheless. In order to strengthen one's conscience, the Buddha recommended the cultivation of two additional virtues — that of being ashamed of unwholesomeness [hiri] and fear of the consequences of unwholesomeness [ottappa]. Shame of unwholesomeness can be developed by recollecting:

1. Your own human status. You have to think that you are a human being and not a savage — having attained such a noble birth how can we stoop to killing, stealing or adultery?

2. Your own family. You have to remind yourself that your family has been doing good deeds for generations — so how can you bear to be the one to destroy the family name.

3. Your own age. If you remind yourself that at your age you ought to know better than to mess around with various sorts of immorality.

4. Your own past good deeds. You have to think how can you bear to spoil your track record

5. Your own knowledge. You have to think how you can be so stupid to do bad things in spite of all you have learned.

6. Your own teachers. You have to think of your spiritual teachers and academic teacher and think how they would feel about what you are doing.

Another way of thinking is to remind yourself that there are no secrets in the world. If others don't see what we are doing, the angels will. Even if the angels don't see, we are still witness to our own deeds. Similarly, fear of the consequences of unwholesomeness can be developed by recollecting:

1 ***Later Regret.*** If we were to do an unwholesome thing like this, it is not worth it because we will only regret it later.

2 ***Criticism:*** If we were to do an unwholesome thing like this, it is not worth it because others will criticize us for it.

3 ***Retribution:*** If we were to do an unwholesome thing like this, it is not worth it because we will only be punished later or receive the bad karma.

4 ***Hell Realms:*** If we were to do an unwholesome thing like this, it is not worth it because we will only be born in hell.

In conclusion we can say that unwholesomeness is not just breaking the Precepts but it is what happens to the mind whenever the mind is distanced from the centre of the body. To avoid unwholesome we have to train the mind to return and establish itself permanently at the centre of the body. In the beginning we have to keep the Precepts, at an intermediate level we have to train ourselves in meditation until we can attain the DhammakÅya. When we attain DhammakÅya we can meditate oninsight and uproot the refined defilements from the mind too. In order to inspire yourself to train in keeping the Precepts and meditate conscientiously you should cultivate these hand-in-hand with your conscience.

E. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

E.1 Metaphor: Just as we must freshen ourselves up . . .

Just as we have to freshen ourselves up thoroughly before dressing up smart, before we avail ourselves of the higher virtues we have to make sure we are completely free of remaining unwholesomeness.

E.2 Ex. Cakkana and the Rabbit SA.ii.112, MA.i.165, DhsA.103

There is a story of a young man whose mother was ill with a bad back. The doctor said the only way to cure the disease is to treat it with fresh rabbit blood. Because he wanted his mother to be cured he went out hunting for rabbits. He caught a rabbit but when

he was about to wring its neck, he saw its sad eyes and couldn't bring himself to kill it. He let the rabbit go and returned home empty handed.

His brother asked him, "Where's the rabbit?"
The boy said, he had let the rabbit go so his brother shouted at him, "Do you think the life of a rabbit is worth more than the life of your own mother?"

The boy didn't say anything but went and bowed at the feet of his mother and said, "Mother I wanted to kill a rabbit to make medicine for you but I couldn't bring myself to do it. I thought to myself that your illness is only due to the karmic retribution of such killing for many lifetimes. Even if I were to have killed the rabbit, there is no guarantee that its blood would help you to survive. Whether the medicine worked or not, the killing would just make for more unwholesome karma so we would come across the same predicament in future life-times."

The young boy made an act of truth, saying, "May the power of never having killed an animal since I was born cause my mother to be cured".
Because of the boy's virtue and sincerity, miraculously the mother was cured. Thus if you keep the Precepts properly, when it comes to situations of hardship, your resolution will also be effective. This isan example of abstinence from unwholesomeness by *situational avoidance*.

E.3 Ex. The Man and the Python (MaÌgaladÈpanÈ 2/158/129)

There was once a young man who used to go to the temple regularly and request his Precepts from an arahant. He didn't have any special virtue except for the Precepts he had requested. One day he went to work in the forest. On the way a python captured him and coiled round him with the intention to crush him. Normally, forest travelers will keep a dagger on them for such an eventuality. Every time you breath out, the python will tighten its coils, but if the victim puts the knife between themselves and the coils normally the snake will release them.The young man immediately pulled out his dagger with the thought to stab the python in the head. Then he thought, it is such a rare opportunity for me to be born at a time when Buddhism is still known and practiced. It is so rare for me to be able to meet an *arahant*. If I were to die, I don't know how many more lifetimes it would take before I would have a similar chance again. If I were to kill this snake then there would be no end to the vicious circle of karma. It would also break my Precepts. It is also equivalent to lying to an arahant. He had to think to himself which was more important to him — Precepts or his own life. Finally he decided his Precepts were more important so he threw away his knife and concentrated at the centre of his body. The merit filled his mind. A strange thing happened. The snake, even though it was a humble beast, suddenly felt sorry for the man and let him go. This is an example of abstinence from unwholesomeness by *planned avoidance*.

E.4 Ex. KukkuÊamitta the Hunter (DhA.iii.24ff.)

In the time of the Buddha there was a woman who had been going to the temple with her mother since the age of seven. At that time she had already become a stream-enterer. A stream-enterer keeps the Precepts automatically the whole of the time and is unable to break their Precepts. Sense-grasping is still in the mind of a stream-enterer, however. Thus even though she was a stream-enterer, she still had subtle desires. As the daughter of a millionaire she had her own castle and each day she would look down from the castle at the people coming and going in the market place (because she had nothing better to do). One day she saw a hunter coming to sell the animals he had killed in the market place. She fell in love with him on first sight, and in the end eloped with him. Even though she could no longer bring herself to kill, steal, commit adultery, lie or drink alcohol, she could not help herself falling in love. Before long she had seven sons. When they married, she had another seven daughter in-laws. The Buddha saw that the time had come when the family could profit from his teaching so he passed by the home of the hunter. The Buddha spread loving-kindness so that no animals in the area got caught in any of the hunter's traps. The Buddha sat in the forest and meditated. When the hunter couldn't catch any-

thing he thought that someone must be stealing the animals out of the traps, so he looked for the culprit. He saw the footprints of the Buddha and followed them to where the Buddha was. The hunter aimed an arrow at the Buddha but was unable to shoot and stuck there at the spot. All the seven sons came out looking for the father, and tried to shoot the Buddha and ended up the same as the father, frozen to the spot. Later in the day, the woman came out looking for the rest of the family along with her daughters in-law. When the woman saw the Buddha and what her husband was trying to do she called, "That's my own father. Don't harm him!" When the sons and father heard their mother's voice they thought that the Buddha was really her father and so laid down their bows. The Buddha was able to teach them until all of them could attain stream-entry in that family. From that time onwards no-one in the family could kill any more. This is an example of abstinence from unwholesomeness by *transcendental avoidance*.

Blessing Twenty: Restraint from Drinking Intoxicants

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Western values concerning alcohol

Alcohol in the West is a substance primarily associated with relaxation and celebration. Most westerners would shrink from any hint that alcohol is an agent of mass destruction. However, consider some of the following national statistics from the USA summarized in a *Scientific American* report in June 1998 (p.67):

- Alcohol consumption contributes annually to 100,000 deaths in the USA alone.
- Alcoholism is the third most common preventable cause of death after smoking and obesity.
- 14-20 million Americans have some history of their lives being disrupted by their relations with alcohol.
- An estimated 40% of Americans have been intimately exposed to the effects of alcohol abuse through a family member.
- As many as 12,000 children born annually to drinking mothers in the US have mental and physical deficiencies as a result of their exposure to alcohol *in utero*.

The mores and traditions of our era form a veil of self-satisfying myths which often blind us to the damage alcohol consumption actually brings to modern society — and perhaps by understanding how deeply alcohol is woven into Western culture, can we take care not to have the wool pulled over our eyes too!

In the West before the popularity of tea and coffee in the late eighteenth century, alcohol was claimed to be one of the only hygenic drinks available. Although Judeo-Christian teachings prevalent in the west have never supported drunkenness, they have portrayed alcohol consumption as a necessary coping mechanism in the face of social hardship:

> "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." (Proverbs 31)

Wine has even been incorporated into the most sacred of Christian ceremonies — the Mass. Historically speaking, the escalation in the seriousness of alcohol problems has been accelerated as the distilled liquor products have become more readily available on the market. Research as early as 1813 established the connection between alcohol consumption and liver disease, jaundice, wasting and mental disfunction. Indeed, alcohol consumption has not gone completely unopposed in the West — however, in Christian circles such opposition has mostly come in the form of *temperance* rather than abstinence. It was Methodist values backed by clinical research which led to the American Prohibition from 1920 to 1933.

Because of its long history of acceptance in Judeo-Christian culture alcohol remains deeply rooted in the Western idea of respectability. Thus, as we pur-

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sue our path of the Manual of Peace, whether in a Buddhist context or otherwise, we need to take care to make ourselves truly open to alternative approaches to intoxicants like alcohol — westerners reading the content of this blessing need (perhaps more than for other blessings) to have particular conviction in the wisdom of 'Restraint from drinking intoxicants' to adopt standards concerning the consumption of alcohol based on the Buddha's teachings rather than the current social norms.

A.2 Why Buddhists consider abstinence from alcohol indispensable

Abstaining from alcohol is a virtue we have already encountered several times on our journey through the Manual of Peace — as a 'road to ruin' in Blessings Six, Seven, Thirteen and Fourteen, as the Fifth Precept in Blessing Nine and as a substance which is not to be sold for one's livelihood in Blessing Eighteen. The Buddha devotes an entire blessing to 'Restraint from Drinking Intoxicants' in Blessing Twenty, not simply because of the damage alcohol does to one's physical health, but because if one doesn't abstain from alcohol definitively by this point in the Manual of Peace, one will have no chance to upgrade oneself in the direction of Blessing Twenty-One (Avoiding recklessness in the Dhamma) and beyond.

If you consider self-discipline based on the Five Precepts, you will find that each of the Five Precepts are more or less independent from one another — except for the fifth. If you break the any of the first four precepts, normally it will not cause any other of the Precepts to be broken. However, if the Fifth Precept is ever broken, it subsequently increases the risk of breaking all the other four Precepts. When you drink, you say more than you mean to, some is true, the rest breaks the fourth Precept. If you have some latent adulterous tendencies, they will manifest themselves when you are drunk. If you have tendencies to steal then you will find it hard to keep your hands to yourself when you are drunk. If you are normally bad-tempered, when you are drunk you will be uninhibited in your violence. Alcohol may be the single reason why you break all the Precepts. Without alcohol, when our conscience is fully-functional, we cannot do anything harmful, because we still feel shy of wicked deeds — especially for our reputation. Thus alcohol is something about which we have to be extremely wary.

For most of us, no matter how bad we may start out, if we don't go to the lengths of drinking alcohol, we still have the opportunity to change ourselves for the better. Supposing someone is a ruffian who likes to pick fights, usually such habits will only last for as long as he is a teenager. When he is more mature he will stop by himself. Thieves who have been stealing since they were young, as they grow up will start to think, "Am I going to keep on stealing like this until the day I die?" Even the Casanovas of the world, as they get older will become reflective about their own condition — they will become self-conscious about being seen by others as a 'dirty old man'. Liars too will eventually become bored of lying. However, if any of these four types of people are still drinking alcohol as well, they will be unable to stop their old ways. The thought of stopping might cross their minds, but as soon as they start drinking, their behaviour will regress into its old ways. The fifth Precept is thus the most crucial. If you ever hear anyone boasting that they can keep all the Precepts except the last, take their claims with a pinch of salt — all five of their Precepts are at risk.

A.3 How alcohol affects the mind

The problem with alcohol is that it worsens the latent weaknesses and unwholesome tendencies that already exist in the mind.The Buddha taught that the untrained mind tends to have the following four weaknesses:

1. It is habituated to unwholesomeness: The mind will squirm like a fish out of water: being so used to negative moods as soon as you start to take the mind away from these negative states it will struggle.

2. It will change continuously: You will tend to change your mind about any decision you have made

3. It will wander: It is hard to keep the mind on a single thing

4. It is hard to pacify.

Under the influence of alcohol, all these bad features of the mind have the chance to manifest themselves to the full.

A.4 Drunkenness even without alcohol

Even if we are sober it is difficult enough to perceive the true nature of life and the world around us. The Buddha taught that, *even* if we don't smoke, drink alcohol or abuse drugs, we are already drunk the whole of the time — especially concerning the following three things:

> ***1. we are drunken concerning our youth*** (we tend to think "I am still young — I can still go out every night. I am still beautiful — I can still turn the heads of young men")
>
> ***2. we are drunken concerning our freedom of disease***. Those who are healthy are wont to think that they will be healthy like that forever and that abuse of their health doesn't matter.
>
> ***3. we are drunken concerning the length of our lives.*** We think that the likes of us doesn't die so easily. We tend to think we are still strong and that our time has not come — in fact we are fooling ourselves.

The Buddha called such attitudes 'drunkenness'. Even without drinking alcohol, people still think like this. If we drink alcohol as well, there will be many more forms of drunkenness which will be attracted to us as the result.

B. DEFINITIONS

B.1 Definition of 'intoxicants'

Intoxicants [majjhapÅna] in this blessing refer to anything absorbable by the body that clouds the mind. In general this means alcohol, but it also refers to other substances such as addictive drugs. It can mean liquids that are drunk or injected or dry substances like tobacco that are smoked.

B.2 Definition of 'drinking'

The Pali word 'saññamo' used in relation to alcohol in this Blessing usually means 'being careful with regard to'. In our context, however, 'being careful' of intoxicating substances doesn't just mean using these things with care, in normal circumstances it means *total abstention*. It is only in exceptional circumstances such as medical use that careful use of alcohol may be considered. Some religions which prohibit alcohol *per se* will not even allow their followers to use alcohol to clean a wound or to preserve a corpse — however, Buddhism allows intoxicants to be used for medical purposes (e.g. where alcohol must be used to extract the active ingredients of some medicines). This excuse should not, however, be abused by those who put a teaspoonful of medicine in a bottle of alcohol to drink instead of putting a teaspoonful of alcohol in a bottle of medicine. Similarly, we know that such drugs like opium are damaging to smoke, but they may be used for medicinal purposes. However to use them for non-medicinal purposes is prohibited. This is the only reason why 'being careful in the use of' is used instead of 'abstain from'. If your sense of discretion is good, and your mind is clear, then you will be able to know for yourself what is the appropriate use of these substances. Thus we abstain completely from the general use of these substances and we use these substances with care in the case of medicinal use.

C. DAMAGE FROM DRINKING ALCOHOL

C.1 Damage arising from drinking alcohol (visible this lifetime)

In brief the Buddha taught (D.iii.182-4) that, even without waiting to see what will happen to us as the result of drinking alcohol in the next life, the damage alcohol does is as follows:

> ***1. It destroys your wealth:*** it will start eating into your income from the day you start to drink.
>
> ***2. It destroys friendship*** — in the beginning people look like they are drinking to be sociable, but at the end of the night they may be breaking bottles over one another's heads
>
> ***3. It destroys your health***
>
> ***4. It destroys your respectability***
>
> ***5. It destroys your honour***
>
> ***6. It destroys your intelligence.***

These are all dangers of alcohol visible in the present lifetime.

C.2 Damage arising from drinking alcohol (visible next lifetime)

If we take a longer term view, drinking alcohol this lifetime stores up countless forms of retribution for future lifetimes:

1. Speech impediments: Some people are born mute, and it turns out that such people passed away while drunk, while they were so drunk they couldn't say anything coherent. Even after a long time in hell, they may still not be able to throw off their speech impediment. A lesser form of the same retribution is to suffer from a stammer;

2. Madness: Some people are born mad or mentally incompetent as a result of having drunk a lot of alcohol in their past. The hallucinations experienced when drunk become a permanent state of mind in a future birth. Some experience paranoia. Lesser forms of the same sort of retribution are to lack steadfastness and self-confidence or to be gullible. Some people hear only a few words of praise from the opposite sex and elope with them — or hear a few words of criticism and hang themselves. Some are incapable of doing anything more than sitting around all day and daydreaming — 'building castles in the air'.

3. Mental Deficiency: Some are mentally retarded having been so drunk in previous existences that they were unable to think straight — in a later existence this becomes a permanent state of being.

4. Arising as a Crawling Animal: Even the crawling animals like snakes and lizards have drunkenness in previous lives as their causes — previously they were drunks who had been rehearsing crawling on all fours since they were still human. The difference between poisonous snakes and non-poisonous snakes is the difference between vengeful drunks who create suffering for others and those who get drunk and remain benign.

It is because the long-term effects of drinking are so difficult to control that when we come to the task of adjusting the quality of the mind, the Buddha had to teach us to avoid alcohol repeatedly.

D. BENEFITS OF NOT DRINKING ALCOHOL

The Buddha taught that if we don't drink alcohol, it will pave the way for the higher blessings ahead on the path — with advantages such as:

- knowing events in the past, present and future without delay
- mindfulness in all situations (rather than the mind wandering continuously)
- non-recklessness
- lack of envious enemies
- respect from others
- happiness
- appreciating the virtue of others [kataññË]
- repaying one's debt of gratitude to others [katavedÈ]
- generosity
- purity of precepts
- wisdom
- worldly wealth
- heavenly wealth
- the ability to be a true refuge to oneself
-

● the wealth of Nirvana Furthermore the purity by which we can avoid the Tenfold Path of Unwholesomeness will be avoided

together with the Subtle Defilements of mind. We will have less tendency to engage in:

- lies
- malicious gossip
- insults or swearing
- idle chatter
- deviousness
- ill-temperedness
- lack of shame of evil [hiri]
- lack of fear of (the retribution) of evil [ottappa]
- wrong view.

E. PRACTICALITY OF GIVING-UP DRINKING DEFINITIVELY

Having realized the harm brought by consuming alcohol, if you decide to kick the drink habit, prepare yourself for a struggle! It is not so easy to change an addiction and you are liable to experience withdrawal symptoms. However, for those who dare to train themselves in this way, here are a few words of advice to help pave the way to your eventual freedom from alcohol:

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1. The first thing you have to do is see through to the danger of alcohol.
2. Once you have seen the danger, you need to make up your mind to give up.
3. The third thing is to avoid contact with anything that will remind you of drink any more (such as collections of old bottles). Don't allow any of these sort of things into your house.
4. Fourthly, think of your own self-respect. Think of the things that will create a sense of conscience for yourself.
5. The fifth thing you need to do is not to associate with your drinking friends any more.

F. ILLUSTRATIVEEXAMPLES

F.1 Metaphor: Just as one match can burn a town down

Just as a single match can burn down an entire town — even a little alcohol can cause a lapse of mindfulness that may ruin your whole life.

F.2 Metaphor: The elephant's trunk

In one metaphor told by Phramonkolthepmuni (1885-1959) — the Great Abbot of Wat Paknam: "abstaining from alcohol is the most important single Precepts because it ensures the reliability of all the other four. For this reason you must strictly abstain from all alcohol. If you cannot abstain from alcohol then no single one of your Five Precepts is safe. This precept prohibits the consumption of any substance which causes people to lose their sense of responsibility. The enlightened ones never think to touch even a drop of such substances and you should follow their example too if you really want to keep the Precepts. If the substance is one that causes heedlessness, you have the intention of consuming it, you make the effort to consume it and it goes inside your body (e.g. down your throat) then the Fifth Precept will be broken. The Buddha compared the first four Precepts to the feet of an elephant and the Fifth Precept to its trunk. The whole of an elephant's quality of life depends on the intactness of its trunk. With its trunk it can earn its living and feed itself. Without a trunk it cannot stoop down and eat grass like a buffalo — because its so tall. It would have to endure the difficulty of lying down in order to eat. That's why the trunk is important. In the same way abstaining from alcohol is the important part of the Five Precepts. If you consume substances that make you heedless then before you realize it, you will break the other four Precepts.

Thus the Fifth Precept is the important one. This is because of greed, hatred and ignorance in the mind, ignorance is the most damaging. This is why the Fifth Precept is so important. All the benefits of the good things in the whole of the Buddhist Canon hinge upon our responsibility towards practising them. If you are reckless then you will estrange yourself from all these good things and furthermore do evil things instead. Alcohol and drugs that dull the mind causing one to slip into recklessness. Thus only when you are able to abstain strictly from all such substances will you set yourself upon a foundation of non-recklessness."

F.3 Ex. BhagraghaÊa JÅtaka J.ii.431ff.

Once the banker AnÅthapiÁÎika had a nephew who had squandered 40 million by his drinking habits, leaving him penniless. The nephew therefore came to AnÅthapiÁÎika's home asking for some financial help. The nephew said he would use the money to invest in business — to set himself up in life. AnÅthapiÁÎika was pleasantly surprised to hear his drunken nephew wanted to earn his living. He gave him 1,000 and taught him a few tricks of the trade. The nephew thanked AnÅthapiÁÎika and wasted no time in going out with his friends at spending all the money on booze.

Later he came back to AnÅthapiÁÎika saying he had lost all his money in business due to lack of experience and asked for money again. AnÅthapiÁÎika pretended he didn't know what was going on and this time gave the nephew only 500, again telling him to invest it wisely. The shameless nephew spent all 500 on the alcohol again.
For a third time, the nephew returned to ask for more. AnÅthapiÁÎika gave him two pieces of coarse cloth instead of money, knowing he would

be more likely to make an effort to sell it. The nephew did sell the cloth but again he spent all he had earned on alcohol.

He came back to AnÅthapiÁÎika for a fourth time with an outstretched palm. This time AnÅthapiÁÎika had his nephew thrown out into the street. The nephew was destitute and lodged at this person's house or that, until eventually the nephew died in poverty.

AnÅthapiÁÎika felt somehow blameworthy for his nephew's death. Was there something more he could have done? He sought audience from the Buddha telling him the whole story. The Buddha said that it was not only this life that the nephew had been beyond help.

In a previous lifetime when the nephew had been given a wishing cup, it still couldn't help him. It still couldn't satiate his appetite — so it is no surprise that with AnÅthapiÁÎika's limited means weren't enough to help him.

The Buddha concluded briefly, but AnÅthapiÁÎika invited him to give more detail. The Buddha thus revealed the story of the past as follows:

In the past, when King Brahmadatta reigned in Benares, the Bodhisattva was born as a millionaire, inheriting a fortune of 40 million from his father. He had only one child — a son. The Bodhisattva liked to perform acts of charity regularly, giving alms and pursuing other forms of virtues until the end of his life. When he passed away the Bodhisattva was reborn as Indra, the king of heaven. The only son inherited the fortune of 40 million, but instead of investing it in business, he had a huge pavilion built — not as a place of worship but as a drinking place.

There he whiled away the time drinking with friends, hiring dancers and singers and gave them extravagant prizes for their performances. He did the same things every day — this and nothing else

— living a life of drink and recklessness. Eventually his wealth was exhausted. He had to sell-up everything he owned. He was left destitute, wearing only rags and wandering the streets.

Indra surveyed the world and saw his former son destitute — his inheritance squandered on alcohol.

Out of mercy, Indra appeared to the son saying "Now you are in great hardship. I feel sorry for you, so I'm giving you this magic pot — take good care of it. Never drop it. If it breaks, it will lose its magic powers. It will produce whatever you wish for."

The son accepted the cup and Indra gave him a sermon before returning to heaven, re-iterating that he should never let the cup break. The son promised to take good care of it. "Good," said Indra, "Because its your last chance to liberate yourself from hardship and poverty!"

As soon as Indra was gone, he made a wish for all types of wealth and spent all the wealth on alcohol. He drank alone or in company singing and dancing merrily, holding the wishing cup in one hand and a bottle of liquor in other. He felt more and more incapable. He came to the point where his merit had run out — because the alcohol had uprooted the last of his merit. He started to play with the wishing cup for fun, throwing it in the air and catching it. Eventually it fell to the ground and broke — irreparably. And so he returned to his former hardship, with a begging bowl, a burden on society to the end of his days."

"AnÅthapiÁÎika! As it was in the past, so it is now — this man has not changed his ways." Thus for an alcoholic even the gift of a wishing cup is still unable to bring happiness or prosperity. From their foolishness drinkers even destroy the luck they already have. Even though he had had the chance to help himself with a magic pot even more powerful than any money, as a drunk he could not do anything to help himself. He was beyond help. Therefore before helping someone, look to see whether they are going to use the money you give them to buy alcohol. Sometimes you pay labourers more wages — instead of the work they do improving, it gets worse because they have more money left at the end of the week to spend on drink. Make sure that before you help someone, they stop all forms of the Six Roads to Ruin, even if they are your own family or parents.

F.4 Ex. Putting your land in a whisky bottle

There was an old uncle who loved to drink liquor. His wife and children warned him again and again

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but he would not listen. He sold all his land to buy liquor. One day the son came home tired from the fields and saw his father drinking and thought, "How can I teach my father to see through his stupidity?" The boy took a goad and beat a buffalo trying to force the buffalo into an earthenware pot.

The father said, "Stop that at once! How can you expect to force a buffalo into a tiny jar like that?"
The boy said, "Father it's no more illogical than what you do every day — you have managed to put all of the land on this farm in your whisky bottle!"

Then the father managed to see what his son was teaching him — if his son was doing something crazy, then he was the crazier of the two of them.

F.5 Ex.MahÅdhana: a millionnaire reduced to rags (DhA.iii.129ff.)

In the time of Lord Buddha there was a family of bankers who had 80 million to their name. The son was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and his parents loved him so much that when they got older they pleaded with him just to live off the family inheritance and never to earn his living. They said, "You are our only child. Even if you were to spend the money all your life, there is so much you would surely never manage to use it all up. So just take it easy. It would be much better then the stress of earning a living."

The son didn't like working for a living anyway, so he agreed wholeheartedly. He settled down to the onerous task of spending his parents' fortune and passed the time playing the guitar or singing songs.

In another nearby town there was a daughter born to another bankers' family and her parents loved her so much that when they got older they pleaded with her in just the same way, just to live off the family inheritance and never to earn her living. They said, "You are our only child. Even if you were to spend the money all your life, there is so much you would surely never manage to use it all up — so please take it easy. It would be much better then the stress of earning a living. You could live nearby us so we won't get lonely in our old age." The daughter agreed and whiled away her time spend ing her parents' fortune.
When both the daughter and the son came of age, both families looked for a worthy partner for their child. They found a worthy partner in each other and so their marriage was arranged. This couple was amply provided for but they had no idea how to manage their wealth. At the time when the parents on both sides of the family passed away the couple had been left with a total inheritance of 160 million — the millionaire boy would seek audience with the king three times a day.

In that town there was a group of drunkards. They would get drunk and chatter idly and dream of ways to be able to get free drinks their whole life long, because they thought alcohol was the greatest drink in the world. One day, they came up with the idea of persuading some wealthy person to become an alcoholic like themselves — then they would be able to manipulate that millionaire's wealth. They did their homework and found out how rich the millionaire boy was. They found out that he went for royal audience three times a day and what route he took on the way back from the palace with his retinue. The next day the drunkards waited nearby the millionaire boy's usual route and acted like they were having tremendous fun. When they saw the millionaire boy they toasted him shouting, "May you live to be a hundred years old". The millionaire asked his man-servant (who was a drunk himself) what the group was doing. The manservant said, "the men are drinking a drink called 'alcohol' (which at that time was not well known)". The millionaire asked what alcohol was. The man-servant replied, in the manner of alcoholic, "It is the most delicious drink in the world. If you were to have just a sip of alcohol, you would feel very lively. You will be a new person. It'll reduce cholesterol. If you have high blood pressure, it will reduce your blood pressure. If you have low blood pressure, it will raise your blood pressure. It's good for you in every way."

The millionaire boy said, "If that is the case, bring some alcohol for me to try!"
He thought he would only have a sip, but the taste was so seductive he felt intoxicated. All the drunkards gathered around him cheering him on to drink

more and that is exactly what he did. He drank more and more until he wasn't himself any more. The drunkards smirked to themselves. The millionaire boy kept on paying for more drinks — drinks for himself and drinks for all the other cronies too — because it's no fun to drink all alone. You have to have company when you are drinking, so that you can chat and boast and tell tall stories. And just getting drunk wasn't enough — he would go out buying expensive flower garlands and would invite musicians and dancers to perform for him and would always reward them with lavish prizes. He would do the same thing every day. Before long all that was left of his fortune were empty treasure chests. The treasurer came to advise the millionaire boy that there was not nothing left of his fortune of 80 million. The millionaire boy asked "Doesn't my wife have some money to her name?" The treasurer answered, "Yes sir! She does still have some wealth."

Therefore as soon as the millionaire boy got his hands on his wife's fortune he continued his drunken extravagance as before, until eventually the fortune was exhausted again. Now in order to raise some cash, he was reduced to selling all his beautiful estates. To slake his thirst, he sold off his orchards, his coach and horses, trinkets around the house and eventually the house itself.

In the beginning they asked the permission of the new owner to stay on in their former house. Their handsome looks became forlorn. In their old age they were driven from the house by the new owners. So they had to wander from one house to another looking for refuge. Eventually they had to resort to a begging bowl to feed themselves.

One day the Lord Buddha, with Ânanda as his attendant, passed through that town and seeing the husband and wife begging for the monks left-overs by the monk's refectory, the Buddha smiled to himself. Seeing the Buddha smile, Ânanda asked the reason. The Buddha replied, "Ânanda! Look at this millionaire son formerly rich, but who has squandered 160 million and who must now take his wife around begging for a living in the city."

"If this millionaire's son hadn't squandered his wealth, but in his youth had invested in business, he would be the richest man in the city by now, because he has a lot of merit in his past. If he had renounced the world in his youth he would have become an *arahant*. If his wife had renounced the world as a nun in her youth. She would have become a non-returner [anÅgÅmi]."

"If this millionaire's son had squandered his wealth only in his youth, but in middle age had invested his wealth in business, his previous merits would have caused him to become the second richest man in the city. If he had decided to renounce the world in the middle age he would have become a non-returner [anÅgÅmi], and his wife if she had ordained as a nun, would have become a once-returner [sakÈdÅgÅmi]."

"If this millionaire's son had squandered his wealth in his youth and his middle age, but had invested his wealth in his old-age, his previous merit would have caused him to become the third richest man in the city and if he had decided to renounce the world in his old age, he would have become a once-returner [sakÈdÅgÅmi]. If his wife had ordained as a nun, she would have become a "stream-enterer [sotÅpana]."

"Unfortunately, this couple have completely squandered their wealth and have lost their opportunity to cultivate to path for Nirvana. Ânanda! Foolish people who fail to cultivate virtue in their lives, and who fail to earn their living when they are young, will become forlorn like an aging heron, living in a dried-up pond with no more fish to prey upon. They hadn't cultivated virtue in their youth

— nor earned their living either. In their old age all they can do now is reminisce with regret about their former wealth like an arrow that falls to earth when its momentum has run out.

Therefore the harm of alcohol apart from it destroying the drinker also ruins the lives of the rest of the drinker's family, destroys our wealth and security and obscures the pathway to Nirvana. This is the harmfulness of alcohol — therefore if you have alcohol in your possession stop drinking it, pour it away and discard the bottles. Make sure your home is alcohol free.

F.6 Ex. Choice of which Precept to break

There were once a man and a wife who lived near the mountains. One day the husband left home and went to live in a cave in the mountains to keep the Five Precepts. After a while, his wife began to miss him and went to him in his cave, threatening to kill herself if he continued with the 'Five Precepts nonsense'. The man found the threat rather worrisome, so offered to break one of the Precepts in order to save the life of his wife. The wife brought him a cow, a young woman and a bottle of liquor and told him to take his pick of which Precept to break. The man thought that to kill the cow would be destructive — and equally to rape the young woman— so he settled for drinking the liquor because it didn't seem to bring harm to anyone else. After one sip of the liquor he found it good and drank the whole bottle. Inebriated, he killed the cow and raped the young girl too. The moral of the story is that abstaining from alcohol serves to preserve the intactness of all the other four Precepts!

F.7 Ex. Kumbha JÅtaka (J.512)

Long ago before alcohol was produced industrially, it occurred by accident far away, deep in a forest in Kasi in India. In the forest there was a certain tree with a cleft between its branches. Rainwater collected in the cleft. Fruit like myrobalans and peppercorns from the surrounding trees fell in the water. At the foot of the tree was a rice plant and the birds in the forest would collect the rice seeds and perch to eat them in the bough of the tree. Some of the seeds fell in the water in the cleft of the tree too. The water, the fruit and the rice in the tree cleft were warmed by the heat of the sun until it fermented into alcohol, changing its colour, taste and smell. It became red in colour and the smell attracted birds to drink it. The birds drank some of the rotgut without realizing its danger

— they only drank it to slake their thirst, mistaking it for water.

After only a taste the birds fell out of the tree unconscious — and the pile of birds under the tree did not escape the eye of a forester called Sura who happened to be passing by. He taught "that's good luck for me today — I don't have to catch birds and set my traps or spread my nets!" As he watched the birds continued to fall out of the tree one by one. In fact the birds were asleep and when then eventually woke up, they could fly away as normal. The hunter was curious and realized there must be something special up the tree. He climbed the tree and found the special liquid in the cleft with a tempting aroma. He tasted a little fluid — not knowing its dangers however by the time he had climbed down the tree he started to feel dizzy, unlike he had ever felt before — intoxicated. He picked up some of the unconscious birds from the foot of the tree and started to roast them on the coals of a bonfire he had built, and ate them as an appetizer with cup after cup of alcohol from the top of the tree. He felt like dancing and singing all by himself in the forest. Then he remembered a friend of his called Varuna who had become a hermit. He thought, "I ought to share discovery with my friend." Thinking this, he took a flask of the alcohol for his friend to try. When Sura arrived at Varuna's hermitage, he was sitting for meditation. Sura tapped on his shoulder, "Hey friend! Don't waste your time meditating. Drink this instead — it's more fun!" You'll feel intoxicated and relaxed."

Varuna the hermit tasted it and laughed out loud. He felt more lively than usual and decided to give up being a hermit to see if he could make a living out of selling the liquor. Sura led the way back into the forest saying, "We'll start by offering some to the king."

Eventually they brought a sample of alcohol of offer to the king. They explained, "Your majesty, we have found the most wonderful, the most delicious drink in the world. A drink so amazing that you have never before tasted since the day you were born — won't your majesty just try a sip?"

The king tasted it and liked it — and ordered more. Therefore Sura and Varuna were in and out of the forest all day long bringing alcohol from the tree for the king.

Later the two got tired of making the journey so often, so they contrived a synthetic process to produce the alcohol. The produced many barrel of the liquor. They reserved some of the liquor for the king but they sold the rest to citizens of the kingdom.

In the beginning the citizens asked what sort of drink it was — they replied, "It's a delicious drink and call it 'Sura' after the discoverer."

The citizens drank more and more. The more they drank, the less inclined the felt to work for a living. When they were drunk they would sleep all day. When they got sober they would drink more because it was so tasty. In the end, the whole kingdom went bankrupt — eventually going to rack and ruin. Sura and Varuna realized their market had collapsed so they moved to another kingdom, namely Benares, where the king and the citizens were still unaware of the side-effects. They brought Benares to rack and ruin in exactly the save way and moved on to the next kingdom, that of Saketa. The same thing happened there, so they moved to SÅvatthÈ.

In that kingdom, King Sabbamitta ordered 500 barrels of alcohol without even tasting it. However as they were pouring the alcohol into the barrels some split over the brim. A cat licked some of the spillings out of curiosity. The cat's curiosity was not easily abated and eventually it got so drunk that it fell down unconscious. It lost all it's cat-like dignity when the mice came out and nibbled its whisker and ears. Someone discovered the incapacitated cat and reported to the king that 'curiosity had killed the cat' — it had be poisoned to death by the alcohol. The King had Sura and Varuna up for treason and sent them for execution.

However before their heads were chopped off. The cat came round and wandered around dizzily. The king realized that alcohol was not poisonous and pardoned the two alcohol merchants — having preparation made for the launch of the new product.

The impending doom caused Indra, the king of heaven's throne to show signs of heat. Indra realized that if he did not intervene and this major kingdom got addicted to alcohol in the same way as the lesser kingdoms before it, alcohol would spread unabated throughout the subcontinent... Indra therefore appeared to King Sabbamitta in the guise of young Brahmin holding a 'gold pot' floating in the air before the throne. The king marvelled, "O! Brahmin! — How come you can float in the air like that you are surely no ordinary being! What is that you have in your hand?"

The Brahmin replied, "This is a magic pot. In this pot is a fluid which is exceptionally delicious. Anyone who drinks this fluid will be so drunk they could fall head first in a pond, abandon their reason, sing in the street, run around naked and encourage their friends to do same. They will be shameless, sing raucously, walk back and forth all night each friend taking it in turn to see the other home. They will fall asleep so drunk that they won't even notice if the house is burning down around them. Anyone who drinks this won't even care about eating dog food off the floor, go around clumsily, unsuitably dressed in public, vomiting in the street or sleeping face down in their own vomit. Some have delusions of their own grandeur, or become hideously aggressive. Drinking such a fluid can kill you, it will consume all your wealth if you drink it. It will make you so shameless that you won't think twice about insulting your parents, flirting with your daughter-in-law, shouting at your in-laws or having an affair with the maid. You will be capable of all this if you drink this fluid. You will think nothing of harming clergy, getting in arguments and fighting. Children will have no respect for their elders, adults will squabble, chatter aimlessly and tell lies, when they drink this fluid — they will forget to do the work they promised. The intelligent are reduced to fools. People forget to eat and nourish themselves properly, falling asleep in inappropriate places — anyone who drinks this fluid is like someone who has drunk poison. If your princes drink this they will elope with the court dancers. Even angels who drink this fluid fall out of heaven and become Titans [asËra]. This gold pot contains no butter, cheese or honey — it contains the fluid with all the side-effects I have been speaking of — does your majesty want some?"

"I certainly wouldn't touch it with a bargepole — let alone drink it," said the king and rewarded the Brahmin by granting him five estates, with a great deal of other riches. The king wanted the Brahmin to be his minister.

The Brahmin said, "You may keep your wealth and estates because I am already king of my own estate in heaven. It is out of anxiety that I have come here to warn your majesty. I am afraid otherwise that the whole subcontinent will come to rack and ruin. May your majesty be established in justice. May you practice in accordance with the Buddha's teaching so that you too may gain heaven at the end of your life!"

Blessing Twenty-One: Non-Recklessness in the Dhamma

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Looking a spiritual gift horse in the mouth

In the previous blessings we have started to set the foundation for the cultivation of higher virtues by closing the door definitively on any unwholesome behaviours that might deviate us from our spiritual quest. We have seen specifically the dangers of 'unwholesomeness' and alcohol towards our path of cultivation. However, in this grouping there still remains one possible danger for us on our path of cultivation — that we miss or overlook the opportunities which come our way to cultivate ourselves in earnest. Such opportunities are precious and few

— and given our short lifespan, if we miss the golden opportunity to work on ourselves, we can never be sure if there will be a second chance.

The irony of self-cultivation is that the impurities in our mind may lead us to 'look a gift horse in the mouth'. Because the untrained mind is full of weaknesses — it spends the whole time mulling unsystematically over thoughts about the world — in distinct contrast to the thinking of the Lord Buddha who had a systematic way of thinking. We spend our whole time drunk with the desires of life (even when we are sober) — our thinking is more like a boat cast adrift without a rudder — than that of someone pursuing a spiritual quest!

Whenever the mind is without direction it will almost always fall under sway of the five forms of sensual desire:

1.visual images;
2.melodious sounds; 3.tasty food; 4.perfumes, and;
5.things soft to the touch.

All we care about is beautiful houses, beautiful clothes — our desires are without end. When such thoughts as these dominate the mind, there is no remaining space for our spiritual vocation. There is only selfishness and even the thought to take advantage of others. When our thoughts are negative, negative speech starts to escape from our mouths and bad action start to manifest themselves for the rest of the world to see. Even when we set our mind on doing good things, our good intentions become discontinuous. Allowing our mind to succumb to such unsystematic thinking is a condition the Lord Buddha called 'recklessness' and because of all the harm such recklessness brings, the Buddha advocated non-recklessness at every opportunity.

A.2 Things for which we cannot afford to be reckless

One might think that there is no harm in a little 'recklessness' — but the opportunity to cultivate ourselves spiritually is so precious that we cannot afford to be reckless about anything leading us in the direction of self-improvement. Such resources upon which our opportunity to better ourselves depend are in limited quantity — consider these:

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1. Time. We cannot afford to overlook the passing of time. The Buddha taught that "he who is not reckless will habitually reflect that days and nights are passing us by, what are we doing with our lives?" Some people sit and gossip all day or sit and boast about this or that all day or sit and look at fashion magazines or rehearse dancing. We are always competing with time. Time waits for no man and once it has passed it has gone.

2. Youthfulness: We cannot afford to overlook the value of the 'best years of our life'. Some people spend their life thinking that they will wait until retirement before getting religious — however, in reality, even if you are lucky enough to reach retirement age, you will lack the former health and strength necessary for spiritual striving.

3. Health: We cannot afford to overlook the value of strong health. Some people think they will be healthy the whole of their lives — some even abuse their health — if you see the robustness of your health in the context of spiritual striving, you will realize the importance of preserving it!

4. Long-life: We cannot afford to overlook the transience of human life. Some people think that they have plenty of time to do good deeds — but everyone knows someone younger than themselves who has already passed away — couldn't they just have easily been us?

5. The opportunity to train oneself in working skills: We cannot afford to overlook the opportunity to train ourselves in working skills. Make sure that every task that comes your way is done to the best of your ability. Make it your personal rule always to do things to the best of your ability no matter what the situation around you. At the very least it will build up good habits for yourself.

6. The opportunity to train oneself in knowledge: We cannot afford to overlook the opportunity to train ourselves in knowledge. When you get older, your memory starts to falter. If there is anything which you need to study and memorize get it done since you are young. You don't need to wait until you are in the mood!

7. The opportunity to further oneself spiritually: We cannot afford to overlook the opportunity to train ourselves spiritually. In a single lifetime, we can expect only to overcome 10% of the weaknesses in our mind at the most — and that is only if we try our hardest. Therefore, you can very easily make no improvement to yourself at all or even backslide if you let opportunities pass you by, to train yourself spiritually.

A.3 Three Characteristics of the reckless

The usual way in which a person's recklessness in the Dhamma expresses itself is to overlook the importance of putting in the appropriate effort in order to get the hoped-for results. Here are some examples of the attitudes of those caught up in recklessness:

1. Those who don't do anything good but who expect good results [kusÈta]: Some people expend no effort when studying but expect to pass their examinations. Some do no work but expect promotion. Some never help anyone else but they expect to be popular. Some don't keep the Precepts — they practice neither generosity nor meditation — and yet they expect to attain heaven and Nirvana . . .

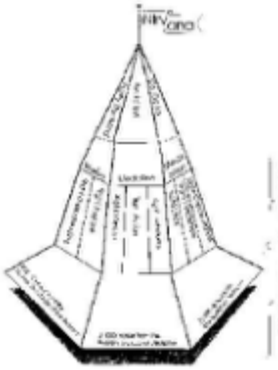
2. Those who do only wicked things but expect fortunate outcomes from their actions [ducarita]: Some do their work badly or harmfully but expect to receive a wage rise. Some spend their whole time gossiping behind others' backs but expect everyone to like them.

3. Those who do negligable amounts of good deeds but who expect significantly good results

[sithila]: Some do nothing more than light sticks of incense on the shrine and expect an afterlife with a heavenly mansion and a retinue of thousands. Some spend only an hour doing serious revision for an exam but expect to be the top of the class. Some do others a small favour like giving someone a meal but expect loyalty for the rest of their lives.

In conclusion, any of these three types of recklessness are caused because the doer underestimates the importance of investing effort in doing good deeds.

TABLE 21.1
THE PYRAMID OF BUDDHIST PRACTICE



KLESSNESS

of non-recklessness

ıess' means being in control of oneself the time, no matter whether one is king or doing overt actions — never self slip into complacency, and never ıportunity to do good deeds pass by ou need to be focussed on the things ve to do and things which you need to ve to be aware and responsible for your duties — working in earnest with the effort to seek for spiritual progress the whole of the time. Non-recklessness is thus like a feeling of responsibility towards yourself which you maintain the whole of the time. It is also like being constantly 'awake' to one's proper priorities.

B.2 Importance of non-recklessness in Dhamma as a whole

We have already mentioned the preciousness of opportunities to cultivate oneself — and the Dhamma, or teaching of the Buddha, is the system which explains these opportunities and how they can be benefitted from. Before exploring the detail of this particular Blessing, let us examine the nature of the Dhamma, so that we can orientate ourselves in a non-reckless way towards it.

The Dhamma can be compared to the spire of a pagoda. A flag attached to the top of the pagoda of the Dhamma could be marked 'non-recklessness' or equally well with the words 'freedom from defilements' or 'Nirvana' or 'arahanthood' or 'freedom from suffering'.

If you are ultimately non-reckless, then you will manage to attain all of these other things i.e. an end of defilements, an end of suffering, Nirvana and arahanthood. The pagoda is made of 84,000 bricks — which are the symbolic number of teachings attributed to the Buddha. Just below the flag on the top, there are three special bricks engraved with the words 'avoid evil' (Precepts), 'do good' (meditation) and 'purify the mind' (wisdom). These three teachings are expansions upon the concept of not being reckless as mentioned in the "OvÅdapÅÊimokkha".

Avoiding evil is further expanded as the following three bricks:

- Right Speech [SammÅ VÅcÅ];
- Right Action [SammÅ Kammanta], and;
- Right Livelihood [SammÅ⁄jÈvo].

The 'meditation' brick is also further supported by the following three bricks:

- Right Effort [SammÅ VÅyÅmo];
- Right Mindfulness [SammÅ Sati], and;
- Right Concentration [SammÅ SamÅdhi].

Wisdom' has two supporting bricks:

- Right View [SammÅ DiÊÊhi], and;
- Right Intention [SammÅ SaÌkappo]. This line of bricks all on the same level as the Noble Eightfold Path. Beneath the Eightfold Path there is a further expansion of detail in each of the three original categories, rather like a base to the whole structure. On the side of 'Precepts' there is a gradual expansion to 'Five Precepts', 'Eight Precepts', 'Ten Precepts' and '227 Precepts'. Finally it expands to 21,000 items that are the content of the Vinaya.The bricks Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Meditation are further expanded to a base of 42,000 items which are called the Suttanta. The bricks Right View and Right Intention are further expanded into 21,000 items known as the Abhidhamma. Thus when you see the structure of all the teachings, you can see that the Teachings of the Buddha originate from 'non-recklessness' and anyone who

does not want to be reckless needs to train themselves in Precepts, meditation and wisdom.

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We might easily overlook the importance of 'nonrecklessness' at this particular point in the thirty-eight blessings because it seems like nothing more than a vague instruction to 'be careful'. 'Being careful' — we might think— means nothing more than taking a torch with us when we go outside in the dark or not going out of the house during a storm — or if you are a drunkard, it might mean making sure that there is always enough stock of whisky in the house! However, when we come to study what 'being careful' means according to the Buddhist meaning, we have to make a study that has its own individual identity. It is a teaching that is particularly deep, not just a teaching that is 'vaguely useful'. It is a teaching that is at the heart of Buddhism and even Buddhists, even if they have 'known Buddhism' all their lives, might not understand 'non-recklessness' if they have never given it due consideration. If it was an easy blessing to apprehend, it would surely not have been put as number twenty-one in the sequence of thirty eight.

Another point which reminds us of the importance of this teaching is that it is contained in the ParinibbÅna Sutta which is the last teaching of the Lord Buddha to his disciples. In His last days, instead of going back and revising any particular teaching from the forty-five years of his dispensation, the Buddha talked of non-recklessness. He said:

> "O! Monks! Our aggregates have the nature of impermanence — therefore all of you must arouse 'non-recklessness'."

These were His last words before passing away. 'Non-recklessness' is therefore sure to be a major issue. You cannot afford to overlook it.

B.3 Definition of non-recklessness in the Dhamma

Non-recklessness in the Dhamma, refers particularly to "being careful" concerning the performance of particular "causes" that will lead to the "effects" — rather than superstitiously believing that 'everything will turn out fine' even if we are too lazy to make things better.

B.4 Components of non-recklessness in the Dhamma

When we apply the cause and effect of non-recklessness to the spiritual path, it points to a total of five things we should be particularly 'careful' about:

1. Being careful to remind ourselves to abstain from the three modes of evil action (evil of body, speech and mind) the whole of the time. It is like a conscience which reminds you not to kill or steal or speak in an aggressive way or think about things that are going to upset your mind without due cause.

2. Being careful to remind ourselves to do the three modes of good actions (goodness of body, speech and mind) the whole of the time. It is like a conscience which reminds you to do good deeds at every opportunity

3. Being careful to remind ourselves of the suffering of the hell realms that awaits us in the case we do evil. We cannot be reckless, because even though we may be a good person these days, in our childhood, when we didn't know the difference between wholesome and unwholesome behaviours, we surely have amassed a not insignificant toll of bad karma for ourselves...

4. Being careful to remind ourselves of the suffering that arises from birth, sickness, old age and death. Mindfulness reminds us 'at our age' we can no longer afford to be reckless any more. If we are a child of ten, we cannot afford to be reckless because we must study. If we are teenagers we cannot afford to be reckless because we need to get the skills we need to help our parents run their business. If you are thirty and you are still unable to set yourself up in life you cannot afford to be reckless. If you are thirty-five or forty, even though you have already set yourself up in life, you cannot be reckless because you have still not done many good deeds in life — the same principle of non-recklessness applies throughout our lives.

5. Being careful to recall our object of meditation the whole of the time. Apart from keeping your mind focussed on your chosen object of meditation throughout your waking hours, this means

the mindfulness to keep your mind free from the bias of greed, hatred, delusion and fear the whole of the time. These are the virtues maintained continuously in the mind by those who are cultivating 'non-recklessness'. If you regard yourself as someone in the face of impending death the whole of the time, it will inspire you not to neglect these tasks of non-recklessness. Treat each day as if it were your last and by this recollection of death, your mind remain focussed on the task of self-cultivation. Such an ability to focus comes from a mental attribute we call '*mindfulness*' — a virtue discussed in more detail in the following section.

C. MINDFULNESS

C.1 Definition of mindfulness

Mindfulness is recollection and discernment of good or bad, right and wrong, together with the motivation to think, speak and act in the proper way without forgetting oneself, without distraction and with wise reflection — not letting our mind become caught up in sensory stimuli than come into contact with us.

C.2 Properties of mindfulness

The properties of mindfulness can be analyzed as follows:

1. Not allowing the mind to wander: They are at work here but their mind is thinking about things on the other side of the world.

2. Not allowing moods and feelings to take over the mind: Not like those who smoke opium or maruana or even actors who make no effort to control their feelings.

3. Not allowing the mind to elaborate one thought after another without end.

4. Constantly reminding yourself not to forget yourself.

C.3 Benefits of mindfulness

The benefits of mindfulness can be analyzed as follows:

1. Mindfulness controls the state of mind to make sure our mind remains in the state we require — keeping only the sorts of things we want to think and cutting out the things we don't want to think.

2. Allows the body and mind to be independent. Sometimes when we feel ill or in bad shape, our body feels heavy and sluggish. This also happens when our business is not going so well, or there are problems in the family. It is as if the world is weighing heavy on our shoulders. However, if we have good mindfulness, even though the things around us may be challenging they are unable to weigh us down it will not 'get through' to your state of mind.

3. Mindfulness will allow our thoughts to enlarge outwards without limits. You will see things as they really are. You will be able to spread loving kindness without limits because you have no limiting anxieties.

4. Mindfulness will allow us to consider things with wisdom and follow them up with clarity. Thus mindfulness augments wisdom because it will allow you to get to the root of every matter.

5. Will purify all actions of body, speech and mind.

The Buddha taught that non-recklessness can be brought about by the simultaneous cultivation of five virtues at all times. See if you possess all of these virtues or whether some are missing. Can you manage to maintain them continuously all of the time or can you only maintain them from time to time. In this way we will know the degree of our recklessness

C.4 Functions of mindfulness

The functions of mindfulness can be analyzed as follows:

1. ***It allows us to be careful of ourselves.*** It will protect us from falling into ways of evil or deterioration — by being suspicious of things worthy of suspicion and to be careful to protect yourself from dangers. Mindfulness is something that has the ability to stay with us wherever we are, whatever posture we are in. If you go out of the house and there is the sound of distant thunder, instead of simply being oblivious, you might

think, "Today it may rain heavily" (suspicious of things that deserve it) therefore I'd better take along my umbrella" (care to protect yourself from potential dangers). If you see a friend of the same age who is usually stronger than yourself fall down faint in the street, maybe you would instantly think of food poisoning and besides helping them, be especially careful of the sort of food you eat.

2. Tells us where to draw the line: when one must share activities with those who might a different aim in life from our own, to know to what extent one can join in with the activity without compromising one's spiritual path.

3. Gives us a timely reminder: To wake us up and get us doing useful things with our lives instead of lying around all day.

4. Acts as a catalyst: Stimulates us to hurry us up instead of allowing us to drag our feet in certain situations which require haste — an attribute lacking for those who are already thirty years old but who are still playing around in life as if they were teenagers.

5. Makes us aware of our reponsibilities: It will remind us of our responsibilities — to know what and should not be done. If you are young and you wear lively colours, no-one will criticize your for it, but if you are old and you still do the same, your mindfulness might remind you about your duty at your particular time of life. It will tell you that old people don't belong in discotheques any more.

6. Engenders Thoroughness: Thoroughness relies on experience — if you know the sort of mistakes you or the employees in your care tend to make, you will be more cautious when assessing the quality of work done.

C.5 Metaphors for mindfulness

There are many metaphors for mindfulness:

1. ***Supporting Pillar:*** The people of old compared mindfulness to the main supporting pillar. Wherever you put the main pillar, everything around will be firm and strong. In the same way wherever there is mindfulness, you will always manage to consider issues until you get to the bot
tom of things. (No other virtue can be cultivated without awareness).

2. Doorkeeper: Mindfulness has also been compared to a doorkeeper/guard in a large house or palace. A doorkeeper will let familiar people pass, but must stop strangers. In the same way mindfulness must always question as to what to investigate and what to let pass by. Whether to adjust or whether to start all over again (especially concerning sensory filtering).

3. Treasurer: Others say that mindfulness is like a treasurer who must by fussy. They must make sure that the income and outgoings are balanced or else they will not let go of the issue. In a bank sometimes they have to stay late to midnight if there is an irregularity in the accounts — even if it is a profit — because they cannot afford to have even the slightest mistake in the accounts. Even if the amount of money in question is only a small fraction of the extra wages that must be paid to all the staff who have to check the accounts.

4. Ship's Rudder: Mindfulness has also been compared to the rudder of a ship which will steer to port or starboard. Whether the ship will complete its voyage or collide with another object along the way will depend on the rudder. Without a rudder a ship will go in circles — it uses up all its fuel but gets nowhere.

D. CULTIVATING NON-RECKLESSNESS IN THE DHAMMA

In order to cultivate non-recklessness in the Dhamma, one needs to make the cultivation of wholesomeness a regular daily activity — without exception or excuses. Be generous, keep the Precepts and meditate on a daily basis. Any morning when you have not get given alms, don't dare to take breakfast. Any day you have no intention to keep the Precepts, don't dare to leave the house. Any day you haven't done your chanting and meditation, don't yet dare to go to bed. If you have the opportunity find time for temporary ordination or to keep the Precepts at the temple — keep your mind on your object of meditation throughout your waking hours and remind yourself of impending death in order to keep yourself focussed on the priorities of your spiritual vocation.

E. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

E.1 Proverbs

AppamÅdo amataÔ padaÔ
Non-recklessness is the pathway to immor tality.
PamÅdo maccuno padaÔ
Recklessness is the pathways to death. Dh. v21

When the wise remove recklessness by non-recklessness; it is as entering upon the castle of wisdom; free of sorrow, they are able to see people; still caught up in their stupidity. Those still caught up in sorrow, like those standing upon a mountain peak.

E.2 Ex. MakhÅdeva JÅtaka (J.9)

Once there was a king called MakhÅdeva who ascended the throne. On the day of his coronation he summoned his barber and said, "From now on my work will be much more busy — I will look after the country, but you also have your job, to tell me on the day you see the first grey hair appearing on my head."

The barber smiled at such an easy job. One day a few years later, the barber saw the first hair on the king's head turn grey. When he told him, the king's face turned sheet white. The king had all the subjects in the kingdom summoned together in an assembly and announced, "Today, after many years of ruling this country, the first sign of deterioration has appeared on my body. It has therefore come to the time for me to seek good deeds for myself. Thus I give up the throne, and my son will reign in my place."

The king then went into the forest and became a hermit. That was the Buddha himself in one of his previous lifetimes as the Bodhisattva.

For most people, instead of thinking of impending death when their hair turns grey, they are still thinking of hair dye. This is more a case of lack of mindfulness. Wouldn't it be better to donate the price of the hair dye to a good cause?

(J.i.137ff., also M.ii.74ff.)

E.3 Ex. CakkhupÅla Thera DhA.i.15ff.40/32

There was a monk called CakkhupÅla in the time of the Buddha. He ordained in his old age. Once he had learned the principles of meditation, he went into the forest to practice with another thirty monks. Before the beginning of the rainy season, the monks had a meeting to decide how to practise in keeping with having become Buddhist monks. Some monks said they wanted to meditate for an hour a day. Others said they would learn chanting or read books. CakkhupÅla disagreed and said that they were all still reckless. He said that such practice was no more challenging than the household life. He said that for himself, he would restrict himself to the three positions of sitting, standing and walking to meditate throughout the rainy season. He would not lie down even for the fear of death. All the other monks agreed with him so they all practiced like this for two months. At that time, CakkhupÅla's eye got an infection. He developed opthalmia and needed medicine. He went to see a doctor who gave him eye drops. To administer the drops, you needed to lie down. Thus CakkhupÅla didn't use the medicine because he didn't want to break his vow of not lying down. He thought at his advancing years, he didn't know when death would come. He was more afraid that his mind would be blind to the Dhamma than that his eyes would be blind to the light. The doctor abandoned him. CakkhupÅla thought to himself that he no longer had any refuge so he sat for meditation with a fervour, to try to find a real refuge for himself — the DhammakÅya inside. On the last day of the rainy season, he attained DhammakÅya and used the DhammakÅya to consider the Noble Truths and was able to become an *arahant*, but by that time he was already blind. All of the thirty monks were able to become *arahant*s.

Some asked the Buddha why after doing so many good deeds CakkhupÅla could go blind. CakkhupÅla had been an optician in a previous life and had a female patient who was blind. The girl had made a contract that if she got her sight back she would pay him a certain amount. When she really recovered her sight, she didn't want to pay what she had agreed, so she pretended not to have recovered. The doctor wondered how she knew it

was him if she could not see. When he found out she was just evading payment, in anger he made her a new eye medicine with acid, saying that when she used this medicine, she would be cured for life. This time the girl really did go blind. The karma of that action was to plague him in every future lifetime.

To advocate meditation even to the point of damaging one's health might sound extreme. If we were still considering the pursuit of virtue in Blessings One to Eighteen, perhaps we would consider compromising spiritual practice with our worldly needs, however, now that we are in the second half of the Manual of Peace concerning higher virtue, given that we have the knowhow and the opportunity, having come thus far, we should strive without compromise in every way that we know will bring progress to our practice.

E.4 Ex. Subhadda Thera D.ii.***148ff., DhA.iii.376ff.***

When the Buddha knew that he was approaching the time when he must enter ParinibbÅna, he made an announcement that anyone with any remaining doubts concerning the Dhamma should come and ask their questions within three months. Everybody was so sad and cried with grief. One monk Subhadda however, did not cry, but withdrew into the forest to intensify his own practice. He practiced meditation walking, standing and sitting — never allowing himself to lie down. He trained himself in mindfulness the whole of the time. Someone went to the Buddha and accused the monk of disrespect saying that even though that monk knew the Buddha must pass away soon, he had still not come to pay his respects. The Buddha summoned the monk in question and asked, "Why have you abandoned the community?"

"I considered myself that I have still not attained any higher virtue as the result of my practice. If this is how I am even when the Buddha is still with us, what will I be like when you are gone? Therefore, I am practising to my utmost in the hope that the Buddha will be able to help with any obstacles that may crop up in the course of my practice during this three months."

The Buddha agreed with the answer and said, "Other monks should take this monk as their example. He has done correctly and is an exemplar of non-recklessness."

The monk was able to become an arahant before the Buddha entered ParinibbÅna — he was the last to become enlightened before the passing of the Buddha.

This might seem like a very high level of practice which surely could not apply to us, but even on meditation retreats, when retreatants know for themselves that they are close to making a breakthrough in their meditation, they would be wrong to waste time chattering and joking with their fellows — instead, maybe they need more time to themselves, more solitude and practice until they can secure progress in their meditation and only then to return to being their usual gregarious self.

The Seventh Group of Blessings

"Instilling oneself with Basic Virtues"

In the sixth grouping we have already removed the weeds from the soil of the mind ready for the sowing of higher virtues. At this point in our pursuit of higher virtues we still need to till and seed the ground of our mind before sowing the higher virtues we want to cultivate. There is no seed that grows well on stony ground and accordingly the first four of the five blessings in this Group, patience, humility, contentment and gratitude are concerned with softening up the mind and making it more receptive to the seeds of Dhamma to be sown in Blessing Twenty-Six (Regularly listening to Dhamma teachings).

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Blessing Twenty-Two: Respect

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Introduction to Blessing Twenty-two

In recent years, a new term has become fashionable in the vocabulary of management science — that word is 'knowledge management'. The term refers to ameliorating the atmosphere of knowledge sharing in a working or educational context. The problem is that knowledge in the working enviroment consists of more than just academic knowhow. Many of the skills which a craftsman can show by example, but can't put into words, will be lost on an apprentice if he has a bad rapport with his trainer. Discretion especially, can be learned only through example — an apprentice needs to rely upon his master's experience especially when it comes to steering clear of the pitfalls implicit in every body of knowledge. Some types of knowledge such as acting or singing for entertainment are useful sorts of knowledge in themselves, but when entertainers don't know where to draw the line, then they may run the risk of becoming promiscuous simply because they don't know how much is *too* much in their quest for fame or fortune. Some doctors are very skilled in their medical skills, but if they are not close to a good exemplar of medical ethics (which are often not contained in the textbooks) they will end up becoming immoral doctors who will find any excuse to do operations because they know that the more operations they do, the more money they can earn. Without a good rapport with a teacher who is a good exemplar, with all professions, new practitioners run the risk of degeneration into the vices of alcohol, prostitution, corruption etc.

Moreover, researchers have found that in many working environments where expertise consists of more than just academic knowledge, there is often little sharing of knowledge between employees, because many barriers arise which impede the spreading of good ideas in a workplace. Those who should be on the receiving end of knowledge waste time 'reinventing the wheel', they don't learn from others' mistakes or their own, they have a reduced ability to absorb knowledge, learning only overt aspects of knowledge, competing with one another instead of co-operating, and not giving sufficient time or interest to new ideas to improve their work performance. In turn, those who have the knowledge to share are often unaware of what the less knowledgable wish to know and thus they communicate their ideas ineffectively or may be disinclined to share their knowledge at all.

In the academic situation the same principles apply. For all the knowledge a lecturer may have if he is confronted day-in-day-out by inconsiderate, fault-finding students who have no genuine interest in their studies eventually he will be tempted to teach only half of what he knows. He will take the other half with him to the grave. The next generation will know only 50% and teach only 25%.Within only a few generations for the whole body of knowledge once so well known, will completely disappear.

Looking for ways to rectify the situation in working and educational contexts, the researchers recognized a set of behaviours found to act as an antidote to the problems mentioned above — behaviours which work as a sort of lubricant in the student-teacher relationship — allowing the knowledge to flow. Such behaviours include being open, having the courage to admit failings, asking if one doesn't understand, looking for good points in the people one wishes to learn from and in the knowledge itself (rather than finding fault) and showing enthusiasm. In a nutshell, these sort of behaviours help to transform passive transfer of knowledge into an active and enthusiastic search for knowledge.

Just as in the world of business and education, obstacles to the transfer of knowledge need to be overcome, it may come as no surprise that the same is *all the more* true in the world of spiritual teaching and learning. Many of the behaviours just described which help a student to learn actively instead of passively, are just as essential to the spiritual learning process. However, far from being a new discovery, these behaviours are grouped together under an ancient virtue by the name of 'respect'. Respect is vitally important to the spiritual learner. In its business context, the worst that can happen if respect is lost is the bankruptcy of the company — but in the spiritual world the stakes are much higher. All of us are familiar with the rise and fall of different Empires in the world, whether they may be the Roman Empire, the Ancient Egyptian civilization or the Aztec Empire to take a few examples. All of them are established upon a particular *vision* which unifies a sufficient number of people and is of benefit to satisfy the human need to reach out to a cause that is larger or greater then their own self interest. Civilization can last for only as long as there is still a unifying vision to inspire people to share what they know with those of the next generation. The civilizations of the world prosper or founder depending on the vitality of visionary scholarship in their day and age. The Great Wall of China and the Pyramids which even today's modern technology cannot replicate are concrete proof of the knowledge of the ancient ones — but nowa days Egypt's empire is but desert, and ruins are all to tell us of civilizations past. Empires prosper as the arts and scholarship grow, bringing more and more comfort to peoples' lives. Peoples' appetites are never satiated though, and in the race to personal pleasure man becomes less considerate of his fellow man. At this point as the market grows for those sort of pleasures that make men antisocial — the vices of gambling, prostitution, alcoholism and drugs — pleasures of which no-one can ever get enough. However, neither vice nor materialism *per se* are reasons for the fall of civilizations. It is man's lack of respect for his fellow man and especially towards the knowledge he relies upon for his wellbeing, that is the critical factor in the downfall of bodies of knowledge and their dependent civilizations.

Without respect, whole bodies of knowledge quickly die because neither student nor teacher are willing to go out of their way to help each another. The death of knowledge is the death not just of altruism, but of civilization. Thus respect needs to be cherished by all who wish to see such a crucial body of knowledge such as the way to enlightenment, perpetuated throughout our generation and for many generations to come.Thus we must ask ourselves how both on the level of the individual and the level of civilization how we can promote and preserve a learning environment which promotes spiritual maturity.

A.2 Virtue that opens our eyes to the qualities of people

The key value which we need to develop in order to activate our spiritual learning is the ability to look deep enough into the personality of others to identify the good qualities from which we can learn. To know the uses of things, whether it be the healing properties of plants or the applications of minerals, is the characteristic of a wise man — contrary to those who think that nothing is a greater gift to the world than themselves. Anyone blind to the usefulness of the objects or people around them lose any opportunity to benefit from the things around them. Unfortunately, without practice we tend not to see others as they really are. When we see someone, we tend to be caught up in appearances in

stead of being able to tell what virtues that person really has. The only way we have any chance of seeing through to the real value of people is if we make a specific effort to look for the good qualities in people. However, we have a tendency not to do this. Because we have a certain arrogance, thinking that we will always be better than others, often we overlook the good in anyone else. If we are not even able to see the goodness in others, what chance do we have to emulate that goodness for ourselves? Some people are blind to the goodness in others because they do not look for it — or they assume themselves to be superior — or the goodness in others is often not manifest — and even when their virtues are manifest, they are veiled from our own perceptions by the impurities in our minds. In order to overcome possible blindness in the mind we therefore need to focus on respect and how to cultivate it.

B. RESPECT

B.1 Definitions

Respect means to open up sincerely to the ways in which others are (in truth) more valuable or important than yourself and by expressing sincere and humble praise deserved by others with body, speech and mind — whether you are in their presence or not — as a way of showing that the person expressing respect appreciates and is cognizant of the good deeds of another — voluntarily without being forced to show such respect. Respect is easy to understand if we say that is is the opposite of finding fault with others. If you look at the epistemology of the word 'respect' you will find that it is made up of two parts "re" and "spect"."Spect" means 'to look'. "Re" means 'to do something again'.Thus the meaning of the word 'respect' is 'to look at something a second time' — but specifically to find the good qualities of something.

Such a definition helps us not to confuse 'respect' with its near neighbour 'expressing respect'. Such behaviours as bowing may be sincere but often they are not. A soldier's salute, for example, doesn't mean he has respect for the person he salutes — the key factor which makes respect useful in the cultivation of virtue is the *attitude* behind the re spectful behaviour.

Having emphasised so much on the attitude of respect, the reader might be tempted to think it is superfluous to bow or express respect — in fact many think that having respectful thoughts is good enough. However, *expressing* respect is also useful in itself (*see objectives below for further details*) — because it helps to reduce ones' selfish views, cultivates humility and lends value to the cultivation of virtue in any society. For a young child taught from an early age to bow in respect to monks, parents, elders and teachers — in the beginning it might be an automatic response out of a child's blind faith or obedience. However, when expressing such respect becomes habitual, later when the child is older and more reflective, it will start to ask itself the question, "what's so great about my parents or teachers or spiritual teachers that makes them worthy of such respect?" and at that time the child will start to look for the virtue in those people — which is the fully-fledged attitude of respect.

B.2 Objectives of expressing respect

The reasons we show respect are in order to:

1. To show that we have real respect for that person both in body and mind

2. To reinforce the goodness of that person: When you pay respect to someone it forces the person on the receiving end of the respect to reflect whether they are worthy or not of such respect

— if they feel embarrassed by the respect because of their lack of virtue, before long they will feel motivated to improve themselves. Teachers, for example often forget that their duty consists of both parts, both of which he need to be fulfilled in order to qualify for the respect of their students:

1. The duty to explain (i.e. teach a subject in theory)
2. The duty to exemplify (especially the moral useage of the subject he teaches)

3. To perpetuate humane culture

4. To reduce your own selfish views

5. To train yourself in human relations

6. To publicize the goodness of yourself and the person who is object to your respect.

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Those who express respect have the wisdom to seek for goodness in others. If someone shows you respect you will know that that person is someone of developed virtue — they have at least the makings of wisdom. If you too are smart, when someone treats you with respect, you will treat them with respect too. It is a foolish person who ignores or patronizes someone else who shows them respect. Not to acknowledge another's respect is as good as saying, "I'm so dumb and devoid of wisdom that I can see no good in you!" The fear to express respect to others or to acknowledge the respect shown to one is usually rooted in the assumption that it will belittle one's grandeur or allow others to appear more important than oneself. Such hankering after self-importance and hunger for deference by others unfortunately blinds one's mind to the goodness in others.

C. OBJECTS OF RESPECT

C.1 Spiritual objects of respect

The Buddha taught (AppamÅda Sutta A.iv.27; Kimmila Sutta A.iv.84; Sakkacca Sutta A.iv.120) that there are seven objects of respect in the spiritual world which are so full of virtues that even if a person is unable to appreciate the value of virtue at the outset, the effort to show respect will soon be rewarded by an appreciation of virtue (*a process already described in the Third Blessing*). These are spiritual objects of respect which are so valuable to the world that no-one can afford to overlook the good they exemplify:

1. the Buddha (a personality)
2. the Dhamma (a phenomenon)
3. the SaÌgha (personalities)
4. education (a phenomenon)
5. meditation (a practice)
6. non-recklessness (a practice)
7. hospitality (a phenomenon) All of these things have such a decisive influence over our own well-being that we cannot afford to

overlook them. If we have no respect for these things it is hard to appreciate any lesser virtue.

C.1.1. The Lord Buddha

We need to have respect for the Buddha, because he has nothing but goodness, we can really look as deep as we like and we will find no end to his virtue.

If anybody is able to instill themselves with the virtues which the Buddha had, they will themselves be worthy of respect. Anyone whose mind is blind to the virtues of the Buddha will find it very difficult to achieve success or happiness in life.

There are different ways of expressing one's respect to the Buddha which depend on whether the Buddha is still alive or has already passed away. When the Lord Buddha was still alive, disciples would pay respect by:

1. going for audience with the Buddha three times a day — or if lay Buddhists, would pay respect to the Buddha by going for audience with the Buddha regularly;

2. not wearing shoes when the Buddha was barefoot;

3. not walking in a place higher than where the Buddha was standing;
4. not sitting in a place higher than where the Buddha was sitting;
5. (for monks) not wearing one's robe in a manner as to cover both shoulders when the Buddha was robed with one shoulder open. (to cover both shoulders in the time of the Buddha was the manner of dressing of a leader — thus if the Buddha was already sitting as president in any particular place with one shoulder 'open' it would not be suitable for others to keep both shoulders covered).

6. not putting up an umbrella or parasol within the Buddha's sight if the Buddha had not already done so;

7. not passing water or defecating within the Bud dha's sight. When the Buddha had entered ParinibbÅna, different ways of paying respect became applicable:

1. respecting the pagoda containing the Buddha's relics;
2. paying respect at the four holy sites of Buddhism [saÔvejanÈyaÊÊhÅna] the places as which the Buddha was born, enlightened, gave his first sermon and passed away into ParinibbÅna;
3. paying respect to Buddha images or anointing

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the Buddha image with water on the appropriate occasion;

4. paying respect before the main shrine of a temple when arriving and before leaving;

5. not wearing shoes in pagoda grounds;

6. not putting up an umbrella or parasol in the pagoda grounds;

7. not chattering while walking in the pagoda grounds;

8. taking down one's umbrella or parasol and removing one's shoes when entering the grounds of a temple (or for monks to change one's manner of robing from that of covering both shoulders to that of exposing one shoulder when entering the temple) and maintaining modesty and composure from the time one enters the temple compound;

9. practising what the Lord Buddha taught.

C.1.2. The Dhamma

The Dhamma is the collective name for all that the Buddha taught about the nature of life and the world. It is also a pathway which if followed will lead to an end of suffering. Even the Lord Buddha himself paid respect to the Dhamma. He respected the teaching so much that his final words were to declare, not a person, but the Dhamma (together with the monastic code of conduct [vinaya]) as successor to Buddhism after his passing.

1. never missing opportunity to listen to Dhamma teachings

2. listening to Dhamma teachings attentively, peacefully and with composure — rather than falling asleep or picking one's fingernails during the teaching

3. taking respectful care of books containing Dhamma teachings — not shoving them in trouser pockets, putting them on the floor or in places where they will get dirty or wet and not putting other things (like cups of coffee) down on top of them;

4. You should not make fun of the Dhamma — and if one has the opportunity to teach the Dhamma to others, it should be taught accurately.

C.1.3. The Saİgha

The Saİgha were those who have trained themselves and help to teach others to follow in their footsteps. We can pay respect to the Saİgha by:

1. Bowing and saluting with composure in the presence of monks;

2. Sitting with composure when in the presence of monks (rather than sitting hugging one's knees, for example);

3. Not putting on shoes or putting up umbrellas in the middle of the monastic community;

4. Not making exaggerated gestures (such as waving one's arms and legs immodestly) when in the presence of monks;

5. Not standing, walking, lying or sitting in a way impedes or encroaches upon monks;

6. Not boasting of Dhamma knowledge or answering questions on Dhamma unless specifically invited to do so by the most senior monk;

7. looking after the monks needs with a faithful heart;

8. receiving monks hospitably with appropriate gifts of requisites.

C.1.4. Education

Education in both spiritual and worldly ways is necessary for one's welfare doesn't mean bowing to your pencil and jotter. It means being sincere in your studies (not reckless). You must not take the attitude that you already know it all. If you study then try to get to the core of the thing you are studying.

C.1.5. Meditation

People might be very respectful towards the Triple Gem and education, but they can never expect to attain enlightenment unless they get down to the practice of meditation too. It is necessary to remind oneself constantly of the benefits of practising meditation and express one's respect by practising meditation regularly for as long as one can. Meditation is vital to the cultivation of virtue. It is the last and most important link of the Eightfold path that will bring the mind to successful attainment in meditation. It is irreplaceable for all who wish to know the real meaning of the Dhamma as explained by

the Threefold Training [ti-sikkhÅ] — the heart of the Buddhist teaching consisting of self-discipline [sÈla], meditation [samÅdhi] and wisdom [paññÅ]

— which will lead to the liberation of Nirvana. We cultivate self-discipline in order to avoid the evil that might otherwise cloud the mind and impede our mind from entering upon meditation. Meditation is in turn the foundation of wisdom. Thus meditation is the prime principle in the cultivation of all sorts of virtue, especially removing defilements from the mind and entry upon Nirvana. Some people refuse to meditate, but try to attain enlightenment exclusively by reading about it. Unfortunately, no matter how much they read, they have no chance of coming closer to enlightenment, because all their theoretical knowledge, can do nothing to help an inner sphere of knowing to arise in the mind unless the mind is directed inwards . . .

Thus don't go believing anyone who tells you that meditation is superfluous to Buddhist practice. It contradicts the Buddha's own words and it does not correspond which the example set throughout his life by the Buddha himself.

C.1.6. Non-recklessness

Those who are not reckless will habitually be mindful of:

1. Abstaining from evil
2. Doing good deeds
3. Remind ourselves of the suffering of the hell realms that awaits us in the case we do evil.
4. Recall the suffering that arises from birth, sickness, old age and death.
5. Recall our object of meditation the whole of the time. All of these things are equivalent to having respect for yourself.

C.1.7. Hospitality

Hospitality is helping to fill the gaps. Sometimes when we are taking care of other people, it is hard to please them in every respect. However, if guests come to our own house and the reception we provide for them is still lacking, then we may well be criticized for it. We must try to fill the gaps so that there is no remainingthing which others could criticize us for as being inhospitable. This doesn't just mean being friendly to guests, but it means training everybody in our circle of influence who might receive guests in our place (e.g. sons & daughters, subordinates or housemaids). Hospitality is very important if you want to be a pillar of society. Hospitality means (A.i.93, Vbh.360):

1. Material Hospitality [Åmisa-paÊisanthÅra]: receiving people with the material things they need. Even if they have come to your house to borrow your money don't refuse them completely (but might not give *as much* as they ask).

2. Spiritual Hospitality [dhamma-paÊisanthÅra]: talking about thngs that are useful for the guest's spiritual transformation instead of talking about things which they don't want to hear — or useless things.

If we are able to cultivate respect for these seven objects (*of §C.1*), before long we will gain the ability to see the virtue not only in these objects, but in everybody around us in the world — whether they are spiritually inclined or not. The habit of finding fault with others will gradually recede.

C.2 Secular Objects of Respect

In daily life, it is not only the seven objects of §C.1 which we should show our respect towards. Virtue exists in many places, even the mundane world, and the Buddha advised us also to have respect for the following secular personages. Such personages are especially worthy of respect if in turn they have respect for the seven objects already mentioned:

1. Kings or national leaders who are established in the Ten Virtues of a Monarch (*see Blessing 16, §C.2*):

2. Parents (*for the part of them that is virtuous*): Supposing they are robbers and get put in jail, maybe you will send food for them.
3. Teachers and Preceptors (*who have virtue*)
4. Elders
5. Older brothers or sisters should be respected by younger brothers or sisters
6. Younger brothers and sisters (*who have exceptional virtue*)

For these secular objects of respect, the following are appropriate ways in which respect can be expressed:

1. Clearing the way for that person to pass.
2. Standing up to receive the person
3. Holding your hands in a gesture of respect
4. Bowing

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Metaphor: Cavemen frozen for their ignorance

Arthur C. Clarke once observed that cave dwellers froze to death on beds of coal. Coal was right under them, but they didn't notice it, or have the knowledge to mine it or use it. Not knowing the beneficial qualities of a resource can cost you your life. In the same way, without the respect to wake you up to the virtues latent in the people standing right next to you might cost you your the path of spiritual progess.

D.2 Ex. Tittira JÅtaka (J.37)

There were three animals a pigeon, a monkey and an elephant which lived in a banyan tree. They showed no respect or consideration for each other. The elephant thought it was the best because it was the biggest. It would scratch itself against the tree so roughly that all the other animals would fall out of the tree. It would trumpet so loudly that it would wake up all the others. The monkey was no less inconsiderate. It thought it was the best because it was fast and could climb the tree more quickly than the others. It would throw a red-ant's nest down on the elephant if it was dissatisfied. If it was bored it would destroy the pigeon's nest just for fun. The pigeon said nothing but did a dropping on the monkey's head. Also the pigeon would coo loudly whenever it felt like it. In the end, none of the three animals could get a proper night's sleep. The three animals met together to decide what to do because, if they carried on being inconsiderate like this indefinitely, they would surely all die. They decided to respect each other according to age. They didn't have a way of counting the years so they all compared themselves to the history of the tree. The elephant said that his first memory of the tree was when the tree was only as high as his navel (a metre high). The monkey's first memory of the tree was when it could sit on the ground and nibble the top of the tree (*six inches high*). The bird said that he could remember the tree since it had still not sprouted. Therefore the bird was oldest followed by the monkey followed by the elephant. Now each animal could put its own goodness to work. The bird would get up in the morning and fly up high into the sky to see which part of the forest where the fruit was ripe. Now the elephant and monkey didn't have to guess where the fruit was any more. The monkey and the bird would sit on the back of the elephant and go to where the fruit was ripe. Now instead of the elephant having to wait for the fruit to drop, the monkey would climb the tree and collect the fruit for the other two. They would pick so much fruit and put it on the back of the elephant that they could store fruit at the bottom of the banyan tree so that the next day they wouldn't have to go looking for food any more. Because of the benefit of respect according to seniority in bringing forth the goodness in every person, even in the monastic community, monks respect one another according to seniority and the older monks have the duty to teach the younger.

D.3 Ex. SÅriputta jumping canals

The elder monk SÅriputta, who was second only to the Buddha for wisdom, still had certain faults remaining even though he was already an arahant. When he led the other monks on almsround, instead of using bridges to cross canals in his path, he would jump across the canal. If he led a group of monks for dhutaḷga practice, he would like to hang up his umbrella not at ground level, but at the top of a tree. Some people asked the Buddha, "With all these strange habits, is it true that SÅriputta is really an *arahant*?" The Buddha confirmed that SÅriputta was really an *arahant*. They asked, "Then why does he still jump across canals and camp at the top of trees?" The Buddha replied, "SÅriputta is really an *arahant*, but even so,there are some deeply engrained aspects of his character that being an *arahant* has not changed — because he has spent many lifetimes as a monkey."

D.4 Ex. Pilindavaccha says 'peasant'

There was another arahant Pilindavaccha who,

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whenever he met someone, would call them with the words, "you peasant" [vasala]. If you didn't deserve such a title and you got called 'a peasant' every day, it would surely become very irritating, even for the most patient of people. To him, whether they were aristocrats or kings they were all 'peasants' to him. A large number of people asked, if Pilindavaccha was really an *arahant* or not, with such disrespect for everyone he met. The Buddha confirmed that he was really an *arahant*, but that again he had certain engrained aspects of his character, too deep to change — because Pilindavaccha had been born only as a king and as an emperor continuously for many lifetimes. Even as an *arahant*, it is still possible to have faults — so what about the humble likes of ourselves who have still not made much progress in our Dhamma practice?

Blessing Twenty-Three: Humility

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Introduction to Blessing Twenty-Three

There are many obstacles which may stand in the way of our acquisition of higher virtue. As already mentioned, virtue does not exist unpackaged, but comes as part and parcel of the people who are endowed with them. If we are unable to see deeply enough into the qualities of people — if we judge them only on superficial appearances, we might overlook their deeper worth. By overlooking their qualities, we tend to assume they have less than us

— and when we assume ourselves to be superior, arrogance becomes our normal state of mind.

A.2 Things which people tend to measure their worth in terms of

Arrogant people tend to measure their worth in terms of superficial things (*a completer list of twelve items is available at Nd.80*]) such as:

1. ***Their family:*** Some are born with a silver spoon in their mouths and thus tend to think, "I come from a large and influential family. I am descended from celebrities. I can get away with anything I want. No-one else can even compare with me." Thinking such, a person tends to look down on everyone else. However, in reality coming from an influential family does nothing to guarantee a bright future for oneself. It is often even harder than for an 'unknown person' for someone from a famous family to learn to stand on their own two feet or establish an independ

ent reputation. It has been said that the children who are constantly namedropping or using their parent's importance as an excuse to do devious things will eventually come to grief. Eventually when they listen to no-one's advice, they will be beyond help;

2. Their wealth: Some tend to think, "I am exceedingly wealthy. There is nothing I can't afford to buy or do. There is no reason why I should show any deference to anyone else — or show anyone any consideration." Thinking such, a person tends to look down on everyone else. In reality wealth does nothing to guarantee a bright future for oneself. Just by making a few slip-ups in their accounts today's rich can become tomorrow's paupers and debtors. Even if you manage to keep your riches until the end of your life, you cannot take them with you when you go. If you don't appreciate applying your wealth for the cultivation of good deeds, even though you may be wealthy, it will not help you to escape from suffering in life. The richer you are, the more worries you will have — out of fear your riches will disappear or be stolen.

3. The beauty of their appearance: Some people tend to think, "I am more attractive than anyone else. No-one comes close to me in beauty — my skin is so fine, my nose shows breeding, my eyes are rounded — even Miss Universe would be jealous." Thinking such, a person tends to look down on everyone else. However, in reality an

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attractive appearance does nothing to guarantee a bright future for oneself. People may be attracted to one for the wrong reasons and even *if* you live to seventy you can be sure your beauty won't!

4. Their knowledge and experience: Some people think, "I am so smart I have a Masters' Degree. I have obtained even the degrees that everyone says are so tough to obtain. I am cleverer than anyone else." Thinking such, a person tends to look down on everyone else. In reality academic knowledge does nothing to guarantee a bright future for oneself — because knowledge in the hands of a fool can lead to disaster.

5. Their rank or position: Some tend to think, I hold such a high rank in the armed forces or have a managerial position in the civil service therefore everyone else should listen to me! Thinking such, a person tends to look down on everyone else. However, in reality rank does nothing to guarantee a bright future for oneself. Positions come with responsibilities and if we don't have the virtues requisite for fulfilling those duties, those ranks or titles can be our downfall — ruining our reputation. Moreover, there is nothing to guarantee security of our position forever.

6. The number of followers: Some tend to think, "I have so many friends and followers that no-one would dare to mess with me!" Thinking such, a person tends to look down on everyone else. However, in reality the number of our friends and followers does nothing to ensure a bright future for oneself. If we don't know how to choose wise friends and are interested in nothing more that popularity — those friends can become our downfall. Furthermore, even if we have many friends and followers in the present day, there is nothing to guarantee that we will be able to keep them for ever.

We tend to measure our worth in terms of these six factors while at the back of our mind, common sense tells us that none of these six things can stay with us permanently. All of these things are impermanent — and they don't really belong to us. Many are just conceptual phenomena which happen to have value in the eyes of society in this particular day and age. They are assets which can be of benefit to us only as long as we practise a particular duty in the social structure. If you examine what we can actually call our own — you will eventually find that all we can call our own are the good virtues we have cultivated in our hearts.

You should ask yourself what you actually improve in yourself by looking down on the other people. Does it make others appreciate us more? — or does it irritate other people so that they will never want to do anything to help us a second time? It is like a person who wants to wants to be praised for their wealth and who behaves like a 'big-spender' in spite of the fact they cannot really afford to do so
— because of their frivolous spending they go further and further into debt day-by-day as the price of their pretenciousness.
Those who are really endowed with virtues will maintain their humility even when praised by others. Thus they will not allow self-pride to cause them to look down on others — for fear that they will lose the opportunity further to improve themselves.

A.3 Isn't humility just the same as respect?
Respect and humility sometimes look as if they are the same virtue, but in fact there are many differences.

Respect, as we have seen from the previous blessing, has already taught us to be active in our search for the virtues contained in others Respect is a virtue basedon *the way we see others* — a respectful person is someone who actively looks for the good things about other people instead of finding fault with them — and who expresses respect in their thoughts, words and deeds. They would be a person who is able to estimate peoples' worth according to reality rather than superficial appearances.
Humility, by contrast, is a virtue based on *the way we see ourselves* — to be a humble person is to reflect on one's own weaknesses, finding fault with oneself and to estimating one's own worth according to reality rather than superficial appearances. A humble person is not someone to boast, but one who is able to show deference to others in order to maximize the amount of goodness absorbed from

them. A humble person does not overestimate themselves in terms of their good qualities in relation to others — to give ourselves the chance to learn from them.

A respectful person is not necessarily a humble one. A person may be observant enough to see the good qualities exemplified by others (i.e. they have the quality of respect) but they might not be able bring themselves to show any deference to such a person in order to learn from them (i.e. they are not humble). Instead they always like to compare themselves to that person they respect in an unrealistically favourable light. They say to themselves, "even though you're the best at this, I'm the best at that — so I'm as good as you!" If they were a little less arrogant, even though they may already be good at one thing, they will always be looking to improve themselves at things they have not yet mastered — instead of complacently sitting on their laurels.

Thus, not to overestimate ourselves together with avoiding the arrogance of looking down on others (for whatever reason) is the subject to be dealt with by this Blessing.

A.4 Damage from arrogance

When we lose our humility, judging our worth in superficial terms and arrogantly looking down on others, there are three sorts of harm it will bring to ourselves, others and society at large:

1. Damage to yourself: You lose your opportunity to absorb goodness from others — estimating yourself too highly — you will tend to think you are already good enough and have no room for improvement. Looking at others you see no-one who matches your own talents.

2. Damage to others: Often people's arrogance starts with good intentions. However their haughty discrimination will degenerate into being touchy about trivial things and they become the subject of disagreements which break up friendships. Like a pagoda with a narrow base which cannot be built very tall without toppling, arrogant people will not get far in teamwork. Because of the conflicts they always have, they will always prefer to work alone, so their life's achievements will never amount to much. In the words of the famous Buddhist master of meditation, Luang Phaw Wat Paknam:

> "to look down on others, even without realizing it, seeing others as weaker than oneself, speaking irreverendly to them, is like the gables of a house being burned by a fire which has spread from the lower storeys. Even in the smallest house fire will spread to the gables — and in the same way, the resentment of juniors can destroy the person who governs them unless he is compassionate and wishes only happiness to those around him, especially those less privileged than himself."

3. Damage to society at large: Arrogant people have many negative consequences for society, namely:

1. breakdown of law and order: Arrogant people don't tend to respect the rules and always expect to be treated as the exception to the rule. Society will break down if it supports such people.

2. disharmony, social instability and vulnerability to colonization: in a society where arrogance prevails, it will be difficult for any lasting harmony to come about. (*see §D2, Like sandy broken soil even after the rain*). The caste system in India in the olden days tended to make each caste arrogant and even when enemies were at the door such as the British colonists, instead of thinking to unite to defend the independance of their country, the superior castes all thought themselves too superior to deal with the practicality of national affairs

> — meanwhile the lower castes and the untouchables, although they saw the danger, shrugged their shoulders and reflected that if the worst came to the worst, it would teach the arrogant superior castes a good lesson. The castes were so busy arguing amongst themselves they failed to defend themselves against invaders who were many thousands of times less numerous than themselves. In dynastic China arrogance was often expressed

in terms of vengeance wrought by one family on another often many generations after the original provoking incident. In countries such as Thailand where humility is more well-regarded as a social virtue, although there may disagreements on a national level — even *coup d'état* from time to time — the transitions usually take place with a minimum of bloodshed. In any community or society where humility prevails — even when a conflict should arise

— before long people will be re-united again in harmony (*see §D2, like a clay soil after the rain*). These are all good reasons why we should cultivate humility.

B. HUMILITY & ARROGANCE

B.1 Definition: Humility

The word for humility in the Pali, 'nivÅta' used in this blessing, actually means someone who is without ('*ni*') air ('vÅta'). The word is applicable to someone who is not inflated by their own self-importance.

B.2. Characteristics of Humility

If you were able to see into the mind of a humble person, you would see the following characteristics:

1. Freedom from false views: False views are ground assumptions about the nature of life and the world so negative or out of keeping with reality that they obscure any intention to cultivate oneself for the better.

2. Freedom from self-pride and self-importance: Self-pride is the belief that you are always superior to others. Some people who are born in the aristocracy don't believe that the normal man-in the street can ever be his equal. Rich people look down on poor people. Town dwellers look down on 'country bumpkins' — in a nutshell people tend to be proud of themselves for the wrong reasons;

3. Freedom from stubborness: The mind of a humble person is soft like greenwood (*§D1*) or like a piece of soft workable clay (*§D2*). Not like a deadwood (*§D1*) or like a clod of sandy soil (*§D2*). This is the result of 1 and 2 above.

4. Workableness of mind: whether the mind is soft or hard will be adapted appropriately to the situation.

B.3 Characteristics of a humble person

A humble person tends to behave as if they are of no importance. Their virtues speak for themselves — they don't need to advertise them. It is like a diamond which will always be a diamond whether you advertise it or not. A humble person doesn't need to show-off their strengths — to be stubborn or make a fuss. Because humble people know their own worth according to reality, they are characterised by three identifying features:

1. Humility of action: a humble person is not arrogant in their body language or their manners — but at the same time they are not obsequious. They know how to make themselves endearing to others by their behaviour but at the same time they have confidence in themselves. It is someone who is always ready to mould themselves to the convenience of others like a piece of soft clay. They will be the person who can get along with everybody and fill the gaps in situations of social disharmony. They will be good-mannered to seniors and subordinates alike. They give things due respect rather than pretending that they are the equal of others out of their league. They are careful always to be consistent in their cultivated manners no matter what walk of society they are dealing with. They mould themselves favourably to any situation that will give rise to virtue or reduce bad habits. This is in stark contrast to the body language of arrogant people. Arrogant people will often be physically unable to bend their body to express humility (such as bowing or even lowering their head in deference).

2. Humility of words: a humble person is not arrogant in the way they speak. Their words express the purity and good intention in their heart. Their words are soft rather than being provocative or boastful. They do not use their verbal skills to 'put others down'. If they should be responsible for a mistake, they will be quick to say 'sorry'. If they receive praise from others they will be quick

to thank them for the complement. They don't make threats or tease others for making mistakes. If they see the good someone else has done, they will be quick to congratulate them for it. Because their thoughts are pure, the words that come from their mouths are only those which have already been well filtered and considered. The manner of their speech is gentle but not weak. They refer to people by their appropriate titles. Their speech is therefore endearing to all who hear it. This is in stark contrast to the rigid speech of arrogant people characterised by patronizing comments about others. They will never let others forget how they are related to the royal family or have a high rank in the civil service.The words they say are nauseating to all who hear them.

3. Humility of mind: a humble person is not arrogant even in the way they think. They may be soft and gentle in their approach to all things, but it doesn't mean that they are weak or indecisive. Never complacent about their abilities, they will always be looking for ways to improve on them. They don't assume that they are always right — they are open to others' opinions. They don't get angry if they don't get their own way, but look for ways to adapt their thinking to the needs of others (within the limits of scrupulousness laid down by the Lord Buddha). This is in contrast to the untrained mind of an arrogant person which will tend to be subject to 'views'

— especially those concerning 'self-importance' In any situation where they must forgo their individual whims in order better to work as a team, they will often find it hard to adapt. They will always want to be the leader of a group — even if they don't have the capability.

C. OVERCOMING ARROGANCE

C.1 Useful ways to train yourself

Everyone has tendencies towards arrogance — even children. Children are known to gangfight with others simply because they go to a rival school. A crying child will stop crying as soon as they hear the magic words, "Oh aren't you the bravest little boy in the world?" When our arrogance is engrained from such an early age, we need to make a special effort to cultivate humility in its place — and in practice this can be done by:

1. Avoiding flatterers: If we have the feeling that we have a tendency towards arrogance or if we know that our own family is one of influence — the person who has the most danger for us is the flatterer. Instead of succumbing to popularity with flatterers we need to seek out those who can wake us up to our delusions on a regular basis. Such people may be found amongst our teachers or elders, but they might even be responsible friends or those who have a lot of virtue. Such friends will influence us to be thorough and detailed in assessing all that we do, never overlooking our habits irrespective of the situation (*see Blessing Two*).

2. Being thorough and think carefully before you do things: You have to think things through thoroughly before doing them. For example, you should wisely reflect whether dressing so lavishly is appropriate to one's social position. You should wisely reflect whether driving such a large car is appropriate if your boss drives a much smaller one. If, even unintentionally, you are constantly doing things that might be interpreted as arrogant by others you will eventually find yourself surrounded by enemies. Be careful when you express opinions. Remember that an idea doesn't have to be yours to be good! You get your merit even if you make your good idea appear to belong to someone else! Don't become reckless when you have success. Never forget that you are never the best, there is always better. Think of death and remind yourself that there are still a lot more good deeds to do. Don't become enamoured by superficial qualities of your personality — and try to remember that no matter how good you think you may be, you are still subject to all the weaknesses of a human — whether it be old age, sickness or death.

C.2 The tradition of paying respect to one's teacher

Humility is one of the virtues heavily emphasised along with 'patience' and 'self-discipline' in the ceremony of respect for one's teacher practised in the

Buddhist tradition by schools and educational institutions annually throughout Thailand. At this ceremony called '*Wai Kru*', there are three symbolic gifts whichhave been used traditionally in the ceremony to pay respect to the teacher — aubergine flowers, coarse grass and popped rice:

1. The aubergine flower is a symbol of humility because each flower that will give rise to a fruit must bow its head towards the ground. Flowers which hold their head high will give no fruit and in the end will wither. In the same way, humility is quality of every student who will receive a teacher's knowledge to the full. Just as water must flow down to a lower level, the student who is humble will receive the most knowledge the most quickly.

2. Coarse grass is a symbol of patience. This sort of grass can endure being parched during the dry season. It can endure treading and crushing by countless feet at the side of a footpath where other plants might have withered and died. In the same way, only the student with patience will endure the full duration of the course — doing whatever is needed to succeed in their studies.

3. Popped rice is a symbol of self-discipline. When by exposure to heat upon the stove, only the rice which can stay in the cooking pot without jumping out before time will be sweet and tender: ready to eat. In the same way, the one who can stay within the discipline they have set themselves in studying will succeed in their studies. The one who cannot stand the discipline and has to give-up half way can be compared to rice which is charred but not popped and ready to eat.

These are the three qualities of the effective learner — humility is the first and the two others are covered in Blessings Nine and Twenty-Seven with also Sensitivity to Self-improvement (willingness to hear out criticism of oneself) at Blessing Twenty Eight.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Metaphor: Deadwood v. Greenwood

Deadwood is tough and brittle. It will stand unyielding in the wind. If the wind gets stronger, it will remain unmoving. However, if there is a gale, it will break in two. Pushed to its limits, the damage to deadwood is irreparable. No matter how much more water or fertilizer you give it, it will not come back to life. This can be compared to an arrogant person who will never show any deference to anyone else and thereby forgoes the opportunity to absorb virtue from others.

By contrast, greenwood is soft and flexible. In a breeze it will bend and twist with the wind. If the wind gets strong, then it will bend double — or even parallel with the ground. When the wind has passed, then it will stand up as straight as it was before. If you give it a little water after the dry season, it will soon break into leaf. This can be compared to a humble person who will adapt themselves favourably to any situation or person from which they can absorb virtue.

D.2 Metaphor: Clay earth v. sandy earth

Sandy soil becomes fragmented into individual clods in the drought of the dry season — but even when the rains come, although the ground is wetted, the soil will still remain rigidly cracked into its individual clods. In a similar way when differences arise in a group of arrogant people, even though they have the opportunity to reconcile them, vengeful thoughts keep prevent them from coming back together again.

Clay earth also becomes cracked in the dry season — however, all it takes is a shower of rain, and it will soon be back to normal with no remaining cracks. In a similar way, when differences arise in a group of humble people, as soon as they have the opportunity to reconcile themselves, they will soon be back to harmony again.

D.3 Metaphor: the low-lying ocean

The ocean is the lowest lying of all the waterways in the world — as such all the waters of the all the rivers of the world must flow towards it. In the same way the deference shown by a humble person will lead all the virtues exemplified in other people in the world to flow towards him.

D.4 Metaphor: Half-full bottle

A bottle that is full of water makes no noise when shaken like a person full of virtue who doesn't need

to boast about it. But a bottle that is half-full is noisy when shaken like a person lacking in virtue who feels compelled to boast about what little they have.

D.5. Ex. Humility of SÅriputta (VuÎÎhi Sutta) A.iv.373, DhA.ii.178

Once in a monastic assembly presided over by the Lord Buddha, a monk accused SÅriputta saying that in spite of being one of the two chief disciples of the Buddha, he was clumsy enough to have bumped into him. The Buddha thus asked SÅriputta whether the accusation was true or not.

SÅriputta explained to the Buddha, "I am a person who is steadfast in mindfulness — I am careful of everything I do. I am mindful of the body with just the same care that a man would carry a tray filled to the brim with oil if stalked by a sword-brandishing guard threatening to cut off his head should he spill a single drop. I am wont to behave with the humility of a wiping rag, a bull with broken horns, like an untouchable child who blunders into the village of another caste — all of whom have no opportunity to indulge in their self-importance"

Even before renouncing the world, SÅriputta was already so gifted that he had attained no less that eighteen scholastic degrees before renouncing the world. After ordination he had attained arahantship. He was the right-hand chief disciple of the Buddha —yet look at how humble he could be — comparing himself to a rag, a broken-horned bull or an untouchable child. SÅriputta had no trace of self-importance or arrogance. If such gifted monks in such an elevated position can be so humble — then who are we to look down on others?

D.6 Ex. VidËdabha & MahÅnÅma, DhA.i.346

Although the SÅkya clan were the ancestors of the Lord Buddha, they had one weakness— their arrogance about the long history of their clan led them to look down on everyone else. Normally they would not even deign to marry outside their own dynasty. Thus when King Pasenadi of Kosala, hoping to secure good relations with the SÅkyans, asked for the hand of a SÅkyan maiden in marriage they had a difficult decision to make. In the end they succumbed to their normal arrogant ways and instead of sending a real princess, sent an illegitimate, half-caste daughter born out of a relationship between SÅkyan King MahÅnÅma and a slave-girl. The child was therefore an untouchable. King Pasenadi didn't know, so he had a huge State marriage organized. Later a prince was born called Prince VidËdabha. He was very clever (because of hybrid vigour). He wanted to know about his maternal relatives. When he grew up and went to visit hismaternal city of Kapilavastu, he was still looked down upon by all the SÅkyans and he was given reluctant hospitality.

On the way home after such an inhospitable visit, one of VidËdabha's generals found he had forgotten something important at Kapilavastu. He returned and found the SÅkyans scouring the palace with milk. When he asked the reason why, they told him that VidËdabha was an untouchable — and they must disinfect every place he had trodden or sat. When Pasenadi heard the news he removed both the queen and the prince from their positions and was going to invade Magadha. The Buddha prohibited him. The Buddha explained that whether Pasenadi attacked them or not, the SÅkyans would receive the fruits of their own karma. The Buddha also advised Pasenadi to reinstate the queen, saying that the paternal blood was more important than the maternal. Pasenadi followed the Buddha's advice but VidËdabha found it less easy to forgive the SÅkyans. He made the vow that whenever he became king, he would seek his revenge and scour the earth of Kapilavastu with the blood of the SÅkyans. Before long VidËdabha ascended to the throne and marched against the SÅkyans.

The Buddha knew what would happen and appeared to VidËdabha at a sand heap on the road between SÅvatthÈ and Kapilavastu. The Buddha appealed to VidËdabha to stop and the first time, he turned around and returned to SÅvatthÈ. However, he couldn't forget his anger. He set out with his troops a second time. Again, the Buddha appealed to him to be forgiving. A second time he turned his troops homeward. This happened in all three times — but VidËdabha was not cured of his

anger. The fourth timehe marched on Kapilavastu, the Buddha didn't stand in his way. He saw that it was karma that was unavoidable to the SÅkyans because of their past arrogance. Even though many of the SÅkyans had ordained, many had attained degrees of enlightenment, and all of them kept the Five Precepts, they still maintained their arrogance. The SÅkyans all came out in defense of their kingdom, but they were more scared of breaking their Precepts than they were of death. They shot arrows harmlessly into the turbans of the Kosalans, into flags and into the wagon wheels. They were too afraid to hit any living target. VidËdabha conquered the SÅkyans easily and had the throat of every SÅkyan slit — washing the floor with their blood. He spared only the life of King MahÅnÅma. He said that he would have one last meal with his grandfather. MahÅnÅma was still so arrogant, that he would not even eat at the same table as his untouchable grandson. He threw himself into the water and drowned himself. This is an example of the damage done when people are arrogant.

D.8 Ex. King Rama V. abolishes slavery

In most countries when slavery is going to be abolished, it will present major difficulties for that country. In America it caused a civil war between the North and the South. However, for the abolition of slavery in Thailand in the reign of King Rama V, nota single drop of blood was spilled. How did he manage to do it? He went to his advisors in the palace, and they advised him to use the tactic of 'getting their foot in the door'. They knew that slaves were the most important convenience to all the most influential people in the country. Ninety-nine percent of them would instantly refuse if the king were to change the Law. He sent his spies out into society and asked them to find out what people's attitude was to slaves. The king found out that many of the old slaves had been slaves since they were children. Some were sixty or seventy years old. Even if they were to be released, they wouldn't be able to support themselves any longer. What should they do? The king was very humble. He made a simple law: that any child born since his coronation should be liberated from slavery. Ten years later, all the old slaves had passed away. The slave masters looked for new slaves but the young teenagers were protected by the law. As that generation grew up into the next, slaves became extinct and not a single drop of blood was spilled — all because of the humility of the King.

Blessing Twenty-Four: Contentment

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Blessing Twenty-Four's place in the order of things

Before starting to discuss the twenty-fourth step on the stairway of Buddhist practice let us take stock of the place of Blessing Twenty-four in the Seventh Group of Blessings "Cultivating Basic Virtues" — so we can see how they integrate. In our pursuit of basic virtue we started by opening up the channel by which we can transfer the virtues of others into our own heart. The respect of Blessing Twenty-Two helps us overcome the tendency to find fault with others — allowing us to target the virtues and strengths to learn from them. The humility of Blessing Twenty-three helps us to avoid overestimating ourselves so that we don't look down on others — so that we can keep the flexibility of mind necessary to avoid becoming complacent about further improving ourselves. However there is one more virtue which we need to acquire for ourselves — owing to the elusive nature of the virtues we are trying to cultivate for ourselves.

Virtue is strangely unlike worldly phenomena. For worldly phenomena, often we have to rush and struggle to achieve our ambitions — often we have to make sure that our performance doesn't fall short of the target we have set for ourselves — only in such a way can our ambitions be fulfilled. For worldly phenomena, it is always with an eye on the outcome that we invest the necessary effort. However, for spiritual phenomena it is very differ

ent — sometimes the more we hanker after results, the more elusive they will be. Spiritual phenomena are like trees where you must add the water and fertilizer at the roots, but the blossoms and fruit for which we wish for will appear in another place altogether — high above our head! However if we spend the whole day gazing into the branches to the neglect of our watering — we will never get the fruits and blossoms for which we long.

For meditation too, we have to do our daily practice without undue interest in what the results will be — although in the long run, we would like to make a breakthrough in our meditation, if we sit for meditation worrying about when the breakthrough will be, such expectations will only impede our progress.

Not only for personal virtues, but also for social virtues, we have to concentrate on our cultivation and not worry about the results. If you imagine a person who whines incessantly all day long, "How come no-one ever listens to a word I say?"— do you think his complaints ameliorate or worsen his situation? If he were instead to ask himself how he could make himself into the sort of person people *want* to listen to and to get down to cultivate those virtues instead of complaining — his effort would be better spent.

In this respect the cultivation of virtue is like a tennis trainee who concentrates their attention on 'technique' rather than results. Some tennis players make the mistake of worrying constantly where

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in the opposite side of the court, the ball is going to land. However, instead of projecting one's anxieties over the net, trainers always recommend their students to concentrate instead on how they *hit* the ball. If they hit the ball correctly, then the ball will go where it is meant to whether the player worries about it or not!

Thus instead of getting caught up in expectations and comparing ourselves to others, we need to cultivate a virtue which will allow us the acceptance and enthusiasm to work on ourselves as we really are — instead of wasting our time daydreaming as to how we would like to be. That virtue is contentment — a key aspect of our personality, which apart from being important for self-development also has a social role in allowing people to pool their strengths instead of competing with one another.

A.2 Why it is necessary to know where you stand

A.2.1 Personal Potential

When cultivating ourselves we have a certain number of strengths and weaknesses — and through our cultivation, we hope to further the strengths and diminish the weaknesses. Before we can do that, we need to evaluate ourselves honestly and accurately — we need to accept ourselves as we are — only then will we have the pride in ourselves to have the encouragement to make the necessary improvements.

The strengths and influence which people bring to bear on improving themselves is different from person to person — the more strengths and influence one has, the more one will immediately be able to improve about oneself, others and society. If there are limitations to one's strengths, however, there will be many things at which one will fail in one's efforts to change — and even to try will cause great discouragement to your one's career of self-development.

To avoid such unnecessary discouragement and to be realistic about yourself as you stand, the Buddha taught a total of six characteristics which are benchmarks forus to 'know ourselves', comparable to a mirror which allows us to look deeply at the latent potential within ourselves.

1. Inspiration [saddha]: the degree to which you believe in what you're doing. Believe that the good deeds you are doing are really having an effect;

2. Self-discipline [sÈla]***:*** this is the purity with which you are able to keep your Precepts;

3. Experience [bahËsËta]: this is the extent of the experience you have under your belt and also how many teachings you have heard and can remember;

4. Generosity [cÅga]: this is the extent of your own generosity and the ability to let go of the things to which you are attached;

5. Wisdom [paññÅ]: this is the extent of the knowledge, common sense and insight you possess;

6. Quick wittedness [paÊibhÅna]: the extent of your ability to answer questions on your toes without having the chance to go away and prepare beforehand.

One's health can also be a big factor in determining one's personal potential to change things.

Try seeing how you measure in relation to the following virtues — note your strengths and your shortfalls — accept them, and then get down to making the necessary improvements. Thus contentment in the context of personal development means both accepting the reality of yourself and putting in the necessary effort to make an improvement.

A.2.2 Social Potential

Besides measuring yourself up personally against these benchmark virtues, when working for progress in a social context it is necessary to know your place in society. Sometimes to a westerner, having a 'place in society' might seem to imply encouragement of segregation of society into classes and castes — with all their hereditary rigidity. When we talk of a 'place in society' we mean something more akin to one's 'function' in society — and it should be hastily added that there is nothing *per se* to hinder mobility from one function in society to another. A realistic appreciation of one's 'place' or 'function' in society will prevent one from wasting one's efforts being pretencious or hankering after something that one has not yet attained instead of 'putting one's back' into the work needed to im

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prove one's lot in society. Even if you don't like your place in society, you need to start by accepting where you stand, and in that way the enthusiasm and willing [chanda] will arise which will allow you to make a success of whatever you doing (*it is the first of the "Foundations of Success [*iddhipada*], already met in Blessing Fourteen, §D.2*) and thereby to achieve success. It is by this success, not by our hankering that promotion and progress will come.Thus contentment in the context of social progress means both accepting the reality of your place in society and putting in the necessary effort to make an improvement.

B. CONTENTMENT

B.1 Definitions

The Pali word from which the word 'contentment' in this blessing is derived, is 'santuÊÊhÈ'which can be broken down into the syllables 'san-' which means 'oneself' and '-tuÊÊhÈ' which means 'happy'. Thus, in its entirety, the word means 'happiness with oneself and one's possessions' — in other words knowing moderation or knowing enough.

B.2 What Contentment is not

'Contentment' is a concept widely misunderstood. Some blame the idea of 'contentment' for standing in the way of economic progress, or claim it makes people too lazy to change or to improve themselves and their situation. They think it means being content to do nothing or being content to remain in isolation from others. In fact these other concepts already have their own words in the Pali language which are different from the '*santosa*' which we refer to by 'contentment' for the purposes of this Blessing:

- being contented to do nothing is called 'kosajja' in Pali otherwise translated as 'laziness';
- being contented to be alone is called 'pavivitta' in Pali, otherwise translated as 'seclusion';

The Buddha never taught his disciples to be lazy, backsliding or to avoid work — or to be inert or unresponsive in a way that impedes progress and prosperity, as is often misunderstood. On the contrary, this Blessing emphasises that when each person understands their own strengths and weaknesses and their place in society — that contentment will arise of its own accord. Such contentment will ensure that everyone will be content with what they have, what they receive and what is appropriate to them — in such a way that the tendency to fight over luxuries will be reduced — and along with it, the jealousy and mudslinging that is often common between those of influence in society.

B.3 Types of contentment

Being happy with oneself as one stands has three different characteristics:

1. contentment with what you already have

[sakena santosa]: In the words of the Lord Buddha (Dh.103):

SalÅbhaÔ nÅtimaññeyya

"Never look down on your own wealth" this might mean being content with one's parents, one's spouse and children, our work or one's nationality. Even if there are faults with these things, it is necessary to cultivate the 'pride' for them (*note*: not *arrogant* pride which has already been dispensed with since Blessing Twenty-three) that will make it seem worthwhile gradually to make the necessary improvements

rather than to attempt to solve the problem by stealing away someone else's (spouse, work etc.) There are many examples of even the humblest of shoe-menders working in the gutter who have taken pride in their work (even though they might not have liked it at first) until eventually managing to build up a prospering shoe business for themselves. If a person is contented with something, they tend to progress in that thing

because contentment, properly understood gives us the encouragement to expend effort on the things we come into contact with. Thus 'contentment' in our meaning of the word is something which helps to vanquish laziness. You need to accept how you are and use what you have to the very best of your ability. It is not like some people who think to themselves, "My father is only an ignorant fool, what hope have I of doing anything worthwhile? Why couldn't I have the

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president for my father?" Some people blame their parents for being so poor, thinking, "What have they wasted their time doing all these years instead of amassing riches? Why couldn't I have been born with a silver spoon in my mouth?" Some people are not content with their nationality. Some people are not content with their own wife, thinking that other people's wives are all so much better. Some people wonder how their own children could ever have grown up with such a monstrous personality — without ever thinking to ask themselves where those children got their bad habits from! It's no use wasting your energy being discontent — instead you ought to be rechanneling our energy into improving the situation.

2. contentment with what you get [santena santosa]: in the words of the Lord Buddha (J.i.476):

YaÔ laddhaÔ tena tuÊÊhabbaÔ

"You should be content with whatever you receive" when we are working on a task, this sort of contentment means contentment with the outcome. Sometimes the results don't reach the targets of beauty, quantity or craftsmanship we had set for ourselves — but if we can be content, instead of losing sleep about it or revelling in the suffering of it we can go on cheerfully to make the necessary adjustments. Some who lack this sort of contentment will tend to assume that they are destined to misfortune. One tends to revel in the shortcomings of one's work instead of concentrating on the successful part of what one has achieved. A fisherman lacking such contentment will always think that the fish that escaped his net are larger than the ones he has caught. In the end he spends his whole life eating fish he is disappointed with. Thus he never enjoys his food to his dying day. If your parents can only afford to give you 1,000 or 10,000 you should be thankful — it's better than being given a debt to service. By contrast someone who is contented will be happy with whatever they are endowed with instead of always looking to see what their neigh

bour has that might be better. If you already have something and you feel that it is in some way inappropriate, then if you decide to make some adjustments then that is another matter. If someone gives you a small piece of land to build a house, and you can build only a small house — you should be thankful that you don't have to waste money renting for many years — but at the same time, you should work diligently, building up your financial position, so that you can expand the house to your full requirements at a later date. Supposing you are in business and you expect to make a profit of a million. You work as hard as you can but can manage a profit of only 500,000. You have to learn to live with that. Don't be like some people who immediately go into chronic depression. Instead of being upset about the small size of your profit, you should be thankful that you haven't made a loss. Some people take an entrance exam hoping to be accepted to study medicine — but when they are turned down, they commit suicide. Why can't they look on the bright side and find something else to study instead? Some people fall in love with a girl who shows no interest in them — so they hang themselves with a broken heart. People of such stupidity deserve no sympathy. If they didn't have their love returned, why couldn't they learn to be content with living alone? You can be content with what you have or what you are given. If you are content with what you are given, supposing when it comes to time for promotion, the boss gives it to someone else who is lazy, even though you have been working hard all year, maybe you can be content with that. However if it happens every year, maybe you need to do something about it.

3. contentment with what is appropriate for you [samena santosa]: In practice this means that we don't keep in our possession things that are surplus to what is appropriate for us. Supposing someone comes along and offers you something that is unbefitting of your ability or social status it is better to be content with what you already have. If someone comes along one day and of

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fers to make you president, if you were to accept, it might just be the death of you. If you were just a newly ordained monk and someone came along and offered to make you the abbot of a temple, again it might not be fitting because you are not yet well trained enough. Monks have to think carefully before they accept certain offerings. Supposing someone were to come along and offer a monk a jade Buddha or a huge Buddha image made of gold — it might be better to refuse it otherwise you might have to be a security guard for the rest of his life. There was once a tramp who bought a lottery ticket and miraculously got the first prize. When the tramp heard the news of how much he had won, he had a heart attack and died. A second person went to collect the money, but as they had never had any experience of looking after the money before, they died in the ensuing quarrels between various friends and relatives who thought they were entitled to a share of the money. You have to know what is appropriate or inappropriate for yourself. When considering what is appropriate for one, there are three deciding factors:

1. whether it is appropriate to our status [yathÅ lÅbha]*:* we should consider what our socio-economic status is — are we a monastic, a householder, a senior, a subordinate, a teacher, a student, a military general, an infantryman, a faculty head, an odd-job man — and the things which we use and consume ought to be appropriate to the socio-economic status we occupy instead of being pretencious things inappropriate to our status. If you are a manual worker maybe you should be contented to furnish your house with plain furniture rather than the upholstered 'reception furniture' more fitting to the office of the primeminister! If you are a monk and someone offers a female maidservant to attend to all your domestic needs — then in spite of their good intentions, you would be better to turn them down, because that would not be fitting a monk — or perhaps not building a huge air-conditioned house you cannot afford, having to take out loans to do it;

2. whether it is appropriate to our potency [yathÅ bala]*:* If one knows and accepts the level of one's own potential, one will be better able to know what is appropriate for one. You should not over- or under-estimate oneself. You should look at oneself deeper than surface features such as gender, size or beauty. Don't go comparing yourself to others out of your league — thinking that just because you know them or can speak to them, that you you deserve the same treatment as them. If you know your capabilities are only enough to take the responsibilities of a minister in parliament, don't go coveting the title of primeminister. If your capabilities are only enough to be a hand-servant, don't go dreaming of being an employer — e.g. not choosing status-symbols inappropriate to our actual status — like a high-backed director's chair if one is not capable of being a director;

3. whether it is appropriate to our level of morality [yathÅ sarupa]: Even if something is appropriate to our status and potential, if it is something inappropriate to the level of Precepts we have set for ourselves — or if it will discredit us or compromise our dignity to receive it — then we should not be contented to receive that kind of thing. For example, we should not accept goods we know to be stolen or salary earned by illegal employment — in order that possessions don't become more important to us than our virtues — and so that we don't become a puppet to the accumulation of more and more possessions without end

— if something is over or beneath one's social status, it is inappropriate to accept it or own it.

C. HAPPINESS & POVERTY

C.1 The Two sorts of happiness

The key issue which will become obvious to us if we are endowed with contentment is that happiness exists in (at least) two different forms (A.i.80):

1. Happiness dependent on external stimuli [sÅmisa sukha]: Such happiness is dependent on sense-pleasure coming to us via our eyes, ears,

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nose, mouth or by our sense of touch. It also includes thoughts of desire from which superficial pleasure can also be derived. This sort of happiness tends to be gross because it is mixed up with suffering and has the following characteristics:

1. the objects of happiness can be obtained only as the result of considerable effort and difficulty because they are rare and limited in quantity;

2. the objects of happiness, once obtained have to be closely guarded for fear of being parted from them;

3. being hindered in one's access to such objects of happiness, can cause aggression and acts of vengeance;

2. Inner happiness [nirÅmisa sukha]: Such happiness is independent of external stimuli and arises directly from inside whenever the mind has the characteristics of being:

- *pure*: occurs when the mind is free of defilements;
- *peaceful*: occurs when the mind is free from movement and grasping;
- *free*: occurs when the mind breaks free of various encroachments, becoming light and limitless;
- *radiant*: occurs when the mind is suffused by wisdom [paññÅ] — seeing things according to reality;
- *fulfilled*: occurs when the mind has no further feeling of lacking or missing anything, and with no residual feeling of even the slightest loneliness — because the happiness of the mind is self-sufficient in itself.

Inner happiness is true happiness — it is happiness that creates no conflicts of interest. It is a happiness that helps to diminish other problems. However, those who are to find inner happiness must first cultivate a state of mind that is peaceful and free from discontent. The more one can cultivate contentment with relation to the happiness dependent on external stimuli, the easier it will become to touch instead upon inner happiness — as with the Buddhist proverb (Dh.93):

TuÊÊhÈ sukhÅ yÅ itarÈtarena
"contentment with the requisites you have and those you receive will bring you happiness"

C.2 Two sorts of poverty

Those who lack happiness succumb to poverty — and just as there are two sorts of happiness, there are two corresponding sorts of pauper:

1. Material paupers: Such people suffer from lack of resources because they really lack the wherewithall to earn enough to keep themselves from the poverty line. Such people are temporarily poor because if they find an appropriate way to earn their living, before long they will be able to help themselves out of poverty.

2. Spiritual paupers: Such people suffer from lack of resources because they spend more than they earn. Their problem is not one of resources but one of attitude because they know no moderation in their spending. Such people can be counted amongst the 'permanent poor' because even if they inherit a fortune, they will not be able to stay out of debt until the day they die (unless they learn contentment in the meantime).

Thus 'contentment' means 'knowing moderation' —it is a miraculous virtue which can stop people from competing mercilessly with one another, stop extravagence, stop pretenciousness, stop wars, making people self-sufficient in happiness irrespective of their position in society and it can allow the rich to be real millionnaires, because in the words of the Buddha (Dh.57):

SantuÊÊhÈ paramaÔ dhanaÔ
"Contentment is the ultimate wealth"

D.SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF CONTENTMENT

When contentment is lacking:

- ***competition tends to grow up*** between those who are influential in society to the degree that one tries to discredit another or cut corners in amassing wealth instead of applying their skills and influence for the public benefit. Unfortunately such behaviour is becoming more and more prevalent in our society.
- ***there is no respect for ethics*** in the business world

— nothing is left but flagrant profiteering with

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out any thought of the negative repurcussions for others in society or the harm brought by fanning the flames of greed. No matter how much is earned, even in unscrupulous ways, it is never enough to satisfy the appetites of those addicted to materialism. Expenditures exceed spending power and when the businessmen concerned cannot earn money fast enough by scrupulous methods then they will soon resort to dishonest ones

— like puppets dancing on the strings of the defilements of greed in the mind. As such one goes through life distancing oneself further and further from all reasonableness and moderation — for one key reason — the lack of contentment.

Social progress requires both contentment and the investment of effort. Effort needs to be regulated by contentment just as a powerful car needs to have a good set of brakes. Without contentment, efforts made will tend to be excessive, misplaced and vulnerable to risk-taking. Thus contentment is one of the most vital virtues contained in the Blessings. It is for progress at individual, family and even national levels. The mind of someone versed in contentment will always be ripe for the fruition of other higher virtues instilled there. Those who know contentment will be able to cultivate all manner of virtues without risking 'burnout'. Virtue will always be cultivated with the most honest of intentions. When society fails to make progress or progresses slowly, it is not because people are content, but on the contrary because of those lacking in contentment who constantly undermine the fair economic system.

D.1 Danger of discontentment

The trouble with discontent is that it develops from an insignificant emotions in the mind into more and more serious attachments — until it becomes wanting without end. The point of studying about the symptomology of greed is that you can more easily learn to catch yourself before the symptoms become too serious. You can observe your own tendencies by examining the symptoms of greed as they develop in your own mind. This is the nature of the escalation of greed in the mind. In what follows we will examine the way in which greed progresses from subtle emotions to powerful and damaging temptation. In essence greed has many components and as it gets worse, more and more components become involved:

- attraction (or preference) [rati];
- attachment (wanting it for ourselves) [icchÅ];
- losing our consideration for others [mahicchÅ];
- losing our scruples about how to earn the money to pay for what we want [pÅpicchÅ];
- losing our scruples about exploiting others [lobha];
- getting down to out and out stealing [adinnadÅna].

The last involves a total loss of conscience in this matters again undermining our discretion in the manner of the recklessness we studied in the most recent lecture.

In conclusion, from someone who likes something, we become someone who is attracted to it — from being attracted to it, we want to own it — from wanting to own it, we want own it so strongly that we are not interested in anyone else's feelings concerning it

— from being interested in nothing else but owning it, we would even do evil to own it — making people suffer throughoutthe neighbourhood. This is how something seemingly benign like discontent deteriorates into a serious social evil.

D.2 Objects of Discontent

In general there are four types of things that are the objects of peoples discontent:

1. greed for power: those who get elected as a member of parliament and they are not content, wanting to be prime minister.

2. greed for possessions: those who have pearls and want diamonds, they get diamonds and want rubies etc. etc.. Someone who used to live in a hovel and wants to get a house. When they get a house they want to get a mansion. When they get a mansion they want a palace. When they get a palace, they still want to be king of the world.

3. greed for food (overeating): some people are not interested in power or possessions as long as they can get their hands on delicacies to eat.

4. promiscuity: they have a family in every new town they visit. All of these things can be the source of discontent.

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D.3 Acquisition with and without discontent

If we want to have something that belongs to someone else, but by honest means, for example if you want a new Mercedes and it costs a million so you save up to buy it (such a feeling is not succumbing to discontent) — however, if you have a salary of a million per month, but you think to cheat someone else in order to get the Mercedes you want, instead of paying for it (discontent is at work in the mind for sure). Wanting to obtain things is not wrong in itself, if it doesn't lead us to lose our scruples about exploiting others. If you really want to buy a Mercedes and you save up your salary to buy it, that is not discontent. However, if you can't wait and get involved in corruption to boost your earnings, then that is submission to the discontent. And eventually it will lead to greed for things without end.

E. CULTIVATING CONTENTMENT IN EVERYDAY LIFE

E.1 Earning one's living contentedly

In Buddhism, the purpose of earning one's living is nothing more than to procure sufficient of the basic requisites of life to support one's physical needs, so that one can use one's time, strength and ability to do what is really important in life — namely to cultivate the maximum possible virtues in the space of one's life. Buddhism has never seen the working life or the accrual of material assets as an end in itself. Thus Buddhists define the economic and social prosperity of a country as being in inverse proportion to the number of people on the poverty line rather than in proportion to the amount of money in the national treasury, in keeping with the saying:

> "the absence of poverty is a better measure of a nation's success than the number of wealthy people"

To cultivate happiness and progress one should start by contentment for what one already has — doing one's duties to the best of one's abilities without hankering unduly after other things. For example, if one has the position of 'head of department' at work, and would like to experience both job satisfaction and progress in one's career, one should start with contentment for one's own position and doing one's duty to the best of one's ability. Apart from being happy at work, promotion and other aspects of career progress will come to us automatically by the fact one is devoted and enthusiastic about our present position. Similarly, if one feels as if one's married relationship is going badly, before harbouring discontentand thinking that a new spouse would fix the problem, one should try cultivating contentment with one's present spouse by practising one's duties (*see Blessing 13*) towards them to the best of one's ability.

E.2 Principles for administering one's possessions

Principles concerning assets

1. Acquisition: When acquiring assets, you should earn them in a scrupulous way without having to take advantage of other people to do so — not breaking the law, breaking with custom, breaking one's Precepts or breaking with virtue.

2. Expenditure: When using your wealth, you should not be stingy — but you should also not be extravagent. You should not be reluctant to use what you have earned for your own welfare and the welfare of those closest to you — while at the same time practising generosity, sharing with others and for good works.

3. Attitude: One should not worship money but should see it as a means or a tool by which one can live one's life.

E.3 Cultivating Contentment

1. Daily Reflections: There is a habitual reflection contained in the Evening Chanting: We are of a nature to age, we have not yet gone beyond aging — we are of a nature to sicken, we have not yet gone beyond sickening — we are of a nature to die, we have not yet gone beyond dying." If we think habitually of the limited nature of our life it will help to reduce the time we waste greedily chasing after desires for things that are ultimately unimportant to our real well-being

2. Moderation in eating: Train yourself to know moderation in eating. *Eat to live* rather than *living to eat*! If you can appreciate moderation in simple things, it will be easier to know contentment in more complex ones.

3. Generosity: If we often give things to others it will help us to overcome greed.

4. Keeping Eight Precepts: Keeping the Eight Precepts, especially the Third Precept of abstaining from sexual relations, will directly train us to overcome greed concerning the opposite sex. The Sixth Precept of not taking food in the evening will help us to overcome our interest in food. The Seventh Precept of not wearing jewelry or make-up will train us to be content with ourselves as we are. The Eighth Precept of not sleeping on a luxurious bed will train us not to be overcome with desire for comfort.

5. Meditate every day: When the mind becomes more refined, our temptation to hunger for power and fame will be reduced.

If you have a good friend, never ask them for the thing they love the most, it may cost you your friendship — unless they give it to you without your asking.

E.4 Monastic Life as training in contentment

Since ancient times, Thai society has had a way of training in contentment which has always been very efficient in instilling contentment in its people — this ancient training is the tradition of temporary ordination. There is a tradition in Thailand for young men to take temporary ordination as a monk at the age of around twenty-years old. Usually the ordination is no longer than three months, however it gives the ordinands the chance to experience inner happiness first hand, and especially the happiness that comes from knowing contentment. Those who ordain as monks are allowed to use only the bare minimum of material requisites, namely three robes and a bowl — one's living is earned by almsround — such a simple life without worries about material wealth easily facilitates the freedom of mind which gives rise to the subtle states of inner happiness — allowing those with the chance to ordain to understand the importance to their happiness of attaining contentment in life.

F. ILLUSTATIVE EXAMPLES

F.1 Metaphor: A drop can fill a glass but a river cannot fill the sea . . .

Even the smallest drop of water can make the difference between whether a bottle is full is not. On the other hand no much water you may have you cannot cause the ocean to overflow. In the same way, even a small amount of money can make a difference to a person who knows contentment. On the other hand, no matter how much wealth you may have, for those who don't know contentment, it will only add to that person's discontent.

F.2 Ex. Happy beggar, discontent businessman

There was a minister of commerce who told the story of two events he came across in the same day which had impressed him from that day to this. He left his home one day and passed a beggar in the street. In his family there was a tradition that they would never pass a request for help unanswered

— how much they helped someone in need depended — but they would never refuse someone help. To give a beggar a cent would normally be a lot, but that day in his pocket there was no loose change. He had to open up his wallet where the smallest note was a five-dollar bill. He gave the five dollar bill to the beggar. The beggar was so happy that he bowed down on the pavement at the feet of the minister. The beggar said that he had been a beggar since he was a child and today was the first time in his life he had met someone so generous as to give him five dollars. The beggar's eyes shone with appreciation.The beggar's delight gave the minister a certain cheerfulness to start his day.

When the minister reached the ministry, he met a bank manager with a pained expression of woe on his face. The minister asked whether the banker was ill. The banker said,"I am so upset I haven't slept for a week. I told my son to order a certain product that was bound to be missing from the market, right from early in the year. The son didn't believe me at first so he made his order a little late. Only the first order had been ahead of the competitor. For the second and third lots, there had been sales competition from other companies. The son should have had a profit of 100 million this year, but because he didn't believe me, he could only manage a profit of 60 million. We have lost 40 million we could have had."

The minister expressed his condolences and entered his office and that day, could hardly get any work done, because of his musing about the ways

of the world — a beggar who is happy all day with a five dollar bill and a banker who cannot sleep because he only got a profit of sixty million. He sat and wondered whether even if he managed to achieve miracles as the minister of commerce whether anyone would be happier as the result.

F.3 Ex. AsitÅbhu JÅtaka (J.234)

There was a prince in the time of the Buddha who already had a wife, but he wasn't content with her. If his father wasn't vigilant he would mess around with the maids in the royal court. One day the king discovered his son's evil ways so he banished him into the forest. If it had been anyone else he would have had them executed.

The prince escaped into the forest with his wife and the two of them lived in a hovel. Instead of realizing the peril of non-contentment with one's own spouse, one day the prince saw some female *kinnaree*s in the forest so he left his wife in the hovel and ran after the *kinnaree*s trying to catch one as a wife. The wife despaired and went to a hermit in the forest, asking him to teach her how to meditate. With the determination and lack of attachments in the world, before long the wife was able to meditate so well she was able to float in the air and flew away from the forest leaving the prince to his ignorance. The prince couldn't catch any *kinnaree*s . When he returned to the hovel, even his old wife hadn't waited for him. So he sat in his hovel and cried like a drowned and helpless rat.

Even today, there are people with the same tendency. You ask them if they would like a wife. They think having a wife would satisfy them. But when married if they could have another mistress or two, they would certainly feel that it would add a little more spice to life — and if they had four or five mistresses — the more the merrier. They are not content with what they receive. Even if you were to give them a mountain of gold they would not be content.

F.4 Ex. Kumbhaghosaka DhA.i.321ff.

In the time of the Lord Buddha, there was an outbreak of an infectious disease. In the home of a millionaire, the two parents decided they were too old to escape the infection, but they told their son to run away as far as he could to save his own life. Before the son went, the father pointed out where all the family treasure was buried. The son cried to think that he had to leave his parents to die, but all the same he fled despite being only 12-13 years of age at that time. In ten years time he returned to his home-town. The disease had long subsided. He thought of digging up the treasure, but he decided that it was not yet appropriate for him to obtain a fortune. He thought that if anyone saw him with a fortune, they would think that he had stolen it, so he might be caught by the police. He also reflected that he had nowhere to store the fortune even if he did get it — because he still had no house of his own — so to have the fortune would put his own life at risk.

Therefore he waited and took a job working as a guard in the house of a wealthy family, ringing the bell to tell the family the time of day. One day King BimbasÅra heard the sound of the man ringing the bell in the morning and could tell at once that the person ringing the bell was no ordinary person but a rich man. The king sent a courtier to see the man and she came back to the king to report that the guard ringing the bell was no rich man, but just a guard employed in a rich household. The king would not believe her therefore the courtier found ways of finding out the background of the man until she found out that he was the owner of a fortune.

King BimbasÅra thus summoned the man curious to find out why he lived like a poor man even though he was heir to a treasure. The man told the king the reason why he was waiting for the appropriate time to take advantage of his fortune. The king told him that the time had now come to dig up the treasure. The young man dug up his fortune and the king made him the treasurer of the kingdom as the result of his wisdom and patience in the use of his savings.

The wisdom of this man has a useful message especially for ladies who are tempted to wear expensive jewelry beyond their means and even for ladies who dress provocatively.

F.5 Ex. Pañcuposatha JÅtaka (J.490)

There was once a hermit that had a pet bear. One day the bear was bored of the food it was given so it decided to go into the town to look for delicacies to eat. The bear disappeared into town, but before it could get its paws on anything to eat, the town dwellers chased the bear away with arrows and spears. The bear returned covered in blood to the dwelling of the hermit and had no more discontent. The bear learned from its hard lesson, and decided to take the Eight Precepts and would no longer take an evening meal even if the hermit offered it food at that time. When the hermit asked why the bear didn't accept food, the bear said it had decided to keep Eight Precepts to learn to be content with the food it was given.

The same JÅtaka told the story of a past life of Devadatta when he was born as a greedy fox. The fox found the carcass of an elephant recently died and licked its lips. It made its way inside the body of the elephant through one of the openings and started to eat the soft inner organs of the elephant. When the fox was full it fell asleep where it lay, inside the elephant, for a day or two. In the sun, the carcass of the elephant started to dry out and the bodily openings all closed trapping the fox inside. The fox was trapped there for seven days until the fox was thin. Only then did it rain and when the bodily openings loosened, the fox was able to escape with its life, but it was so shocked by the whole experience that it wanted to overcome its attachment to food and so kept the Eight Precepts from that day forth.

F.6 Ex. Suva**ÁÁ**aha**Ôsa JÅtaka(J.136)

There was a greedy bhikkhuÁi who was the origin for the Vinaya rule for bhikkhuÁis not being allowed to eat garlic. The bhikkhuÁi called TulÅnandÅ loved to eat garlic and one day she became acquainted with a garlic farmer. The farmer thought that a bhikkhuÁi should know moderation in eating so he pointed to the garlic field saying, whenever you want any garlic, just go to the field caretaker and tell him I gave you permission to help yourself. The bhikkhuÁi picked cartloads of garlic and the neighbours gossipped and spread it about that the bhikkhuÁi was shameless. The farmer himself didn't know what to say.

The news reached the Buddha so the Buddha made the simple rule that bhikkhuÁis may no longer eat garlic. The Buddha looked at the past lives of the bhikkhuÁi and caused pictures of those previous lives to manifest themselves for the bhikkhuÁi and others to see.

TulÅnandÅ had been a female Brahmin with a husband and a daughter. The Brahmin died but because of not understanding the working of merit had done both good and bad deeds. The Brahmin was born as a golden goose. The goose was able to recognize his former wife and daughter in their poverty and shed its golden feathers for them to ameliorate their poverty, feather by feather. In that lifetime, TulÅnandÅ had also been greedy. She wanted more than just a few feathers and a few days later plucked the goose bare and shut the goose away in a coop. From that day forth, the goose could no longer produce golden feathers. With its new conventional plumage the goose flew away and did not return. The mother and daughter thus returned to poverty and starvation.

A clear message from such stories is that if you are going to help someone, you have to observe first whether they know moderation first or not.

F.7 Ex. A stray dog grown fat

If you notice the habits of a mangy, starved dog — if you give it a bowlful of offal it will be glad of even this and will finish the whole plate. However, if you feed it offal for seven days, if after a week there is no meat in its bowl it will start to refuse food. If you continue to give it better food, in no time it will be climbing on the table competing with the master for the food on his plate. If you meet this sort of stray dog, you have no alternative but to chase it away, because it is a dog of the sort that never knows enough.

Not only animals are like this — even some people, although they may not be at all poor, never know enough of a good thing. The richer they get, the richer they want to be. Even when they are quite comfortable in their own lifestyle, they will still go out of their way to take advantage of others to

widen their own profit margin. There have been society in all cases. The illness such people suffer such people in every period of history and they from is that they ‘never know enough’ of something have brought only suffering and degradation to or to be more specific, they lack contentment.

Blessing Twenty-Five: Gratitude

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Blessing Twenty-five in the order of things

This blessing is the twenty fifth step on the stairway of Buddhist practice. In fact we have already come across much of the material in this unit already in the preceding units — such as Blessing Three 'Paying Respect to those worthy of respect', Blessing Twelve 'Cherishing One's Parents, Blessing Thirteen 'Cherishing One's children and Blessing Seventeen 'Cherishing One's extended family.' Sometimes it looks as if much of the material is repeated but in fact there are new things to study which go beyond the mundane household situations already discussed — because in this Blessing, gratitude is considered particularly in the context of the learning of virtue. This is why the Lord Buddha chose to give special consideration to this virtue for the purposes of Group VII of the Blessings.

A.2 The Rarity of Altruism

In the words of the Lord Buddha, there are two very rare sorts of people [dullabha-puggala] in the world (A.i.87):

1. those who initiate favours to others [pubbakÅrÈ] — whether they be our parents, relatives, elders, monks, the Lord Buddha or the King — it is no accident for someone to mature into a person who values virtue and who is dedicated to the cultivation of virtue;

2. those who are grateful and repay the benefits they receive from others [kataññË-katavedÈ].

Such altruism is hard to find amongst people in general because it requires a high degree of spiritual maturity. According to the research of psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg (late 1950's), our wish to help others around us is a form of maturity that we acquire with age, we tend to start out in life selfish, but become less self-centred as we mature. From birth to age eleven children tend to be motivated mainly by self-interest — being mainly interested in avoiding punishment and maximising rewards from their parents and teachers. During the teenage years, motivation shifts to give more credance to social approval — they need to be liked by their peers or else to conform to social order such as staying on the right side of the Law. Only those who manage to extricate themselves from the mind frame of a teenager does a person's ethical motivation move onto considerations of social contract such as not doing something because of being obliged not to or Universal Rights such as those characterized by the spiritual traditions. Altruism belongs to this final category of abstract ideals. From such research we learn two things:

- that an altruist is rare and that without an attitude of gratitude from those on the receiving end of such altruism it will surely become still harder to find;
- that we cannot underestimate the role of social contract in bolstering our efforts to do good deeds;

A.3 Gratitude in the Cultivation of Virtue

This second observation is borne out by experience. Although by this stage in the Blessings we ought to be beyond the self interest of 'reward' and 'punishment', we are not yet at a level where our patience is at the level of abstract ideals unaffected by emotions. Therefore we still have to use social approval (especially the approval of those to whom we owe a debt of gratitude) to give ourselves extra moral leverage. Somehow if left to our own devices we can succumb all too easily to temptation. Harder than simply doing good deeds, is to keep one's encouragement for the cultivation of good deeds going indefinately — rather than giving up at the first obstacle to come along. It is the nature of cultivating virtue that one must always come up against obstacles and hindrances — sometimes problems from our associates or our immediate surroundings, sometimes inner problems from the working of our defilements. Not to succumb to discouragement in the face of such hardships needs special strategies which we can use to help us overcome our tendencies to backslide in the cultivation of goodness:

1. patience [khanti]: Such patience particularly needs development of 'shame of evil' [hiri] and 'fear of the consequences of evil' [ottappa] — and can eventually allow us to be a good teacher to ourselves [yonisomanasikÅra]. When we are not sufficiently definitive in our own mind to keep to our own principles, sometimes we need to give ourselves some extra moral leverage by thinking of the other people who our behaviour affects. Patience will be developed to the full in Blessing Twenty-Seven.

2. respect [gÅrava]: Sometimes, even though we know full well that something is wrong, we still do it, because we lack the patience. Because our patience is not yet fully developed (*we didn't complete Blessing Twenty-seven yet*), it will reach a dead-end or a ceiling if we don't develop the virtues of respect and gratitude (together with the wish to repay the debt of gratitude) in relation to our spiritual teachers too. Respect doesn't just mean bowing or expressing reverence towards one's teacher, it means using our sincer

est effort and ability to ensure the transfer of the virtues of the teacher towards ourselves — and to rid ourselves of our remaining bad habits — to the point that all their goodness becomes ours and they become a part of us — while avoiding the temptation to dwell on any faults the teacher may still have — and avoiding the temptation to answer back whenever the spiritual teacher delegates work or gives advice.If we recall our debt of gratitude to them, sometimes, even if we couldn't be bothered to make the effort for ourselves, we would still do it "just for them".

3. gratitude [kataññË]: Sometimes what our teacher asks of us exceeds the threshold of our patience, and even our respect cannot bolster our morale enough to keep us going. Sometimes it is because of our limited understanding, that we cannot understand by reasoning why a teacher has asked us to do one thing or another. Such limited understanding is often exactly the same reason why we are unable to make any progress in our spiritual practice. However if we think to ourselves that:

> "before I got to where I am today I was like the majority of other people in the world, up to my neck in water, drowning a slow death in the shark-infested sea of sense-pleasures [saÔsÅra]. However my teacher came along in his boat, and hoisted me to safety. After coming aboard and helping to row the boat so that it can go around helping to rescue others like my former self who are still adrift in the ocean. Although such rowing is undisputably hard work, it is a thousand times better than being eaten up by sharks. No-one has forced my teacher to work his fingers to the bone, day-in-day-out to perform this great act of altruism in helping other people — my teacher could just as easily opt for the quiet life of meditation — without having to bother about anyone else — thus I owe my life to the pure compassion of my teacher. Therefore even if I feel tired now and then and would prefer to take a rest, out of gratitude I realize that for as long as my teacher

> doesn't rest from our mission, it is not my place to protest "How much longer do we have to wait before we can take a rest," or worse than that to go about persuading other oarsmen to take a rest too."
>
> We will begin to realize that the difficulties we are facing in our personal cultivation are very minor when compared to the huge debt of gratitude we have to our teacher for ameliorating the course of our destiny!

Thus gratitude is a form of social approval which can be used to give leverage in elevating the usual threshold of our patience in cultivating virtue to the level of the ideal — even beyond the bolstering effect of respect. But something which remains of the utmost importance in the cultivation of virtue is that we must train ourselves a great deal in the regular practice of meditation — especially at times when we must 'weather out' conflicts or when we are feeling demoralized — we must be quick to sit for meditation, because otherwise hesitation can cost us our career of virtue cultivation.

Schoolchildren persevere in their studies, often not because of their own intent, but out of gratitude to their parents and teachers. Similarly spiritual practitioners,who in spite of their good intentions often succumb to petty quibbling with their fellow practitioners, can keep themselves on track to self-betterment by reminding themselves of their gratitude to the Lord Buddha and their spiritual teachers, even when their own vocation might be weak. Thus gratitude is one of the most important virtues which will act as a catalyst to allow even higher virtues to be developed in the future.

B. GRATITUDE AND INGRATITUDE

B.1 Definitions

The Pali word for 'gratitude', kataññË, used in this Blessing means recognizing benefit or virtue (in Pali the same word 'guÁa' is used for both commodities). It is similar to the western notion of 'loyalty' — but loyalty to those people or things that have done favours for us or brought us benefit in the past. For our purposes in this blessing, 'kataññË' means:

1. Recognizing benefit brought to us by others: Such benefit usually comes to us as the result of an intentional effort on behalf of benefactor. In this context, the word 'gratitude' is a reasonable translation.

2. Recognizing the latent benefit: sometimes benefit comes to us not by any intentional action, but simply by the presence of a personage or a thing with latent virtue. An example of this is a *paccekabuddha* who is enlightened and has rid himself of all defilements — but because he lacks teaching skills is unable to transform his latent virtue into benefit for others who want to learn from him. It also applies to the benefit of things like merit in our mind accumulated by our past actions. This second meaning is something we have not yet met in the preceding Blessings — and it is not quite the same as respect either.

B.2 Degrees of Gratitude

When we categorize any sort of thing in the world, we have to choose the standards by which we judge them. Some people divide up people according to the colour of their skin, or their nationality or the level of their knowledge, or maybe you can divide them into fools and wise men as we have done since the earliest Blessings. However, using gratitude as your standard, you can divide people into three different types:

1. Able to appreciate favours ***received from others*** [kataññu]: This might be compared to virtue at the primary school level. Even some animals have virtue at this level of development so any person who still lacks this virtue should seriously question their own level of maturity. If you can already practice virtue at this level you can congratulate yourself that you are already more advanced than some dogs!

2. Able to appreciate the favours received from others and repays ***his debt of gratitude to others too*** [kataññË-katavedÈ]. This might be compared to virtue at the secondary school level.

3. Being able to appreciate the favours received from others and repays his debt of gratitude to others such a person also honours the goodness ***of the person who has done that favour***

[pËjÅ]. This might be compared to virtue at the

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- universe. Our parents are the highest de-
- velopers of our minds (see *Bl. Three §C1*). Our teachers come next (see *Bl. Three §C1*) someone just
- thinks, Virtuous Employers (see *Bl. Three §C1*)
- bringing us up with love (see *Bl. Three §C3*) looking after them in their old age (see *Bl. Three §C2*).

at the secondary school level. If the person is truly virtuous he will not only repay his debt of gratitude to his parents — he will also honour them in some of the ways already discussed in Blessing Eleven (§D. & E.). If you remember, you can honour people in two ways — with gifts [amisapËjÅ] and also by putting into practice what they have taught and exemplified for your benefit [paÊipatipËjÅ]. You can see the distinction clearly in the case of a person who looks after their parents in their old age, but they never listen to any advice their parents give — they do whatever they feel like doing — they never think what they might do to keep up the parent's inspiration to take concern for their child's well-being.

B.3 Degrees of Ingratitude

Similarly using ingratitude as your standard, you can divide people into three different types:

1. Low-down people: Even though you know that a person has done you favours in the past, you don't even attempt to repay your debt of gratitude. The Buddha didn't go as far as to cause such people wicked but he called them 'lowdown' people. Such people often try to forget the good things that people have done for them in the past. Even a pet dog will help the owner guard the house, but if human being doesn't even recognize the debt of gratitude they have to another, there is something seriously wrong.

2. Wicked people*:* Such people are unable even to recognize the benefits or favours brought to them by others. In the olden days, even a robber wouldn't touch the possessions in a house where he had been given a free meal. However, the robbers of today are different. When they have finished the food they have been given, they will steal everything in the house and even hurt the householders too. Doing a favour for such a person is lost on them.

3. Treacherer*:* Such a person goes further than the forgoing — they will not only fail to recognize the benefits they have received from others — they bite the hand that feeds. They will not stop short of killing those to whom they have a debt of gratitude. Such a person might grow up as adopted child in someone's house, and as soon as they are old enough, run off with the householder's daughter.

Ungrateful people find it very difficult to integrate in society because they cannot accept the thinking of anyone else. If you are ever on the receiving end of a new acquaintance, employee, spouse etc. then always examine the degree to which they have or lack gratitude. If they have no gratitude and are unable to develop it, especially for their own parents, never shelter them in your house — no matter how tempting it may be to have someone who is very skilled or talented close at hand. You may find otherwise, it is like letting a cobra into your house. If you find your own children have such a tendency, quickly reeducate them from an early age, otherwise when they grow up there will be no limit to the evil they will be capable of. Don't go thinking that they will understand for themselves when they get older. You have to take responsibility for guiding them from the earliest possible age.

C. OBJECTS OF GRATITUDE

C.1 Comparison between Respect and Gratitude

There are many parallels between the list of people and things worthy of gratitude and those worthy of respect already discussed in Blessing Three. Gratitude is elicited not merely by a person or a thing that has latent virtue — but by the good that person or thing has done us. Thus the objects of gratitude tend to be more concrete than the corresponding list for 'respect'. Thus to avoid repetition, in this Blessing we cover the details only of the objects of gratitude not shared with the list of objects of respect — with the following list serving as a rough-and-ready comparison:

Personages

- Lord Buddha (*see Bl. Three §C1*)
- Community of Enlightened Monks (*see Bl. Three §C2*)

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Animals
● Beasts of Burden

Inanimate Objects

- Educational Objects (*see Bl. Three §D3*)
- Dhamma Scriptures (*see Bl. Three §D2*)
- Pagodas (*see Bl. Three §D1*)
- Homeland
- Shade-giving Trees

Goodness
● Merit

Yourself
● Your own health

C.2 Gratitude to Animals

The people of old were grateful to their beasts of burden by which they earned their living. They would not use their water buffaloes to plough in the heat of the midday sun when it would be torture to the beasts. They would find only the best of soft grass and pastures for their beasts to graze during their time of rest. They would never kill an old beast when it was beyond its working life — out of gratitude for all it had helped them with. They would maintain the buffalo to the end of its days. Some people loved their buffalos and felt their debt of gratitude so strongly that they would hardly ever beat them and some would even put up a mosquito net for the buffalos at night! When the buffalo passed away of natural causes, the owner would divide up the meat with his neighbours. People in the old days would even choose new employees based on the level of gratitude they displayed towards their old buffalos. If anyone didn't keep buffalo beyond their working age, they would not be accepted into a company.

C.3 Gratitude to Inanimate objects

In the old days, those who took their rest under a tree for many years, even though the tree is inani

mate (it has no mind) people would still be grateful for the shade and shelter they had had from it. Maybe they will take care of the tree as a result so that others might get the same benefit. They might not make a mess under such a tree or cut it down. You will miss the forests and realize the forests when they're gone. If you have gotten benefit even from your meditation centre or temple you ought to treat that place with respect.

Some people might even go as far to reflect as to the value they have taken from their homeland, home country or even the territory fought for and won by one's ancestors, where one has grown up in peace. You would know the value of your own country ifyou were ever made a refugee and had to leave your own country. You will miss it when its gone.

C.4 Merit

Just as electricity works invisibly to bring us many benefits and conveniences, the Lord Buddha discovered that there is another force which brings benefit to all of our lives, but about which (in general) we understand little of the workings — and that is merit — which had brought all forms of success and happiness into our lives. It gives us life and strength and protects us from handicap at birth. It brings us material comfort and intelligence. Most of us are new to meditation so we are still not particularly versed in the real value of merit, but if you meditate further until you attain the DhammakÅya, you will be able to start to understand the workings of merit in the same way that a scientist understands the workings of electricity. This is why merit deserves our gratitude

C.5 Yourself

None of the forgoing forms of gratitude are of any great surprise to anyone — but something which is many times more miraculous is gratitude to yourself. Your physical body is a vital piece of equipment for you to use in the pursuit of goodness. You can't have anyone else do it for you. Those who use their body for doing evil things such as breaking the Precepts: killing, stealing, committing adultery, lying or taking intoxicating drugs and alcohol. It is as good as destroying your own body. The

demerit of all these activities will follow you like a shadow. However, if you use your body to perform generous actions, keep the Precepts and meditate — the merit which arises as the result will nourish the mind and when it comes to time to leave this world, our physical body will go to the graveyard but our merit will be collected by our astral body and angelic body, leading us to take new life in heaven. When the power of that merit is exhausted then you return to be born as a human again. You will be the sort of person they invite to be born human — not the sort who has to compete to be born as a human. The proportions and characteristics of your body will be better than before — not excessively fat or thin, or white or black — everything will be in equilibrium. Eventually you will be able to advance you meditation until you are able to overcome all the defilements in the mind and you can enter upon Nirvana in the footsteps of the Buddha. You have to rely on your own body to do this. Thus everybody should be grateful to their own body which is their vehicle on the path to Nirvana.

D. DEVELOPING GRATITUDE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

D.1 Repaying a Debt of Gratitude

How large or small does a debt of gratitude have to be before it is worth recognizing? Sometimes it is impossible to put a price on a favour one has received. If you are dying and someone donates a bottle of blood to save your life, how can you put a price on that blood you have received? The blood is worth your life. You cannot put a price on the milk you have suckled at your mother's breast. If your mother had refused to feed you since you were small, you would have died. That milk is worth as much as your life also. For some things it is likely that you will never be able fully to repay the debt of gratitude you owe. The best we can do is to do what we can to repay our debt of gratitude until our dying day. Thus if not entirely necessary, stand on your own feet rather than accepting the help of others — but in case you cannot do without their help, then don't forget that debt of gratitude for the rest of your life. As a practical guideline, however for how a debt of gratitude can be repaid appropriately, bear in mind the definitions of conditional and unconditional love (*described in Blessing Seventeen §A.2*) which will allow you to size up your debts in a way that allows you to set your priorities without conflicting loyalties.

If someone has done you a favour, be quick to repay your own debt of gratitude (without them having to ask) — not just once but many times until your dying day. Don't go thinking like some children, "I lived in my parents' house for fifteen years — therefore I will look after may aging parents for only fifteen years, no more than that." If a person has done both good and bad things to you in the past, try to remember that person for the good things they have done, and be grateful for those good things. If you are to remember the bad things they have done, don't remember thinking only of vengeance, but remember in order to protect yourself from further such situations. Don't allow a few faults on the part of another person to obscure the good favours you have received from them. If you can manage to do this the whole of the time, you will be able to maintain a joyous heart and a happy face. You will not get old before your time with a frown established on your face. If all you can think of is the bad you have received at the hands of others, then this world will not appear a very pleasant place to live. You will fail to see any value in life. Some final hints for putting gratitude into practice in everyday life are as follows:

1. Build up the roots of gratitude in the younger generation: The people of old used to have a way of developing gratitude in the younger generation. Children would be trained to use only the very highest of words to greet and speak of their parents. They would bow to their parents every night before going to bed. When children get older, instead of just going through the motions of bowing they start to look for the virtues in their parents that make them worthy of respect. Once one can see the benefits received from one's parents one will be able to identify the goodness in others such as the Buddha or one's teachers. If we are unable to see the goodness received from our parents it is unlikely to be able to identify the goodness in anyone else.

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2. Be grateful to your own body: by using it only for good deeds. Don't go destroying your health with alcohol. Don't abuse your mouth by lying or gossiping with the neighbours. Don't go using your handsomeness to become a womanizer. Everyone has the opportunity to go to Nirvana so why don't you hurry up and use your entitlement? Thus you should use your own body with gratitude.

D.2 Words of Warning concerning Gratitude

It should be noted that gratitude needs be moderated by 'equanimity ' [upekkhÅ] (i.e. not allowed to be influenced by bias [Ågati] or by familiarity [visÅsa] or else can lead to corruption. Thus the importance of understanding Blessing Sixteen (*§C*) before moving on to this blessing.

Secondly, supposing you have done someone a favour in the past. In fact they owe you a favour in return. However if you are to openly claim a favour in return, then it makes you look like a manipulator instead of a benefactor in others' estimation. Thus if you ever do someone a favour, never go ask for that favour back! If you ask for money back that you have lent someone, that is alright — but when it is a favour you have given someone, asking for the favour back is not at all appropriate — because you often cannot put a price on a favour.

E. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

E.1 Metaphor: Sunlight is lost on a blind man

In the same way that the light of the sun is blind man no matter how brightly it shines, the favours and compassions of a benefactor are lost on an ungrateful person no matter how much help they may give.

E.2 Ex. One ladleful of rice DhA.ii.104ff.

Besides being the right-hand disciple of the Lord Buddha who was wise in teaching second to the Buddha himself. SÅriputta was also unsurpassed in the virtue of gratitude. He would not let even the smallest favour pass by unnoticed. There was one day in the town of RÅjagaha, the Lord Buddha was staying at VeÒuvana Temple and SÅriputta was there also. An aged brahmin called RÅdha who had been shunned by his wife, family and in-laws because he was not very wealthy. They abandoned RÅdha instead of looking after him in his old age. He didn't want to bother anyone unduly so he thought of becoming a Buddhist monk for the final days of his life. None of the monks in the temple were interested to take responsibility for his ordination because they saw that he was already old and would only be a burden on the temple. No-one would give him ordination. The Buddha asked if there was not a single monk in the temple who had received benefit from this Brahmin in the past. SÅriputta spoke up and said that once a long time ago RÅdha had given him a ladleful of rice when he was on alms round. The Buddha therefore asked SÅriputta to help out RÅdha on this occasion. SÅriputta ordained RÅdha and allowed him to stay in the same lodging teaching him meditation and the teachings of the Buddha. RÅdha practised hard and before long was able to become an arahant. SÅriputta certainly showed his gratitude and the Buddha revealed that it was not only in that lifetime that he had been grateful. Even in previous lifetimes, he had been grateful and this had built up the habits that allowed him to absorb the Dhamma to the point of mastery.

E.3 Ex. GuÅa/SÈha JÅtaka (J.157)

A second disciple of the Buddha well known for his gratitude was Ånanda. Ånanda had his own disciples to look after — five-hundred of them — according to the duty of senior monks. There was a young monk who attended Ånanda in every way
— washing his robes, sweeping the lodging and massaging his feet because Ånanda himself had many other responsibilities to attend to, especially as secretary to the Buddha. Even though Ånanda did not have much time to spare to look after his charges, he thought of his junior monks with gratitude. One day when Ånanda went to teach in the palace he was offered 500 sets of robes. Ånanda offered all 500 to that faithful student of his. Some people wondered why Ånanda was biased towards this particular student and whether he was really a stream-enterer [sotÅpana] as others claimed. Why didn't he divide up the robes equally? In any case the faithful student divided up the five-hundred

robes equally amongst the other 499 monks and kept only a single robe for himself. There were still tell-tale monks who went to ask the Buddha about what Ânanda had done. The Buddha explained that Ânanda had not given all the robes to a single monk because of bias because of three reasons:

1. He recognized with gratitude the benefits he had received from that student;
2. He knew that that particular monk possessed true virtue;
3. That monk had made himself endearing. The Buddha praised Ânanda for doing the right thing. If he had praised all the five-hundred monks

equally, it would have obscured the special good deeds possessed only by a single monk.

E.4 Ex. Cullapaduma JÅtaka (J.192)

When the Lord Buddha was still pursuing Perfections as the Bodhisattva, he was born as a prince called Paduma. His father the king was suspicious of his young and handsome son because he was afraid that his son might compete with him for his own wives and consorts. He banished his son from the kingdom and told him to come back only after the death of the king. Prince Paduma lived in the forest with his wife.

One day the prince came across a prisoner who had had his arms, legs, nose and ears cut off in punishment but who was nevertheless still alive and who had been cast away on a raft. The prince attended to the health of the prisoner even though the princess shunned him at first. Later, when the prisoner had recovered his health, somehow a love grew up between himself and the princess and the two of them had an affair. The princess was afraid she would be discovered so she lured the prince to the edge of a cliff and pushed him over. The prince survived by clinging to a branch below and returned to his home kingdom, in time to become king. He was fed up with marriage and ruled the kingdom in justice doing only good deeds throughout his life. As for the princess, she put her lover in a basket and would carry him here and there begging for a living. They made up a story that they had been married only out of respect for the wishes of their parents. Everyone was sorry for them, thinking that the wife had gratitude towards both her parents and her husband so they gave their donations of food and money. One day, the princess crossed into the kingdom of King Paduma and that day the king himself was there making donations to the poor with the others. Of course he remembered the couple and was angry because he had still not come to an end of defilements. He ordered the execution of both the princess and the prisoner, but after a few moments, his temper cooled down and reduced their punishment to banishment.

Thus you may trust a person but never trust their defilements — even if they are an invalid. Ingratitude has deep roots which can even be communicated from one lifetime to the next — therefore to get rid of ingratitude right from the present lifetime is the safest bet.

E.5 Ex. SÈlavanÅga JÅtaka (J.72)

In another lifetime the Lord Buddha was born as a white elephant in the forest. Devadatta was born a hunter. The hunter had lost his way in the forest so the elephant showed him the way home. The hunter left marks on the trees as he went and later found the opportunity to return to the same place in order to get the tusks of the white elephant. The first time the hunter came, the elephant gave him the tip of his right tusk. The second time the hunter came he gave him the tip of his left tusk. Each time the hunter came, the tusks of the elephant were cut a little shorter. As the tusks got shorter, sawing the tusks became very painful for the elephant. When only stumps were left, the hunter no longer used a saw. He cut into the flesh of the elephant's face to get the tusks out by their roots. The Bodhisattva elephant thought to itself,"It is not that I don't love my tusks, but I love them less than the prospect of pursuing perfection towards Buddhahood. The elephant thought of its giving as the perfection of giving. In the end the hunter took the life of the elephant — it's final gift to the world. As the hunter was cutting the tusks from the carcass of the elephant, the earth split in two where the hunter stood and sucked him directly into hell, without having to wait for him to die.

E.6 Ex. JavasakuÅa JÅtaka (J.308)

Once upon a time in the Himavanta forest a mountain lion was devouring his prey under a tree near his den. A piece of bone got stuck in his throat causing the lion extreme pain. A woodpecker perched above heard the lion's cries and asked what had happened to make him look so pained. The lion replied, "A piece of bone has stuck in my throat"

"I can take it out," offered the woodpecker.

"Please hurry up and remove it, my friend — you will be saving my life," roared the lion.

". . . but this is not going to be easy . . ."

". . . I don't see what is so difficult?"

". . . the problem is I don't dare to go inside your mouth," said the woodpecker. "I am afraid you will eat me up!"

"Oh! I wouldn't do that," said the lion. "Hurry up and save my life!"

Thus the woodpecker accepted to help the lion — but not without circumspect. He used a stout branch to prop the lion's jaws open first and only then did he enter the lion's mouth and pull the bone from the lion's throat with his beak. Only then did he re-emerge from the lion's mouth, knock away the branch and retreat hastily to a nearby tree. The lion's pain subsided. Later, fit and well again, the lion caught a wild buffalo and returned to sit under the same tree to devour his prey. The woodpecker learned of the lion's success in his hunting and tested the lion asking:

"I have heard you've been successful in your hunting — could you spare a little of the meat to share with me?"

"Be off with you," growled the lion. "You don't deserve anything from me — think yourself lucky that I granted you your life when you were between my jaws!"

The woodpecker criticized the lion for his selfishness and ingratitude and then flew away never to return.

Blessing Twenty-Six: Listening Regularly to Dhamma Teachings

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 The Place of Blessing Twenty-six in the order of things

We come to the twenty-sixth step of the staircase of Buddhist practice entitled 'Regular hearing of Dhamma Sermons'. Only once we have availed ourselves of the first four virtues of Group VII of these Blessings is it useful for us to go on to listen to Dhamma Teachings regularly. If we have done the requisite groundwork for the mind, when we come to listen to the Dhamma, it we can use what we learn as a mirror to evaluate ourselves in order to know which virtues we possess and those we lack, the weaknesses we have, and those we have overcome — so that we know in which areas we have room for improvement.

A.2 Objectives of listening to the Dhamma

Of course the point of listening to a sermon is to depthen one's wisdom. However wisdom in not an instant commodity. There are some things we don't understand immediately when we hear them, but that doesn't mean that listening to the Dhamma is a waste of time. Therefore listening to Dhamma sermons has objectives at many levels of complexity:

1. ***To arouse faith in the Triple Gem:*** without a foundation of faith it is unlikely that you will see the value of the teachings to the extent that you will want to reflect on them. Thus faith is like a sword which helps you to cut away the unnecessary doubts and fears. People are potentially so full of suspicions and doubts that they could write a list of hundreds. However, if you can put these doubts on one side to the extent that a few items of the Dhamma start to wake you up to reality, often these problems will be overcome. If at least you can see some value in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, then you begin to open your heart to the benefits which you can absorb from Buddhism.

2. To wake you up [saÔvega] ***to the reality of life*** Most of the time our mind wanders about aimlessly. If you can point your finger at something that allows the mind to wake up to the real nature of mind (such as the imminence of death) it can stimulate people really to get down to practice of the Dhamma. It is like matches and a matchbox which may lie together throughout their lives but they never break into flame unless one is struck against the other. In the same way, people co-exist with the cruel reality of life for years but it is not unless people receive some sort of transformative shock that they will get down to earnest practice to improve their lot. This form of transformative shock is the function of Dhamma teaching.

The Lord Buddha taught that whether Dhamma practice gives its fruit quickly or slowly, we still need to do it because at the very least such practice will start to engrain itself as a positive disposition [upanissaya] in oneself.

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B. LISTENING REGULARLY TO DHAMMA TEACHINGS

B.1 Definitions

The meaning of the title of this particular blessing is to seek out opportunities to hear Buddhist teachings and make time to listen to them from knowledgeable teachers in order to transform one's mind for the better — and having heard teachings in theory, to use the virtues learned as a mirror to examine the presence or absence of those virtues in ourselves and to see whether the virtues we already have can be improved upon. For example, having heard a teaching about 'patience' one should use one's new knowledge to examine one's own heart to see the level of patience in oneself. If you have some degree of patience in you, you should be honest about yourself about how much — are there some things which still make you impatient? Can you put up with unpleasant things, but find it hard to say 'no' to temptations? Listening to a Dhamma sermon, you will know instantly where you have room for improvement. The main point of this particular blessing is the choice of appropriate things to listen to and secondly the choice of appropriate time to listen to them too.

The word 'Dhamma' means (*also defined in Blessing Sixteen*) Buddhist teachings as found in the TipiÊaka. We need to find the time to listen to such teachings — because the teachings of the Buddha are without a shadow of a doubt beneficial — because if anyone can really understand them and practice them for themselves, they will certainly manage to avoid hardship in the long or short term. Sometimes we hear that there are 84,000 headings of Dhamma in the Buddha's teachings. Do you think you know as many of these as 10,000 yet? Or perhaps 1,000? People in general know 10-200 headings of Dhamma from the Teachings. Sometimes, we only know such subject matter but we have still not got round to practising it for ourselves. Thus if you are to ask yourself which of the 84,000 headings of Dhamma it would be useful to listen to, the answer is 'as many as possible'.

B.2 Appropriate times to listen to the Dhamma

There are four main appropriate times to listen to the Dhamma teachings. The Buddha taught:

1. On Quarter-Moon Days (the Buddhist Holy Days): These are the full-moon days, new-moon days and half-moon days. Such days are about seven-days apart. You will find a similar rhythm of holy days in almost every religion. Christians observe their Sabbath every Sunday. Moslems observe the Sabbath on Fridays and Jews on Saurday. Why should all religions have such a seven-day periodicity for listening to religious teachings? Usually even if someone is impressed or inspired by a teaching, they will remember such a teaching for only a few days. Most people have so many other things on their minds, that within seven days will forget spiritual teachings they have learned and at the end of seven days they will return to their bad old ways. If you listen to a teaching which recommends that you study conscientiously, maybe you will become a conscientious student for a few days, but by the end of the week you will be back to your old lazy ways. Supposing your parents have given you some strong advice about a matter. Maybe you will remember what they have taught you for a few days, but by the end of the week you will start to forget again. It is the same for practically every good habit we set out to build for ourselves — if we are absent from our spiritual teacher for more than seven days, we start to revert to our old behaviour. Thus it is no coincidence that there is teaching every seven days no matter what the religion. It is like recharging your batteries every seven days — topping up your morale.

2. Whenever there are unskilful states arising in the mind: If unskilful states arise in your mind, you should be quick to listen to a Dhamma teaching. It doesn't matter what day of the week it is, if your mind has fallen into unskilful states — that is the right time to listen to the Dhamma. It doesn't matter where or from whom you listen to such Dhamma — from a monk in a temple or from a layperson or even from your parents or elders — the important thing is that you cannot just allow your mind to 'run riot' — you have to do something immediately to solve the problem

of the mind that you are experiencing. If you are feeling slighted or sorry for yourself, don't allow that state of mind to continue, but you should listen to some Dhamma teachings or else you might get so negative that you feel suicidal. Supposing that you are particularly angry with the neighbours, then you should go and listen to the Dhamma before you do something you will regret later. If ever the feeling that you would like to respond to any of these three sorts of unwholesome mental preoccupations [akusalavitakka] (A.iii.446) arises in the mind to make it unskilful, then find the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma without delay:

1. preoccupation with sense-pleasures [kÅma-vitakka]: when your mind is overcome with desire (especially sensual temptation);

2. preoccupation with vengefulness [byÄpÅda-vitakka]: (when you feel that you would like to steal from people, or damage their reputation or even when you are angry),

3. preoccupation with violence or cruelty [vihiÔsÅ-vitakka]: when you want to hurt or take advantage of others

3. When in Doubt: An appropriate time to listen to the Dhamma is when doubts arise in your mind

— for example, when you feel there is something about your meditation practice or what you have heard that you don't understand or if you find something seemingly inconsistent in the Dhamma teachings you have heard. If you have doubts, then go to find a teaching monk or someone more experienced in the Dhamma practice than yourself — so you can put your mind at rest.

4. ***Whenever there is a sermon being given:*** If you hear that there is a sermon on Dhamma being given and you know that the person or monk giving the sermon is someone who has real knowledge, it doesn't matter what day of the week it is, or what time of the day it is, you should not hesitate to go and listen to such a sermon. It is a very difficult thing for anyone able to understand the Dhamma to arise in the world. To study the Dhamma to the point of understanding takes time and it requires that they study from the Buddha Himself or someone who is as adept as the Buddha. Not only that, but they must also be able to communicate what they have learned in a way that others can understand. If there is such a person arisen in the world, you should not delay — go and listen to what they have to teach without hesitation. If you hear that there is someone who is enlightened then you should see what they have to teach

— but beware of those who make false claim to being enlightened such as the many people who have to advertise themselves. However, if someone is knowledgeable, has a good manner of practice and has a gift for making Dhamma easy to understand — be quick to make yourself one of the audience whenever you hear news that they are teaching.

The Buddha even went further to enumerate the virtues of those who teach the Dhamma and those who listen to the Dhamma.

B.3 Marks of a good Dhamma Teacher

Those who are good at teaching the Dhamma should have the following characteristics (A.ii.184)(you can use these characteristics as quality control for any Dhamma teacher about whom you have your doubts):

1. Expounds Dhamma sequentially: This means the speaker must teach the Dhamma in way that becomes gradually more profound (not someone who skips over important subject matter vital for the listener's understanding). To be sequentially profound requires that the speaker:

1. has a real understanding of their own subject matter;
2. has skill in communication
3. must have prepared and planned what he is going to teach. It is not good enough just to speak 'off the top of one's head'.

2. ***Gives reasons for the Dhamma taught:*** It is not good enough just to repeat what you have memorized from a textbook or even from the Scriptures. It is unacceptable for a teacher who has not done any preparation simply to take the same textbook which the students already have

and read it aloud to them. You have to be able to explain the causes and effects in any relationship, be able to categorize, analyze, generalize and distinguish. When teaching virtue, it is only possible to explain something thoroughly if one has practiced such a virtue for oneself. How can you expect to teach meditation if you have never practised for yourself? How can you expect to teach about the Five Precepts or Eight Precepts, if you are unable even to keep a single Precept yourself? If you are giving a description or an example and there are only the examples of what others have done, but you can never pay witness to your own good deeds, who will be convinced by what you have to say?

3. Teaches out of sincere compassion for the listener: The goodwill of loving kindness and compassion are the basic foundation of a good teacher. Supposing someone is very virtuous and can practice many virtues for himself (like a *paccekabuddha*) but lacks compassion for his fellow man — supposing he gives up teaching as soon as someone doesn't understand a few words of what he has said — then it may be that he lacks sufficient compassion to teach others.

4. Teaching without the motive of gaining something (material) in return: A good teacher must not teach with a wish for something material (e.g. wealth, praise or fame) in return. Some monks lose their interest in giving sermons if they are offered insufficient donations. Such thinking is more worthy of a mercenary Dhamma teacher. Some are not interested in the income from their sermon, but will be disappointed if their audience is small. If there is a large audience, they will rise to the occasion — but if there are only a few in the congregation, they don't really bother what they teach and try to finish as early as possible. This is wrong. Thus if you can be pleased no matter how many or few come to listen to your teaching, that is one of the signs of a successful Dhamma teacher. The Great Abbot of Wat Paknam taught:

> "If a thousand come, we teach a thousand: (its tiring but a few words can change the lives of many, so the speaker accrues a lot of merit — so that's good). If a hundred come, we teach a hundred: (its not so tiring — so that's also good). If a handful of people come, we teach a handful: (so we don't have to speak so loudly, and the atmosphere can be a little more informal — so that's also good). If no-one comes, we sit for meditation and teach ourselves (so that's also good)"

5. Teaching without bringing conflict to yourself or others: Sometimes when someone is teaching, they are not firmly established in the virtues they teach — when they see someone they don't like in the audience, they take the opportunity to insult that person in the course of their teaching (bringing yourself into conflict with others). Others use giving sermons as the opportunity to boast about themselves (bringing yourself into conflict with yourself). This is a very important distinguishing feature of how the teachings of Buddhism have always been spread — the Buddha laid down guidelines for his monks so that they never teach in a way that brings Buddhism into conflict with other religions — but that doesn't mean Buddhism is a religion of '*laissezfaire*' — it means that when teaching, one should choose one's explanations and subject matter with care.

If you ever hear that someone who has all five of these qualities who will give a sermon, then if you can take leave from work, go and listen to them without delay and without worrying what day of the week it is.

B.4 Marks of a Good Listener to the Dhamma

The person who is a good listener to the Dhamma also should have five qualities (MNidA.8):

1. ***Doesn't look down on the subject matter:*** Never look down on the subject matter being taught that it is too basic 'for the likes of yourself'. The Buddha taught that each and every item of Dhamma that he taught has the quality that if it is practised to the full it can lead to enlightenment in the end — but some people fail to see the teachings in sufficient depth because they

look down on the subject matter and thus miss the real value. Some people, for example, think that the First Blessing (not associating with fools) just means being choosy about one's friends — and conclude that it is too simple to waste their time with. They have their own preconceived ideas about what fools are like so they don't want to waste time hearing a sermon about such a subject! But looked at through the eyes of the initiated, even this single subject practised properly can allow us to enter upon Nirvana! — however a person needs to look at the teaching sufficiently deeply to realize that they must also give up associating with the fool in themselves — the part of themselves that is stingy, undisciplined and too lazy to meditate. Thus don't go thinking any item of the Dhamma is too simple to bother learning or revising. Thus those who appreciate Dhamma teaching never look down on the materials they are taught.

2. Doesn't look down on the level of knowledge of the teacher: Don't go thinking that a monk is young, therefore there is probably nothing you can learn from him. Don't go thinking that as an older person you have to hear the Dhamma from and old monk to be a match for your own level of experience. It is therefore a great mistake to look down on the knowledge of a Dhamma teacher. In order to help remind the people not to look down on the knowledge of a teacher, in the olden times, people would hold their hands in a gesture of prayer throughout the sermon they were listening to. However in the present day, you can sit however you like, but don't fall asleep or chat with your friends during the sermon or else that is showing that you are looking down on the knowledge of the teacher. You close the door on your own possibility of spiritual progress. The Buddha warned (*Dahara Sutta S.i.68*) that there are four small things which you should never underestimate the importance of:

1. a small fire: even a small fire can grow to burn down an entire city

2. a small poisonous snake: you can die from the bite even of a small snake

3. a young king: some kings have reigned since they were not yet thirty (e.g. Alexander the Great)

4. a young monk: some have become arahants since the age of seven.

3. Never look down on yourself: Don't go thinking that you have no chance of being able to understand anything as profound as the Dhamma. In fact, even the most unlikely of people have benefitted from Dhamma teachings to the degree they could become arahants. *See the story of*(CËlapanthaka *§D.2 below*). Some people think that they have no chance of being able to transform themselves for the better so they give up even before they start. They think to themselves that success in the study of the Dhamma may take years even for an enthusiastic person — so what hope does a lazy person like them have?

4. Keeping the mind in meditation (concentration) when listening: Your mind should be in meditation while listening to sermons — you shouldn't distract yourself during a sermon by chatting or picking your fingernails etc.. The better your mind is concentrated in meditation as you hear a talk the more you will understand of the subject being taught. In the time of the Buddha, when He needed to teach a very subtle subject, he would sit with his eyes closed in meditation to teach and the listeners would do the same in order to be able to follow the subtleties of his teaching. In this way, many people were able to attain the path and fruit of Nirvana. Thus we too, should keep a mind of meditation when listening to Dhamma teachings in keeping with this age old Buddhist tradition.

5. Reflects wisely [yonisomanasikÅra] ***on everything learned:*** You should reflect further on the things you have learned from a sermon — turning the subject matter over in your mind and examining it from different angles. Such a habit will allow you a fast and quick mastery of the subject matter.

Thus both the teacher and the listener each have five points of practice which they need to apply if a sermon of the Dhamma is to give its maximum benefits.

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C. OUTCOMES OF LISTENING TO THE DHAMMA

C.1 Fruits of listening to the Dhamma (A.iii.248)

1. Hearing things never before heard [assutaÔ suÁÅti]: Because a Dhamma teacher will always put in the effort to find new items of Dhamma for the listener (*see Blessing Three §C.2*), if we attend a Dhamma sermon, we will almost always be hearing something we have never heard before;

2. Clarifying things already heard [sutaÔ pariyodapeti]: If it happens that the subject to the sermon is something we have already heard before, at the very least, it will allow us to revise and depthen what we already know and raise our mastery to a new level allowing us to remember more;

3. Dispelling one's doubts [kaÌkhaÔ vihanati]: If after hearing teachings in the past, it is still with some reluctance that we give up old bad habits and strive for new better ones, as a result of hearing a Dhamma sermon, some of that doubt and reluctance will be dispelled;

4. Straightening one's views [diÊÊhiÔ ujuÔ karoti]: In the course of our everyday life as we journey in pursuit of virtue, we may come up against many obstacles from inside and outside which might conspire to infiltrate our thinking with 'false views' [micchÅ diÊÊhÈ]. Such false views if left to their own devices can eventually lead our spiritual cultivation to go in circles or else to deviate from the objectives we have set ourselves. One advantage of regularly hearing Dhamma teachings is that we will be able to identify the workings of False View in our mind and to uproot these, cultivating Right View [sammÅ diÊÊhÈ] in their place.

5. Calming the mind and bringing happiness [cittamassa pasÈdati]: Hearing Dhamma sermons will 'wake us up' to the reality of life and the world, shaking our mind out of distraction with sensuality, vengeance and aggression while making clearer to us where our weaknesses lie, and to raise up our morale giving us the means by which to definitively overcome those weaknesses — ultimately attaining the path and fruit of Nirvana.

C.2 Predispositions acquired through listening to the Dhamma

By listening to Dhamma sermons, even though we might not understand everything of what we hear, something which we will gradually acquire in our personality through our perseverence are certain sorts of pre-disposition. Such deeply rooted habits become like bedrock for the mind. Even though we might not understand everything we hear when we listen to the Dhamma, before long, we will start to build up a vocabulary of technical terms associated with the Dhamma — even if we are not sure of the meaning, we have a familiarity with them. Sometimes we don't know the meaning of chanting, but before long we have a passing acquaintance with the Pali words. Such predispositions will be like 'capital' that will be a downpayment making cultivation of good deeds by us easier in future in four different ways:

1. Quicker attainment of wisdom: in subsequent existences one will attain wisdom quickly and with ease. One will be able to recall and apply items of Dhamma with ease allowing one to attain the path and fruit of Nirvana quickly:

2. Ability to teach: in subsequent existences, once one has a knowledge of Dhamma, it will be easy for one to teach it and explain it to others;

3. Recognition of the Dhamma message: in subsequent existences, even if one cannot remember items of Dhamma oneself, but upon hearing Dhamma teaching from others, one will be able to attain the path and fruit of Nirvana quickly

> and one's understanding will be thorough and without any shadow of a doubt. Like a person who has heard the sound of a drum once before
>
> even much later, after a journey of many miles
>
> if they are to hear the sound of a drum for the second time, they will recognize it instantly for what it is. It would be hard for anyone to persuade such a person that what they are listening to is not a drum.

4. ***Easily re-awakened to the value of Dhamma teachings:*** in subsequent existences, even if one can no longer remember the Dhamma one has

learned, and even if there is no-one to teach it, but on hearing only a few words of advice from others, or perhaps even overhearing such advice

— it will bring back one's former knowledge of Dhamma easily allowing one to attain the path and fruit of Nirvana with ease.

Even those who regularly perform their Morning and Evening Chanting, even though they might not know the precise meaning of the Pali vocabulary

— it is certainly not a waste of time because at the very least it will bring peace of mind and a familiarity with the Pali turns of phrase so that in a future existence even just overhearing the sound of someone else chanting, it will attract one to investigate more closely and have the opportunity to hear Dhamma teachings — and having heard them, to understand them with ease as the result of the past disposition we have built up for ourselves, so that we can attain the path and fruit of Nirvana with ease.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Proverb: Those who see the danger in the cycle of existence (S.v.94-6)

> "O! You who see the danger in the cycles of existence [saÔsÅra], in whatsoever era the Noble Disciples hear the Dhamma, listen to the marrow of their bones, listen to the innermost part of their mind, and who muster all of their encouragement, bending their ears to listen in earnest — in that era their Five Hindrances will be overcome and their Seven Factors of Enlightenment [bojjhaṀga] will be brought to completion through the power of their meditation."

D.2 Ex. CËlapanthaka DhA.i.239ff.

There was one monk in the time of the Lord Buddha called CËlapanthaka who had ordained for ten years but was so inert that after all that time he could not even remember four lines of verse (one *vagga*). His elder brother (already an arahant) despaired. He thought, "My younger brother is so dumb he cannot even remember four lines of verse so what chance would he have of learning the chant ing or any of the longer suttas of the Buddha?" CËlapanthaka was chased out of the temple and shunned because he wasn't considered worth his almsfood. CËlapanthaka left the temple in despair and met with the Buddha. CËlapanthaka informed the Buddha that he was going to disrobe. The Buddha asked him, "When you ordained, did you ordain to offer your life to Buddhism or did you ordain for the benefit of your big brother?" CËlapanthaka agreed he had ordained to offer his life for Buddhism so he renewed his interest to continue with the ordination. The Buddha looked back into the previous lifetimes of CËlapanthaka to see what was the problem impeding his progress in the apprehension of Buddhism. In past lives he had been very intelligent but he had become arrogant as the result of his intelligence and had regularly teased a fellow monk who was not so gifted so often that the other monk despaired and disrobed. That evil had made him as stupid as his victim in every subsequent lifetime. The Buddha realized that to memorize any scriptures would be fruitless so he found another way to teach the monk. He taught the monk the word 'rajoharaÁaÔ' (meaning sullied) and gave the monk a piece of white cloth with which to wipe his own head. He gave the monk the practice of reciting the word while at the same time wiping his head with the cloth. The white cloth was blackened by sweat and dirt and eventually CËlapanthaka, seeing that the impurity of his own body had sullied the white cloth to make it black, lost attraction for his own body, his mind was able to enter the centre of his body and attain the DhammakÅya inside. He became an arahant where he stood. His elder brother could not believe he was enlightened until his younger brother performed a feat of mental power by replicating thousands of images of himself [manomayiddhi].

D.3 ***Ex. JanasÅna Ascetic*** (MahÅvaÔsa-ÊËkÅ 190ff.)
In the time of Kassapa Buddha, there was a python which had dug a burrow just next to a cave where monks regularly chanted the Abhidhamma. The monks often chanted the verses concerning the sense doors [Åyatana] and how they should be re-

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strained. The python heard the chanting every day but because it was a snake, of course it could not understand the meaning. It could only remember the word 'Åyatana' and the pleasant personality of the monk chanting the verses. It was these things that the snake remembered at the last moments of its life. Usually animals will only think of food, mating and fear of death — but this snake thought only of Dhamma and was reborn as an angel. It lived in heaven for a hundred years. The ex-snake was reborn in about 300 B.C. as JanasÅna and his former familiarity with the chanting attracted him to ordination, even from teenage. He became an ascetic who was able to become versed in the Vedas[1]. The ascetic also trained in meditation and was able to make accurate predictions.

At that time the Queen who would be mother to the Emperor Asoka conceived. Usually when women become pregnant, they have morning sickness which leads them to have some strange compulsions. Some would like to eat strange things such as sand or human blood. Some feel compelled to shout at the neighbours. For the mother of Asoka, her compulsion was to have the moon and the sun at her feet and to eat stars and clouds.

The young ascetic heard the strange desires of the queen and was able to tell her that he child would be no ordinary son. He told her that wanting to stand on the sun and the moon was a sign that her son would rule the whole of the subcontinent. Wanting to eat the stars was a sign that Asoka would kill some of his own brothers and sisters and wanting to eat clouds was a sign that he would destroy heretic sects which got in the way of the truth (like the clouds which hide the sun).

The life of Emperor Asoka proved all the prophecies of the ascetic to be true, so Asoka sent his men with a golden palanquin to invite the ascetic to the palace. However, on the way, the ascetic visited Vattaniya Hermitage and met with an arahant Assagutta who taught about the sense doors. Just hearing the word 'Åyatana' woke him up to the value of Buddhism to the extent that he asked to ordain at that very moment and could become an arahant himself in the reign of Asoka. Thus even listening to the Dhamma without understanding the meaning can have implications to the extent of enlightenment in the future.

1. The Vedas are Hindu scriptures in which some of the prophetic materials share elements of the Buddhist scriptures from a time when Buddhism has almost disappeared from the world and which is passed down to the next era.

D.4 Ex. Saccaka Nigantha M.i.234ff., MA.i.469ff.

In the JÅyamaİgalagÅthÅ chanting which recollects the victories of the Buddha achieved without aggression — there was one example in that chanting of a dialogue with a leading philosopher in contemporary India. Both his parents were also philosophers. In his own right, he was renowned for his skill in dialogue. He was not contented when many of his supporters became followers of the Buddha so he planned to defeat the Buddha in debate to descredit Him. He went to see the Buddha with a huge congregation of supporters (who loved debates).

That morning the Buddha had seen in his meditation that Saccaka Nigantha was ripe for progress in Dhamma that day, but not to the extent of attaining the Path and Fruit of Nirvana (the reason for this was because he lacked sufficient engrained familiarity with the Dhamma). However, as a result of their debate, Saccaka Nigantha would absorb the Dhamma he had learned as an engrained familiarity that would help him towards enlightenment in a future lifetime. The philosopher was defeated in the discussion and listened to the teaching of the Buddha. He invited the Buddha to take a meal in his own house and again heard a repetition of the same sermon, but still was unable to understand it. He could manage no more than faith.

In the next lifetime he was born in Sri Lanka and became a monk known as KÅÒa-Buddharakkhita at an early age. He knew all the Teachings by heart, but the engrained habits of a philosopher rendered him unable to practice any of them. He knew only the theory. One day his teacher warned him to practice himself or else all his students would be arahants before him. The monk realized his mistake, practised for himself and was soon able to become an arahant himself. At that time, with his old ability in dialogue together with the sermon in his mind, received from the Buddha in a previous life

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time, he was soon able to become a valuable Buddhist missionary.

D.5 Ex. KÅÒÈ ***KuraragharikÅ (DhA.iv.103ff.)***

KÅÒÈ KuraragharikÅ was the mother of SoÁa-KuÊikaÁÁÅ Thera. On one occasion, SoÁa passed through his home town. On his return from the Jetavana monastery, his mother met him and organised a grand charity in his honour. Having heard that her son could expound the Dhamma very well, she requested him to give a discourse. SoÁa complied with her request and so she built a pavilion for the purpose. A large crowd, including his mother, turned up to listen to the Dhamma expounded by SoÁa.

While she was at the pavilion, some thieves broke into her house. However the leader of the thieves went to the pavilion to keep an eye on her. His intention was to kill her should she return home early on learning about the theft at her house. Her maid, left behind to guard the house, went to the pavilion to inform her about the theft, but the lady only said, 'Let the thieves take all my money, I don't care. But don't come and disturb me while I am listening to the Dhamma!' Having reprimanded her, she sent the maid home.

The leader of the thieves, who was sitting closeby, overheard everything. Her words also made him think, 'If we take away the property of this wise and noble lady, we will surely be punished. We might even be struck by lightning.' The leader got alarmed, hurried back to her house and ordered his thieves to return all the things they had taken. The gang of thieves then went to the pavilion to listen to the Dhamma.

SoÁa finished his exposition of the Dhamma at the crack of dawn. Then, the leader and all the thieves admitted their mistakes and requested for her forgiveness. Being a kind and devout lady she pardoned them all. Realising the evil of their ways, all the thieves joined the Holy Order. After receiving instructions from SoÁa, the new *bhikkhu*s went into the forest to practise meditation. The Buddha knowing their mental attitudes sent forth his radiance and exhorted them on the way to gain Purity

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The Eighth Group of Blessings
"Instilling Oneself with Higher Virtues"

Having acquired the basic virtues in Group VII culminating in regular listening to the Dhamma (Blessing Twenty-Six) — to cultivate oneself further on the Buddhist path of progress, it is necessary to instill ourselves with higher virtues such as patience, openness to criticism, the sight of a true monk and regular dicussion of the Dhamma. There is a major distinction between the basic virtues described in Group VII and the higher virtues described in Group VIII. The basic virtues of Group VII are concerned with making ourselves receptive to what we hear during a Dhamma talk — and this is the major purpose of the virtues of respect, humility and gratitude. However the culmination of Group VIII is more demanding. Even after the explanation of various items of Dhamma in Group VII we may not understand them until we see them exemplified. We might be able to understand the Precepts [*sīla*] from a Dhamma sermon, but we might not be able to comprehend how they can bring happiness until we see the happiness of a monk who keeps the Precepts well in Group VIII. Thus the 'higher' virtues of Group VIII are more demanding because they are 'interactive' virtues — namely patience and openness to criticism — which make us ready before we see a monk and discuss the Dhamma with him. Without these two major 'interactive' virtues, if the monk should attempt to point out a profound truth to us which conflicts with the defilements still lurking in our mind, if too much is demanded of us, instead of improving ourselves, we might flounce away in a huff — the 'fool' re-appearing in us because our patience and openness to criticism is insufficient.

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Blessing Twenty-Seven: Patience

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 The Place of Blessing Twenty-seven in the order of things

Patience is necessary as an interactive virtue because we need to be prepared to overcome many possible obstacles, especially conflicts and temptations, in order to acquire the higher virtues. Patience is one of the most important qualities of mind we can possess. We do meditation the whole of our lives to give rise to the wisdom that will allow us to identify and overcome the defilements in the mind — but you could never attain wisdom without a foundation of patience. In fact patience is not only the foundation of wisdom — it is the foundation of every sort of virtue in the world. Thus if we already have a mirror with which we can examine the quality of the mind, the first thing we should be looking for is 'patience' in the mind. No matter what task we undertake, our success relies not only upon our level of wisdom, but also our patience to apply our wisdom to its intended conclusion. Patience is the virtue allowing us to overcome the temptation to backslide or become dejected instead of being diligent. Instead of seeing obstacles with trepidation, with patience we welcome them as challenges — thus every success both in spiritual and worldly ways is a monument to the virtue of patience. The Buddha praised patience as one of the greatest virtues, second only to wisdom.

B. PATIENCE

B.1 Definition: Patience

The root meaning of the Pali word for patience, "khanti" literally means maintaining one's normal state — and this would be true no matter whether shaken by tempting or unpleasant stimuli — in the face of such obstacles, a patient person remains steadfast.

B.2 Characteristics of Patience

The characteristics of authentic patience are as follows:

1. ***We can put up with things:*** If insulted by a fool, one pretends one has not heard. If you are reprimanded for something that is not true or if you are provoked, you pretend not to hear. Some have just given up drinking alcohol and knowing that a colleague might intentionally order some liquor and sit down at the same table with the intention of making your mouth water — if you pretend not to see, that is the practice of patience. Patience is to do all the good things you normally do with restraint of speech and mind. It applies especially when someone has done you a favour in the past, but later does something annoying to you. Patience is to continue to treat them well without forgetting your debt of gratitude to them. Supposing you have always been someone with very strong false views, by patience you will keep your mouth shut, not allowing your views to express themselves in your

speech and by continuing to work on yourself — until there are no further traces of such false views even in your thoughts.

2. Avoiding being cruel: One is able to keep one's temper under control — rather than getting angry, violent or threatening. Those who lose their temper easily show a lack in their development of patience. There is a proverb coined by Indra that:

> "Those angry in response to the angry provocation of others are the worse of the two; Those who don't respond angrily to angry provocation have won the battle which is hard indeed to win." (S.i.157)

At a more subtle level, avoiding cruelty even means avoiding allowing other things to irritate you — whether it be extravagant people, or working in the hot weather — irritation would be a sign that your level of patience is still lacking.There should not even be thought of getting your own back on others who have hurt you in the past.

3. Not bringing tears to others: One avoids bringing suffering or mental hurt to others because of any hatred we might bear towards them.

4. Maintaining joyousness of mind the whole of the time: One should not allow one's mind to fall away from contentment — rather than being vengeful or putting the blame on the weather, fate or scapegoats, we should try to do all sorts of work with a mind that is blythe. You look on the bright side of the world, instead of thinking who to blame for hardships — instead of grinding your teeth whenever you are ill thinking, "Why is it always me? Why do others never get ill like me?"

In addition to all of these you should be interested only to mind your own business — instead of nosing into the affairs of others which don't concern you. Instead of going for instant solutions from fortune tellers, one should get down to hard and honest work to ameliorate the situation through your own abilities. Keeping the Precepts no matter whether others laugh at you or not, would count as patience. Supposing you have never meditated before, or you have meditated but have still not attained the Sphere of Dhamma or you are still not able to maintain the Sphere of Dhamma the whole of the time or you are still unable to attain the Dhammakaya — then getting on with our daily practice in spite of what anyone else says, can be counted as patience.

B.3 Misunderstandings concerning patience

Some may be familiar with effigies of three monkies often seen in Asia — one monkey with its hands over his eyes, the second with his hands over his ears and a third with a hand over his mouth. This is a symbol of the ancient proverb advocating patience:

"See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" Even though this proverb is well known, even the meaning of the three monkies has been twisted in the modern day by those who misunderstand patience. They say: "Even if you see evil behaviour turn a blind eye; even if you hear evil speech, pretend you haven't heard; even if you know something evil is going on, keep your mouth shut" Thus various evil actions such as corruption continue unabated as a result of the pseudo-patience of its witnesses. Thus if we are really to understand patience, we have to look carefully at its guiding principles instead of succumbing to widespread misunderstandings. Supposing a child is too lazy to study or help around the house. If his mother reprimands him and he is unmoved and indifferent, is that patience? Indeed, it is maintaining one's normal conduct in the face of unpleasant stimuli, but it is not the cultivation of patience. In this case it would be better referred to as stubborness. Supposing some hooligans are normally troublemakers and they ignore someone who tells them to stop, carrying on with their normal troublemaking — is that patience? They may say it is the cultivation of patience, but in fact it is more likely to be insensitivity to advice.

Supposing someone is so poor that he is about to starve, but instead of helping himself by going out

and earning money, he puts up with the situation — calling it patience — In fact, he could show a lot more patience in striving hard to do the necessary to ameliorate his situation.

By contrast, patience should be the saving grace that allows one to extricate oneself from truancy, delinquence or poverty. The important characteristic of patience is for as long as you are truly patience it should be on the basis of a radiant mind not a clouded one! True patience is thus:

- the patience to extract oneself from and avoid all evil — allows you to endure until you can extract yourself from the clutches of evil behaviour
- the patience to continue to do all manner of virtuous deeds — allows you to persevere in doing good deeds
- the patience to maintain one's mind, not allowing it to become clouded — allows you to keep your mind pure and radiant

B.4 Levels of patience

Patience exists at at least four different levels:

1. Patience in the face of hardship: This means endurance of hardships caused by the environment around us — such as the heat of the sun, or the rain. We were born with the sky over our heads and not a roof, so if it rains or the sun is hot then we have to accept it and carry on with our work in the rain or the sun.

2. Patience in the face of physical suffering: Everybody has physical feelings in their body. All you need to do is sit without moving for a few minutes and you will start to feel stiff. However, some people sit around a gambling table or sit watching a movie all night without moving or complaining — but why when you sit for meditation for a few minutes is it such a grueling experience (?) — only because you lack patience in the face of suffering. This category of patience also includes toleration of the suffering implicit in illness. If a person has an illness and they exaggerate their suffering by reveling in it, it is as if they are twice as ill than they need to be. Some people can tolerate all sorts of hardship, but if they see their own blood from a cut in their finger they will scream and cry as if they were going to die. In a hospital there were three patients. One was crying out as if in agony and it was discovered that she had lost her ring finger. She couldn't accept her own bad luck because she thought, "I'll never be able to wear a wedding ring any more." The second bed had a patient who was just moaning now and then. She had lost her arm and both legs. At the third bed, all was quiet because the patient had a broken neck. It was because of many similar situations that the people of old had the saying, "Don't attend to the patients who cry out loudly first, because they are still a long way from death. Take care of the ones who have no strength to cry out any more — because we have no way of knowing how much longer they will be with us.

3. Patience in the face of conflict (mental suffering): This refers to patience we have when confronted by anger, discontent and denial that comes from hearing insulting words, unpleasant treatment or manners, being put under pressure by one's boss or by one's subordinates and various sorts of injustice in society. People in our society are very diverse in their dispositions — thus don't expect everyone to be as you would want in every respect — thus once you start to develop the social dimension of your life, if you want to get along with other people, you need to prepare plenty of this sort of patience for yourself. Everybody in the world loves to do exactly whatever they want without taking any notice of any regulations — but in fact it just shows that you are lacking this third form of patience. The more people live in a community together, the more occasions there will be for conflict. People have different habits, needs and backgrounds and if they don't have the capacity to be tolerant of others' differences then conflicts will soon break out. Even if you possess all the forms of patience already discussed, but you lack patience in the face of conflict, you cannot make a success of life — supposing you resign from a place of work every time you get a little bit of criticism?

4. ***Patience in the face of temptation:*** This means patience to avoid succumbing to attractive or distractive things which maybe you would like to do but which are inappropriate e.g. the patience not to succumb to the temptation of touring night clubs, gambling, addictive drugs, bribery, corruption, promiscuity, drunkenness concerning rank or power or boasting etc. This is resistance towards the things that distract us from our real work or purpose — for example, to resist the attraction of going on outings, gambling, smoking, drinking or taking drugs. Before you had experience of any of these things, you would have found it easy to resist any of them because you regarded all of them in a negative light — but whenever you have had your first taste, your capacity to refuse is significantly weakened. Before you knew the rules of poker the whole game seemed very tedious but as soon as you knew how to play, it began to feel more like a way of strengthening friendship, or an aid to mental calculation. Before trying heroin, like the rest of the world you would condemn it, but once you become more familiar with it, it suddenly seems more acceptable as a way of enhancing your strength. It might take patience not to accept a bribe. If someone offers you a bribe of a 1,000 or 10,000, you might find it easy to refuse, saying, "What do you think I am — a mercenary?" But what if they offer you 100,000 to keep your mouth shut? You might say, "Personally, I don't have the need of your money, but sometimes, I have to help out my employees and their families . . . but both my self-respect and those of my employees are worth more than your money!" When offered a million, there is only one response left — "I'll take it!" As soon as you are put in a position of responsibility, there will be things to tempt you. The sort of patience that you need to overcome this sort of temptation is even more difficult to master than patience against conflict. Most people who are already temple-goers already feel indifferent if anyone comes up and insults them — it is not much different than listening to a dog barking. We often congratulate ourselves for being so patient — not getting angry when insulted. However, are you patient enough not to smile when someone praises you? Flattery is specially dangerous for young ladies who run away with the first spotty youth to chat them up. This final type of patience is the hardest of all to develop — as in the words of the ancient saying:

> "Not to be angry when insulted is hard enough — but not to be elated by flattery is harder still"

Thus obstacles on all four levels can be overcome by patience.

C. CULTIVATING PATIENCE

C.1 Training oneself in patience

Training oneself in patience when one is put in situations of hardship can be easier if one bears the following tips in mind:

1. Reflect regularly on one's sense of conscience: When we are fully ashamed of evil [*hirī*] and fear the consequences of evil [*ottappa*], patience will automatically arise;

2. Transform negative emotions into positive ones: In the case we are maltreated, by relativizing, and reminding ourselves that things could be worse, we can elevate our level of patience in the face of hardship. If they insult you, remind yourself it is better than being beaten by them. If you are beaten by them, remind yourself that it is better than dying at their hands. Some people only like to meditate when they feel it is easy for them to do so. On days when it doesn't seem to be going very well, often they make no attempt to carry on with the practice. Such people will be unlikely to make progress, because they refuse to meditate at exactly the time when they need to sit for meditation the most. If you sit for meditation and find it is not going as well as you expected, don't give up. Think instead, "Today all I can see in meditation is pitch darkness — well at least that is better than feeling dizzy." And if some days you sit for meditation and you feel dizzy, think instead, "today I feel dizzy in meditation — well at least that is better than feeling stiff." And if

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some days you sit for meditation and feel stiff, think instead, "Today I feel stiff in meditation — well at least that is better than having a headache." And if some days you sit for meditation and have a headache, think instead, "Today I have a headache when meditating — well at least that is better than having a fever." Such an attitude is equivalent to the attitude of a boxer who dodges punches to avoid the painful blows they are intended to cause.

3. Practice meditation regularly: Meditation is the foundation of all sorts of patience. Patience allows our meditation to deepen. As our meditation deepens, our ability to be patient is improved. This is why no matter what part of Buddhism you want to study you have to meditate first to prepare the mind. Train yourself in meditation continuously. Patience and meditation are complementary virtues — for patience to be good, there must be a good quality of meditation as its foundation. For meditation to progress, it needs patience as its springboard. Patience is like the left hand and meditation like the right. If the left hand gets dirty, it can be washed with the right. If the right hand is dirty it can be washed with the left — and if both are dirty, one can be rubbed against the other to get them both clean.

C.2 Turning a blind eye to provocation

The Great Abbot of Wat Paknam taught how patience is invaluable for the cultivation of meditation. He taught that you need to:

> "do as if your eyes are blind like bamboo; do as if your ears are as deaf as frying pans; do as if your body is as humble as a doormat-rag; do as if your mind was as steadfast as the earth"

The conclusion of his advice is in the order of the above verses:

1. don't go looking at the inappropriate things — for example, don't go looking at the other people who go to the same temple who might annoy you

2. don't go listening to the things that are inappropriate — for example, don't go listening to gossip

3. don't look down on even the humblest of work

4. don't allow your mind to be upset by elation or disgust: your mind needs to be like the earth which doesn't recoil no matter whether unpleasant refuse or the most exotic perfume is poured onto it and a mountain remains unshaken in the face of the winds from the four directions.

If you can follow these four practices, you will soon be able to cultivate patience and other virtues will follow.

C.3 Practising patience in the face of injustice

Similarly the Great Abbot of Wat Paknam gave a path of practice to victims of injustice. Sometimes you know that you are being maligned — but to lose your temper about it would do nothing to help the situation. Usually such injustice is the end product of a longer train of contributing factors which are better dealt with cooly and calmly by such means as new legislation — thus if you find yourself the victim of the end products of injustice rather than letting it spoil your day, you can cultivate patience as follows:

1. Never fight back. For example if they insult you, don't insult them in return. If there is a fight there is always a winner and a loser. In our case that is never enough because we will settle for nothing less than outright victory. If they put an article of lies about you in the paper, don't go giving an interview to the newspapers instantly. Maybe you should just have a private talk with your boss to let him know the real situation. Don't engage in mud-slinging. Even if you publicize your response in the papers, they may twist your words to their own advantage.

2. Never run away. By running away it is like admitting your guilt.

3. Do good deeds continuously. This is the transformative part of our patience. Don't give up but maintain your quality of mind. Don't leave weak spots for your opponents to attack further. The initial accusation is only like the first punch of a boxing match — to see how the opponent will open himself up to further attacks. 'Good' in the worldly sense means carrying on

with ‘business as usual’. Do everything according to the book, in case someone looks for fault with your practice. In spiritual ways, don’t go relying on others but rely on the merit you have done. Merit is *really* the thing that helps people win or lose. Thus any morning when you haven’t given done something generous, don’t dare to take breakfast. Any day when you don’t intend to keep the Precepts, don’t dare to leave the house. Any evening when you haven’t done your meditation and chanting, don’t dare to go to bed. In that way your goodness will accumulate making you less vulnerable to injustice.

If you can manage to follow this advice, before long you will win a victory without bloodshed. It will be outright victory and the public sympathy will fall on your side.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Metaphor: Grass is Patient

Despite its small size, the tenacity of grass has allowed it to spread to every corner of the world. In the same way, despite a person’s lack of wealth, knowledge or ability, their patience will allow them to train themselves towards happiness and success in life.

D.2 Ex. KhantivÅdÈ JÅtaka (J.313)

At a time when the Lord Buddha was still pursuing Perfections as the Bodhisattva, he was born as a hermit. He was meditating in a royal park. That day the king was drunk and came through the forest with his retinue of court ladies. The king fell asleep in the forest, so all the courtiers became bored and instead of attending the king, they went to listen to the teachings of the hermit nearby. When the king woke and found himself alone he lost his temper. When he found the courtiers, instead of being angry with his courtiers for leaving him, he became jealous of the hermit for having become the centre of the courtiers’ attention.

He shouted at the hermit saying, “What’s so good about you? — Speak up for yourself if you have any particular virtues to speak of!”
The hermit said, “I have the habit of not being driven to anger. I train myself in patience.”
The king said, “That’s all I wanted to hear. We’ll soon find out where your patience lies!”— and had his attendants whip the hermit a thousand of times.
The hermit remained indifferent. He said, “Your majesty, patience is not to be found my skin but in my mind. Even if you were to strip all my skin off you would not find it.”
The king said, “That’s all I wanted to hear. We need waste no further time with whipping,” and proceeded to cut off the ears, nose, arms and legs of the hermit.

The hermit remained indifferent. Of course it would have been agony, but the hermit maintained the quality of his mind, and in spite of the pain he was not angry. Normally, if something hurts our body, it hurts us to our mind, but not in the case of this hermit. Instead of the hermit being angry, it was the king who got angry because he couldn’t manage to upset the hermit. He stamped on the ground in anger and turned his back on the hermit to leave the park. As he turned, the earth opened up beneath his feet and swallowed him directly into Aveci Hell. The hermit remained alive, but covered in his own blood. The courtiers attended to the hermit’s wounds and redressed him. They were afraid the hermit would be angry with them — they all said that they only did what they did because the king had ordered them to do so. The hermit replied, “Long live the king and anyone else who decides to cut off my arms, legs, ears and nose. People of the likes of me have no anger left for anyone.”

D.3 Ex. PuÁÁovÅda Sutta M.iii.267

In the time of the Buddha there was a man called PuÁÁa who lived in the town of SunÅparanta in the south of India. At that time the south of India was less developed than the rest of the country. There were even cannibals living in the forests and all the inhabitants had a reputation for their cruelty. Murder was a daily occurrence. PuÁÁa had been a merchant travelling with his brother to trade in the town of SÅvatthÈ. He had the chance to hear the teaching of the Buddha and was so inspired that he asked to ordain. He tried his best in meditation but the foreign climate and the environment was not amenable to his meditation — and he could

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make no progress. One day he came to take his leave of the Buddha in order to return to his home country and to try meditating there instead. The Buddha disagreed with his idea reminding him, "Have you forgotten the cruelty of the people in your homeland? Will you be able to tolerate the people there?"

PuÁÁa replied, "I can."
The Buddha asked, "What will you do if they insult you?"
"I will consider that being insulted is better than their beating me with their hands."
"And what if they beat you?"
"I will consider that being beaten is better than their throwing clods of earth, sticks and stones at me."

"And what if they stone you?"
"I will consider that being stoned is better than their stabbing me with spears and knives."
"And what if they stab you with knives and spears?"

"I will thank them because some people who want to die have to waste considerable time looking for effective means to take their own lives."
The Buddha thus allowed PuÁÁa to make the journey. Meditating in favourable surroundings, he was able to attain arahantship before long, and made an important contribution to spreading Buddhism in that province of cannibals.

D.4 Ex. Temiya the Mute J.vi.1ff.
When the Buddha was still pursuing perfection as the Bodhisattva, he was born as a prince called Temi. Because the king wanted Prince Temi to grow up into a king who was able to take decisions in his place, from the age of six or seven, he would be taken to sit on the king's lap when the king had to make serious decisions in court. One day when the prince was eight or nine, he was present in court when the king sentenced a murderer to death by live burning at the stake. Because of the Perfections which the Bodhisattva had cultivated over the course of many lifetimes, the power of his patience and meditation was very well developed. He knew that in his past he had been a king who had ordered the death of robbers in exactly the same way and as the result he had spent many lifetimes in hell. He considered that if he grew up to be king again in this lifetime then he would have to order the death of people again in the same way and he would risk going to hell again. Therefore he decided to train himself further in patience. He decided that he would not fall for the temptation of the power of kingship and that he would pretend to be mute from that day forth so that he would not be made king by his father and the people of the kingdom. He pretended to have no strength whenever he was in public. He would show no interest either in toys or in sweets that people used to tempt him to co-operate. When he grew up a little more, the king brought young princesses to tempt him. He felt tempted, but relied on the power of meditation he had built up for himself since he was young. Eventually, the king and the people lost all hope that he would be king and sentenced him to death. However, at the moment he was to be executed, he demonstrated to the executioner that he had no disability and he had been faking all along — and escaped to become an ascetic instead. When the people of the town found out what had happened, they followed his example and all left the home life to become ascetics in the same way. This is the power of the perfection of patience.

D.5 Ex. Ciñca MÅÁavika
During the lifetime of the Buddha, he was falsely accused many times by those who didn't agree with what he was doing. At that time the Buddha overcame his rivals accusations through the use of patience. There once was a woman called Ciñca MÅÁavika who supported ascetic sects. She was also a very beautiful woman — the local beauty of SÅvatthÈ and also a competitor of VisÅkhÅ. VisÅkhÅ supported Buddhism throughout her life. In that time, they would always invite celebrities to do the opening ceremony for local events. Buddhists would always invite VisÅkhÅ to open their ceremonies.The naked ascetics would always invite Ciñca MÅÁavika to do their openings. One day, because the naked ascetics were losing many followers to the Buddha, they enlisted the help of Ciñca MÅÁavika to spread gossip about the Buddha. In

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the evening, when supporters of the Buddha were returning from listening to His teachings at the temple she would pass them in the opposite direction and make it look like she was about to sleep in the *kuti* of the Buddha. When they asked where she was going, she would say, “To bring pleasure to the Buddha.” In the morning Ciñca MÅÁavika would pass the supporters who came to offer food in the morning. When they asked where she had been, she would say, “Bringing pleasure to the Buddha.”She pretended to be on intimate terms with the Buddha. She faked that she had become pregnant, by wearing a concealed lump of wood over her stomach. Gossip started amongst some people who were still unsure of the virtue of the Buddha. Some believed that he had made Ciñca MÅÁavika pregnant. After nine months, many supporters had been put off going to the temple. Ciñca MÅÁavika stood up in the middle of a sermon and asked, “Are you only interested in teaching others rather than paying attention to our unborn child?” If any woman in India made an accusation like this, she would be instantly believed. Many people walked out of the temple. The Buddha continued to use patience as his weapon. He said, “Only the two of us know the truth of the situation.” He didn’t deny or accept the accusation and he was not angry. Ciñca MÅÁavika didn’t know what to do. She strode about irritably and somehow the lump of wood slipped out from under her dress. Everyone knew the truth of the situation. “Have you given birth to a lump of wood?” some asked — but others were not so forgiving — they were going to kill her. She ran out of the gate of the temple, but as soon as she escaped the temple, the Earth split open between her feet and swallowed her straight into Aveci Hell. In India there are still two holes in the ground close to the historic sight of Jetavana Temple. One where Ciñca MÅÁavika was swallowed up — the second belonging to Devadatta. Even to the present day, the soil of those two holes remains infertile to any crops planted on them.

D.6 Ex. MÅgandiyÅ

In another place, a Queen MÅgandiyÅ hired people to accuse the Buddha because in the past she had been presented to the Buddha as gift and as a monk he was unable to accept the gift. She had felt slighted and later vengeful. When she became queen she used her authority to destroy his reputation. Wherever he went, there were hired men by the hundred waiting to insult him. They would follow him wherever he went, insulting him, until his secretary, Ánanda could not stand it any more. He suggested to the Buddha that they go to another town.

The Buddha asked Ánanda, “And what happens if in the next town there are also people coming to insult us?”

Ánanda replied, “We should move on to another town.”

The Buddha said, “If you think like that, we will be moving for the rest of our lives. Better, when we find the get to the root of the problem and solve the problem at its roots. The roots of our problem are right here in this town. If we do good deeds and nothing but good deeds, within seven days the problems will sort themselves out.”

After seven days, the hired insulters went to get paid. They were supposed to keep their work secret, but when they were paid they spent their money on drink. They were no longer able to keep their silence and started to boast where they had got their money from. When the ‘cat was out of the bag’, the people of that country wanted to execute the MÅgandiyÅ — and that was the end of the story.

Blessing Twenty-Eight: Openness to Criticism

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 The place of Blessing Twenty-Eight in the order of things

We need to be open to criticism because many of our faults are less apparent to ourselves than to other people. As in the words of the Buddhist proverb (Dh.252):

> SudassaÔ vajjam aññesaÔ
> attano pana duddasaÔ
>
> ParesaÔ hi so vajjÅni
> opuÁÅti yathÅbhusaÔ
>
> Attano pana chÅdeti
> kaliÔ va kitava saÊho
>
> Easily seen are the faults of others
> but one's own are difficult to see
>
> Like chaff one winnows another's faults but
> tends to hide one's own
>
> Even as a crafty fowler hides
> behind sham branches

— just like a fish born and raised in the water might never know what 'water' is — we are sometimes so used to our faults that we fail to notice them. Thus we need to rely upon outsiders to offer their criticism to us in order that we can know the weaknesses we must improve upon. In this respect, we start to appreciate that the acquisition of higher virtues requires more than just the four levels of patience described in the Blessing Twenty-seven, namely:

1. Patience in the face of physical hardship: working on normally despite rain, hot or cold weather;

2. Patience in the face of physical suffering: working on normally despite illness or pain;

3. Patience in the face of conflict: working on normally despite having to avoid conflict;

4. Patience in the face of temptation: working on normally despite the ever-present temptation of things like bribes which we might like but know are not good for us;

— indeed, what we need to bring the higher virtues to their fruition is the additional sort of patience that allows us to receive (instead of refusing) the criticism offered to us by others. In fact, the openness to criticism (or not being stubborn) which is the subject of this Blessing, is like another subtle form of patience — but is patience in the face of *criticism*. Some people can tolerate all forms of physical hardship, physical suffering, mental anguish and temptation, but if anyone gives them a piece of advice they will turn their back on the person who gives them it. When it is close to examination time, a parent might warn their child, "Son! Isn't it about time you started doing your revision?" The son turns round and says, "Why don't you say such things *before* I dress up to go out?" If his little brother gives him advice, even if it is useful advice,

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he will not listen— why? — because how can someone younger than him have the cheek to talk in such a way? In this respect, the Buddha taught:

> "Those who tolerate criticism from superiors do so out of fear; those who tolerate criticism from equals do so to compete; but those who tolerate criticism from subordinates; the Noble ones praise as the ultimate of patience."
>
> SarabhaÌga JÃtaka (J.522)

Who is the most stubborn person in the world? In fact *everybody* in the world has the seeds of stubborness in them, but it's just a question of degree. The sound of advice seems to singe their ears so badly that they never listen to such things. Thus we come to 'openness to criticism' as the twenty-eighth step on the staircase of Buddhist practice.

B. OPENNESS TO CRITICISM

B.1 Definition: Openness to Criticism

In the original Pali, openness to criticism uses the word 'sovacassata' — literally, someone who learns easily and is gentle in response to teaching. When a person of knowledge teaches them something useful out of compassion, they will follow the advice given with respect and humility — without 'ifs' or 'buts' or answering back. Thus if they are taught something, they start by listening — then they do what they have been advised without showing reluctance but thinking of the compassion of that person to have taken the trouble to give a piece of advice.

B.2 Characteristics of those open to criticism

The characteristics of someone who is open to criticism are as follows:

1 ***Doesn't answer back when warned or given advice.*** Some people will immediately criticize someone back as soon as they hear a few words of advice. If a person is really sensitive to self-improvement, they will not protest in return or make excuses when they are given advice, but accept that advice with humility.

2 ***Will not turn a deaf ear when given advice.***

> Some say they are practising patience when they remain inert to advice given!

3. ***Has no intention to find fault with the person who has given them the advice*** in return. Some answer back with the words, "And are *you* so superior as to expect to criticize me in that way?" Or "How come you are the *only* person to say such a thing?" If someone doesn't accept advice in such a way, it doesn't make any difference to the person who gives the advice. They only bothered to say it out of compassion for the listener!

1 ***Facilitate further teaching:*** they will follow the advice, acting on what they have been told in a way that will give the advisor the encouragement to pass on further advice to them, if the need arises, in the future.

2 ***Having the highest respect for what they have been taught and for the person who has given the advice:*** Some people follow the advice they have been given with reluctance. However, if someone is really open to criticism, they will not even show reluctance because they will be afraid of showing disrespect towards what has been taught and the person who has given the advice. In fact, anyone who had come to give us advice, is taking a big risk because they know that they might not meet with a favourable response if they give someone a piece of personal advice — and yet they still give it. When someone is criticized, usually they have not even thought whether the criticism is true or false, they must first express some resistance to the criticism. This is the sign of an untrained mind. Thus a well trained person will pause to consider the value of teachings received instead of immediately thinking, "How *dare* they criticize me?" or "Who are *they* to criticize me?" If they are even better trained, not only will they consider whether what they have been taught is true or not — they will show their enthusiasm to hear criticism, no matter whether the criticism received is true or not. They think instead, "What a great risk this person has taken in giving me some criticism — look at how they have singled me out for special attention — so I had better be quick to thank them for their good intention."

3 ***Will show the greatest humility:*** They will re

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spond to criticism without expressing stubbornness and without pretending as if they already knew better.

7. ***They will express their happiness and gratitude at having received advice:*** In the time of the Buddha, they would express appreciation with the word 'SÅdhu'. For people really interested in training themselves, receiving criticism is like an elixir for the mind. They feel really thankful to the critic to the degree that they will thank that person immediately. However for a stubborn person, when they receive criticism which is correct and they know it, the words 'thank you' seem to get stuck in their throat.

8. Follow the advice to an appropriate extent. Supposing someone points out the reality of a situation. "Why at your age and your time of life are you still unable to support yourself? Why are you still gambling every day? When your children grow up and see you like this, what will they think?" Really, what that person has said is out of goodwill for the listener

— but if they are stubborn they will respond, "And what about *you* then — and who are you to speak when you drink alcohol every day?" Even if what the critic says is not 100% true, if we are on the receiving end of the criticism must temporarily forget their bad points in order to help ourselves open up to their advice. Rather than continuing to err just to prove our point, once we know we are in the wrong, we accept this and do what is right according to the Dhamma.

9. Has acceptable and polite behaviour: Anyone who is open to criticism must resist the temptation to burst into a tantrum or be unpleasant to the person giving the advice;

10. Must listen with intent to all sides of advice given without answering back and should even go so far as to invite that person to speak up again if ever they notice anything else in their behaviour which needs improvement. They will not be afraid of being embarrassed by knowledge of their faults — because the character of a wise man is never to suffice as to new knowledge. Thus if someone gives you some advice you could think to yourself, 'thank you' because it has been worthwhile keeping friendship with you, or paying respect to you as an elder member of my family etc. etc.

11.Tolerant even to advice that comes in the form of unpleasant speech: we have to accept that we have not yet come to an end of defilements. Sometimes someone has already carefully explained something to us, but we are unable to follow what they have said. Sometimes we are not smart enough to grasp what they mean. Sometimes, the person who gives us the advice might already be irritated or in a bad mood. Sometimes they might speak a little harshly or use comparisons that are a little direct. If any of the case, then you should still be patient and not be angry as a result.

B.3 Characteristics of those open to criticism

For ease of remembering, these eleven headings can be summarized down to three main characteristics of those open to criticism — being able to:

1. Hear out criticism: Someone who doesn't even hear out others have to say is *very* stubborn.

2. Follow advice: Some people pay attention to listen to criticism without expressing any resistance, but they never follow the advice given. Such a person is *fairly* stubborn.

3. Appreciate the goodwill of the person who has given the advice: No matter what the relative social standing of the person who gives the advice. Some people appreciate criticism from a person more senior than them but will be irritated if criticized by a peer or someone like their husband or wife. Such a person is not entirely open to criticism. Some people accept and follow advice given to them by seniors and peers but if someone younger or subordinate offers them advice, it is too much for them. They lose face and so cannot accept advice.

If you are put in such a situation and you still feel irritated, try biting your lip instead of criticizing them in return. You will build up a habit of being a good listener to such advice which will start to become part of your personality. At first, if you prevent yourself from criticizing them in return but

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can still not bring yourself to follow their advice — at least you keep the channel open to improvement in the future. At first you may have no inkling of appreciation for the goodwill of that person. However, if over the course of time, you can prevent yourself criticizing them in return and can follow their advice too, before long you will start to see through to the goodwill of that person too.

B.4 Ulterior motives for being open to criticism

It is rare to find someone who can *genuinely* take criticism on board. However, saying that, that someone accepts criticism doesn't automatically mean that they are motivated by self-improvement — they may have an ulterior motive. Not to be able to distinguish between the openness to criticism and '*pseudo*' openness to criticism can potentially be very misleading. Thus when dealing observing our own or others' responses to criticism, we should make a clear distinction between the negative and positive sorts of openness to criticism:

1. Materially-motivated: some people make themselves very obsequious because they seek for something material in return. Why are some children so obedient? You will see *why* after they receive the legacy from their parents. Once received if they lose their original obsequiousness, it is a sign that they were only obedient for the money. Some people are stubborn by nature, but they will change their tune whenever they are close to influential people (but only for as long as they have the chance of being promoted). Really such people are not open to criticism — they are only compliant to your face but behind your back they will behave differently.

2. The gullible: Such people look compliant and obedient but the reason is not through intention. They are obedient because they lack any intelligence to think for themselves. Usually they lack any initiative of their own and will do anything they are told to do. You might chase them off to school, and they will obediently listen to the teacher for hours at a time without understanding a word. If you tell them to go to school they go. If a friend tells them to skip school then they play truant. They will do whatever the last person they meet has told them to do. They tend to lack any aim in life because they lack the wisdom to see the need for one — in fact they lack any confidence in themselves.

3. Spiritually motivated: only this last category are such people who want to improve themselves without limit. Thus any criticism is taken as treasure that will help them towards the goal of perfection. Only this last category is open to criticism for purposes corresponding to the Manual of Peace.

Thus in practice, if you have those close to you, or subordinates who seem to be compliant and obedient, you need to ask yourself what motivates them to be so. Is it because they want to run off with your daughter? If this is the case, as soon as they get her hand in marriage, they might never lift a finger to help you again. So be careful not to be fooled by such behaviour.

C. STUBBORNNESS

C.1 Categories of stubbornness

There are basically three categories of stubborn people in the world:

1. stubborn because of ignorance: their intelligence doesn't allow them to see the value of the advice they are being given. Sometimes, they might not only be ignorant — they may be too lazy to change. For such people it is not worth devoting too much effort to encouraging them to change. Such people are stubborn without realizing it.

2. stubborn because of intransigent views: In fact they are very intelligent people, but only intelligent in the materials they have studied. There may be many more things that they do not yet know or understand. They don't realize the limits of their knowledge or the gaps in their experience. They think they already know everything there is to know. Many such people have high IQ and always get the best results in the class. Such success gives rise to the feeling that 'I'm the cleverest and beyond criticism'. Such people get their first class honours degree, but when they try to apply their talents in the workplace may die in the effort. They are unable to accept advice from anyone else so those who have the

potential to help them 'leave them to their ignorance'. They leave them to learn from their own mistakes. Such people will meet with disaster, as the result of their own inability to listen to others.

3. stubborn because short-tempered: these will lose their temper upon hearing the slightest thing they disagree with. It is very hard to eke any sort of cooperation from such people. They are likely to cause disharmony in any group.

We will further examine the practical ways of dealing with the first two sorts of stubbornness in §D.3 below.

C.2 Reasons for stubbornness

Some people think that training oneself to be sensitive to self-improvement should be simple. All you have to do is to stop being stubborn — but that is easier said than done. You have to ask yourself what is the root of the damage in a stubborn person. What is the reason for stubborness in people (so that we can get rid of it)? MahÅmoggallÅna Thera taught in the AnumÅna Sutta how sixteen possible sorts of traits can create stubbornness in the face of criticism (M.i.95-7):

1 ***Determination to do evil*** [pÅpiccho hoti pÅpikÅnaÔ icchÅnaÔ]***:*** Some people will wish for success in the most evil things (like stealing Buddha images from temples or smuggling heroin). Such determination to do evil will make them evil for the whole of their life. It sounds very extreme but even normal people suffer from it now and then when we think 'just this once we'll make them sorry'. At that time the seeds of stubborness are creeping into the mind.

2 ***Overestimation of oneself*** [attukaÔ sako hoti paravambhi]***:*** When we think we are superior to everyone else, then again it is a root of stubborness. Again you will listen to no-one

3 ***Losing one's temper easily*** [kodhano hoti kodhÅbhibhËto]***:*** If you know you have this tendency then you must bite your lip if ever you are criticized in case you lose your temper with the person giving you advice — or else you will have no second chance of a helping hand.

1 ***Vengefulness*** [kodhano hoti kodhÅhetu upanÅhÈ]***:*** Not only angry with others — but even long after the event still harnessing a grudge for that person even though it is so long ago you cannot even remember who that person is. Thus, if you are angry, never let it last overnight. To be angry for no longer than it takes to drink a glass of cool water.

2 ***Inability to control oneself when angry*** [kodhano hoti abhisaÌgÈ]***:*** Not being able to control your gestures with your angry. e.g. stamping or tearing one's hair out, or spitting or slamming doors. If you meet anyone like this don't waste time giving them advice.

3 ***Those who have to have the last word if criticized*** [kodhano hoti kodhasÅmantaÔ vÅcaÔ nicchÅretÅ]***:*** unable to control what they say when criticized.

4 ***Those who have an excuse for everything*** [cudito codakena codakaÔ paÊippharati]***:*** a person who is asked to sit politely when in the temple will find an excuse for doing whatever they like, for example "If you want to learn the Dhamma you have to be comfortable in body and mind, so if I want to stretch my legs however I want, don't come interfering in something that is none of your business." If you meet such people, don't waste time trying to change their ways — however, if you recognize the same habits in yourself, get rid of such habits without delay.

5 ***Those who give others the brush-off*** [cudito codakena codakaÔ apasÅdeti]***:*** Whenever someone tries to give such a person advice, they chase them away saying that they have no time to listen to such talk.

6 ***Those who find a callous way of answering back*** [cudito codakena codakassa paccÅropeti]***:*** who will always find a way of answering back to the person who gives them advice in a way that will hurt them. They will say something like, "Don't go worrying about me — use your time more usefully and worry about the state of your own husband." Instead of accepting advice and showing enthusiasm to follow it — they ignore the advice and go

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further by using the advice as the excuse to hurt the person who has helped them with the best of intention. Or maybe, "I may have my weaknesses and faults but at least I manage to keep control of my own husband...".

10. Those who change the subject to avoid speaking about the matter [cudito codakena aññen' aññaÔ paÊicaroti bahiddhÅ kathaÔ apanÅmeti, kopañca, dosañca appaccayañca pÅtukaroti]***:*** They cannot refuse the accusation so they change the subject instead.

11. Those who become suspicious of the person who advises them [cudito codakena apadÅne na sampÅyati]

12. Those who persecute anyone who tries to advise them in order to hide their faults [makkhÈ hoti paÒÅsÈ]***:*** In Buddhism monks have to confess their faults so that there is nothing left secret. Suspicion will not arise in a community. If faults are kept hidden the perpetrator will end up with anxious neuroses.

13. Those who like mudslinging [issukÈ hoti maccharÈ]: or glossing over favours received from others in order to make themselves look superior.

14. Those who are jealous [saÊho hoti mÅyÅvÈ]***:***this extreme form of selfishness makes one narrow minded to the extent that you are unable to receive advice from anyone else in case they look better than you when you admit your faults

15. Those who are boasting and arrogant [thaddho hoti atimÅnÈ]***:*** because they feel they are already superior to others. They bring a needle to offer the monks and boast about it until it becomes a crate of needles or Cleopatra's Needle.

16. Someone who has views which deviate severely from reality [sadiÊÊhiparÅmÅsÈ hoti ÅdhÅnagÅhÈduppaÊinissaggÈ]***:*** They might think, "Our parents ought to be thanking us for all we have done for them. If it wasn't for us, they would have died of loneliness in their old age" or else "Generosity just makes the recipients lazy." With such thoughts in mind, they will not be able to benefit from advice all their lives — as if the compass in their minds has malfunctioned.

Like all of these qualities, all of these are the starting point of stubborness that will make us unable to correct our weaknesses.

D. CULTIVATING OPENNESS TO CRITICISM

D.1 Correction of stubborn habits for monks

The Buddha taught that monks should improve themselves by inviting others [pavaraÁa] to give their criticism, whatever their relative rank or status. In the rainy season, when Buddhist monks stay in the same place for three months when travel is inconvenient. At the end of the rainy season retreat (lent) the Buddha made it monastic discipline that all the monks in the temple should meet together and make the invitation to one another to invite the other monks to correct each others behaviour out of goodwill for one another and for the rest of the community. The words of the ceremony areas follows:

> "If any of you have seen, heard or suspected any behaviour of mine that is unpleasant in any matter, please inform me of such errors out of compassion, so that I might realize my own faults and be more careful of my behaviour in future."

Every monk from the abbot of the temple to monks newly ordained that day must participate in the ceremony.

D.2 Correction of stubborn habits for laypeople

If you are not a monk, but a layperson, there are nonetheless many ways in which you can help to make yourself more open to criticism:

1. Reflect on the harm you bring to yourself by your obstinacy: If you realize that you are closing the door on useful advice others might have for you like a paralytic person surrounded by useful objects, none of which he can reach. Even if a person is surrounded by the wise he can gain nothing from any of them.

2. Reflect that criticism is hidden treasure: Reflect upon the Buddhist proverb that 'he who gives us personal advice and criticism is he who points the way to treasure.'

3. Train yourself in respect so that you try to see the good points about others instead of the bad

points. Whatever criticism you might receive from others, extend a heart of gratitude towards them, because the trouble they have taken to criticise us shows that they have high expectations of us — think like this even if you don't agree 100% with what they have criticised you for — hear out their criticism instead of rushing to answer them back or pick a fight with them.

4. Open the opportunity for others to criticise you: In the same way as monks invite others to criticize one another, members of the same family can invite criticism from one another from time to time. If children are trained in such a way from an early age, then they can avoid collecting the sixteen damaging traits before they develop and they can avoid the disadvantages of stubbornness in later life.

5. Meditate often and regularly: If we can train our mind to the point of radiance and steadfastness, it will allow us to reflect wisely on the advice given to us by others seeing how such advice can be applied to improve our personal weaknesses.

D.3 Dealing with the stubbornness of other people

If you have to work with stubborn people, never forget that the stubborn come in more than one category:

1. Those who are stubborn through ignorance: such people prefer to be ordered to do things rather than to hear reasons for things. Don't bother giving reasons for things which are not appreciated because it is about as much use as playing a flute for the benefit of a buffalo;

2. Those who are stubborn because of their views: such people prefer not to be ordered around — but rather to be given reasons, explanations and choices for the things you would like them to help with. If they are not too entrenched in their own views, given a good reason, before long they will want to comply — but if their views are extremely rigid, you will have to let them do what they insist and be there to give compassionate advice when they start to realize their own mistakes.As for the 'stubborn by view' in fact they are already quite clever, but only in the limited areas they know. They are like a frog at the bottom of a well that thinks it knows the whole of the world because it already knows the bottom of a well. If you are a boss with stubborn people if this type working for you and even after ordering them and teaching them they still do not respond, you may have to punish them

(e.g. by reducing their salary). Failing that you might use the punishment of shunning them known in Buddhist tradition as the 'BrahmadaÁÎa treatment'.

Thus now that we know the qualities of a person sensitive to self-improvement, we can examine ourselves for these qualities so that if ever we receive advice or criticism from someone else, we will get benefit from them: listening without criticism in return; reflecting on the criticism; following the advice; getting an appropriate benefit from following the practice and eventually appreciating the good-will of that person. From someone who never managed to pass an examination, you will be able to develop yourself into someone who passes more than fails.

The people of old said that advice to a person stubborn by stupidity is like watering a tree stump.
(i.e. useless) but you might at least get a few mush-rooms to eat as the result. However, advice to a person stubborn because of false views is like pouring water on a dog. The dog doesn't get wet but will shake itself until everyone around it is wet instead. Such a stubborn person will accept no advice and instead they will turn the criticism back on the person giving the advice, by answering back.

E. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

E.1 Proverb: Criticism like hidden treasure (Dh.76)

NidhÈnaÔ' va pavattÅraÔ yaÔ passe vajjadassinaÔ, niggayhavÅdiÔ medhÅviÔ, tÅdisaÔ paÁÎitaÔ bhaje, tÅdisaÔ bhajamÅnassa, seyyo hoti na pÅpiyo

Should one find a man, who points out faults and who reproves, let him follow such a wise and sagacious person, as one would a guide to

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hidden treasure, it is always better and never worse, to cultivate such an association.

E.2 Metaphor: Frog at the bottom of a well

A stubborn person who doesn't open themselves to criticism is like a frog living at the bottom of a well who has never had the chance to see the world from any other perspective. No matter how many people might come along and point out how much better the world is outside the well, such words are lost on the frog who through his lack of experience always assumes he knows better.

E.3 Metaphor: Paralyzed by Stubbornness

The people of old compared a stubborn person to someone who has been paralyzed. Even though all round him there may be delicious food, beautiful clothes and many other useful things, they are all useless to that person because the paralyzed person is unable to pick them up. In the same way, if a person is stubborn, even though they might have an arahant for a teacher, are unable to absorb any of the goodness of that person.

E.4 Ex. JÈvaka heals King Candappajjota (Vin.268-81)

In the time of the Buddha King Candappajjota of Ujjeni could not be healed by anyone in his own kingdom, so he sent a letter to King BimbisÅra asking him to send the court physician JÈvaka KomÅrabhacca to take care of him. Normally in the treatment, the patient must swallow ghee to be cured. In this case, the patient stubbornly refused treatment because in his religion, they prohibited the eating of dairy products. JÈvaka considered the condition of the king would be helpless if he didn't take ghee, so he make what may have been the world's first 'capsule' by concealing the ghee inside a digestible husk. JÈvaka knew that after halfan-hour, the medicine would give its effect and the king would regurgitate the ghee. Besides being cured, the king would know that he had been fooled by the doctor. JÈvaka administered the ghee capsule to the king and immediately asked for the king's fastest elephant to go looking for additional herbs. The king granted his request and JÈvaka made a quick get-away, without any intention to return. When the king regurgitated the ghee and knew he had been fooled, he ordered his soldiers to pursue and kill JÈvaka, but JÈvaka was long gone on a swift elephant and they could not catch him. The king was angry all day and all night, but within a few days he was cured of his illness, and changed his attitude to JÈvaka , even sending him a reward of sÈveyyaka cloth to thank him for his attention. The king made an effort to change his stubborn personality from that day onwards.

E.5 Ex. RÅdha Thera DhA.ii.104ff.

There was one day in the town of RÅjagaha, the Lord Buddha was staying at VeÒuvana Temple and SÅriputta was there also. An aged Brahmin called RÅdha who had been shunned by his wife, family and in-laws because he was not very wealthy. They abandoned RÅdha instead of looking after him in his old age. He didn't want to bother anyone unduly so he thought of becoming a Buddhist monk for the final days of his life. None of the monks in the temple were interested to take responsibility for his ordination because they saw that he was already old and would only be a burden on the temple. No-one would give him ordination. The Buddha asked if there was not a single monk in the temple who had received benefit from this Brahmin in the past. SÅriputta spoke up and said that once a long time ago RÅdha had given him a ladleful of rice when he was on almsround. The Buddha therefore asked SÅriputta to help out RÅdha on this occasion. SÅriputta ordained RÅdha and allowed him to stay in the same *kuti* teaching him meditation and the teachings of the Buddha. RÅdha practised hard and possessed the quality of being sensitive to self-improvement. He never thought of looking down on the teachings of a much younger monk. He practised everything he was taught. There was no hesitation or doubt in his mind. If he was asked to use the mantra 'SammÅ-ArahaÔ' and think of a Buddha image that was exactly what he did. He was not like some people who sit and think, "How can it be possible that we can imagine something and see it?" or "How could there ever be brightness inside?" or "The mind has the nature to think, what's the use of trying not to think?" or "Surely the teach

ing monk is making it up as he goes along?" like most people. RÅdha did exactly what was asked of him. SÅriputta was a young monk who could sit for meditation for five to ten hours at a time. Even though RÅdha was seventy, he would still sit together with SÅriputta without worrying about stiffness. RÅdha thought, "After all, I have made the effort to become a monk, so what is there to be feared about meditation when I have left behind everything else?" and after three days was able to become an *arahant*.

E.6 Ex. BrahmadaÁÎa punishment of Channa DhA.ii.110ff.

In the time of the Buddha, when he left the palace to ordain, he went together witha horseman called Channa. Channa also ordained at that time, but from that day to the time when the Buddha entered Parinirvana, he could make no progress in the teachings of Buddhism. The reason for this is that he would selfishly do whatever he felt like doing and would ignore the advice of all the other monks in the community. He would be so proud of the fact that he had accompanied the Buddha when he renounced the palace that he thought that the whole of Buddhism should thank him for it. He was not ready to listen to anyone's criticism because he saw them all as ungrateful. He would listen to no-one but the Buddha himself. However, the Buddha didn't have enough time to give Channa personal attention, so he ended up as a stubborn monk.

/nanda asked the Buddha "What can we do with this monk because if you should ever enter upon parinibbÅna, there will be no-one left who can do anything to help this monk."

The Buddha said, "You must perform the BrahmadaÁÎa punishment."

/nanda asked, "How can we do that?"

The Buddha explained, "From now on, whatever Channa wants to do let him do it. Whatever he wants to say let him say it. Shun him by treating him as if he wasn't there and don't speak to him or do anything to co-operate with him."

When the Buddha passed away, all the monks did what the Buddha had instructed and within a very short period of time Channa became like an outcast in the community. Channa came grovelling to /nanda saying, "Please be a refuge to me — I will stop being stubborn."

All the monks had a meeting and decided to forgive him. As a result of everyone treating him in the same way, he could soon realize his mistake and change his ways.

If you have a stubborn child in the family, the parents can use the same technique of punishment. However, if your parents are stubborn, as children you should not try using this technique or maybe you will be punished yourself! Even in schools or places of work might adapt this for their own use.

E.7 Ex. Sariputta criticized for a squint under-robe (SA.ii.29, Mil.397)

SÅriputta's humility was as great as his patience. He was willing to receive correction from anyone, not only with submission, but with gratitude. It is told in the commentary to the SusÈma Sutta that once through momentary negligence, a corner of the elder's under-robe was hanging down. A seven-year old novice, seeing this, pointed it out to him. SÅriputta stepped aside a once and arranged the garment in the proper way and then stood before the novice with folded hands saying "Now it is correct, teacher!" and said the following verses:

> "If one who has gone forth this day, at the age of seven should teach me, I accept it with a lowered head. At the sight of him, I show my zeal and respect. May I always set him in the teacher's place."

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Blessing Twenty-Nine: The Sight of a True Monk

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 The place of Blessing Twenty-nine in the order of things

With this blessing we come to the twenty-ninth step of Buddhist practice — that of 'the sight of a true monk'. We find that all that patience and openness to criticism developed in earlier blessings together with 'seeing a true monk' in this blessing will be a foundation to prepare us to discuss spiritual teachings with a monk (*the topic of the next blessing*).

A.2 The Objectives of the Twenty-ninth blessing

The objectives of this blessing are as follows:

1. to make ourselves worthy of discussing the Dhamma with a monk: a monk is an ordained person who has no need of anything from anyone. He has no interest in fame or social standing. If anyone cannot be sufficiently patient to listen to what he has to say, then why should he bother to teach them? Even if you were to conduct yourself towards him in a pleasant way, his main priority is to attain liberation from the world, training himself in the forest. Thus, if you were to conduct yourself in an inappropriate way, it would be an unattractive prospect indeed for him to teach you;

2. to understand by example the meaning of Dhamma we have not yet experienced for ourselves: with higher virtues, if you just say 'such and such a virtue' is good in 'such and such a way', it brings the listener no closer to under

standing it. You always need to give an example. Supposing you tell someone, "Keeping the Five, Eight, Ten or 227 Precepts will make your mind cheerful." If someone had never heard of the Precepts, they would disagree immediately because 227 Precepts looks like a way of removing all the cheerfulness from life. To the uninitiated, the more Precepts you have, the less life has to offer. To them, cheerfulness is equated with keeping no Precepts, because you can do exactly what you want — you can drink liquor and you don't need to be faithful to your wife any more. They would argue that keeping no Precepts would certainly be more cheerful. They have seen only cheerful drunks, night-club singers, dancers and boxing crowds. Thus if you say keeping the Precepts makes you cheerful, they might accuse you of lying. However, the day such a person meets a monk keeping 227 Precepts who is peaceful and has a radiant complexion and who speaks politely, they will realize, "Yes, the monk is cheerful too", but it may be a sort of cheerfulness they have never encountered before. However, if someone never met such a monk before, there is no way they would believe in the capacity of the Precepts to make people happy;

3. ***to recognize a monk able to benefit us with his teaching:*** Part of the objective of this blessing is to allow us to recognize a good monk when we see one — and at the same time to avoid being

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taken in by those masquerading as monks. We mustn't overlook qualities that make someone a 'true monk', otherwise, we run the risk of meeting a monk without recognizing him as did the main character 'Kamanita' of the novel of K.A. Gjellerup's (1906-Danish/1907-German) classic *Der Pilger Kamanita*, who searched high and low for the Buddha, hoping the Buddha would heal his broken heart. One night he met an old monk and sat talking to him all night because the monk seemed to be able to answer all of his questions. The next morning he bade farewell to the monk and continued in his search for the Buddha, without realizing that the monk he had been talking to all night *was* the Buddha himself. Even when at the end of his life he was gored to death by a bull, he still didn't realize who he had been speaking to! Thus, so you don't make the same mistake as Kamanita, we must instead study this twenty-ninth Blessing of the MaĿgala Sutta.

B. SEEING A TRUE MONK

B.1 Definition: The True Monk

The definition of the word a true monk means 'peaceful one.' However, because we tend to translate in a haphazard way, we had better compare the translations of a few similar words:

- 'Pabbajita': This word means 'an ordained person', i.e. a person who has gone forth into the homeless life. They will not marry and have decided to remain single and to spend their time training themselves in discipline meditation instead. A 'pabbajita' can belong to any religion, not necessarily Buddhist.
- 'Bhikkhu': This term means a certain sort of 'pabbajita' in Buddhism who is an almsman and must practice the 'Dhammas of a Peaceful One' according to the regulations laid down by the Lord Buddha.
- 'SĂmaÁera': This term means a novice — which is also a type of 'pabbajita', but they are usually of child's age (9-20) or are still a postulant.

Even those who wear white to practice Eight Precepts in the temple are also a type of ordinand but of a precursory sort. Buddhist nuns are also a form of ordinand. In the Chinese religions such as Tao ism, there are also ordinands with their own training regulations — and they would also be called 'pabbajita'.

By comparison, the word 'samana' should be reserved for bhikkhus who really practice the 'Dhammas of a Peaceful One' to the point that they are peaceful in body, speech and mind. A 'samana' is a monk whose body, speech and mind are already well-trained — and is hereafter referred to as a 'true monk'.

Just because a person shaves their head and dons robes doesn't automatically make him a 'true monk' — because there are some monks, unfortunately to say, who have a daily regime which consists of no more than eating, sleeping and watching the television. Such monks are hardly worthy of being called a true monk — they can be considered more like 'trainee monks'. They are no more than 'bhikkhus'. You have to be careful about your definition of a a true monk because if you pick the wrong sort of monk, (e.g. trainee monks who are still fighting over almsfood) you will find it hard ever to see why seeing such monks could ever be a blessing. In cases where you see monks doing un-suitable things, you should remind yourself that they are just trainees, but not yet true monks. For the purposes of this Blessing, seeing a monk, is to see a monk of the type we can call a 'true monk' — because there is no guarantee that seeing monks of any other sort will really be a blessing!

B.2 General Guidelines

As we shall see later, there are different levels at which we can catch sight of a true monk. However, we can start by making some generalizations which apply at all levels of description of a monk's behaviour:

1. ***A true monk must be peaceful in action:*** He must be completely free from actions of harm to others. He cannot carry weapons, pick fights with others or even walk in a demonstration. He cannot beat the table with his fist as he gives his sermon. None of his physical actions must be provocative. Anyone who sees him must be left with nothing other than a positive impression. He will not be attractive in the same way as a handsome

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man or a beautiful woman, but he will be graceful and charismatic in his presence. If a *bhikkhu* has no presence, then maybe he has no self confidence to be anything more than a beggar. The a true monk will have confidence in his own good deeds, so he will not feel inferior.

2. A true monk must be peaceful in speech: He must be completely free from malicious gossip or harmful speech or boasting. How would you like to meet a monk who said, "My temple is the best. Any other temple is no competition. My way of meditation is the best. Don't bother paying attention to any other sort of meditation."? A monk must be well-spoken. What he says must be serious — not said just to make people laugh. It is not suitable for a monk to speak of matters such as politics.

3. A true monk must be peaceful in mind: He must train himself to rid his mind of thoughts of greed. If a monk doesn't try to free his mind of greed by training in meditation, before long he will want to have supplementary activities like being a witch doctor, or a fortune teller, or a lottery tipster. In the same way, he should not allow his mind to come under the influence of hatred or ignorance. However, it is easier said than done. He must try to train his mind the whole of the time and maintain a good temper always.

Thus don't go thinking that a monk can become a true monk simply through his achievements in temple construction. Only these four practices mentioned above can allow the body, speech and mind of a monk to become sufficiently pure for him to be termed a 'true monk'. He needs to practice all four in order to really be worthy of the name a true monk.

A further set of generalizations about monks' behaviour which qualifies him as a true monk are as follows:

1. Must be of no danger to anyone: Thus nothing about a true monk in body, speech or mind must be of any danger to anyone.

2. Must not be biased by the temptations of wealth: If you find monks overtaking one another on almsround to compete for food, could you entrust them with anything more valuable?

3. Must practise the 'Dhammas of a Peaceful One': This means he must train himself to avoid the temptations of excessive eating and sleeping. He must have a steadfast daily routine, without exception: doing morning and evening chanting, studying the Dhammavinaya, TipiÊaka and Buddhist ceremonies. His manners should be polite.

4. Must practise austerities (to reduce the level of bad habits in the mind): These include the practice of meditation, dhutaÌga (*see Blessing Thirty-One*). They help one to overcome the habit of doing exactly as one pleases the whole of time.

In conclusion to this general introduction to the features of the true monk — we can say that a monk is someone whose happiness comes entirely from spiritual sources. We have already seen (*from contentment in Blessing Twenty-Four §C.*) that happiness can come from either material or spiritual sources, and for a true monk, the connection with happiness from inner peace is so well-developed that it manifests in all that he does and in his appearance too!

B.3 Ways of seeing a true monk

Simply to see a monk pass by the door is not fully 'the sight of a true monk' — it is not much of a blessing. You have to be on closer terms with the monk until you can start to distinguish the virtues of the monk. Thus simply to 'see' a true monk is not so simple as it sounds. In fact the word 'to see' can have three different depths of meaning:

1. Seeing with the eye: i.e a monk's outward appearances

2. Seeing with the mind: i.e a monk's outward behaviour

3. Seeing through meditation: i.e a monk's inner attainments Why do we have to look at three levels to see a true monk? This is because every person is complex and has an inner and outer self. In the following sections we consider each level of description in turn.

B.3.1 Seeing with the eyes

According to the SÅmaññaphala Sutta (D.2) the characteristics of a true monk which can be observed by the outward manner and behaviour of monks are as follows:

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1. Ordination with an aim in mind: A monk should ordain with the aim to train himself to be a good person in every respect: restraint of senses, education of the mind in theory [pariyatti] and practice [paÊipati] by study of the scriptures and following a correct method of meditation until being able to tame the mind — bringing peace, radiance and eventually wisdom to understand life and the world in accordance with reality;

2. Restrained in accordance with the monastic code of conduct *[*pÅÊimokkhasaÔvara*]:* (*see Bl.9 §C3.2.1*);

3. Pure in livelihood *[*ÅjÈvaparisuddhi*]:* (*see Bl.9 §C3.2.3*);

4. Possessed of self-discipline *[*sÈla*]*: (*for details see Blessing Nine §C3.2*) If monks are possessed of such characteristics they are worthy of the praise, faith, homage and support of householders.

B.3.2 Seeing with the mind

This means appreciating the good manner and conduct of the monk through the channel of our mind. We see that in the *kuti* of the monk, there are virtually no possessions — that he has hardly anything but humble bedclothes and a set of the Buddhist scriptures. Such a few possessions, would lead us to suppose that the monk studies the TipiÊaka whenever he is free. We might observe a battered meditation mat in the corner and might suppose that he meditates as part of his daily routine. We reflect and surmise according to what we see. This is the virtue of the true monk. According to the SÅmaññaphala Sutta the five characteristics of a true monk which can be observed a the level of the mind are as follows:

1. Restraint of the senses [indriyasaÔvara]: When in public it is especially important for monks to restrain the sense doors — to be worthy of the homage of laypeople or younger monks. Monks who are habitually restrained according to the pÅÊimokkha will find that it comes naturally to restrain the senses both in public and behind closed doors;

2. Endowment with mindfulness [sati] ***and self-awareness*** [sampajañña]**:** This means not allow ing the mind to wander or to drift in a way that undermines the faith of others.

3. Endowed with contentment [santuÊÊhi]**:** This means contentment with what one has and what one receives — not going to great lengths to ask for special treatment and gifts from lay people in a way that undermines the faith of others

4. Freedom from the Hindrances [nivaraÁa]**:** Although the hindrances are an internal affair of the mind, a monk must be careful not to let hindrances manifest themselves as e.g. losing one's temper, hatred of others, sleepiness, reluctance, boredom with life, doubt in the teaching — on the contrary, a monk should show enthusiasm for a life of training, restraint and give encouragement and guidance to laypeople.

5. Attainment of the absorptions [jhÅna]**:** This is not something that is obvious to the observer. Also a monk will not inform you — because to inform you would be in breach of the Vinaya. However for a monk who is able to overcome the hindrances and make further progress, attainment of the inner brightness of absorptions will be visible by improved conduct, ability to teach clearly and from a bright physical complexion.

B.3.3 Seeing through meditation

According to the SÅmaññaphala Sutta the characteristics of a true monk which can be observed a the level of inner attainment which come as the result of self-training in meditation are eight in number and sometimes referred to as the Supra-normal Eightfold knowledge [vijjÅ] are as follows:

1. insight-knowledge [vipassanÅñÅÁa]
2. mental powers [manomayiddhi]
3. miraculous powers [iddhividdhi]
4. supra-normal hearing [dibbasota]
5. knowing the minds of others [cetopariyayañÅÁa]
6. recollection of previous lives [pubbenivÅsÅnussatiñÅÁa]
7. seeing the arising and passing away of other beings according to their karma [dibbacakkhu or cutupapatañÅÁa]
8. knowledge of an end of defilements

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[asavakkhayañÅÅa] These supramundane forms of knowledge can only come about because the monk himself has attained the sight of the true monk inside himself i.e. has attained one of the levels of the body of enlightenment [dhammakÅya] within himself.

B.4 Characteristics of a monk not worthy of respect

The SÅmañña phala Sutta teaches us not only the things which identify a good monk but also characteristic of monks to be avoided.

1. Ordained in spite of lacking faith in the Vinaya: without any intention to train oneself or improve oneself as a monk. Some ordain simply to run away from their worldly problems or to avoid the hard work of earning a living. Some ordain to escape legal proceedings or as a tool in earning their living;

1 ***Laxity in following the monastic code of conduct:*** This is obvious in the case of monks lying, taking drugs, taking an evening meal or listening to music;

2 ***Going to places which are 'out-of-bounds'*** [*agocara*] ***for a monk:*** This may include monks going to places of entertainment or commerce on personal business instead of by invitation;

3 ***Gambling or encouraging supporters to waste time with gambling;***

4 ***Being interested to converse on worldly subjects:*** Such subjects include waging war or fashion — or other subjects not directly concerned with monastic duties;

5 ***Volunteering to help with jobs that are the domain of a householder:*** These may include tasks such as matchmaking, being a go-between or canvassing for votes;

6 ***Making a living out of black arts:*** Examples include fortune telling, initiations, charms, witch doctery, numerical house charms and *yantra*s, making predictions looking at the vital signs of adults, children or animals — predictions and lucky stars for marriage.

7 ***Playing games:*** Such games might include chess, draughts, cards, computer games or even ball games;

9. Boasting: This may include boasting about one's personal ability or looking down on the abilities of other monks;

10. Indulging the senses;

11. Distorting the teachings: This may include explaining and teaching Buddhism in a way that deviates from the *dhammavinaya* or spreading or perpetuating false views such as that heaven and hell don't really exist, that death is the end of the story or that there is no afterlife.

12. Deviousness: Monks may use means to mislead the public e.g. into understanding that they have attained the stages of Sainthood.

13. Displaying a lack of contentment: This may be noticeable from the way a monk's accommodation is furnished (excessive luxury or with a television or radio — which are not for helping to practice Dhamma — and accumulating lot of things in their *kuti* beyond any possible usefulness).

There may be more characteristics of unworthy monks than these thirteen — but any one of the thirteen behaviours mentioned above is sufficient for supporters to suspect that a monk might not be a 'true monk'. It is sad to say that numerous are those who profess piety — but who in reality doesn't live up to all they profess. Thus don't go wasting time with monks who say they can turn silver into gold, or give you a fertility spell or guess the result of the lottery. If you do — it only goes to show that your misunderstanding of the purpose of a monk.

C. THE PRACTICALITY OF SEEING A MONK

C.1 Receiving the full benefits of seeing a monk

In order to gain the full benefit of the sight of a monk, it is important, not only to see him, but to hear his teaching, to memorize it, reflect on it and apply it for one's own and others' benefit in the same way (*as already outlined for academic teachings in Blessing Seven §E.* [The Learning Process]). In addition it is also necessary to *help and support* the monk in order to learn from his example the virtues which may be hard to

transmit in words.

C.2 Why people like to have a true monk visit their home

In order to gain full benefit from seeing a true monk, if we should have the opportunity to invite one to our home, the Buddha gave us clear guidance on how to offer appropriate hospitality. Done properly, such hospitality can bring five distinct sorts of merit to the owner of the house, because:

1. Looking on him with respect: will bring steadfast faith in mind because seeing the conduct of a true monk will give that household the chance to practice the *path to heaven*;

2. Preparing his seat: giving the a true monk a place to sit [Åsana] will give that household the chance to practice the path to *birth in an influential family*.

3. Offering him refreshment: putting aside the mental impurities of stinginess (by giving something for the a true monk to drink for example) gives the household the chance to practice for the path to the *attainment of honour*.

4. Offering him requisites: sharing their wealth with the a true monk (e.g. by offering a donation to a monk) gives that household the chance to practice the path for the *attainment of wealth*.

5. Conversing on the Dhamma: conversing on the Dhamma and listening to teachings gives the household the chance to practice the path to the *attainment of wisdom*.

In fact to treat a monk of attainment badly can be very damaging, as in the case of Koka the Hunter (DhA.iii.31) who set his dogs on a monk and whose dogs subsequently turned on him, or the case of Upaka (DhA.iv.71-2) whose lack of ability to recognize the qualities of a True Monk in the Buddha delayed his spiritual search for many years.

C.3 Manners in meeting with a monk

These days even Buddhists are often not so careful as they used to be about the way in which they treat monks whether it be passing them in the street of inviting them to their homes. Both the monks and the laypeople must shoulder some of the blame, because often monks ordain without any special preparation. They are not really very sure what being a monk entails. After ordination they don't study monastic conduct and so make mistakes. When they make mistakes, then no-one treats them with any respect. The other half of the blame falls on the laypeople who have never taken any interest to look for the good points in monks. They spend the whole of their lives going from one bar to another and never think to visit the temple. Thus it is sometimes hard for monks if they go into town.Young ladies think that the monks are just another sort of man and squeeze past them in the street. Some gentlemen even walk into monks knocking them over in the street. If people carry on treating monks like this, then in the end they will remove all possibility of ever learning anything useful from the monks. Their eyes still see but their minds will become blind to virtue. Even if they were to meet the Buddha they would be unable to get any benefit from him. Thus if you want to conduct yourself properly when interacting with monks you need to study the correct protocol. If you should have the opportunity to come into contact with a monk, try to practise the following as far as it is practical:

1. Offer something: If you have any requisites suitable for monks to use, then you should offer an appropriate amount to monks. Even a glass of water counts as requisites.

2. Bow: If there are no suitable requisites available then bow to the monk using the five-point bow to express your respect. It shows that you don't just look a monks indifferently and it will be a habit which you will build up for yourself to give its fruit for the course of many lifetimes to come. It will remove the habit of stubborness from your mind.

3. Join your hands in a gesture of respect: If it is not convenient for you to bow (e.g. the floor is not clean, there are a lot of people or you risk being run over by a car) then join your hands in a gesture of prayer and it is better than nothing.

4. Stand respectfully: If it is not convenient for you to join your hands in a gesture of respect (e.g. you are carrying something) at least stand re

spectfully or bow your head or make way for him to pass or find some other way of expressing your respect.

5. Look respectfully: Even if you cannot do any of the above, at least look at the monk with faith and respect — not to look daggers at the monk or survey the monk from head to foot as if with the question in your mind 'Is that really a monk or not?'.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE TALES

D.1 Ex. Vakkali Thera (It.92, AA.i.140ff).

Vakkali belonged to a brahmin family of SÅvatthÈ and became proficient in the Vedas. Usually people are inspired to faith by one or more of four attributes of a monk (A.ii.71):

1. the appearance [rupappamÅÁikÅ]
2. the voice [ghosappamÅÁikÅ]
3. the humble manner of dress [lËkhappamÅÁikÅ]

4. the teachings he gives [dhammappamÅÁikÅ]

Vakkali was inspired to faith by the appearance alone of the Lord Buddha. After seeing the Buddha only once, he could never again tire of looking at him and followed him about everywhere. Any day he could not see the Buddha he felt low. In order to become closer to him he become a monk, and spent all his time apart from meals and bathing in contemplating the thirty-two signs of a Great Man [purisalakkhaÁa] so well exemplified by the Buddha's person. He was satisfied simply to see the Buddha and had no further thought of listening to the Buddha's teaching or of striving for liberation. The Buddha waited for the right opportunity to teach him — because what he had to say would surely upset Vakkali — but at the same time must be for his benefit. One day when the right time came, He banished Vakkali to a place where he could no longer see the Buddha. Vakkali was so upset by the Buddha's retort that he prepared to commit suicide by jumping over a cliff on GijjhakuÊa (the Vultures' Peak). Fully aware of Vakkali's intentions, before he was able to jump,

the Buddha went to him and appeared to him teaching the words (S.iii.120):

> AlaÔ Vakkali kiÔ te iminÅ pËtikÅyena diÊÊhena. Yo kho Vakkali dhammaÔ passati, so maÔ passati. Yo maÔ passati so dhammaÔ passati.
>
> The sight of my foul body is useless;
> He who sees the Dhamma, sees me
> He who sees me, sees the Dhamma.

Filled with joy, Vakkali rose in the air pondering on the Buddha's words and realized arahantship in mid-air

D.2 Ex. AÌgulimÅla Thera (DA.i.240ff., J.iv.180)

There was once a student at TakkasilÅ called AhiÔsaka (the harmless one). He became a favourite with his teacher because of his devotion to the study of the philosophies and the virtues. His diligence, however, stirred up the envy of his fellow students who conspired against him, eventually poisoning his teacher's mind against him. Finally, looking for a way to rid himself of AhiÔsaka the teacher gave this student a final task he must perform in order to earn his graduation — he must avail himself of a thousand human right-hand fingers — hoping that AhiÔsaka would be killed himself in the attempt. Thus, out of unerring obedience to his teacher, AhiÔsaka was transformed from a diligent student of virtue to a highway murderer attacking travellers in the JÅlinÈ forest. With his usual diligence, he killed each victim taking a finger from each. With the finger-bones thus obtained he made a garland to hang round his neck, hence the nickname 'AÌgulimÅla'.

As a result of his deeds whole villages were deserted and the king ordered a detachment of men to seize him. AÌgulimÅla's mother guessing who the notorious murderer must be, started off to warn him of the king's plan of action. By now he lacked but one finger to complete his thousand and seeing his mother coming, determined to kill her. The Buddha seeing AÌgulimÅla's latent potential for enlightenment, and realizing that if he should kill his mother it would be the end of his spiritual career, went himself to the wood himself, and intercepting him before he could harm his mother. The Buddha appeared to AÌgulimÅla with his back to him

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as if he was moving slowly away from him.
AÌgulimÅla seeing his chance chased after the Buddha with his sword, but miraculously no matter how fast he ran, he could not succeed in catching up with the Buddha — until eventually he called out, "Stop monk! Stop!".

"But, I have stopped," said the Buddha, "On the contrary it is *you* who have not stopped."
It was at the sight of the Buddha's miraculous behaviour that AÌgulimÅla was eventually converted by the Buddha's power and received ordination as a monk, later to become fully-enlightened as an *arahant*.

D.3 Ex. Ma**ÊÊ**haku**ÁÎ**al**È **(DhA.i.20ff.)

MaÊÊhakuÁÎalÈ was the only son of the brahmin Adinnapubbaka. His father loved him dearly but was a great miser and would make savings in every way he could instead of spending money on his son — even down to the burnished earrings from which MaÊÊhakuÁÎalÈ took his name. When he was sixteen years old MaÊÊhakuÁÎalÈ had an attack of jaundice. His father refused to call the physician fearing medical costs and prescribed for MaÊÊhakuÁÎali himself until the boy was beyond all cure. Seeing he could do nothing more to help the boy, he carried him outside and laid him on the terrace — not in the hope of curing him, but to save himself embarrassment in the face of those who came to prepare for the funeral who might see his unspent wealth.

The Buddha saw MaÊÊhakuÁÎalÈ as he lay dying and, out of compassion, came to the door of his father's home. Too weak to do anything else at the sight of the Buddha, the boy conjoured up devout faith in the Buddha. He died soon afterwards and was born amongst the gods in a golden mansion thirty leagues in extent.

D.4 Ex. Asajji Thera (DhA.i.78ff.)

SÅriputta had originally been ascetic in the school of Sañjaya VelaÊÊhaputta. Together with his best friend MoggallÅna, he had achieved eighteen diplomas from university and did not know what further to study, so they became ascetics. They wanted to meet an *arahant*. Later, SÅriputta *did* meet the *arahant* called Assajji. He recognized from the man ner of Assajji that he must have a special attainment. Thus, SÅriputta approached Assajji and bowed in respect before saying, "Sir, you have a radiant complexion, in whose school are you ordained?"

"I am ordained in the school of Gotama Buddha who is the son of the SÅkya kings," replied Assajji.

"And what does he teach, Sir?"

Even though he was an arahant, Assajji continued to treat SÅriputta in a humble way saying, "I am still newly ordained, and I am still new to the teaching of the Buddha, I am not able to elaborate much on the Dhamma teachings, but can tell you that 'Whatever thing arises because of a cause, the TathÅgata will show the cause of that arising and the falling away of that thing."

To the unpracticed listener, such a teaching might not sound very impressive (to those who have only captured sight of a true monk in the past without reflecting on their teachings.) However, SÅriputta had over the course of many lifetimes been in the habit of 'seeing' a true monk on all three levels, so even such a short sermon could become a streamenterer [sotÅpana] on the spot.

D.5 Ex. Mah**Å**n**Å**ga Thera (DA.i.190, 191 etc.)

There were once two brahmins who lived at the gate of the city of PÅÊalÈputta (a trading city built by the Emperor Asoka which served the whole of the Indian subcontinent). They often overheard traders who praised the virtues of an *arahant* called MahÅnÅga Thera who lived in the remote province of Rohana. The two brahmins were inspired to faith and had the wish to see the *arahant* for themselves. Even though the *arahant* lived far away, the two decided they would do whatever was necessary to meet with him. The two brahmins left Pataliputta and set off on the long journey. Before they had got far, one of the brahmins died on the way. The remaining brahmin continued undeterred to the coast where he made the necessary sea voyage to Rohana. He found accommodation at the village closeby MahÅnÅga's dwelling and prepared various delicacies to offer the next morning. Early next morning, the brahmin went to MahÅnÅga and stood respectfully behind all the other people who had also gone to visit. Later, when he had the op

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portunity, he came closer to the arahant and gleefully bowed at his feet, clutching the *arahant* at the ankles. Bowing one more time, the brahmin said, "You are so high." In fact the *arahant* was no taller or shorter than the next man.

"What I meant to say is that you are of such high virtue that your reputation has even spread like the mist, across the sea to India, so that even sitting at the gates of PÅÊalÈputta, I was able to hear others' praises of you. That is the reason I have gone to the trouble to come here."

Having spoken thus, the brahmin offered requisites to the *arahant* and having sought out the necessary robes and bowl for himself requested ordination under the *arahant*. Striving hard in meditation and obedient to the teaching of the monk, within two or three days, through his understanding of the value of the 'sight of a true monk' the brahmin was able to attain arahantship like his master.

D.6 Ex. Godha JÅtaka (J.325)

There are certain sorts of monks who pretend they are genuine but who are actually hypocritical. There was once a hermit who would teach every quarter moon day. He taught both the humans and the animals. One day, a supporter offered him some curry and he found it delicious. He asked,"What meat is this? — it's so delicious!" The supporter replied that it was water-monitor meat. The hermit said, "Water-monitor meat! It's the greatest." There was a water-monitor that lived in a hole at the back of the temple and it used to come and listen every time Dhamma was being taught. Next time round, it would be easy for the hermit to get a delicious meal. He would just sit teaching the sermon with a machete at his side. Next time there was a sermon, the water-monitor stuck its head out of its hole and noticed the machete by the side of the hermit. It thought to itself, "I wonder what subject is being taught today, that the hermit has brought a machete with him?" The water monitor was extra careful, but as soon as it was not attentive, the hermit hit it over the head with the machete. The water-monitor ran back down its burrow and didn't come out again, but all the time, it thought to itself, "Who is the more advanced anyway, me or the hermit? If a hermit who professes the Precepts is going to behave like that even in front of the congregation, who knows what he does behind our backs?"

D.7 Ex. How hot is chili?

People may be as unaware of the qualities of virtues as they are unaware of the spiciness of a chili pepper. If you go to a western country and a European asks what Thai chili is like, you might try making a comparison or showing him an example. They might ask, "Is it hot?" Of course you must agree that it is 'hot'. If they ask how hot it is, of course you could answer that it is "as hot as chili peppers" — however you run the risk of being accused of not trying very hard to explain — but it's hard to know what to use for a comparison, for someone of limited experience. He might ask, "Is it hot like ginger?" or "Is it hot like onions?" or "Is it hot like peppercorns?" or "Is it hot like mustard?" There is only one way of explaining — ask him to open his mouth and shut his eyes and put a little Thai chili in his mouth. Within five minutes he will have a swollen mouth and tongue and his cheeks look as if they are on fire. Now it's your turn to ask, "What is it hot like?" He will say for himself, "Hot like red hot charcoal!"

D.8 Ex. The turtle and the fish

People need to understand things based on their previous experience. If one tries to understand something new in terms of experience in which one is lacking, the results might be the same as a found in the following story:

Once upon a time, there were a turtle and a fish who were good friends. The fish was confined to the water, but the turtle was amphibious and could travel in the water or on the land at will. When the turtle returned from its travels on the land it would tell the fish about all it had seen. At first the fish was not very interested, but after hearing the stories about the land, day in day out, it became more and more fascinated.

The fish asked, "When you say that birds fly, do you mean like a frog?" Well, everybody knows the difference between a hopping frog

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and the flight of a bird — but the turtle was unable to make the fish understand the difference.

”And when you say that elephants are large and have tusks, are the tusks the same as the whiskers of a prawn?” Again, the turtle was unable to make the fish understand the difference.

”And when you say that trees have trunks, branches and twigs with leaves are they the same as seaweed?” The turtle was unable to make the fish understand the difference. However many questions the fish asked, the turtle was unable to explain.

Finally the turtle realized that there is a condition for being able to explain things to another person — both people must *share common experience* to be able to communicate. Without such common experience, the speaker may as well be speaking to himself!

• ***Blessing Twenty-Seven: Patience:*** Those in a discussion need to be patient. The sort of patience you will need the most of is 'patience in the face of conflict' when differences of opinion arise;
• ***Blessing Twenty-Eight: Openness to Criticism:***

Blessing Thirty: Regular Discussion of the Dhamma

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 The place of Blessing Thirty in the order of things

Many people can talk all day and all night about outings or holidays, but if they had to talk even for five minutes on a subject of the Dhamma, they would certainly die! Discussing the Dhamma is no easy skill — even the Buddha himself spent many lifetimes perfecting speaking and listening before he could move on to discussion of the Dhamma. Dhamma discussion is a challenge because it is the culmination of almost all of the Blessings already mentioned:

• ***Blessing Seven: Having heard much:***. Dhamma discussion requires participants to be good listeners. We have to be able to build up the ability to listen to others first before we can expect them to listen to us;
• ***Blessing Ten: Artful Speech:*** Those in the discussion must be artful speakers on the subject of Dhamma. They must not just say what others want to hear by complimenting and praising them. Although someone might speak seven languages, but they can hardly be considered an artful speaker if they are always causing fights by the things they say;
• ***Blessing Twenty-Two: Respect:*** Those in the discussion must be respectful. Everything in the world has good and bad points. You should choose the constructive aspect of things to talk about.
• ***Blessing Twenty-Three: Humility:*** Those in the discussion must be humble — not looking down on others or their opinions;
• ***Blessing Twenty-Six: Having regularly listened to the Dhamma:*** They must have heard many Dhamma Talks — with an understanding built by reflecting on what they have learned, and by discussing and questioning the Dhamma. Of course, it is an acquired taste to want to listen to the Dhamma rather than listening to something else like music — which can be explained by two reasons:

1. It's hard to concentrate on something abstract like the Dhamma: we are used to focussing on more material or sensually-stimulating subjects;
2. It's hard to open up one's mind to the Dhamma: Supposing the monk talks about Precepts, the listener knows that their Precepts are not very well kept, therefore to be reminded of their bad habits is always painful. It's hard to want to listen to someone talk about the faults about your personality. It is all very entertaining to listen to a sermon about 'fools' (as in the first Blessing) for as long as someone else is the subject of the sermon, but as soon as we realize that we also share some characteristics of a fool, the sermon becomes less pleasurable to listen to. It is like touching an open wound. This is why people like sitting right at the *back* of the lecture hall when listening to Dhamma teachings — to try to protect their 'comfort zone'.

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Those in the discussion must be open to criticism. You will know why you need to have patience when in the course of a discussion, you receive your first item of personal criticism. Sometimes during the course of a discussion, the others will test our patience first to see just how much criticism we are able to accept. If someone deserves some heavy criticism, they will start by receiving minor criticisms first, such as "When you are listening to sermons, you shouldn't sit and wriggle because it shows lack of respect towards the Dhamma," and gradually get heavier for example: "When you are listening to sermons, you shouldn't let your mind wander to think about other matters like your own home, because it shows lack of respect towards the Dhamma."

Thus you can see that discussing the Dhamma is no easy matter. If it were easy, it would have been one of the first units of the Manual of Peace. However, we find that it has been placed at the *thirtieth* step of the path of Buddhist practice. Thus don't go organizing a discussion if you don't know what you are doing or else you might end up with a discussion of things that are not artful. Dhamma discussion is even more demanding than just listening to a Dhamma-talk — because discussion means we must learn to listen and respond at the same time. Similarly, it is easier just to talk and have people listen to you than to have the patience to listen to other people talk.

A.2 The objectives of Blessing Thirty

The objectives of this blessing are:

1. to discuss the Dhamma in a way that benefits oneself and others; for those who are capable of discussing and sharing their knowledge, a large merit awaits because in the words of the Buddha

'sabbadÅnaÔ dhammadÅnaÔ jinÅti'
(the gift of Dhamma excels all gifts) Dh.354

2. to discuss the Dhamma in a way that does not detract from the value of the Dhamma; This needs to be mentioned because discussing Dhamma in an inappropriate or distorted way may curtail the life of the Dhamma in living memory

> "O! Monks! Those monks who claim (various sorts of) monastic transgressions are not monastic transgressions, and those who claim as monastic transgressions those which are not monastic transgressions, are those who bring harm and unhappiness for the manyfolk — suffering to humans and angels alike — in so doing earning grave demerit, consuming much merit and causing an end to the Saddhamma."
>
> AnÅpati Sutta (A.i.20)

and "Distortion of the Dhamma means claiming the Buddha said or didn't say (A.i.59) or that the Suttas contain or don't contain (A.i.61) what is in fact not the case."

This is in addition to what has already been mentioned in Blessing Three (*§D.2*) about joking about the Dhamma;

3. to acquire wisdom: Dhamma discussions are intended as a way of cultivating wisdom. Above all other things the Buddha praised 'wisdom'. Most people know that wisdom is beyond price. The Buddha even taught the proverb:

PaññÅ naranaÔ ratanaÔ
wisdom is the (wish-fulfilling) gem of the people

JarÅ Sutta (S.i.36)

The Buddha's observation is in contrast to the opinion of many modern children who seem to think that a wish-fulfilling gem comes in the form of a television or a computer. Life is full of problems to solve. Whether it be trivial problems of physical hardship like drying washing when it is raining, or problems from the people around us. There are even problems inside our own body from illnesses and pain. We must rely on wis

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dom to solve all these problems — but wisdom is something we cannot buy — it can however be acquired from two main sources (as already discussed in the "Two Formative Influences on our discretion (*§B.3*) in the *First Blessing*):

1. the advice and encouragement we get from good friends [kalyÅÁamitta] during discussion of the Dhamma with them;
2. the insights we come to through our ability to be a teacher to ourselves [yonisomanasikÅra]

— for which the regular practice of meditation is a prerequisite;

4. to sharpen our wits: having to think and apply the Dhamma we know 'in real-time' as one does in a discussion is a 'performing art'. In order to do so well, we need to have sharp wits [paÊibhÅÁa].

These are in addition to the five objectives of listening to the Dhamma already mentioned in Blessing Twenty-Six (*§C.1*).

B. DISCUSSION OF THE DHAMMA

B.1 Definitions: Dhamma & Discussion

The word '*dhamma*' is not easy to define and can have up to a hundred meanings depending on the context. In *Blessing Sixteen* we have already described Dhamma as being a description of the reality of things while at the same time referring to virtue. However, at this stage in the Manual of Peace it is perhaps also useful to reflect that the Dhamma in its context as the teaching of the Buddha and as the second component of the Triple Gem is recognizable by the following six characteristics (M.i.37, A.iii.285):

1. properly expounded by the Exalted One [svÅkkÅto bhagavatÅ Dhamma];
2. clearly perceived within ourselves [sandiÊÊhiko];
3. timeless [akÅliko];
4. which inspires those who see it to call others to come and see it [ehipassiko];
5. which should be internalized [opanayiko];
6. which can be realized subjectively by the wise [paccataÔ veditabbo viññËhi]; The word 'discussion' means that there must be at least two people dialoguing on a subject of the Dhamma (not on other matters). Such discussions should occur regularly and they should be aimed to increase the wisdom of the participants (not to show off who is the smartest like some sort of contest) arranged at an appropriate time and taking no more time than is appropriate.

B.2 Varieties of Discussion

Discussion of the Dhamma can be divided into two types:

1. Giving a Dhamma talk: which is more or less a one-way discussion of the Dhamma. This subject has already been touched upon in *Blessing Twenty-Six*, however, in this Blessing we are no longer simply on the receiving end of teachings, now we must start to take some of the responsibility for applying them to others for our own and others' increasing wisdom, without devaluing the Dhamma by doing so;

2. Dhamma debate: which is a two (or more)-way discussion on the subject of the Dhamma.

B.2.1 Giving a Dhamma Talk

The Buddha enumerates the following five qualities of a good Dhamma preacher as already mentioned in the *Twenty-Sixth Blessing §B3*. The Buddha went further to say (Candupama Sutta S.ii.195) that anyone who teaches simply to attract followers does not teach in a pure way. However anyone who thinks that the Dhamma with its *six characteristics* will bring benefit to those who know it and practice it and who teaches it on the basis of loving-kindness, compassion and the thought to help others, that sort of teaching is pure. In addition to these basic skills, according to the KesÈ Sutta (A.ii.112ff.) different approaches are required for training different types of people in the Dhamma

— some disciples need to be taught gently by elaborating the meaning of good behaviour and the wholesome fruits of such good behaviour — some need to be taught sternly by elaborating the meaning of evil and the unwholesome retribution of such evil behaviour — some need to be taught by a combination of these two means — and for those that cannot be helped in any of the previous three ways,

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one needs to accept that there is no use in giving them further teachings until such time as they can gain benefit therefrom.

B.2.2 Dhamma Debate

Preaching is challenging in that one needs to have a sensitivity to the disposition and needs of the listener without hearing anything from them. However, even though in debating others' position is more express, the debate is more challenging because one must have the ability to 'think on one's feet'. It is not only a question of satifactorily answering questions, but also the ability to gauge the type of question and the real purpose behind the question too. The Buddha enumerates five sorts of questions (S.ii.1):

1. questions about things the person asking has not yet seen;
2. questions comparing things to those the person asking has already seen;
3. questions to overcome the person asking's doubts;

4. questions to encouraging the listener to follow what the questioner has seen;
5. rhetorical questions; Surprisingly, many questions do not require a straight answer and this becomes easier to compre

hend if one looks at the five reasons the Buddha identified for why questions are asked (A.iii.191):

1. asking under the influence of ignorance or forgetfulness
2. asking under the influence of evil desires
3. asking as a way to express looking down on others

4. asking out of curiousity to know
5. asking with the expectation that they will get a good answer Thus, one needs a multifaceted strategy in answering questions— and it turns out that even the Buddha himself had four different ways of answering a question (A.ii.46):

1. answering directly [ekaÔsabyÅkaraÁa]; well-prepared questions deserve a direct answer

2. answering by dividing one's response [paÊipucchabyÅkaraÁa]; Answer which requires you to make a division clear. If someone is mixing up their practice because they are confusing steps which should be made separate or practising things in the wrong order, then your answer must start by making a clear division between the factors in an issue. Sometimes you need to limit the scope of what you are answering. Sometimes, you need to make sure that both you and the listener understand the same thing by the terms you are using in a dialogue (e.g. when they are talking about 'evil' are they in fact meaning 'sin' defined in their own terms?)

3. answering by a question in return [vibhajjabyÅkaraÁa], Sometimes people ask questions not because they are interested in the answer but they are interested in whether you *can* answer. In such cases maybe you should ask such people *why* they ask such a question. In some cases you need to ask them whether they would like to know or whether they would like to experience it for themselves — without answering, and;

4. keeping one's silence [ÊhapanÈyapañha]. This is otherwise known as 'Noble silence' — or in modern day parlance 'no comment'! It is applicable when giving any answer irrespective will only serve to reinforce the unwholesomeness of the questioner. An example of this is when people ask about the specific inner experiences gained as a result of meditation but they have never practiced for themselves, it is not much use to give an answer because:

1. they may not believe you;
2. they may use what they have remembered instead of striving to attain such experience for themselves.

C. PRACTICALITIES OF ORGANIZING A DHAMMA DISCUSSION

C.1 Self-preparation for a Dhamma Debate

It is hard to get a good Dhamma discussion going if you don't know the rules and regulations of the game. You need to be well-prepared when you enter a Dhamma Discussion. It is not just like having a chat. As for conducting the discussion of the Dhamma, the following guidelines are recom

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mended:

1 ***Keep the Precepts in advance:*** If you are a householder, you should keep Five Precepts for at least seven days beforehand. (If possible, Eight Precepts is even better). It will make sure that we embody the Dhamma about which we want to talk. It is not the idea to discuss the Dhamma when you are drunk. In the old days Dhamma would never be discussed if alcohol was being drunk or if any of the participants had been drinking. If you want to know the reason, why not try it for yourself? If you try speaking on a sensible subject to someone under the influence of alcohol, you may start a fight. To discuss the Dhamma, your mind must first be true to its real nature. Alcohol interferes with this nature. Thus if you can't even manage to keep the Five Precepts, don't delude yourself into thinking you will be able to discuss the Dhamma.

2 ***Meditate in advance:*** You should prepare yourself for the Dhamma discussion by meditating regularly beforehand and meditating immediately before starting the discussion. In this way your mind will be sufficiently refined to understand the subtle nature of the subject under discussion.

3 ***Dress politely and modestly to participate:*** you must dress in a way suitable for the nature of things under discussion. Thus don't dress in clothes that are too brightly coloured, provocative, tight-fitting, dirty, stained or torn.

4 ***Maintain good manners:*** Nothing you do must be irritating to the others participating.

5 ***Speak politely:*** You should speak calmly. For those who speak loudly, it is obvious that the mind is already away from the centre of the body. One should not boast about one's own attainments or one's own school of meditation. One should honestly admit the limits of what one knows and not pretend to be expert in everything.

6 ***Give unknown teachings the benefit of the doubt:*** Even if you don't understand some of the Buddha's teachings at first encounter, don't refuse them outright. Sometimes we don't instantly understand the meaning of teachings we learn. Sometimes our experience or refinement of mind is not enough to be able to see the benefit of a teaching. Supposing we have the teaching, "forge your own destiny with diligence" — if we are heavily involved in social welfare work we might think that the teaching cannot be right — how could it be better to help ourselves rather than to spend our time being altruistic to others? However reflecting more deeply we will find that it refers to the fact that the benefit of others will be of no use in the long term if we don't train ourselves *too* as our first priority. Thus, if you don't agree with a teaching, don't refuse it but express your doubt and what you think it might mean as an alternative instead. Supposing we have already categorically refused a teaching and later someone points out that it is right using appropriate reasons, it will be hard for us to reconsider our point of view — because we will be more afraid of losing face than of being wrong.

7. Avoid provocative words: Use only a manner and choice of words that facilitate harmony.

8. Avoid expressing anger when confronted by differences of opinion: Sometimes there are even classic proverbs can be contradictory (viz. "Make hay while the sun shines" versus "More haste less speed") Both can be true in the appropriate context. If two people have different situations in mind they will be sure to have differences on even the same subject.

9. Avoid having fame or oneupmanship as the motivation for your discussion: If such unskilful motives are the reason you want to have a discussion for it would be better for you to stay at home!

10. Don't forget that Dhamma discussions are designed to bring forth wisdom: Dhamma conversations are always to further our knowledge and to use the strengths of others to fill in our own weaknesses. Such discussions are never to show off how much we know.

11.Avoid letting the conversation drift 'off topic': If you you start by talking about generosity and later find yourself boasting about all the times you have been generous then you have gone

beyond the limits of a Dhamma discussion. Similarly, if you find that you are gossiping about how stingy such-and-such another person is, then again it is no longer a Dhamma discussion.

12. Avoid letting the discussion go on for too long:
— otherwise everyone involved will be bored

C.2 Selecting worthy participants

Choosing the wrong people to engage in a Dhamma discussion can be disastrous and cause a quarrel. As mentioned above, it is only in conversation with the 'Good Friend' that wisdom will arise, therefore, in choosing participants, you should invite those possessing the seven characteristics of a good friend [kalyÅÁamitta] (A.iv.32):

1. endearing [piyo]: attractive and making others feel at ease, ready to ask questions and seek advice;

2. respectable [garu]: one who makes others feel that they can take safe refuge in them;

3. cultured and emulable [bhÅvanÈyo] others who see their educated qualities and would like to be like that too;

4. a counsellor [vatta] having the ability to give good counsel through knowing the way to speak to get results, through knowing how to explain Dhamma so that others understand, through knowing the appropriate time to give praise and mention criticisms ;

5. being a patient listener [vacanakkhamo] always being open to advice, questions and criticism without being irritated ;

6. the ability to treat profound matters [gambhirañca kathaÔ kattÅ] and able to difficult matters in a way which can be easily understood;

7. never speaking of things without reason or leading conversations to a useless end [no caÊÊhÅne niyojaye].

These criteria apply to conversation between unrelated people. It should be noted that if the conversation is within the family, then it is not necessary to worry about selecting the participants.

C.3 Selecting a worthy subject of debate

According to the Buddha there are ten criteria [*katthavatthu*] for selecting subjects constructive for a Dhamma discussion (A.v.129, also at M.i.145 and M.iii.113), namely subjects that are conducive to:

1. wanting little [appiccha];
2. contentment [santuÊÊhi];
3. seclusion [paviveka];
4. solitude [asaÔsagga];
5. energetic striving [viriya];
6. self-discipline [sÈla];
7. concentration [samÅdhi];
8. wisdom [paññÅ];
9. liberation [vimutti], and;
10. seeing and knowing of liberation [vimutti-ñÅÁadassana].

One should talk on these sorts of subjects while avoiding unconducive talk of kings, robbers, ministers, armies, panic, battle, food, drink, clothes, beds, flowers, garlands, perfumes, relatives, vehicles, villages, townships, cities, districts, women, champions, streets, gossip, ghost-stories, desultatory talk, fables about land and sea, prosperity and decay. In addition, the subject of conversation must be suited to the participants — if you are going to discuss the Vinaya you must choose people who are expert in this subject. If you are going to discuss meditation then it should be a discussion between those who have really got down to practice for themselves.

C.4 Selecting an appropriate time for a debate

For participants in a Dhamma Discussion who are unrelated, any mutually appropriate time is acceptable. For families, particular advice (*given below see §D.4*). Just like listening to Dhamma teachings, the practice of Dhamma discussions should be regular (weekly, monthly) or might be on the occasion of a particular calendar event with an appropriately related topic — e.g. for New Year, it might be a discussion about one's good resolutions for the New Year.

C.5 Conclusion: By Dhamma, for Dhamma

In conclusion, there are three governing principles to discussing the Dhamma:

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1. Discuss within the scope ***of Dhamma:*** The subject of discussion must remain within the scope of the Dhamma. If you want to talk about virtues, don't let the discussion overlap into boasting about virtues. If you want to speak on protecting yourself from vices, don't let the discussion run over into gossipping about others' ills;

2. Discuss by means ***of Dhamma:*** Those participating in the discussion must not behave out of keeping with the Dhamma. Respect should be given to others where it is due — rather than looking down on the other participants you assume know less than you. You should speak politely with artful speech. Praise those who speak correctly — and be polite if occasion arises to point out the faults in another's argument (rather than insulting them personally). If you make a mistake yourself, apologise rather than letting your defilements dominate the conversation;

3. Discuss for ***Dhamma:*** Those who discuss must share the goal of furthering their knowledge of Dhamma through conversation — rather than showing off what they already know. In expressing your knowledge, it should be with the aim of facilitating *others* to share their knowledge with you!

D. DHAMMA DISCUSSION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

D.1 Dhamma Discussion in the time of the Buddha:

In the time of the Buddha, even though *arahant*s had already freed themselves of all defilements, they would hold discussions of the Dhamma to sharpen their knowledge — not to speak of the less 'enlightened'. Discussion of the Dhamma was like the national pastime of that age with debate on spiritual and philosophical matters to be found in groups on every street corner.

D.2 Old tradition in Buddhist society

In the olden days, in the countries of Southeast Asia, any village where the mayor was interested in the Dhamma, would hold a public Dhamma discussion every full-moon night. The discussion would have very simple rules so that everybody could have the chance to join in — for example, each villager took it in turn to talk about the best good habit they had — something even the village thief could manage!

D.3 Role of the Older Generation in Dhamma Discussion

In Asian Buddhist society of old, when all the family lived together, the young and middle-aged adults would all go to work the fields. The old folks and would stay at home with the children. Usually the old folks would make baskets or do other sedentary tasks, but often they would tell tales to the children playing nearby — often cautionary tales from the JÅtakas (birth stories of the previous lifetimes of the Buddha). The young children would have a lot of questions for the old-folks and by questions and answers, before long there would be a conversation set up on the subject of the Dhamma. As the result of such conversations, the children would learn the foundations of moral behaviour from a very early age.

D.4 Dhamma Discussion around the dining table

(*see also Bl.12 §B3.1, heading 3.2*) These days the opportunity to discuss Dhamma *en famille* is becoming scarcer because the family tends to centre itself more on the TV than Dhamma wisdom. However anyone who values the future of their children should realize that the TV is robbing them of the opportunity to instil their children with virtue. It can be predicted that any family which cannot manage to come together for at least one communal meal per day will have a sorry future for its children.The extra money parents can earn for their children by working late (but missing the family mealtime) is no substitute for the time they will miss teaching virtue to their children — guidance without which the children can ruin their future. For Dhamma Discussions within the family, finding an appropriate time is more complex. Whether you are the leader of a family yet or not you need to consider being responsible for the real education of your child. Nowadays, we no longer have grandparents at home to look after the children's morality. The

form of the discussion is usually a parent giving advice to his children and asking for their opinions on certain things concerning the childrens' own behaviour. The parent will speak for 80% of the time and the child speaks for 20% of the time — no more than that — otherwise it will end up with the child teaching the parent instead!

D.5 Twin pulpits & Tibetan debate

Between monks in the present time in the TheravÅda tradition, there is still the tradition of giving a sermon 'from two pulpits' — that is two monks with expertise in a subject will discuss that subject in front of an audience — maybe the ancient equivalent of today's televised panel discussion? In the Tibetan tradition, there is alse the tradition of debating for students and teachers to hone their wits and mastery of scriptural material.

D.6 More than just talking about it — practise!

It should never be forgotten that whether knowledge gained comes from a sermon or a discussion, it can be of no use to anyone if we don't practice it for ourselves as the result — as the Buddha mentions in addition to the criteria for subject of discussion (*see §C.3 above*) that the most praiseworthy topics of discussion are those where the debators not only talk about it, but also practice it too (A.v.129).

E. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

E.1 Metaphor: Conferences for academics

Just as the sharing exchange of ideas at conferences helps to foster academic progress, regular discussion of the Dhamma will bring wisdom, the pathway to the liberation of suffering.

E.2 Metaphor: Shadow-boxing

The people of old compared talking to 'shadow boxing'. They compared listening to others like punching a sandbag. However, discussions with others are the hardest of all (like boxing in the ring).

E.3 Ex. EkuddÅna Thera (DhA.iii.384ff.)

There was once the son of a wealthy brahmin of SÅvatthi who entered the Buddhist order. He dwelled in the forest fulfilling his noviciate and came to the Buddha to receive a subject of meditation from him. Seeing that SÅriputta was otherwise occupied, the Buddha gave the novice a short teaching himself to the effect:

"There is no sorrow for the monk of transcen dental thoughts" The novice learned this verse by heart and returned to the forest to reflect on it. Although he didn't know any other verses of Dhamma, he understood this one thoroughly and eventually became an *arahant* by contemplation of it. Later he came to be known as "one exclamation" [ekuddÅna] he would exhort others to listen to the Dhamma, and he would recite this only verse he knew. Every time he had finished his recitation, the guardian spirits [*devas*] of the forest rejoiced in his merit resoundingly. On one occasion two learned monks who were well-versed in the TipiÊaka, each accompanied by a group of 500 monks came to his dwelling place. EkuddÅna invited the two monks to preach the Dhamma. They enquired if there were many who wished to listen to the Dhamma in such a remote area. EkuddÅna told them that even the guardian spirits of the forests would rejoice at the end of each discourse. Thus reassured, the two learned monks took turns to preach the Dhamma, but when their discourses ended, there was no rejoicing from the guardian spirits of the forests. The learned monks were puzzled and they doubted the words of EkuddÅna — but he insisted that the guardian spirits always rejoiced at the end of each discourse. The two learned monks then requested *him* to do the preaching. EkuddÅna recited his usual verse. At the end of the recitation, the guardian spirits rejoiced as usual. Some monks in the retinue felt that the *devas* inhabiting the forests were showing favouritism to EkuddÅna. They reported the matter to the Buddha on arrival at the Jetavana monastery. However, the Buddha admonished them:

> "O! Monks! I don't say that a *bhikkhu* who has learned much and talks much of the Dhamma is one who is versed in the Dhamma. One who has learned only little and knows only one verse of the Dhamma, but fully comprehends the Four Noble

Truths, and is ever mindful is the one who
is truly versed in the Dhamma."

E.4 Ex. Verañja Sutta (A.iv.172)

The brahmin Verañja once visited the Buddha at NaÒerupicumanda and asked the Buddha a series of questions.

First he asked, "It is said that the Buddha *pays no respect* to aged brahmins?"

The Buddha replies that he has not seen a brahmin in the whole world to whom such respect is due from him.

"It is said that the you are *tasteless*?"

"In fact that they say I am tasteless is correct because the Buddha has relinquished attachment in the sense perceptions of eye, ear, nose, mouth and body — but that is not the reason for your asking?"

"It is said that the you are without wealth?"

"What they say is true, because the Buddha has relinquished the sense perceptions of eye, ear, nose, mouth and body which lead to attachments to wealth — but that is not the reason for your asking?"

"It is said that the you are *inactive*?"

"What they say is true, because the Buddha exhorts his disciples not to do anything which is evil with body, speech or mind — but that is not the reason for your asking?"

"It is said that the you are a *nihilist*?"

"What they say is true, because the Buddha advocates the anihilation of greed, hatred and delusion from the mind — but that is not the reason for your asking?"

"It is said that the you are *full of hatred*?"

"What they say is true, because the Buddha advocates the hatred of evil action of body, speech and mind — but that is not the reason for your asking?"

"It is said that the you are a *terminator*?"

"What they say is true, because the Buddha advocates the termination of greed, hatred and delusion and he teaches the Dhamma for the termination of all forms of evil and unwholesomeness — but that is not the reason for your asking?"

"It is said that you are an *incinerator*?"

"What they say is true, because the Buddha advocates the burning up of the unwholesome states of body, speech and mind — but that is not the rea son for your asking?"

"It is said that you will *not be born any more*?"

"What they say is true, because the Buddha will never again enter the womb or take future birth. Just like amongst 8, 10 or 12 eggs are incubated by a mother hen, wouldn't it be true to call the first of those chickens to use its beak or its claw to break through the shell the eldest of the batch? "

"It is true he should be called the oldest, because he emerges before all the others."

"In the same way, of all the beings of the world encapsulated in their shell of ignorance [avijjÅ] the Buddha has been the first to break through that shell because of cultivating the recollection of previous lifetimes [pubbenivÅsÅnussatiñÅÁa], knowing the arising and falling of others according to their karma [cutËpapÅtañÅÁa] and knowing an end to defilements [Åsavakkhayañ ÅÁa].

Only after this explanation did Verañja realize the answer to his original question and appreciating the uniqueness of the Buddha in his world and took refuge in the Triple Gem as a Buddhist layman for the rest of his life.

E.5 Ex. BÅvarÈ & his disciples (SN 976-1148)

There was once a Brahmin ascetic teacher who lived on the banks of a river in DakkhiÁÅpatha and who had many students. He heard praise of the Buddha and decided to send his students to interrogate the Buddha with questions to see if his claim to Buddhahood was justified.

They followed the Buddha to RÅjagaha, and meeting him, satisfied themselves that he bore all the thirty-two marks of a Great Man. Then each in turn asked one or more questions (*to a total of thirty-five different questions!*) —

Ajita: What is the reason why living beings are enshrouded in unknowing?

Buddha: The enshrouding of ignorance is reason for their unknowing. Because of their craving and recklessness no wisdom is available to them. Thus I teach that craving smothers living beings in attachment and suffering is the consequent harm brought.

Ajita: What is the thing to prevent the craving that

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runs like water through our perceptions? What can release us from craving?

Buddha: Mindfulness is what can prevent and protect one from craving while wisdom is what allows one release.

Ajita: And what can cause the extinguishing of body and mind components [nÅma-rËpa]?

Buddha: If the consciousness (mind) has already attained extinction, the bodily component will also be brought to extinction.

Ajita: What characterises those who have already seen the Dhamma (attained enlightenment)?

Buddha: They have no further attachment for sense pleasure, their mind remains unclouded and knowing all mental phenomena they are mindful in all postures.

Tissametteyya: Who can be said to be contented?

Buddha: I call those who are not caught up in sense pleasure . . . those who follow the Brahma-faring, who are restrained as to the senses, who have no further craving, who are mindful in all postures who are of Right View and who have uprooted the defilements from the mind, those who are contented.

PuÁÁaka: What is the reason why large numbers of people worship deities with sacrifices?

Buddha: The reason is that their aging interferes with them achieving what they wish.

PuÁÁaka: Is it possible through properly practising sacrifices to overcome birth and aging?

Buddha: Those who perform sacrifices are motivated by material gain. I say that whoever is so motivated cannot be released from the cycle of rebirth.

PuÁÁaka: If those performing sacrifices cannot obtain release from the cycle of rebirth, then who can?

Buddha: Those who can attain release must be those who have no further craving in their mind, who have seen the Dhamma by which their mind is peaceful, pure, without unwholesome behaviour to cloud the mind, like a snuffed candle, without further defilements or craving.

MettagË: What causes all the suffering in the world?

Buddha: Suffering has karma and defilements as its cause [*upadhi*]. The more the cause is fulfilled, the more suffering there will be — thus fools by fulfilling the cause come across suffering often. However, knowing the cause, one should avoid fulfilling it.

MettagË: How can one endowed with wisdom cross the ocean of birth, aging and sorrow?

Buddha: All my teachings are those you must put into practice by yourself, within the very body of yours — it cannot be attained by asking other people — and that is to mindfully overcome the craving that traps you in this world

MettagË: Which *dhamma* does the Buddha rejoice in as the highest?

Buddha: The Buddha rejoices in any teaching which reduces absent-mindedness in the beginning, middle or ending — which leads to mindfulness and non-recklessness to know and relinquish attachment to all that is 'mine' in order to transcend the suffering of birth, aging and sorrow.

MettagË: Just as the Buddha must have overcome suffering and doubtlessly have taught your disciples to do the same — may I be accepted as one of your disciples?

Buddha: He who is the true Brahmin has (not only) thoroughly studied the Three Vedas (but), has no further defilements or anxieties, has no further attachment in the sensual plane — has crossed the ocean of suffering with no remaining suffering — that is who I say is liberated from birth and aging.

Dhotaka: In the human or *deva*-world is their any brahmin perfectly free of concerns?

Buddha: Those who know the supreme Dhamma, having overcome doubt, have crossed the ocean of defilement.

Dhotaka: What is the device to extinguish the defilements?

Buddha: The device which you can see for yourself, and which you don't need to enquire from others, is the mindfulness to overcome the craving that attaches the mind to this world.

Dhotaka: I delight in the Buddha's explanation of how to overcome defilements. . .

Buddha: Once knowing that craving of the high, middle or low level traps beings in the world, entertain no further craving.

UpasÈva: I find that I have no perceptable mental

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state. What mental state can I rely upon to bring me to liberation from this ocean?

Buddha: You should take the absorption of the Sphere of Nothingness [ÅkiñcaññÅyatana-jhÅna] as the object of your meditation to cross the ocean, relinquishing sense-pleasure, overcoming doubt and seeing the end of craving be day and by night.

UpasÈva: Do those who cultivate the Sphere of Nothingness as their object of meditation ever know fading out of that state?

Buddha: There is no fading out from the state of the Sphere of Nothingness.

UpasÈva: If a person were to pass away while in the state of meditation on the Sphere of Nothingness would they stay in that realm or would their consciousness enter upon Nirvana?

Buddha: Just as a flame which blows out in the wind gives no indication of the direction in which it has gone, those who have gone beyond the body and mind constituents [nÅma-rÊpa] will extinguish with no further trace without further birth.

UpasÈva: Has that person really been extinguished or are they simply disembodied or do they become eternal beyond danger?

Buddha: Those who enter upon ParinibbÅna have no further defilements to cause them to be born, they will take no further birth.

Nanda: If a sage [munÈ] exists in the world is he one endowed with the absorptions [jhÅna] or is it the way he earns his living that makes him a sage?

Buddha: One is not called a sage because of what one has seen, heard or known. I say that he who frees himself from defilements, who has no further defilements, who is no longer concerned by craving can be referred to as a 'sage'.

Nanda: A large number of ascetics and brahmins claim to have become pure by what they have seen or heard, by their discipline, torment or methodology — do some of them really manage to overcome birth and aging?

Buddha: I say that those ascetics and brahmins cannot overcome birth and aging by such practices. *Nanda*: If these brahmins and ascetics cannot overcome birth and aging, who in the human or devaworld can?

Buddha: I do not say that is the case for all brahmins and ascetics are trapped in birth and aging, but I say that only those brahmins and ascetics who can relinquish attachment to mental state accompanying all what they have seen or heard, their discipline, torment or methodology, knowing the harmfulness of craving to the extent that they have no further defilement, can overcome birth and aging.

Hemaka: In the past I have been distracted by teachers who have speculated about events of the future or the past. All that they have done is simply lip-service to true practice. I take no delight in their teachings — what I would really like to know is the thing that allows one to overcome craving?

Buddha: Whosoever knows that Nirvana is what can reduce craving and contentment with pleasureable perceptions, that it is not impermanent, and knowing this has mindfulness, who sees the Dhamma and has extinguished the defilements, will overcome the craving which leads to attachment to this world.

Todeyya: How is the liberation of a person who has transcended the sensual, who has no more craving and who has overcome all doubt?

Buddha: The liberation of such a person will be unalterable.

Todeyya: Has such a person really overcome craving, possessed of true wisdom — or have they just altered their wisdom to change the perception of craving or Right View in the mind?

Buddha: That person really has no further craving and has achieved true wisdom — it is not just wisdom to change the perception of craving.

Kappa: What virtue can be a refuge to those amidst the suffering of aging and death in the same way that an island can be refuge to someone cast adrift in a sea of terrifying waves?

Buddha: Nirvana, which is free of defilements and concerns, free of craving and attachments, which is beyond aging and death is as an island refuge. Those who know Nirvana can be said to be endowed with mindfulness, have seen the Dhamma, extinguished the defilements and are longer under the power of the MÅras, and no longer walk the path of the MÅras.

JatukaÁÁÈ: As one who has overcome defile-

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ments and sensuality, may I know what is the virtue that allows one to overcome birth and aging in this very life?

Buddha: If you can put an end to obsession with sensual pleasure, seeing the end of sense indulgence and concern with attachments, craving and views no longer ingrained in your mind, putting an end to any concern you ever had in your mind — not entertaining such concerns at heart, your mind will be tranquil and the defilements which allow the MÅra of death power over you will no longer exist.

BhadrÅvudha: What virtue can be of use to those who have come from afar to hear the Dhamma of the Buddha?

Buddha: Those people should remove craving from themselves completely, because wherever craving causes people to attach to things or to the world the MÅras will be able to interfere — knowing and seeing how beings become entrapped in the cycle (of existence), monks should cultivate mindfulness and not attach or have concern for anything in the world.

Udaya: What is the liberating virtue to be known which can destroy ignorance and un-enlightenedness?

Buddha: I say that the virtue to overcome the Five Hindrances, equanimity and mindfulness are the pure virtues which lead to liberation and destroying of ignorance.

Udaya: What binds one to the world — what is the release from the world — and relinquishing what is Nirvana attained?

Buddha: Distractedness binds one to the world. The world can be escaped by mindfulness. By relinquishing craving is Nirvana attained.

Udaya: What sort of mindfulness leads to the extinguishing of consciousness?

Buddha: When one is not distracted by the inner and outer feelings [vedanÅ], together with mindfulness can the consciousness be extinguished.

PosÅla: How should a person who has already clearly attained the form (absorptions) seeing inside and outside that nothing remains (attaining the Sphere of Nothingness) practise further?

Buddha: He should investigate further in the phenomena arising together with that state of mind to attain the full absorption, in order to bring the Brahma-faring to completion.

MokharÅja: How does the Buddha see the world (including the Brahma-world and *deva*-world) that death cannot see it?

Buddha: The world must be seen with mindfulness, seeing the world as empty for death to be escaped.

PiḶgiya: I am old and afflicted by loss of strength, wrinkled skin, poor eyesight and hardness of hearing — what is the device for overcoming birth and aging in this very life?

Buddha: Having seen that others are reckless, suffering by their attachment to beauty — you must not be reckless nor attached to beauty in order to take no further birth.

PiḶgiya: I have never known any of the ten directions — may the Buddha inform me of the virtue for release from birth and aging in this very life.

Buddha: Having seen how living beings are caught up in craving and their consequent suffering — assailed on all sides by aging — you should not be reckless, relinquishing craving in order to take no further birth.

At the end of the discussion, all BÅvarÈ's disciples and the 16,000 followers who they had gathered during their journey became *arahant*s, except for PiḶgiya who became a non-returner [anagÅmi] because he was thinking of BÅvarÈ as the Buddha preached. PiḶgiya took leave of the Buddha and returned to BÅvarÈ to whom he recounted these events. At the end of his recital, the Buddha appeared before them in a ray of glory and preached to them. PiḶgiya thereupon became an *arahant* and BÅvarÈ a non-returner.

E.6 Ex. How not ***to conduct a Dhamma Discussion!***

There were once a father and a son who were having a drink while they discussed the Dhamma. It was approaching the Buddhist Lent, so they were having their last drink before giving up drinking for the duration of the Lent.

The father said, "I'll be going to stay in the temple to keep the Eight Precepts so this alco

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hol will cause me to excrete the digestive bacteria in my stomach so that I don't get too hungry."

The son replied, "But isn't it evil to excrete those poor digestive bacteria?"

"No, because those bacteria are just the cause of illnesses in our body — they don't count."

"But I insist — that is really killing living creatures!"

Before long, the discussion of the Dhamma has been reduced to an argument and the father chased the son down the road with a shotgun!

The Ninth Group of Blessings

"Practice for the Eradication of Defilements"

Having acquired all the theory we need in the Blessings up to and including Group VIII, the present Ninth Grouping, entitled 'practice for the eradication of defilements' is characterized by putting theory into practice — getting down to earnest spiritual striving. The Grouping consists of:

- ***Blessing Thirty-One: The Practice of Austerities:*** Putting into practice the sensual restraint and striving needed to burn up the defilements in the mind through the practice of gradual and intense austerities;
- ***Blessing Thirty-Two: The Practice of Chastity:*** Having practised austerity until the worst of the defilements have been uprooted, one must quickly sow the seeds of higher virtue in the mind before the defilements can take root again — especially by extricating the mind from the sense-desire that is the origin of decay and suffering;
- ***Blessing Thirty-Three: Seeing the Four Noble Truths:*** Cultivating our meditation further to the point we can know and understand the reality of life and the world — otherwise known as attaining the Dhammakāya;
- ***Blessing Thirty-Four: The Attainment of Nirvana:*** Having seen the Four Noble Truths, if one cultivates meditation further, bringing the mind to a standstill so that it can further penetrate at the centre of the Dhammakāya, the mind will become sufficiently refined to enter upon Nirvana — the subtlest of defilements gradually falling away until there are no remaining defilements and arahantship can be attained.

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TABLE 31.1 Backsliders vs. Strivers' Outlook on the World

Situation	Backslider's Reasoning	Striver's Reasoning
Knowing there is work on its way... Having just finished their work . . . Knowing a long journey is at hand . . . Having just completed a long journey . . . Having had only a little food to eat . . . Having had a lot to eat . . . Being on the brink of illness . . .	"It's not worth meditating because I will soon be interrupted by work anyway" "After all that work, I deserve to rest instead of meditating" "It's not worth meditating because I will soon be interrupted by the journey anyway" "After such a long journey, I deserve to rest instead of meditating" " I can't be expected to meditate on an empty stomach!" "Don't expect me to meditate immediately after a meal!" "If I meditate, I might be risk my health — so better that I sleep instead"	" I should be quick to meditate, because time for such striving will soon be precious" "I should be quick to meditate to make up for time wasted while work was in hand" "I should be quick to meditate, because time for such striving will be hard to find *en route*" " I should be quick to meditate to make up for time wasted *en route*" "I should be quick to meditate while I have an amenably 'light' stomach" "I should be quick to meditate while all the energy of the food in my stomach is readily available" "I should be quick to meditate before it gets worse"
Having just recovered from illness . . .	"If I sit for meditation it might cause a relapse — so better that I sleep instead"	"I should be quick to meditate before there is a relapse"

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Blessing Thirty-One: The Practice of Austerities

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 The place of Blessing Thirty-One in the order of things

With this Blessing we come to the thirty-first step on the staircase of Buddhist practice. An overview of the Manual of Peace reveals that the thirty previous Blessings have been nothing more than 'groundwork' for the spiritual journey ahead — which requires removing the impurities or 'defilements' from the mind. Thus this Blessing is the first to deal earnestly with the nature of the defilements in the mind and continues by advocating the austerities — particularly *sensual restraint* and *striving in meditation* — as methods of removing them.

B. DEFILEMENTS

B.1 Defilements in the mind

If we look at our human being we can conclude that we are made up of two distinct parts: body and mind. If you want to be technical your can use the word 'rËpa' for the part that is the body as opposed to 'nÅma' for the mind. Although the body might look bigger and stronger than the mind, in fact, of the two, it is the quality of the mind which has the greatest influence on our lives.

The human mind is like a dynamic energy, which is like a sphere which is normally about the size of the tip of your little finger. The mind in its natural state takes the form of a clear sphere of diamond brightness, however, when polluted, the sparkling mind is reduced to dullness and weakness, lowering its potential.

This pollution is caused by the impurities that reside in the mind — known by the technical term 'defilements' [*kilesa*]. Defilements are already something we have met in many of the previous blessings — including 5, 7, 16, 19, 20, 21, 24 and 27 (not to be confused with the 'defilements of action' [kammakilesa] which are actually just the outward manifestations of the real 'defilements' in the mind). In this blessing, however, we start to tackle these defilements directly — as we shall see, by the practice of austerities.

Defilements in the mind are equivalent to the bacteria and viruses which infect the body, causing illness. We may think that the possible number of illnesses of the body are a lot, but in fact they are not nearly so numerous as the illnesses of the mind. In the mind the major infections that destroy the capabilities of the mind are things like craving, hatred, vengefulness, wishing for fame, sleepiness, wanting people to admire us for our beauty — all these are signs that the mind is out of condition.

Defilements have gross and subtle forms in just the same way that litter has both gross and refined forms. Gross litter can be picked up and put in a trash can or a waste basket. Defilements also have their subtle forms which are rather like dust. Such defilements are so subtle that they cannot be seen with normal eyesight. They are like the dust that clings to a mirror that make it dull — if you take a

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cloth, you can clean away such dust so that you can see clearly in the mirror again.

We cannot afford to remain ignorant of the nature of the defilements to facilitate our efficiency in ridding ourself from these for good. Defilements in the mind are like the residue of engrained bad habits. They are the things which cause us to act upon our emotions rather than our common sense. Even though all these mental taints might be considered minor — no more than 'rust' in the mind, we have to try to get rid of them because otherwise they will be damaging to us in the future. For most people, the mental taints are so subtle that they feel that it doesn't really matter whether they are there or not. They are like tiny bacteria which can cause much more serious diseases. Unless we have tried meditation, it would be difficult to appreciate the dangers of these taints. However, when we dedicate ourselves to mental training, we see that these taints cannot be ignored. Although defilements may be small, abstract and hidden away in the deepest recesses of our minds, they cannot fail to have dire effects on our everyday lives. In individual work defilements can create problems in the the way we make decisions especially when we succumb to bias. When we work with others, defilements in the mind become even more evident when they cause discord between those supposed to be working as a team.

Defilements originate as a sort of residue from bad habits. Statistically speaking, the more we have done something in the past, the more we will be likely to do it in the future. If all we have done in the past are good and virtuous things, then that would be our good luck. However, for most of us there are bad habits. The more we do them, the more the chance that we will do them again. If we quit any of these habits, we feel a lot of resistance. Although we may not see the source of such resistance at its root, we can know that this is the action of defilements.

B.2 Principles for removing defilements

Such an understanding of the nature and the location of the defilements is vital to a correct understanding of how to eradicate them. Some ascetic religions believe that defilements are located in the body — therefore they try to wash away their sins by washing themselves in a sacred river like the Ganges (e.g. SaÌgÅrava Brahmin [S.i.182ff.]) — as already mentioned in the *purification practices* of Blessing Sixteen (*§A2*). Even some ill-informed Buddhists try to find material solutions to immaterial problems. They think that if their prospective husband is habitually bad-tempered, they can cure the problem before their marriage by washing him with holy water. Misunderstanding of the nature of defilements has given rise to many strange religious rituals in the world. People even link their heads together with a sacred thread at their marriage ceremony with the belief that it will keep them together for the rest of their lives. They can only tie themselves together — but they will never be able to tie their hearts and minds together for life! The Buddha used principles for removing defilements of fighting the fire of defilements with the fire of austerity. The purpose of austerity is directly to burn up of the defilements of the mind.

B.3 Difficulty in removing the defilements

If our body is ill, doctors have to find the bacteria or viruses that have infected us. In medical science they use all sorts of technologies to study the infections in the mind. They use microscopes to identify the infection, study the properties of the infection and put a name to it. For the mind, it is the same process. We have to identify the defilement we wish to remove, catch the defilement and put a name to it — however, there are three problems concerning removing defilements from the mind:

1. Defilements are hard to see: The problem with destroying defilements in the mind is that defilements are even smaller that the mind itself. Most people cannot even see their own mind, let alone the defilements that exist in the mind.

2. We take our defilements for granted: Our mind is so used to being bathed in defilements that it is hard even to notice the effect they are having on us. We feel that they are like a legitimate part of our personality. It is like a person with athlete's foot who half enjoys having an itch to scratch. The Buddha taught that we are as used

to our own defilements as a fish is used to water. A fish without water will surely die. If anyone attempts to take a fish out of water it will struggle with all its might to get back into the water again. In the same way, people are used to defilements, they will go to great lengths to preserve them.

3. The way to remove defilements is elusive: It wasn't for the Buddha arising in the world, we wouldn't know how to cope with defilements in the mind. Even though some religions know that defilements exist in the mind, they know that the mind takes defilements for granted, but they don't have any idea how to overcome those defilements. They know they are lazy but they don't have any idea what to do about it. They know they shouldn't covet their neighbour's wife, but they cannot get her off their mind. All they think is, "Why does it have to happen to me?" What they lack are the techniques of practising austerity taught by the Lord Buddha which are the subject of this Blessing.

C. AUSTERITY

C.1 Definition

The word used for 'practising austerity' in the Pali is '*tapa*' which literally means to make something hot. It can mean to roast, to boil, to grill or to smoke — anything that burns or heats something. It is not the same as '*tapa*s' — better known as a small savoury dish to befound in Spanish bars — although it readers may find this a good '*aidememoire*'! If you can burn out the defilements all that will be left is the unblemished mind. Such a pure mind is wise, not liable to anger etc. etc. It is like heating up crude ore to extract the pure metal that can be used for something useful.

Such austerities should not be confused with the self-mortification practices of Brahminism tried and rejected by the Buddha before his enlightenment. Although these practices are also sometimes called '*tapa*', their objective is different — to weaken the body to the point of feeling no more sense-desire — in contrast to Buddhist '*tapa*' which aim to uproot the defilements in the mind.

C.2 Categories of Austerities

There are two sorts of austerity:

1. Gradual Removal of Defilements [*sallekha*]: The Buddha taught a total of forty-four defilements in the Sallekha Sutta (M.i.40ff.) together with the gradual virtuous behaviours needed to uproot each of them. The *sallekha* are gradual solutions and this is the content of almost every heading of Dhamma in the Buddhist scriptures. Thus, for example:

- if you know you are a very greedy person, then you can change yourself gradually by practising generosity. If you practice every day in the end the tendency to crave others' possessions will gradually disappear.
- if you are a particularly hot-tempered person, you should make sure you spread loving-kindness on a daily basis, before we go to bed.
- if you know you covet a new woman every day or if the whole of the female world looks beautiful to us, you should try to keep the Eight Precepts. Going without a meal in the evening will start to undercut the power of your desires little by little. Giving up wearing make-up and jewelry will help to diminish your tendencies also. The power of your sensual desires will gradually be reduced.
- if you are forgetful then gradually train yourself in mindfulness.

2. Intensive Removal of Defilements [dhutaỊga]: There is another sort of removal of defilements which is more intense... This set of teachings is a radical way of overcoming bad habits accumulated over the course of many years. The Buddha categorized the root bad habits of people into four major categories: habits concerning dress, habits concerning food, habits concerning accommodation and habits concerning laziness. There are thirteen different forms of dhutaỊga practice and they address these four major types of bad habit.

C.3 Thirteen forms of Intense Austerity (Vism.59-83)

Overcoming the wish to be choosy about clothes
[cÈvara-paÊisaÔyutta]

1. Rag-robe wearer's Practice [paÔsukËlikaỊga]

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Wearing only robes made from rags retrieved from a dust heap or from a charnel ground (§1).

2. Triple-robe wearer's Practice [tecÈvarikaİga] Usually just three robes are allowed for monks to use, that is the upper robe [uttarasankaÔ], the outer robe [saİghatiÔ] and the waistcloth [antaravasakaÔ]. These three robes are supposed to be adequate to keep monks warm even in the coldest of weather. In later times there have been trends to allow monks to have additional accessory cloths such as girdles, belts and a vest to absorb sweat in hot climates. Usually monks will have a change of robes to a maximum of three, to allow one set to be washed when the other is being worn. However, if you practice dhutaİga, only three robes are allowed. This practice puts an end to the desire to be choosy about your clothes. You have to be very careful about where and how you sit or else you will soil your robes and have to go to the inconvenience of washing them again. Thus such a practice makes you see the value of the robes you have while at the same time training you in mindfulness (§2).

Overcoming slavery to one's appetite [piÁÎapÅtapaÊisaÔyutta]: If you are the sort of person who cannot control your eating it is hard to make progress in meditation. If you eat too much you will be sleepy. With too much protein perhaps you will be subject to sensual temptations. If you cannot restrain your appetite for food it is unlikely that you will ever be able to overcome your appetite for sexual temptations. The Buddha wanted monks to avoid becoming slave to their appetites and even without following dhutaİga practice monks are not allowed to eat between midday and the dawn of the next morning, even if food is offered. There are thus several ways in which monks can train themselves to become less controlled by their appetite:

1. ***Almsfood-eater's Practice*** [piÁÎapÅÊikaİga] Eating only food that has been received on almsround. If anyone offers food to you on a plate you cannot accept it. You accept only as much as is given. If anyone makes something especially for you, you cannot accept it. Even if some other food offered is better than that in your bowl, you cannot accept it (§3).

2. House-to-house seeker's Practice [sapadÅnacÅrikaİga] For this practice you are only allowed to go for almsround along prescribed routes. You may not go on almsround to places where you think you might get better food. You cannot just go down a street where you know plenty of rich people live who might give you appetizing food (§4).

3. One meal eater's practice [ekÅsanikaİga] If householders aren't satisfied with their breakfast, they can make up for it at lunch time. If they are not satisfied with their lunch they can make up for it with an extra large evening meal. They eat so much that they have to sleep all afternoon and gradually regurgitate the food little by little like a cow chewing the cud. For monks however, with only two meals a day, they have to train themselves to be content with whatever they receive. Even so, on two meals a day, some monks can still not help but be interested in food, and may overeat, becoming sleepy as the result. Therefore some monks prefer to take only one meal per day (§5).

4. Bowl-eater's practice [pattapiÁÎikaİga] This practice entails eating all your food mixed up together. This is particularly suitable for those addicted to tasty food. In a single bowl all the food will be mixed up, no matter whether it be rice, chocolate powder, fish soup or whatever. By the time the fourth or fifth contribution is added to the bowl, the contents will resemble pig-swill. Eating your food in this way will help to remind you what the purpose of eating is — to give you strength to carry on doing good deeds, not just for the sheer enjoyment of eating (§6).

5. Late-serving refuser's practice [khalupacchÅbhattikaİga] This practice entails not accepting further offerings of food once you have already started eating (§7).

Overcoming Attachment to Luxury Accommodation [senÅsana-paÊisaÔyutta]

1. ***Forest-dweller's practice*** [Åraññikaİga] This practice entails living only in shelters in the for

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est and never using accommodation in the town (§8).

2. Tree-root dweller's practice [rukkhamËlikaİga] This practice entails living only in the forest at the roots of trees without any building for shelter. Such a person will stay under a tent or a mosquito net — nothing more (§9).

3. Open-air dweller's practice [abbhokÅsikaİga] This practice entails living out in the open, not even using the trees for shelter. It serves radically to reduce your attachment to comfort, luxury and fulfillment of sense desire (§10).

4. Charnel-ground-dweller's practice [sosÅnikaİga] This practice entails living only in a graveyard where corpses have been laid to rest without coffins. The sound of mice running in and out of corpses and the sound of wind escaping from corpses as they dry-out will soon put an end to sexual obsessions and delusions of grandeur (§11).

5. Any-bed-user's practice [yathÅsantatikaİga] This practice entails taking your shelter wherever you are put by your host. Even those who stay under a camping umbrella or mosquito net are sometimes choosy about where they stay — staying near the kitchen if they like the smell of food or near the toilet if they think they are going to have to visit often. If someone is extremely choosy, maybe they should try staying in the open air instead (§12) (*see (§10) above*).

Overcoming Laziness [viriya-paÊisaÔyutta]

1. Sitter's practice [nesajjikaİga] This practice entails avoiding lying down. Usually when one stays on a dhutaİga retreat, one is there to meditate anyway. If you keep this sort of dhutaİga practice you must restrict the position of your body to standing, walking or sitting down. In the time of the Buddha, monks would keep this ascetic practice for the duration of the rainy season. It works well for a group only when everybody in the group is at the same high level of advancement in meditation. It should only be done when you can meditate well enough to overcome sleepiness (§13).

C.4 Necessary virtues for practising austerity

In general, practice of any Dhamma practice is the practice of austerities at the level of '*sallekha*' (*above*), however, for the practice of intense austerities, it is normal to practice under'residential' circumstances (i.e. to join a 'dhutaİga camp'). When you practice austerities, you have to do so while applying the following virtues:

1. Patience: (*see Blessing Twenty-Seven*)

2. Must keep the Precepts strictly according to your personal status: If you are a householder, Five Precepts is no longer sufficient. You have to keep the Eight Precepts at the least. Some people might like to keep Ten Precepts like a novice. If you are a novice you must keep your Ten Precepts strictly. If you are a monk you must keep your 227 Precepts strictly.

3. Keep Sabbath Self-Discipline [uposathakamma***]:*** You must revise your Precepts regularly in the same way as monks revise their Precepts by taking part in the pÅÊimokkha recitation ceremony every two weeks;

4. You must study the Teachings of the Buddha: You need to alternate your activities with the learning and memorizing of the scriptures by Dhamma sermons or readings and daily chanting.

5. Practise austerities to the best of your ability: Some healthy people might keep all thirteen of the dhutaİga rules at once, but it is more normal just to keep two or three of the rules at a time;

6. Restraint of the senses;

7. Striving in meditation

Sometimes the '*sallekha*' practices might seem to overlap with the practices already mentioned in the preceding Blessings. Sometimes for a person who still leads the household life and who must hold down a job, some of the dhutaİga practices will not be at all compatible with everyday life on a daily basis. However — if one knows what the practices entail, one can look for opportunities to pursue them on a sabbatical basis — perhaps during free weekends or during the long summer holidays. Of these seven virtues, the first five have already been

discussed in the forgoing Blessings. As for practice in everyday life, we find that far from being strangers to everyday life, the twin practices of restraint of the senses and striving to meditate are perfectly amenable even to the householder. The following sections give further explanation of these sixth and seventh virtues of the practitioner of austerity —

i.e. restraint of the senses [indriya saÔvara](*see §D. below*) and striving [viriya] (*see section E. below*).

D. RESTRAINT OF THE SENSES

D.1 The Six Sense-doors

All of us have six channels by which we can improve or damage the quality of our minds and lives. They are like six entrances or doorways to the mind. The six entrances are:

1. Eyes
2. Ears
3. Nose
4. Tongue
5. Our skin
6. Our mind Supposing there is a walled city with six gates — if ever the gateman is caught unawares, robbers or enemies can gain access to the house or the city by any of the six entrances — subsequently wreaking havoc inside that city. The sense doors of the mind are comparable to those city gates. If our mindfulness is ever caught unawares, damaging sensory information can find its way into our mind. If such damaging things can gain entry to the mind they will stir up the mind causing the defilements already there to create trouble for us. The Buddha

went further to compare the sense-doors to lowly animals:

1. The eyes are like a snake: the eyes are always tempted to look at secret things;

2. The ears are like a crocodile: in just the same way that the crocodile loves cool water, the ears are always tempted to hear the flattery or flowery speech of others;

3. The nose is like a caged bird: in just the same way that a caged bird will never stay still in its struggle to escape, the nose will always be obsessed to find the source of any pleasant smell it detects;

4. The tongue is like a mad dog: it is always frothing with saliva at the mouth — if ever it has a moment free it will fulfill itself by gossiping about the neighbours (even though the gossipper knows how angry they would get if anyone gossiped about them!)

5. The body is like a fox: like a fox it likes to find a warm and comfortable place to rest or to take the weight off its feet.

6. The mind is like a monkey: it is never still, but must find something to think about the whole of the time. Even if you try to train your mind to think of a crystal ball or a Buddha image the whole of time, it will think of castles in the air and every other possible thing under the sun.

Thus each of the sense doors has its own damaging tendencies in the absence of sensual restraint. This is why the Buddha didn't have a word of praise for the sense-doors!

D.2 Attachment neither in whole nor in part

The key to overcoming the vulnerability of the senses is to cultivate sensual restraint. When we talk of restraining the senses, the Buddha taught us to practice as follows:

1. Non-attachment to the perception in whole [nimitta]***:*** "When we receive images via our eyes, sounds via our ears, smells via our noses, tastes via our tastebuds, sensations via our skin or inner experience via our mind, we must not become attached to the source of those sensations (in a positive or a negative way)" — if we see an attractive lady we must not react with the thought, "How beautiful she is!" If you see someone who is repulsive you must not react with the though, "How repulsive that person is!" If you are caught unawares thinking such a thought, the thought will stir up defilements latent in the mind.

2. Non-attachment to the perception in part [anubyañjana]***:*** You might see an attractive woman and think to yourself, "Overall, this woman is not very attractive but . . . how beautiful her lips are — like Cupid's!" or "Overall, this woman is not very attractive but . . . look at her little twinkling eyes!" Even such an attachment

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can lead us to make serious mistakes. People recognize, that such-and-such a man is completely irresponsible and all his habits are despicable but . . . his gaze is so mesmerizing that they marry him for the rest of their lives! In the opposite sense even the sight of a part of an object might cause us irritation and anger.

D.3 Restraint of the Senses paves the way to liberation

It is all very well knowing the advantages of sensual restraint, but what if every woman you look at is beautiful? You have to *develop conscience* (*as already mentioned in Blessing Nineteen §D.3*) — and the possibility of what might happen to us if we make a mistake with our senses. It is a way of building up shame of evil [*hiri*] and fear of the consequences of evil [*ottappa*]. The Buddha taught (Hiri Sutta A.iv.99) that training ourselves in conscience will lead eventually to liberation in the same way that if the heartwood of a tree is not rotten, it will protect the bark, and branches from rot too. More specifically, if we can manage to train ourselves inconscience [*hiriottappa*], restraint of the senses [indriya saÔvara] will be the natural consequence. If we are going to look at people, we look at them to find out what good virtues they possess that we might learn from. We don't go looking for the physical beauty of others or any other superficial quality. If you keep on training yourself in this way it will make your self-discipline [sÈla] steadfast. You will be able to upgrade your level of Precepts. From not being able to keep the Five Precepts properly you will be able to upgrade to keeping the Five Precepts properly, but not yet the Eight. If you continue to train yourself in restraint of the senses, before long you will be able to keep the Eight Precepts properly too. They will establish themselves almost automatically. Once our Precepts are properly kept, Right Concentration [sammÅ samÅdhi] will arise of its own accord. If you find in the present day that your meditation doesn't seem to be making much progress, then examine the purity of your Precepts. If the purity of your Precepts leaves something to be desired, they pay more attention to the restraint of the sense doors. Sometimes when you sit for meditation, images of beautiful ce lebrities or whisky bottles will arise in the mind — these are signs that your restraint of the senses needs improvement. If you can develop your restraint of the senses sufficiently, your Precepts will be pure, meditation will arise and brightness will arise inside to the degree you can start to see the mind and the defilements in the mind, so that you can start to work directly on the purification of the mind by the qualities of seeing things as they really are [yathÅbhÈtañÅÁadassana] — in the same way as a medical worker can identify the vectors of illness in the body with his microscope — starting at first with only lenses of low-power, but gradually acquiring medium-power, high-power, oil-emulsion and eventually an electron microscope until none of the vectors of illness have anywhere left to hide and they can be destroyed. In the same way, as the sublety of our concentration increases, it will give way to dispassion with sensuality [nibbitÅ], release [virÅga] and eventually the seeing and knowing of liberation [vimuttiñÅÁadassana] (Kimatthiya Sutta A.v.1)

E. STRIVING IN MEDITATION

By this time in the study of the Manual of Peace, by Blessing Thirty-One we are sure to be able to tell what is right and what is wrong. We know that the practice of austerity is good, but we may be prone to giving up too easily instead of seeing our practice through to its conclusion. We think of keeping Eight Precepts for the whole of the three months of the rainy season. After the third day, when you feel hungry in the evening, you start to think to yourself, "I have kept the Eight Precepts for three days already — and that is already a lot of merit . . . maybe I will keep Eight Precepts again at the end of the rainy season . . . seven days altogether . . . and that is plenty of merit for me." For such a person, the ability to strive is only weakly developed.

E.1 Four types of effort (A.ii.15, 16, 74)

Properly developed striving has four components:

1. not doing evils which you never did before [saÔvarapadhÅna];
2. overcoming evil habits you already possess [pahÅnapadhÅna];
3. doing good deeds you never did before [bhÅvanÅpadhÅna], and;

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4. maintaining the good habits you already possess [anurakkhÅpadhÅna].

E.2 Overcoming excuses for backsliding (8)

A backslider's attitude to the world always gives him an excuse not to meditate, whereas the attitude of a striver will lead him to take every chance to further his meditation (*see Table 31.1 p.346*). If you use any or all of the backslider's reasoning for not meditating, you will be perfectly able to sleep all year round and never do any meditation again. The same goes for people who cannot meditate in the summer because it is too hot. They cannot meditate in the winter because it is too cold. In the seasons when the climateis just right, they regret not using the favourable temperatures to get some hard-earned rest. Such excuses are not hard to find. However, in the practice of austerity, even in everyday life, we should not resort to the lazy excuses above, but instead try to transform that reasoning into the reasoning of a striver.

F. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

F.1 Ex. Loma-kassapa JÅtaka (J.433)

Many aeons ago the Bodhisattva was born as a hermit called Loma-Kassapa. The hermit trained himself in austerities and asceticism together with meditation (pre-Buddhist). He focused his mind on things outside the body and was able to attain the absorptions [jhÅna]. However his attainments in meditation were still not very steadfast. His mind was not perfectly at a standstill. Even so, the more he practiced meditation, the more he managed to attain supranormal powers. He could fly through the air at will. Indra[1] the king of heaven observed how powerful Loma-Kassapa was becoming and realized that before long a mere 'human' would soon be becoming more powerful than any of the angels including himself. Indra felt jealous and didn't want Loma-Kassapa to increase his mental powers to the degree that he would outshine the angels of heaven. He looked for a way to destroy the magical powers of Loma-Kassapa and found that in the town of Benares, there was a princess so beautiful that she would be bound to distract Loma-Kassapa from his practice. Thus Indra went to the king of Benares and told him that if he wanted to rule the world he would have to make a special animal sacrifice and the only person who could do that was Loma-Kassapa. Indra told the king that Loma-Kassapa would be too afraid to kill an animal for sacrifice because it would be too obvious a way of giving in to temptation. However, if the king were to lure Loma-Kassapa using the princess, before long Loma-Kassapa would be fooled into doing the sacrifice. The king of Benares agreed to do the sacrifice and immediately sent his daughter to tempt the hermit. Unfortunately the hermit lacked restraint of the senses. As soon as he started thinking about the beauty of the princess he became slave to his latent sensual desires. His meditational powers disappeared instantly. He could no longer fly in the air. Now he had to walk — and he started to follow the princess along the road back towards Benares.

It came to the day of the sacrifice and he was still wearing the clothes of an ascetic — he felt nothing about the fact that he was going to have to kill an animal for sacrifice, because sensual desire had overcome him. However, the people of Benares complained and protested asking how a hermit could ever do such a thing. All the animals of the town howled and screamed at the same time. Someone said the words,

> "The sun has strength, the moon has strength, monks and ascetics have strength, the ocean coast has its strength, but none of these forms of strength can rival that of a temptress."

On this occasion the complaints and the sound of the animals brought mindfulness back to Loma-Kassapa. He threw away his sword and shame and fear of evil and the consequences of evil [*hiri-ottappa*] returned to him. He restrained his senses again. His Precepts became intact again and his ability to meditate returned. He was able to float and fly in the air again. He flew up into the air and taught to all of the assembled people to learn from his mistake — to practice restraint of the senses for themselves too

1. The word Indra is a rank or title rather than a personal name which denotes the most powerful angel in TavatiÔsa heaven. The angel occupying this rank will change from time to time as angels are reborn again to the human realm.

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— so that the people of the world would not be slaves to their senses. Once Loma-Kassapa had give his warning, he flew away back to the forest again.

F.2 Ex. MudulakkhaÁa JÅtaka (J.66)

In previous lifetimes when the Buddha was still pursuing perfections as the bodhisattva, he renounced the world in order to liberate himself from the world of sense-desire. Practising meditation in the Great Forest, before long, through earnest practice, he was able to attain psychic powers through his meditation. Because the hermit could fly through the air by his mental powers, he would always do so instead of walking. On one occasion in search of supplementary minerals, he travelled through the air to Benares for alms and while there stayed in the royal park. The king of Benares was pleased with the hermit's demenour and persuaded him to live permanently in the royal park. Sixteen years passed and the king, leaving the city to quell a border rising, left Queen MudulakkhaÁa in the care of the ascetic.

The hermit was slightly inconsiderate of his sponsor — and would visit the palace for alms at his own convenience. Any day he was particularly hungry, he would go earlier to the palace. On days he was not so hungry, he would go later. Thus the queen would prepare food each day, but would never know when the ascetic would come to collect alms. On the fateful day, the ascetic had still not come for alms at the appointed hour, so the queen, tired of waiting went about her toilet and laid down to relax while waiting for his arrival. The ascetic finished his meditation and flew unannounced through the air at high speed, to the palace for his alms — not entering by the door, but through the open window! The queen had very little warning, hearing nothing but the sudden sound of the wind whistling through the ascetic's bark clothing as he flew. Getting quickly up from her couch, the queen's clothes slipped from her body, revealing her nakedness to the ascetic.

It was never the intention of the queen to lead her respected ascetic into temptation — however, it was too late for the ascetic whose mind had already been imprinted with her image — all manner of desires long hidden away in his mind overflowed — the hermit fell instantly in love with her, consequently losing all his *iddhi* powers. As he had flown to the palace in the morning, he returned to his dwelling on foot… Meanwhile the queen was upset to think she had unwittingly contributed to the undermining of her hermit's austerities.

Seven days later the king returned, he found the ascetic disconsolate and unable to eat — on learning the reason, and out of respect for the hermit, without hesitation agreed to offer him the queen in marriage. The reason why the king could deal so amenably with the hermit was that he was sure that the hermit's condition was the result of his mistakes or carelessness and not because of any wicked intention in the hermit's mind. Hearing the king's equitable words, the hermit recovered instantly from all his apparent illness. Secretly, however, he asked the queen, to think of some device by which she might save the ascetic's holiness.

Together the ascetic and the queen left the palace and went to a derelict house given to them by the king which had previously been used as a lavatory. The queen made the ascetic clean the house (knowing full well that dealing with loathesomeness [asubhasaññÅ] is a ready antedote to sense desire). Furthermore, she made him fetch water and do a hundred other chores. Having pushed him to the very limits of his physical ability — the queen shook him by the shoulders and shouted:

"And still you don't wake up to the fact you are a monastic? Is this how an ascetic who must be and example of relinquishing sense-pleasure for the rest of the world should behave?

The ascetic then realized his folly and hastened back to the king, surrendering the queen with the words:

"Before obtaining the beautiful Queen MudulakkhaÁa she was the only thing in the world I desired. But once having obtained her for myself, the desire for other things has increased without end."

With these words, the hermit was able to recover his mental powers.Taking his leave, the hermit flew back through the air to the Himavanta forest where

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he cultivated the 'divine abidings' [brahma-vihÅra] for the rest of his life and on passing away was reborn in the Brahma world.

F.3 Ex. Buddha's vow under the Bodhi Tree

The Buddha himself was an example to us the ideal attitude to striving. On the morning before he sat for meditation for his enlightenment, he received milk-rice from SujÅtÅ and a seat of perfumed grass under the Maha Bodhi Tree. The Buddha sat for meditation under the Bodhi Tree and made the vow, "For however long it take for me to attain enlightenment as a fully enlightened Buddha, even if my body should shrivel and die leaving only skin, sinew and bone, I will not leave this meditation seat."

TABLE 32.1 Correlation of inner experience to sphere of mental experience

sphere of mind		subjective experience
LOKIYA BHUMI	sensual	***Physical Body:*** Of course, everybody reading this book has a physical body (although after reading Blessing Twelve you now appreciate how difficult this has been to achieve!), but the inner experience that is central to the existence of the human body is a sphere of light at the centre of the mind that is bright and clear like a shining star — and which in the DhammakÅya tradition is called the 'initial path' [paÊhama magga]. This is equivalent to the first form-absorption in its precursory form. If you want to check the qualities of your experience with those in the TipiÊaka you will find that indeed you have the qualities of initial application of mind [*vitakka*], continued application of mind [vicÅra], joy [*piti*], happiness [*sukha*] and one-pointedness [ekaggatÅ]. The defilements associated with the physical human body comprise covetousness [abhijjhÅ], vengefulness [byÅpÅda] and False View [micchÅ diÊÊhi]. When the mind is sufficiently pure to be released from these three defilements, the mind will attain the Angelic Body.
		Angelic Body: This form is an inner body similar to the subtle human body but more refined and beautiful. This level is equivalent to the second form-absorption. The defilements associated with the Angelic Body are greed [*lobha*], hatred [*dosa*] and delusion [*moha*]. When the mind is sufficiently pure to be released from these three defilements, the mind will attain the Form-Brahma Body.
	form	***Form-Brahma Body:*** This form is an inner body similar to the angelic body but more refined and beautiful. This is equivalent to the Third Absorption.The defilements associated with the BrahmÅ Body are grasping [rÅga], hatred [*dosa*] and delusion [*moha*]. When the mind is sufficiently pure to be released from these three defilements, the mind will attain the Formless Brahma Body.
	formless	***Formless-Brahma Body:*** This form is an inner body similar to the Brahma form but more refined and beautiful. This is equivalent to the fourth absorption.The defilements associated with the Formless Brahma Body are subtle desire [kÅmarÅga Ânusaya], annoyance [pÂÊighÅ Ânusaya] and subtle ignorance [avijjÅ Ânusaya]. When the mind is sufficiently pure to be released from these three defilements, the mind will attain the first Dhamma Body [DhammakÅya GotrabhË].
LOKUTTARA		***Initial Body of Enlightenment:*** This is an inner body of the form of a crystal clear initial body of enlightenment inside oneself. The first Body of Enlightenment stands at the threshold between the mundane [*lokiya*] and the transcendental [*lokuttara*] worlds and is called 'DhammakÅya GotrabhË'. There are still some subtle defilements left in the mind called 'fetters' [saÔyojana] — but these will be dealt with by cultivating the four remaining bodies of enlightenment — stream-enterer [sotÅpana], once-returner [sakidagÅmi], non-returner [anagami] and arahant (*detail is given in Blessing Thirty-Three*).

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Blessing Thirty-Two: Practising the Brahma-Faring

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 The place of Blessing Thirty-Two in the order of things

As far back as Blessing Six (*§B.*) we learned about *levels of aim in life* — indeed, earlier blessings were adequate for exclusively material aim in life but moving into the material/spiritual or exclusively spiritual ways of life, we need to depthen our understanding of spiritual practice to serve our higher aim in life. At the time of studying Blessing Six several complex facets of Buddhist cosmology and attainment were left unexplained — and now, as we near the end of the Manual of Peace with striving towards liberation, it is necessary to explain some of these concepts before going further — concepts which include the Buddhist world system, mental attainments and the transcendental.

In Blessing Thirty-One we studied about austerities as a way of burning up defilements in the mind. However, once you have burned up your defilements that is not the end of the story. It is like farmers in the rainy season who have pulled out and burned-up the weeds in the field. As soon as the weeds are gone and all that is left is the fertile soil, you have to be quick to plough. As soon as the rain falls, you have to be quick to sow your crops. If you are slow to sow your crops you will find that the weeds will grow up again worse than before. You will have wasted your time completely.

With the removal of defilements from the mind, it is the same principle. Once you have practiced the austerities, as soon as you find that your mind starts to become detached from sensual indulgence and laziness, you must be quick to upgrade your mind towards the transcendental attainments. If you are slow or too lazy, your old bad habits will come back worse than before. Moreover, if our level of attainment were accidentally to reach transcendental attainment, if our way of life were not sufficiently pure, it would not be able to support it.

A.2 Definition: the Brahma-faring

The Pali word used to refer to this blessing is '*brahmacariya*'. This word is sometimes translated as 'brahma-faring'or 'holy-life' — or sometimes, more mundanely as, 'celibacy' or 'chastity'. In fact this word has a broader a spectrum of meaning (*as we shall see in §E. below*). In the sense of practice, it means 'conducting yourself like a god (Brahma).' And how does a god conduct himself? A god conducts himself strictly in accordance with the practices of Buddhism to elevate the state of mind until there are no further defilements remaining there. Thus the rationale of this Blessing is for us to elevate our state of mind and behaviour to the level of the Brahma faring for our ultimate liberation.

B. LEVELS OF MIND vs. REALMS OF EXISTENCE

B.1 Levels of mind

Quality of mind is dependent on the degree to which the mind is unified, purified or made free of thought. If the meditator can overcome the Five

Hindrances, (*see Blessing Nineteen §D.2.2.*) the mind can become unified at the level of the first form-absorption [rËpa-jhÅna] a mental state which is qualitatively different from anything it has previously known. Cultivation of the mind further will lead to the second, third and fourth form-absorptions. The next stage of progress of the mind is to make a qualitative leap to the formless-absorptions [arËpajhÅna]. According to Buddhism, all of the states of mind mentioned so far are considered no better than 'mundane'. However, anyone who cultivates their mind beyond the formless absorptions can elevate the mind to a condition so pure that it is 'transcendental'. As for the meaning of 'form', 'formless', 'mundane' and 'transcendental' — and their relationship to liberation, what follows is an examination of each in more detail.

B.1.1 The Three Planes of Mind [bhËmi] The quality of our mind can be summarized down to four different levels:

1. the sensual plane of mind [kÅmavacarabhËmi]: this is the plane to which most people's minds are still attached to the temptation of sensual pleasures. Such people are still affected by the Five Hindrances.

2. the 'form' plane of mind [rËpavacarabhËmi]: this is the plane of those whose minds are still attached to absorptions at the form plane [rËpajhÅna]. With their eyes open or closed they will perceive a bright sphere at the centre of their body the whole of the time as clearly as seen with the eye. If you are really at this plane, the mind will be in this state of brightness the whole of the time and the mind will have no remaining interest in the sensual pleasures of a married life. You will see such things as no more entertaining than child's play;

3. The formless plane of the mind [arËpavacara-bhËmi]: this is the plane of the mind where the mind is still attached to the absorptions at the formless level [arËpa-jhÅna]. You will be able to perceive the inner body of the formless Brahma level at the centre of your body the whole of the time. If you have such a level of attainment you will have intense brightness in side the whole of time and it is no problem if you want to sit for meditation uninterrupted for seven days and seven nights without a break. There is hardly any need to sleep any more — only 15 or 20 minutes per day is enough. The brightness inside keeps the mind refreshed the whole of the time.

4. The supramundane plane of the mind [lokuttara-bhËmi] This is a plane of mind is beyond the reach of worldly viscissitudes. At its most advanced it includes the level of mind of an arahant who has come to an end of defilements.

From the time of the birth of Prince Siddhartha to the time when he left the palace to start his ascetic practices, even He was still trapped in the sensual level of mind with his royal family and consorts and a palace for each of the three seasons. Once he practiced to the point where he could attain the first absorptions [rËpajhÅna] — e.g. at the age of seven under the black plum tree — he elevated his mind to the level of form. When he studied with Ȯara and Udaka he could further raise the level of his mind to the level of the formless. At the age of 35 he could attain enlightenment his mind entered upon the level of the transcendental. He attained all of these levels without leaving the human realm

— his *mind* was elevated not his body.

B.1.2 Subdivisions within the Three Planes of Mind

Within the three planes there are subcategories of experience — and we experience these in meditation in the form of *inner bodies* of experience (*see Table 32.1 p.356*).

B.2 Parallels between level of mind and realms of existence

Many students of Buddhism, especially those who have practised meditation find no difficulty in understanding how different levels can exist in states of mind — however, understanding the full variety of realms of existence is less easy. With the naked eye, the only two forms of existence we can see are the human and the animal realms — are we succumbing to gullability to accept that Buddhist cosmology consists of not two forms of existence but thirty-one?

Indeed, some refuse to believe in the existence of anything they cannot immediately see. They consider as gullable anyone who believes in anything without material proof. They maintain that if invisible realms are real, they should be immediately demonstrable to the naked eye. On the contrary, such skeptics find no difficulty in believing in the existence of Japan or the existence of microscopic particles even though they have no direct experience of either. Such skeptics would say, if you want to prove the existence of Japan — you need to make the journey there. If you want to prove the existence of microscopic particles, you have to have a microscope at your disposal — so even skeptics have their conditions! — i.e.:

- You need to have the appropriate vehicle or equipment at your disposal;
- You need to know the route to get there.
- You need to have enough resources in pocket. Well! Meditators can also have their conditions! If you want to prove the existence of invisible realms,

you need to fulfil the following three conditions for reaching them, i.e.

- your mind needs to be sufficiently stable to observe them
- you need to know the pathway by which you can arrive at there
- you need to have sufficient merit to get you to

there At the very least, to see the invisible realms for yourself, you have to allow the defilements to precipitate out of your mind first. When defilements start to precipitate out, the mind will be left bright and clear. This is the brightness that we use to illuminate the path ahead and we will start to have the possibility to see those 'invisible' realms for ourselves.

B.2.1 The Destination of the Dead: The evidence

Fortunately it is not only ancient and scriptural evidence we have for realms of existence beyond the normal limits of our senses. The testimony of those who have had a Near Death Experience (NDE) — recorded as numbering between 8-13 million people in 1998 in the U.S. alone — shows differences in the nature of destination of those who have had NDE's. Some people report a destination that is pleasant, others report a destination that is deeply frightening. In summary of some of the differences:

Heaven-Like Cases	**Hell-Like Cases**
Friendly beings	Lifeless or threatening apparitions
Beautiful, lovely environments	Barren or ugly expanse
Conversations and dialogue	Threats, screams, silence
Total acceptance and an overwhelming sensation of love	Danger and the possibility of violence and/or torture
A feeling of warmth and a sense of heaven	A feeling of cold (or of temperature extremes), and a sense of hell

TABLE 32.2: Categorization of Near Death Experiences

B.2.2 Equivalence between Planes of Mind and Spheres of Existence

There is a correspondence between states of mind (which are transitory within a given life) and state of existence (which we inhabit the whole of our lives). What we do habitually leads to our habitual state of mind and our habitual state of mind will lead to our next state of existence.

Asked why people who die have different destinations after death, there is always a temptation to require some higher 'force' to 'put' people 'where they deserve'— however, in reality, people's habitual state of mind is already ample reason to explain afterlife destinations. Consider a bee and a dungfly in a bottle. When you open the lid of the bottle, the two insects escape. At first they fly along in unison, but before long they part — the bee heads for a patch of flowers it can smell inthe distance, whereas the dung-fly heads for the dung heap. Asked by whose power the insects have chosen to go their separate ways — the answer is through the force of habit. Like attracts like — the bee has been used to flowers all its life, so is attracted to flowers. The dungfly has been used to dung all its life, so is attracted to dung heaps. Any creator god with the duty to 'put' them 'where they deserve' is decidedly redundant.

Of course there are sometimes discrepencies between habitual state of mind and afterlife destina-

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plane of mind /bhËmi/	**sphere of existence** /bhava/	**underpinning virtue**
sensual plane [kÅmavacarabhËmi]	sensual sphere [kÅmabhava]	<human> Five Precepts intact
		<angelic> shame of evil [*hiri*] and fear of evil [*ottappa*]
form plane [rËpavacarabhËmi]	form sphere [rËpa-bhava]	The four divine abidings [brahmavihÅra]: 1. loving kindness; 2. compassion; 3. sympathetic joy; 4. equanimity.
formless plane [arËpavacarabhËmi]	formless sphere [arËpa-bhava]	arupajhÅna absorptions
transcendental	Nirvana	Noble Eightfold Path (*more in Blessing 33*)

TABLE 32.3: Spheres of Existence vs. their relate to Underpinning Virtues

tion — again, it is no more difficult to explain than someone who has 'crammed' hard for an exam at the last minute (but who habitually knows nothing about their subject) who is put in an advanced class as the result of their good examination results. This might be equivalent to someone who is indifferent to virtue all their lives, but who makes an effort to elevate the quality of their mind in the final years of their life.

Returning to the maxim of 'like attracts like' we find that states of mind and realms of existence have virtues and/or inner experience in common — and if these virtues or inner experiences are habitual for a person throughout their lives or are steadfast in a person at their moment of death, they will lead to rebirth in the corresponding realm. The correspondence is illustrated in the table above.

Please note that if the Five Precepts are not intact then the mind will be attracted to the unfortunate realms such as the hell realms at the break-up of the body.

B.3 Realms of Existence

Having understood the correspondence between inner experience and realms of existence, we now turn to look at each of the Spheres of Existence in more detail. The Spheres of Existence are threefold, like the Planes of mind, but their subcategories can be expanded in detail to up to thirty-one realms of existence.

B.3.1 The Three Spheres of Existence

The realms of existence can be summarized down into three spheres:

1. The sensuous sphere [kÅmabhava] — equivalent in subtlety to the sense-pleasure state of mind

— is the state of existence inhabited by humans, animals, hell-realms and angels. In the deepest heart of every being which inhabits this realm, there is still the feeling of enjoyment of sense pleasure. Sense pleasure can mean sexual pleasure or it can mean pleasures of the five senses (pleasurable images seen with the eyes, pleasurable sounds heard with the ears, pleasurable tastes reaching our tastebuds, pleasurable aromas that reach our nostrils or soft sensations that come into contact with our skin. Every living being in the sensual realm is searching for happiness via sense pleasure, whether by the channels of sight, sound, taste, smell or touch.

2. The Form Sphere [rËpabhava] is the dwelling place of form-Brahmas [rËpabrahma]. Such be

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ings also are derived from people who managed to train themselves in meditation until they attained the 'form absorptions' [rËpajhÅna]. When they passed away, their body was buried or created, but their mind (astral body) had no further attraction for the Sphere of Sensual Pleasure so they escape from this Sphere into the Sphere of Form and take rebirth as a form-Brahma.

3. The Formless Sphere [arËpabhava] is the dwelling place of formless-Brahmas [arËpabrahma]. Such beings also are derived from people who managed to train themselves in meditation until they attained the 'formless absorptions' [arËpajhÅna]. They were those who were attached neither to sensual pleasure or to the pleasure of the form-absorptions — but they enjoyed the pleasure of the formless realms.

To imagine the relationship between the three Spheres so far discussed, you should picture three concentric spheres — one the size of a football, the second in the centre of the football, but the size of a tennis ball and the third inside the tennis ball, but the size of a ping-pong ball. If you were to use the analogy to explain the relationship between the three Spheres, you can compare the ping-pong ball to the Sphere of Sensual Pleasure. The tennis ball can be compared to the Sphere of Form and the football can be compared to the Sphere of the Formless.

B.3.2 Subdivisions within the Three Spheres of Existence

The world system consists of thirty-one realms. They are arranged within the three spheres of existence already described. The sensual sphere [kÅmabhava] includes the hells, the human realm and all the realms of heaven. In this sphere, the inhabitants spend nearly all of their time fulfilling themselves by the pleasure of the senses. If we can escape the sensual realm then we enter upon the sphere of form [rËpabhava] which is known as the Brahma-world because it is inhabited by Brahmas or gods. However there is a third sphere of existence which is even more refined and this is called the formless sphere [arËpabhava] which is inhabited by formless Brahmas.

sphere	**realms of existence**
transcendental	**Nirvana**
formless planes	· ***Realm of neither perception nor non-perception*** [NevasaññÅnÅsaññÅyatana] · ***Realm of nothingness*** [ÅkiñcaññÅyatana] · ***Realm of infinite consciousness*** [viññÅÅañcÅyatana] · ***Realm of infinite space*** [ÅkÅsÅnañcÅyatana]
form-planes	· ***Realm of the supreme Brahmas*** [AkaniÈÈhÅ] · ***Realm of Brahmas who are clear-sighted*** [SudassÈ] · ***Realm of Brahmas who are beautiful*** [SudassÅ] · ***Realm of Brahmas who are serene*** [AtappÅ] · ***Realm of Brahmas who do not fall from prosperity*** [AvihÅ] · ***Realm of non-percipient beings*** [AsaññÈsattÅ] · ***Realm of Brahmas with abundant reward*** [VehapphalÅ] · ***Realm of Brahmas with steady aura*** [SubhakiÅhÅ] · ***Realm of Brahmas with infinite aura*** [AppamÅÅasubhÅ] · ***Realm of Brahmas with limited aura*** [ParittasubhÅ] · ***Realm of Brahmas with radiant lustre*** [ÅbhassarÅ] · ***Realm of Brahmas with infinite lustre*** [AppamÅÅÅbhÅ] · ***Realm of Brahmas with limited lustre*** [ParittÅbhÅ] · ***Realm of Great Brahmas*** [MahÅbrahmÅ] · ***Realm of Great Brahma's ministers*** [BrahmapurohitÅ] · ***Realm of Great Brahma's attendants*** [BrahmapÅriasajjÅ]
sensual planes	***Fortunate Realms*** [*kamasugati*]: · ***Heaven Realms***: · ***Heaven of the Angels who lord over the creations of others*** [ParanimmitavasavattÈ] · ***Heaven of the Angels who rejoice in their own creations*** [NimmÅnaratÈ] · ***Heaven of the Satisfied Angels*** [TusitÅ] · ***Heaven of the Angel of Death*** [YÅmÅ] · ***Heaven of the Thirty Three*** [TÅvatiÔsÅ] · ***Heaven of the Four Great Kings*** [CÅtumahÅrÅjikÅ] · ***Human Realm*** [*Manussa*] ***The unhappy realms*** *[*ApÅya*]:* · ***Animal Realm*** [TiracchÅnayoni] · ***Monsters*** [AsurakÅya]: · ***Hungry Ghosts*** [Pittivisaya] · ***Hell Realms*** [Niraya]

TABLE 32.4: The Thirty-One Realms of Existence *Blessing*

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B.4 Rebirth

B.4.1 If Rebirth is so obvious why should we believe otherwise?

Another new concept which comes with moving around between realms of existence is 'rebirth'. For doctrinal reasons the teaching of rebirth has been suppressed and intentionally removed from Biblical Christian literature. Only during the reign of Constantine the Great with the finalizing of the scriptures to be included in the Bible, was the doctrine of transmigration as preached by the Gnostics decreed to be heretical and received criticism from Greek philosophers such as Hyppolitus, Irenaeus etc. In fact the main problem for Christians with the concept of rebirth seems to be that they don't see animals as sentient beings. If man can be born as an animal sometimes, it devalues his spiritual 'worth' in the eyes of God.

Before this time doctrine of rebirth is not so alien to western thinking as you may think. In the early days of Christianity as still recorded in some of the apocryphal (non-Biblical) scriptures and commentaries on the Bible, rebirth of the soul was accepted up until about 280 A.D. In the Gnostic tradition who emphasized inner insight as the main source of revelation they found no difficulty in fitting reincarnation into their plan of salvation. Far from thinking that reincarnation is alien to gospel-teaching, they elaborately interpret certain of the most striking sayings in this sense, and give graphic details of how Jesus, as the First Mystery, brought to rebirth the souls of John the Baptizer and of the disciples, and supervised the economy of his own incarnation. In this respect the *Great Seth* scriptures offer richer material for those interested in this ancient and widespread doctrine than can be found in any other old-world document in the West. Gnostic teachings like Buddhist ones have regarded reincarnation as a calamity to be overcome by liberation.

B.4.2 Rebirth v.s reincarnation

At this point it is necessary to point out a small distinction in the use of language between the words 'rebirth' and 'reincarnation'. In Buddhism we usually use the word 'rebirth' to describe the continu ity from life to life. It indicates that the 'soul' or 'entity' that is reborn between one life and the next might not be the same in nature but will have a quality which will differ according to the actions most recently performed by that being. Hindu tradition, by contrast, uses the word 'reincarnation' which indicates that a person reborn, has an unchanging character or soul, but the new form of being at birth might change to be a frog or a cat or an elephant, but the soul is still John Smith etc.

C. PRINCIPLES OF LIBERATION

The Three Spheres together are like a three-layered prison which traps the beings in the world in a cycle of rebirth. Returning to our model with three concentric spheres, we realize that even now, we are still in that prison, rattling about inside the pingpong ball. Even if we were to be born as angels we would not escape the ping-pong ball. We get in a spaceship and go to the moon, thinking that we can escape from the prison of the world — but in fact, the moon is just a satellite of the earth. Even if we make it to the sun or the stars, we are still in the same old galaxy, the same old universe — and we are still in the most basic level of prison — the sensuous realm. No matter how far we travel, we cannot escape. What must we do to escape from our prison? The key to gaining liberation of *our being* is to gain liberation of *mind*. Body has mind as its governor. Liberation in Buddhism entails permanently extricating one's mind out of states within the mundane [*lokiya*] plane and elevating one's mind permanently into the transcendental [*lokuttara*] plane. If one's mind is liberated into the transcendental plane it will have access to happiness which is qualitavely different from the worldly state.

The people of old had a metaphor for the degree of happiness attained in each of the levels of mind. In the four different levels, the level of happiness is not the same. In higher levels there is more happiness and this is why we have to make the effort to improve our level of mind.

1. The happiness of the sensual sphere (the happiness of having a family and of sense pleasure) is like the happiness of a newborn child playing with mud or dung.

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2. The happiness of the form sphere (the happiness of attaining the form absorptions) is the satisfaction of someone who fulfills himself by performing his work well.

3. The happiness of the formless sphere (the happiness of the formless absorptions) is like the satisfaction of seeing the success of others who you have raised up, such as the happiness of raising one's children into responsible members of society, when you once again have the freedom to live your own life again.

4. The happiness of the transcendental (the happiness of removing all defilements) is happiness beyond comparison.

Furthermore, the states of mind on the transcendental level will be beyond the touch of the worldly vicissitudes (*see Blessing Thirty-Five*) — the reason for this difference is the radically reduced number of defilements inthe mind.

If we can permanently raise our mind to the highest level, then when dying from the human realm we will gain entry to a purer existence, or better still, will not be reborn any more.

C.1 Relinquishing as a relay

We have to throw off the temptations of sensuality, and the temptations of satisfaction with the form or formless absorptions. You have to sever the attachments sequentially. This point is difficult to understand — it has been very widely misunderstood even amongst monks. You don't give up everything all at once. According to the RathavinÈta Sutta (M.i.145ff.), the process is a relay. For the mind it is the same, in order for the mind to escape a lower level, we need to build up a higher state of mind ready and waiting to receive the outgoing mind. If you plan to remove sensual interest from the mind and you just try to sever the ties without anything in the way of replacement you will never succeed. The mind needs something as the object of its attention. If you have no new (better) object of interest as a replacement, the mind will never give up its old ways. This is why you have to train yourself in meditation to the degree that you attain the first absorptions of the mind (brightness within) before you can hope to sever the ties of sensual tempta tion. Your mind has to be completely absorbed in the happiness of meditation attainment before it will be able to give up the happiness derived from sensual fulfillment.

If you have sweet dreams of graduating and finding a cute husband or wife to marry, and having a cute little house and one or two cute little children of your own, and someone comes along and says — give up all interest in sensual pleasure — it'll be good for you — you would probably think that killing yourself might be a more viable possibility. If you really want to give up sweet dreams of sensual fulfillment, you have to meditate until brightness arises within, there is a possibility of finding alternative forms of fulfillment. Without an alternative you cannot force people to give up sensuality. Thus, anyone who decides to give up sensual attachment without doing meditation to build up a better alternative for themselves is doomed to failure.

D. PRACTISING THE BRAHMA-FARING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

D.1 Attitude to Sensuality

How can it be that a person already had a spouse or a partner or a boyfriend or a girlfriend or children and the Buddha still insisted that sensual fulfilment is a mistake? The Buddha gave many reasons, but in these pages, just ten of his metaphors will suffice, to make the point. If you cannot completely sever the ties, you can prevent yourself from increasing them. However, if you can release yourself fromall the ties of sensuality it is the best of all. Someone wishing to extricate themselves from sensuality should remind themselves regularly of the following metaphors:

1 ***Sensuality is like a hungry dog chewing a dry bone*** (the dog exhausts itself with its chewing but will never satiate its appetite). Married life is just the same. It never fulfills us. Love is never what it promises;

2 ***Sensuality is like a piece of meat fought over by vultures***. (It is said if you choose a wife, never choose a beautiful one, because she will be a source of attraction to other men in the future too, and that will become the bane of your life.);

3 ***Sensuality is like carrying a torch of fire while***

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walking into the wind. (As it burns down, the fire comes closer and closer to burning your hand and in the end you have to throw it away. In the same way however much you may love your spouse, both of you get older year by year and in the end one of you has to be the first to the deathbed);

1 ***Sensuality is like a pool of burning fuel*** (Everyone knows if they fall in the pool they will never get out alive, but they cannot help being attracted to walk along the edge of the pool until they eventually fall in — even though they know the saying 'wherever there is love there will be tears')

2 ***Sensuality is like a dream*** (You dream of happiness, but before long you have to wake up to the real world. Try asking a married couple what the happiest day of their marriage was. They will always reply that it was the first and since that day the causes of suffering have been increasing day by day. When you were single you could please yourself, but since you got married that has had to change. In the old days we thought it was hard work to look after our parents, now you have to look after your partners' parents too — and perhaps their extended family too and any children inherited from previous marriages! You end up saying to yourself, "If only I had known I would never have got married!" but you will be saying that to the end of your days.)

3 ***Sensuality is like borrowed jewelry*** (When you wear it, it looks good and everyone admires you, but as soon as you meet the lender, they will ask for that jewellry back. Before marriage we take special care to choose the best of beauty or handsomeness in our partner. People will admire you when you first marry saying 'What a lovely couple!' but that beauty and handsomeness will gradually be 'returned to its lender' with the passing years leaving only wrinkles in its place. Even the most handsome filmstar ends up with a bald head. The best of beauty wears off after five or ten years. Supposing you are twenty-five when you marry. From the age of thirty-five to the end of your days, you have to live with some one to whom you are no longer physically attracted)

7. Sensuality is like a fruit tree in the forest (The fruit of a tree in the forest is public domain. The fruit it bears is there to be taken by anyone who has the time to pick it. If you are good at climbing the tree or knocking off the fruit or even at cutting down the tree, the fruit is yours. The climber half way up the tree will be hurt when the tree cutters come along — but there is nothing in the way of compensation because none of them own the tree for themselves. In the same way, you cannot become the exclusive owner of the life of another person. If anyone else puts in the time and the effort to make they love them more than they love you, then your spouse becomes your ex-spouse. If you get beaten up by other suitors, who can you complain to?)

8. Sensuality is like a steak hammer. (Anyone who gets involved with sensuality will be putting their own life at risk.) The more beautiful or handsome you spouse, the more risky is your marriage. You know your husband finishes work at four in the afternoon. Why is he still not home at six o'clock? Has there been an accident or is he having a secret affair? The more attractive they are, the more you have to worry about. As the result, instead of your marriage bringing you happiness, the ensuing worry ages you before your time.

9. Sensuality is like a spear. (It has the tendency to wound you). It is like teeth and a tongue which share the same mouth. Sooner or later you will end up biting your tongue. The fights which grow up within a marriage are some of the most painful to all concerned, and eventually you end up dividing up the children between you as if they were nothing more than puppies or kittens.

10. Sensuality is like a snake head. (If you have anything to do with it, you have always to be on your guard. There is no time you can be off your guard. You have to be thinking all the time, "Do they really love me or are they just pretending to love me? Did they have an ulterior motive in loving me?" Suspicion grows like a can

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cer in a marriage. Especially when your spouse is not a particularly moral person, the level of suspicion will be all the greater and the suffering greater too, as the result.)

In fact the Buddha had many more metaphors for sensuality than this. Thus if you are yet to get yourself a boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse, train yourself in meditation more and more and when you attain inner brightness, you will soon find a happiness which is superior. The thought of marriage will disappear of its own accord. As for those who are already married, there is no need to go encouraging divorces. If someone doesn't yet have any children, maybe they would prefer to keep in that way. If someone has a certain number of children already, maybe they can be content with the number they already have. Chastity can offer a bright future to all who can practice it.

D.2 Ways to Practise the Brahma-faring

Many of the ways of practising chastity have already been covered in previous Blessings. However, we come back to these again because chastity can be practised at many levels. There are ten ways of practising chastity and as usual they range from the easy to the difficult:

The Brahma-faring at the Lowest Level

- ***Generosity*** [dÅna]***:*** Once your mind is already purified by austerity, the first thing you must do is to practise generosity. The reason why we must be generous, because possessions surplus to our needs will be chinks in the armour via which sensuality can form attachments. An excess of possessions will attract people to love us for our wealth.
- ***Service:*** [veyyavajja] To give our time and effort to help with good works or do favours to others in need. If there is an ordination then you should do your best to help them. If the neighbours are making a new road you should help them. Pick up litter that has fallen at the side of the road and help to put it in the bin. Help them when they are organizing KaÊhina offerings or the offering of 'forest robes'. If they are building a new hospital or library, see what you can help with. If you see someone's car has broken down, you should help to push it. In a word, it is using strength surplus to our needs to help others. Often if we have too much effort unused, it becomes sensually directed instead, so you have to be quick to use it for more constructive ends.
- ***Keeping the Five Precepts:*** You should keep the Five Precepts purely. You will notice that keeping the Five Precepts seems to be included in almost every form of Dhamma study. The Precepts are unlike many other items of virtue which can be compared to steps on the stairway of Buddhist practice, the Five Precepts can be compared to the banister. The banister is always as long as the stairway itself — unlike the steps which each only extend a little way. Thus whenever you speak of another virtue, you always take for granted that that virtue comes within the guidelines of the Five Precepts (whether they are specifically mentioned or not). Concerning chastity, in the Five Precepts, the third Precept about not committing adultery is most obviously the most crucial. Supposing we would like to practice chastity, but we still have responsibilities to our own family, then proper attention to the Five Precepts is our best inroad to practice. Even if we are still single and we are not yet brave enough to sever the ties of sensuality completely, we should establish ourselves firmly in the Five Precepts so that we don't go messing about with other people's husbands and wives and creating trouble for ourselves in the long term.

The Brahma-faring at the Middle Level

- ***Spreading Loving Kindness limitlessly*** [apamaññña]: This is the spreading of good wishes and forgiveness to all without exception
— even if they are enemies or those who have hurt us in the past. Thinking to yourself, that we are all in the same predicament of old age, sickness and death, so why create further suffering for ourselves by disharmony? Be careful to distinguish between spreading loving kindness and spreading affection [rÅga]. If you spread loving kindness properly it will give the feeling as if the whole of the world is like our own children

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— because we wish that all of them could enjoy happiness. Don't go mistakenly spreading the feeling that you would like everyone in the world to fall in love with you. This is no longer loving kindness. Loving kindness has no admixing of sensual desires.

- ***Contentment with one's own spouse*** [*sadara-santusa*]: Whether you still find your spouse attractive or not, or less attractive than the neighbours is something you have to put behind you now because you have gone ahead and married them. You were the one who chose your spouse for yourself. You don't have to blame anyone else. Cultivating limitless loving kindness towards others without exception and contentment with your spouse will limit the scope of our sensual desires.
- ***Abstention from sexual relations*** [*methunavirati*]: This item applies specifically to those who do not yet have a family or a spouse of their own — or who are religiously ordained in some sense. If you are single or an ordained person, you should think to yourself, "I'm strong enough to be independent — I don't need to rely on anyone else to do my ironing or to replace me as the bread-winner" and keep yourself single. Reflecting on the ten comparisons for sensual desire we have already mentioned, you will soon see that sensual restraint is the key to your own freedom.

The Brahma-faring at the Highest Level

- ***Persistence*** [*viriya*]: This is the fortitude to practice meditation continuously for the whole of your life. This refers to the four components met in the previous blessing i.e. not doing evil that you have never done; giving up evil you have already done; doing all the good things you have not yet done; and; continuing to do the good things you have done before.
- ***Keeping Eight Precepts*** [*uposatha*]: For those who are single, this means keeping the Eight Precepts the whole of the time. Those who are married or who have their own family, they might start by keeping the Eight Precepts on the quarter-moon days, then on the quarter moon days and the day before the quarter moon days too, then on the quarter moon days and the day before the quarter moon days and on the day (i.e. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday...) of your birthday and your spouse's birthday. The people of old lent a lot of importance to keeping the Eight Precepts on one's birthday — reasoning that otherwise, you might never have a clear mind to think seriously about your life. They said that anyone who has sexual relations on their birthday will be someone who will never know success in their lives. If a child is born as the result, it will be the sort of child who doesn't appreciate its debt of gratitude to its parents — because the parents haven't ever taken any trouble to appreciate with gratitude the preciousness of attaining human birth. If you can build up your Eight Precepts, you will already be keeping Eight Precepts for four days of the week (or three days of the week if both husband and wife were born on the same day). Another approach might be to keep the Eight Precepts throughout the rainy season.

- ***Following the Eightfold Path*** [*ariyamagga*]: This will be discussed in more detail in *Blessing Thirty-Three*.
- ***Following all available teachings*** [sÅsanadhamma]: This means following all Buddhist teachings available. It is like an amalgamation of all the practices already mentioned.

At all levels of the brahma-faring, the Precepts are always present. At the lower level, it is the Five Precepts, at the mid-level it is the Eight Precepts and at the High level, it will be Eight Precepts or 227 Precepts.

Thus if you are going to practice at this high level, you should start by performing dhutaÌga practice as mentioned in the previous Blessing. Once you have completed your dhutaÌga practice,you shouldn't just go home and go back to bed! You need to further your practice by practising generosity every day, keeping the Precepts at a level appropriate to your marital status and train yourself in meditation for the rest of your life. You should seek to train yourself in every virtue that exists in the world and this is the true meaning of chastity.

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D.3 Possibilities for practising celibacy

1. Temporary or Permanent Ordination: There has long been the tradition in Thailand that every man should ordain as a monk at some time in their life. Usually at the age of twenty, young men will ordain for one month, two months or three months. Some ordain for the rest of their lives.

2. Ordaining as Nuns: Although there are no female monks[1], it is possible to ordain as a nun who keeps the Eight Precepts for a temporary period or permanently.

3. Staying celibate in your everyday life: It is possible to keep the Eight Precepts while earning your living in the proper way. All that is needed is to *ignore* those who would persuade you to do otherwise. Never forget that they are persuading you to turn yourself into a dog chewing a dry bone! There is nothing dishonourable about being an old maid. The people of old said that to remain unmarried is like to retain your freedom like a bird that flies free in the open sky. Once married, you are no longer a bird but more like a pet dog that has been put on a chain at home. Thus, if anyone tries to chat you up or to pinch your bottom, you can tell them where to go.

4. Staying celibate once your eldest child gets married (or the first child in family gets married): there is an old tradition amongst the country people of Thailand that as soon as the oldest child in a family gets married, the parents must keep chastity (at low/mid/high level) from that time onwards.

5. Staying celibate once you are widowed: Instead of thinking to remarry once your old spouse had died, you should start to think of your long term benefits and keep the Eight Precepts for the rest of your life.

D.4 Practical knowledge about ordination

It is a Buddhist tradition for all young men to ordain temporarily as monks at the age of twenty as a way of self-training in chastity. In practicality, however, many hesitate to take the opportunity to ordain because of unfamiliarity with the requirements. Accordingly, please find some hints and in formation about ordination below:

- ***Age at ordination:*** Those who ordain between the age of 15 to 20 will ordain as 'novices' (who keep the Ten Precepts). Those who ordain at the age of 20 upwards usually take full ordination as monks (who keep 227 Precepts). The latter is the superior form of ordination — but one should not provaricate about ordaining early in life because limitations of health may make ordination at a later age difficult. Also it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks and those ordaining late in life are notoriously hard to instil with new virtues;
- ***Period of ordination:*** It is usual to ordain for the whole of one rainy season (three months) — or to ordain in the university summer vacation for one or two months. One might otherwise take ordination when it is convenient to take leave from work or taking lifelong ordination is also possible. Ordination should not be for less than one month, however because it does not allow sufficient time for the study of the Dhamma;
- ***Choosing a place of ordination:*** The amount we learn while ordained is entirely dependent on the quality of the training given by a temple or institute. You should choose a place of ordination which emphasises strictness in Dhamma education and monastic discipline. At a good place of ordination, the preceptor will take direct and intimate responsibility for training the monks he ordains — giving an abundance of teachings and criticism to his students. This is in contrast to places which leave new monks to do whatever they like after their ordination. In some places, from the day of ordination to the day of disrobing, the ordinand doesn't get to converse a word of Dhamma with his preceptor. Really, what we are seeking from our ordination is to maximise the opportunity to be trained at the hands of our preceptor — don't go thinking that the magic of ordination comes from wearing saffron robes! — it is the training that counts;
- ***Monastic Discipline:*** We should think to ourselves that it is monastic discipline that sets us apart from household life. Without monastic discipline, we are no more than a householder with

1. in orthodox or Theravaada Buddhism

a shaven head and saffron robes. To masquerade as a monk is no better than to steal from the faithful — therefore, once ordained we must be strict in keeping the monastic discipline otherwise we will regret it at a later date;

- ***Meditation Practice:*** Once ordained, one should consecrate one's time entirely to studying the Dhamma and meditating rather than chattering idly or looking for amusement;
- ***Helping Society:*** When ordaining for three months, one should give first priority to training and benefitting oneself — if there are opportunities to help with humanitarian or social work while ordained — it is a good opportunity, but one should not become so involved with this that one diminishes the time available for meditation and Dhamma study. Welfare work doesn't require us to be ordained to do it — we can always do it later after our disrobing. The true way to help society as a monk is to teach Dhamma for others' benefit — however as a newly ordained monk, our knowledge will not yet be enough to teach others — all we can do for society is to conduct ourselves well, go on almsround in an orderly fashion, concentrating on making our behaviour worthy of faith — to be a good exemplar of the monastic discipline and knowing sense-restraint.

E. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

E.1 Ex. MahÅ Kassapa (AA.i.92ff., SA.ii.135ff., ThagA.ii.134ff., Ap.ii.578ff., Ap.i.33ff.)

There once was a young brahmin called Pipli. When he was young, he was very handsome, but was not interested in the married life. He was interested only in the study ofthe Dhamma. His father was a wealthy man and was worried that he would have no-one to look after the family fortune when he was gone. His father was so anxious to see his son married that he went looking for suitors himself. Eventually, the father found another daughter of a millionaire who lived in a distant town. It happened that the daughter like Pipli was disinterested by the subject of marriage. The parents of this young girl were the same as Pipli's parents — they were afraid that she would be an 'old maid'. As soon as they heard that Pipli was to be a suitor, they were quick to give her hand in marriage. Little did the parents of both sides know that both sides were already in communication with one another by letter. Both Pipli and the millionaires daughter had independently written letters to one another saying the same thing (i.e. please inform your parents to cancel the marriage, because with all due respect, I am not interested in marriage and would prefer to remain single for the rest of my life). The messengers bearing the letters met one another on the road between the two towns. Both were scared that if they brought bad news to the respective parents, they would get no reward for their efforts so the two of them read each other's letters then rewrote the letters to say that both sides were ready and waiting to marry. So it came to pass that Pipli and the millionaire's daughter were married, but because both had cultivated chastity for many lifetimes, they had no interest in sensual pleasures. Both had the latent ability to be *arahant*s and even though they were forced to sleep in the same bed, both of them felt completely indifferent. They would put a garland of jasmine flowers between them on the bed and each of them would meditate in the sleeping position throughout the night. Even after ten years when the parents on both sides of the family had passed away, they were still living their married life in the same way. Once the last of their parents had passed away, they gave away all the family legacy. They both obtained the robes of an ascetic and left the home life. When they came to a fork in the road, the wife said, "Now we are ascetics, to go around as a couple is no longer appropriate." Therefore the wife paid her last respects to her husband and both asked forgiveness for any mutual trespasses in the past, before the wife took the left hand fork and the husband took the right hand fork. It is said that through the power of the decision by such young people to go their own separate ways, at that time their was an earthquake in the vicinity. It is said that they were doing something very difficult to do. The Buddha detected the earthquake while he was meditating and looked for the reason. When he saw the reason was the ordination of Pipli, he went to meet him along the way and in a single sermon could elevate Pipli to the level of an arahant in seven days. As for the wife . . . she met with a bhikkhuÁi arahant who taught her to the degree that

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she could attain arahantship within seven days in the same way. Ultimately, Pipli, under the ordained name of MahÅkassapa Thera was the monk praised by the Buddha as unsurpassed in the practice of dhutaİga because he kept the dhutaİga practices throughout the whole of his life. After the passing away of the Buddha, because he was one of the most senior of the monks in the community, he was the monastic president for the First Council.

E.2 Ex. MÅtika MÅta (DhA.i.293)

In the time of the Buddha there was a group of sixty monks who having made sufficient study of Buddhist theory, went to take leave of the Buddha before going into the deep forest to practise meditation. In the forest they came across an old woman who was the mother of the village mayor. The old woman was very pleased to see such a large number of monks coming to practice in the neighbourhood and so she provided for all the catering needs of the monks. One day she asked the monks, "Is it possible only to practice chastity as a monk or can women and householders also practice?" The monks answered that it was also possible for householders to practice chastity — it is possible for anyone who wants to come to an end of defilements. The monk taught the lady all about meditation and keeping the Eight Precepts and the remainder of the ten components of chastity. The lady trained herself strictly in accordance with what she had been taught and found she could make progress even more quickly than the monks themselves. The reason she could make more progress was because she had built up such habits over the course of many lifetimes and she could also see the value of such practice after coming across many disappointments during her life. She was able to attain the form-absorptions, the formless-absorptions and the DhammakÅya to the level of anÅgÅmi. Through the power of her meditation, she was able to read the minds of others. She was able to know that her own progress in meditation was more than any of the sixty monks for whom she brought food. She meditated further and found that the reason that they weren't making progress in meditation was because the monks were unfamiliar with the sort of food they provided for them. Instead of meditating without any concerns, their minds were always distracted by the thought of the food they were used to.

Thus from that day onwards, if the lady knew that there was a particular food that the monk was wishing for that day, she would provide the self-same food for the next meal. The monks were constantly surprised by the fact that whatever food they happened to be interested in, it would always be the next meal on their plates. Before long the monks were meditating better because they were no longer worrying about food and in seven days, fifty-nine of the sixty could become *arahant*s. The fifty-nine returned to the temple where the Buddha was residing. The remaining monk who had not been practising so hard was not only hindered in his meditation, he also guessed that the lady was able to read his mind so he was scared of her. He knew if he should happen to think of anything wicked he would be ashamed to death of that lady. This last monk ran away back to the Buddha and asked permission to pursue his meditation somewhere else. The Buddha asked the reason, and the monk said, "The supporter is a mind reader — supposing I think anything evil, what will she think of me?"

The Buddha said, "To have shame even of your thoughts might just be your advantage!" The monk was sent back to where he had been before, but now he took such care even of his thoughts that he was able to become an *arahant*. As an *arahant*, he looked back into his past lives to see if this was the first lifetime in which that lady had helped him. He found that in a previous life the lady had been his wife — she had been unfaithful and had murdered him — however in other lifetimes, the lady had sacrificed her life for his benefit. The reason why the woman had become only an anÅgÅmi was because in the past she had not paid enough attention to the practice of dhutaİga.

E.3 Ex. BÅhiya DÅrucÈriya DhA.ii.209ff.

Many *kappa*s ago, the teaching of a previous Buddha was almost disappeared from the world. There were seven monks who still practised well. They saw that society had degraded to to a level where no-one was interested to learn the Dhamma any more. The seven monks decided to disappear into the forest to practice in earnest instead of wasting their time with society any more. They found a mountain which was surrounded by cliffs on all sides. The mountain in the forest which was suitable for meditation. They agreed

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amongst themselves to meditate on the top of the mountain until they could attain mental powers. They climbed a ladder up the cliff and when all had reached the top the kicked the ladder away — intending that if they couldn't attain enlightenment in their meditation, they would rather die than give in. They meditated without eating and without moving for five days before the first of the monks could attain transcendental states. He was able to become an *arahant* and floating in the air, flew down the mountain to go for almsround. Returning from almsround, he brought enough food for all the other monks too. However, the other monks were resolute in their meditation and refused his food. On the seventh day a second monk attained anÅgÅmin. The two enlightened monks went for almsround, but the remaining five still refused to eat the food they had brought. Eventually the remaining five died of physical exhaustion in their meditation. The *arahant* entered parinibbÅna. The anÅgÅmÈ entered the Form-BrahmÅ realm and the rest of the monks were reborn in heaven.

After spending the requisite time in heaven one of the five monks was reborn in the human realm as a merchant called BÅhiya DÅrucÈriya. While trading in a ship, it was wrecked and he was the only survivor. He got hold of a plank and eventually came to land at the port of Supparaka. As he was naked, he tied a piece of bark to his body, and sat in a place where people could see him. Passers-by gave him food. Some thought that he was a holy man and paid respects to him. Some brought clothes for him to wear but he refused, fearing that by wearing clothes, people would give him less respect. Besides, because some said that he was an *arahant*, he mistakenly came to think that he *really* was one. Thus, because he was a man of wrong views who was wearing a piece of bark as his clothing, he came to be known as BÅhiya DÅrucÈriya.

At about this time, Maha BrahmÅ, who had been the friend who had attained anÅgÅmÈ in one of his previous existences, saw BÅhiya's views going astray and felt that it was his duty to put him on the right path. Thus, the BrahmÅ came to him in the night and said to him, "BÅhiya, you are not an *arahant* yet, and what is more, you do not have the qualities that make one an *arahant*." Faced with the truth, BÅhiya looked up at the BrahmÅ and said, "Yes, I must admit that I am not an *arahant*, as you have said. I now realise that I have made a great mistake. But is there anyone in this world now who is an *arahant*?" The BrahmÅ then advised him to go and seek help from the Buddha who was staying in SÅvatthÈ.

BÅhiya, realized the enormity of his guilt, felt very much distressed and travelled all the way to SÅvatthÈ to see the Buddha. BÅhiya found the Buddha going on an almsround with other *bhikkhu*s and respectfully followed him. He pleaded with the Buddha to teach him the Dhamma, but the Buddha replied that since they were on an almsround it was not yet time for a religious discourse. And again, BÅhiya pleaded, "Venerable Sir! One cannot know the danger to your life or to my life, so please teach me the Dhamma." The Buddha knew that BÅhiya's mental faculties were not yet ready to completely realize the Dhamma. The Buddha also knew that BÅhiya's mind was not receptive at that time because he had just made the long journey and also because he was overwhelmed with joy at seeing him.

The Enlightened One did not want to expound the Dhamma immediately but wanted him to calm down to enable him to absorb the Dhamma properly. Still, BÅhiya persistentlypleaded. So, while standing at the roadside, the Buddha said to him, "BÅhiya, when you see an object, be conscious of just the visible object; when you hear a sound, be conscious of just the sound; when you smell or taste or touch something, be conscious of just the smell, the taste or the touch; and when you think of anything, be conscious of just that mind-object."

BÅhiya did as he was told and because of his deep concentration, the accumulated karmic force of his past good deeds became dominant and he attained Arahanthood. He asked permission from the Buddha to join the Order. The Buddha told him first to collect the robes, the bowl and other requisites of a *bhikkhu*. On his way to get them, he was gored by a mad cow and died. This is said to be one of the only examples of those to attain arahantship before ordination — but without ordination, he could not support such a high mental state and so passed away within seven days of his enlightenment.

Blessing Thirty-Three: Seeing the Four Noble Truths

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Blessing Thirty-three in the order of things

This blessing and the remaining five blessings of the Maḷgala Sutta are the culmination of all the previous thirty-two blessings. It is not to say that there was nothing gained from the foregoing blessings, but those previous blessings have not yet managed to raise us to liberation or transcendental purity.

In the Blessing Thirty-two we discussed cosmology saying that our current sphere of existence can be compared to 'life in a ping-pong ball' (!), i.e. the Sphere of Sense-Pleasure. Our sphere of existence is enclosed within a larger sphere like a tennis ball, which is called the 'sphere of form-BrahmÅs'. This tennis ball is enclosed within a larger football which is called the 'sphere of formless-BrahmÅs'. Sometimes we think that our cosmos is incomprehensibly large, but to a meditator, it is no more cosmically significant than a ping-pong ball. We refer to all three of these spheres together as the 'ti-bhËmi' or 'Triple World'. The knowledge of anything any further than this 'Triple World' is unique to Buddhism amongst world religions. Buddhism, has specialized in the fact that its implicit knowledge extends further than the Triple World into experiences that truly transcend the mundane world [*lokuttara*] and concern Nirvana.

Of all the blessings we have studied, those which have emphasized earnest practice the most are blessings Thirty-One and Thirty-Two. Those who practice must use austere techniques to burn up the defilements in the mind — overcoming laziness and their habitual bad habits concerning use of clothing, food and shelter. In the blessing concerning the 'Brahma-faring' we sowed the seeds of goodness in the pure mind. The process of sowing virtue is like smelting a metal to purity. We have already said that overcoming impurities in the mind can only take place if we have *transcendental* happiness to replace our *mundane* happiness. As we change the staple diet of the mind from mundane happiness to transcendental happiness, eventually when this becomes habitual, it will dictate our rebirth in the corresponding transcendental realm orlead to no further rebirth.

As you practice more and more according to the prescribed stages, the clarity and brightness of the mind will increase. As the brightness of your mind increases, the mind will have the ability to appreciate the reality of life and the world. If you are able to appreciate such a reality, in that way you can come to an end of all suffering — and attain real happiness. Buddhism refers to 'seeing reality in the way that can bring you to an end of suffering' as 'Seeing the Noble Truths' — which is the subject of this blessing.

A.2 Definition: The Noble Truths

The word 'noble' is used to describe the truths examined in this Blessing. The reason for them being noble is threefold — they are:

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● ***Noble in themselves:*** Seeing these truths, you discover the key to the nature of reality. Simply knowing the truth about certain key issues, you will be able to appreciate the truth of everything
— in contrast to the knowledge of mundane matters which does nothing to transform us for the better;

• ***Discovered by someone who was noble:*** The Noble Truths can be discovered only by those who are really noble — not by birth but by the utter purity of their minds;
• ***Will make the attainer noble:*** Whosoever attains the noble truths will gain penetrating knowledge of all things and that in itself will make that person noble.

We might ask ourselves, having studied the forgoing blessings, why we have not yet see the Noble Truths as a result. The reason is because we have not yet trained ourselves to the utmost. First, we have to ask ourselves honestly whether we have really practiced the forgoing blessings in earnest or not? Once satisfied with our efforts to study the preceding blessings, it is also pertinent to remind ourselves that even if we are not yet at the point where we can *see* the Noble Truths for ourselves, the study of this blessing is still essential, even if only to know *what we are looking for*.

To *see* the Noble Truths is not the work of a single day. Even if we cannot reach this spiritual destination today, at least we can know the route to take us there — so that in the future we can orientate ourselves in the right direction. Thus, this blessing will deal with 'knowing about the Noble Truths' so that we know what they comprise. When we have practised further, then we will be able to recognize the Noble Truths when we see them for ourselves.

A.3 Noble Truths: overlooked for epochs

The Four Noble Truths are Truths which have existed as long as the Earth or longer. However, even though they existed, no-one ever noticed them. Their discovery had to wait for many aeons (an aeon being defined as the time it takes to wear a 16km x 16km x 16 km solid stone mountain down to the ground by rubbing it once every hundred years with a light cloth [Pabbata Sutta S.ii.181]). Not just a single epoch, but a period of the order of 10^{140} aeons. This is how long it takes for someone to train themselves sufficiently well in the thirty-eight blessings to discover the Noble Truths anew. If such a person has not arisen in the world, the world will remain in ignorance concerning those truths. However, once such a person has seen the Noble Truths, even though they might be able to teach those Noble Truths for the benefit of others, it doesn't mean that others will necessarily be able to see the Noble Truths in the same way.

The Noble Truths are difficult to see or appreciate because our relationship to them (especially suffering) is like a fish's relationship to water. A fish is so used to the water it lives in, that it fails to notice the presence of that water. In the same way, our human condition is so intimately in contact with the Noble Truths that without penetrative insight we fail to see the patterns or the reasons behind them.

B. THE NOBLE TRUTHS

The Buddha's first teaching, the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta (S.v.420ff.), which is the main source of our knowledge about the Noble Truths is one of the most important teachings for Buddhists to know. Its importance lies in the fact that it acts like a blueprint for all the subsequent teachings on Buddhism given during the Buddha's lifetime. Even if the Lord Buddha were to teach the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta and never to teach another word of Dhamma for the rest of his life, His duty in proclaiming the Dhamma to the world would have been fulfilled. Just as each country of the world has a Constitution as the blueprint for the rest of the laws of the country to expand upon, similarly, the other teachings of the Buddha, the teachingsof the *arahant*s and the teachings of distinguished Buddhist teachers down to the present time are simply enlargements upon the Noble Truths of the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta. The Noble Truths are fourfold and consist of:

1. The Noble Truth of Suffering [dukkhaariyasacca];

2. The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering [samudaya-ariyasacca];
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering

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- [nirodha-ariya-sacca], pre-death omens and visions
- the struggle of clinging to possessions in vain
- the struggle of clinging to loved ones in vain
- [special] torments of death in the case of execution

4. The Noble Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering [*magga-dasyasacca* or *dukkha nirodha-gAminiI- paTipadA ariyasacca*].

If you were to compare these with our system of curing illness, you can compare:

1. Suffering to the condition of being ill
2. The Origin of Suffering to the pathogen, bacteria or virus
3. The Cessation of Suffering to the condition of being healed from the illness
4. The Path to the medicine that can cure one of the said disease. To take the metaphor further, it can be said that everyone in the world is ill with the disease of suffering — but it is as if no-one really knows what the nature or the cause of the illness — let alone the cure. The purpose of this blessing is to allow us to know the real nature of Suffering and how we can extricate ourselves from it.

B.1 The Noble Truth of Suffering

The Pali word used for this Truth is '*dukkha*' which means the (truth of the existence of) Suffering. Suffering in general means 'awkwardness' or 'discomfort' of body or mind. Over the course of many existences, when the Buddha had developed inner brightness sufficient to see the reality of the world, he saw that every living being in the world is plagued by suffering. Even multimillionaires are suffering. No matter if they are the president, members of parliament, the king, the emperor or even monks — all are plagued by suffering. All are suffering to a greater or lesser extent. As the result of extended self-training, the Buddha was able to see the nature of suffering and even to analyze it into its different components. There are eleven major categories of suffering under the two headings of *inevitable* and *miscellaneous* (to a greater degree avoidable) suffering:

B.1.1 ***Inevitable Suffering*** [svabhÅvadukkha]***:*** It doesn't matter what sort of birth you take, you cannot escape this type of suffering — even if you are a man, an angel or a god, for as long as you are still within the Three Spheres you cannot escape:

1. Birth [jÅta]*:* Most people wonder why the Buddha designated birth as a form of suffering — in contrast to most religions of the world which conclude that it is a pleasure to be born. The Buddha, by contrast, taught that birth is suffering because it is the starting point for all the other sorts of suffering. In addition birth is fraught with the following ten aspects all of which lead to suffering:

1. the Suffering of Internment in the Womb
2. the Suffering of Physical Shocks to the Womb
3. the Suffering of Unnatural Childbirth
4. the Suffering of Undergoing Childbirth (for the baby)
5. the Suffering of Being Cleaned-Up after birth
6. the Suffering of Curtailed Life
7. the Suffering of Wounds in Combat
8. the Suffering of Birth in the Animal Realms
9. the Suffering of Birth in the Realm of Hungry Ghosts
10. the Suffering of Birth in the Hell Kingdoms

2. Aging [jarÅ]*:* Aging is a form of suffering easily seen from the sighs and moans of old people each time they have to get up from their chairs. Indeed, most people think that aging starts when you are seventy or eighty years old. However, the worst aspects of aging are not the grey hair and wrinkles, but the hidden part which works in the background from the day we were born

> — compared to an unseen fire which reduces a forest to cinders or storm which leaves nothing but debris in its wake;

3. Death [maraÅa]*:* All living beings have to undergo death before they leave one existence for the next — no matter whether they are rich or poor, have led a good life or a bad one. When the mind must depart from one's body at the end of one's life, it is only those who have managed to attain transcendental [*lokuttara*] mental states who don't fear oncoming death. This is why the Lord Buddha referred to death as suffering. The suffering of dying brings excruciating misery because of:

- the scorching sensation when dying which seems to penetrate the whole of our body

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B.1.2 Miscellaneous Suffering [pakiÅakkadukkha]***:*** This is suffering which is caused when the mind is lacking in quality. It is a category of suffering which you have the opportunity to escape — but for those who don't make the effort to escape, they will meet up with a lot of it. If you know the method to avoid this sort of suffering, you can reduce your misery

— especially by changing your attitudes at a deeper level:

1. Sorrow [soka]*:* This is the 'dry-minded' suffering — for example, that of a mother with a new baby who cannot take her baby to work (or she will be fired), but must leave the baby in the crêche or with a maid despite her misgivings. He anxiousness leads to sorrow for the situation. With the anxiety of whether the maid will take proper care of the baby or whether they will leave the baby to be bitten by ants.

2. Lamentation [parideva]*:* This is sorrow that drives you to tears. If the mother in the last example should worry herself to tears it would be counted as lamentation.

3. Pain [dukkha]*:* This is physical suffering. The Buddha characterized this sort of suffering as that which makes the mind depressed and dejected. The cause of the suffering might be illness, physical torture, punishment, imprisonment or having hands or feet cut off. As the suffering must be endured alone — friends and relatives can do nothing to help us, or else we are separated from them. Some people feel such pain as a result of their poverty — being unable to afford clothes and jewelry to wear like more fortunate people. The mental anguish which comes from the resentment of the unavoidability and seeming unfairness of one's circumstances can also be ascribed to this form of suffering.

4. Feeling slighted [domanassa]*:* This is when one has a 'chip on one's shoulder' (to be aggressively sensitive about a particular thing or bear a grudge). Some people bear a grudge against their parents for not having showed them enough love. Some wives bear a grudge against their husbands for receiving less affection than they think they deserve.

5. Despair [upÃyÅssa]*:* This is when you give up any hope of success in something. You might see a task which is so great that you give up hope of ever completing it.

6. Exposure to hateful things [apiyehi sampayoga]*:* The Buddha characterized this form of suffering as the sort of cloudedness of mind, grief and melancholy which result from coming into contact with those things to which we are averse. The things which make us feel averse may come via our five senses — we feel aversion and would like to remove those hateful things or escape from their grasp — but when we can't it only adds to the suffering in our mind.

7. Separation from loved ones and treasured things [piyehi vipayoga]*:* If we are the sort of person who wishes for fulfilment by the sense-pleasures and habitually indulges the senses, when we are eventually separated from such sources of pleasure, the heartbreak of parting is the characteristic of this sort of suffering. Separation from loved ones (like close relations who pass away) or from treasured things (possessions, home or honours) will bring us misery for as long as we still harbour these attachments in our hearts.

8. Disappointment [alÅbha]*:* The Buddha divided this category of suffering into two parts — *physical* disappointment and *spiritual* disappointment. Supposing in spite of working hard and having all the necessary patience in the face of hardship, a person still doesn't manage to earn their living successfully — *physical disappointment* is what they feel as the result. If a person hankers after more abstract things like honours, but is unable to procure all that they are looking for, *spiritual disappointment* is what they feel as the result. For as long as we still harbour such disappointment in our hearts, they will continue to bring us misery.

For people in general who never studied the

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Dhamma or listened to sermons concerning suffering, when they are overtaken by old-age, sickness or death, it comes as a major shock. As for those who have achieved some level of enlightenment or have heard the teaching of the Lord Buddha, the inevitability of such suffering presents no surprise. Faced by suffering, the wise reflect that all beings are subject to suffering, irrespective of whether they are possessed of supra-normal powers — no matter how rich or influential a person might be, one doesn't feel one is being singled out for particular bad luck — all are equal in the face of suffering. Thus, to realize the reality of suffering for what it really is, to know the Noble Truth of Suffering, is indeed one strength of the Enlightened Ones.

The realization of the Noble Truth of Suffering has been achieved independently by all the Buddhas and *paccekabuddha*s. As for the *arahant*s and various enlightened disciples of the Buddha — it has only been as the result of the teaching of the Buddha that such an insight has been attained.

B.2 The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering

The Pali word used for this Truth is '*samudaya*' which means the 'origin' of Suffering. When people are ignorant of the real reason behind their suffering, they tend to clutch at straws — blaming anything they can think of (but themselves). Some blame the gods and deities, some say 'that it is God's way of testing one's patience' or 'that it is God's punishment'. Some say the victim has 'fallen prey to the local spirits or to the Devil'. It is like people who don't know the reason for an economic crisis will blame anything they can think of — e.g. the government or foreign countries — but they never think of blaming themselves or the laziness of their fellow countrymen. Some people will always find someone to blame whether it is their husband or wife or the government. If they fail their examinations they blame their teachers. They will do anything to make sure that they pass the buck.

It is only the Buddha who taught us to blame ourselves — to blame ourselves for not having completely dealt with the craving that remains in the mind. The Buddha taught that we suffer because we still have defilements in the mind. The defile

ments in the mind create craving [taÁhÅ] which expresses itself in different ways. The Lord Buddha taught the existence of three sorts of craving (A.iii.445): craving for sense-pleasure [kÅmataÁhÅ], craving for the form realms [bhavataÁhÅ] and craving for the formless realms [vibhavataÁhÅ].

1. Craving for Sense-Pleasure: Craving for sense-pleasure is the grasping of the mind when it is under the influence of greed or desire for the objects of the senses i.e. images, sounds, perfumes, tastes and touching. It is the craving of those who think that true happiness can be obtained via sense pleasures. Thus such people wish to be reborn in the human realm or one of the heavens, all of which are in the Sphere of Sense Pleasure [kÅmabhava]. Skilful-minded people with such an attitude to life, try to do as many meritorious actions as possible (e.g. keeping the Precepts or being generous) in order to be reborn in heaven. Such an attitude is one driven by craving for sense-pleasure and the Lord Buddha enumerated it as one of the Noble Truths of the Origin of Suffering.

2. Craving for the Form Realms: Craving for the Form Realms is the attitude of those who wish to be reborn in the BrahmÅ-world or the Realms of Form [rËpabhava]. Such people believe that being able to attain the BrahmÅ-world (to be reunited with God etc.) will allow them to escape from the suffering of birth, old age, sickness and death. Such people devote all their efforts to the attainment of the form-absorptions [jhÅna] in order to pass away into the BrahmÅ-world at death. Spiritual practitioners who subscribe to this attitude, having developed a certain degree of meditation, will acquire the ability to recollect their previous lives and will know what form they had taken in previous lives. When passing away, the highest realm in which they can be reborn will be the Form-BrahmÅ world. Such an attitude is one driven by craving for the BrahmÅworld and the Lord Buddha enumerated it as one of the Noble Truths of the Origin of Suffering.

3. Craving for the Formless Realms: Craving for the Formless Realms is the attitude of those who

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wish to be reborn in the formless BrahmÅ-world or the formless Realms [arËpabhava]. Such people believe that being able to attain the formless BrahmÅ-world will allow them to escape eternally from rebirth in lower realms and that it will allow them to attain Nirvana. Spiritual practitioners who subscribe to this attitude, who have developed a certain degree of meditation, will acquire the ability to know what awaits them after death. The limit of the knowledge of such practitioners are the Formless-BrahmÅ Realms

— knowledge gained as the result of developing the formless absorptions [arËpa-jhÅna]. Such ascetics misunderstand that being reborn in the Formless BrahmÅ-world will release them from suffering — thus all their time in the human world is spent trying to develop the formless absorptions in order to try to be born in the Formless-BrahmÅ Realms. Such an attitude is one driven by craving for the Formless-BrahmÅ world and the Lord Buddha enumerated it as one of the Noble Truths of the Origin of Suffering.

The wise recognize these three forms of craving as the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering because they are the prime-mover for all subsequent forms of suffering. Craving for sense pleasure is the origin of all the suffering connected with rebirth in the Sphere of Sensual Pleasure. Craving for the Brahma world or the Formless Brahma World are the origins of all the suffering connected with rebirth in the Spheres of the Form-BrahmÅs and the Formless-BrahmÅs respectively. It is for this reason that craving is explained as being the sole cause of all forms of suffering — suffering cannot be blamed on any other thing. If craving can be avoided, the suffering of birth, old age and death will be escaped.

Craving has been responsible for keeping beings in the endless cycle of birth and rebirth in the cycle of existence without offering any possible refuge. It is for this reason that craving has been called '*samudaya*' the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.

B.3 Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering

The Pali word used for this Truth is 'nirodha' which means the 'extinction' or 'cessation' of Suffering. The Buddha found that craving can only be overcome if craving is extinguished. The way that craving can be extinguished is by eradicating the defilements in the mind. If defilements are reduced, craving is reduced. If craving is reduced, suffering will be reduced. If you can bring craving to an end, there is nothing to cause you to be reborn any more. If there is no birth any more, then that will eradicate suffering at its roots. Furthermore, cessation of suffering is something we can find for ourselves. We don't have to wait for an unknown 'factor' or external agent or deity to do the work for us.

B.4 Noble Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering

The Pali word used for this Truth is '*magga*' which means the 'Path' or 'dukkhanirodha gÅminÈ paÊipadÅ' which means the 'path leading to cessation. It refers equally to the 'Middle Way' and to the Noble Eightfold Path.

The 'Middle Way' [majjhimÅ paÊipadÅ] doesn't mean 'moderation in *all* things' but to cultivate the cessation of craving by steering between the extremes of sensual indulgence [kÅmasukallikÅnuyoga] and self-mortification [attakilamathÅnuyoga] in one's spiritual practice. Such cultivation is a way of training ourselves until the mind can wriggle itself free of craving — something achieved by freeing the mind of all the thoughts that cause it to move. If the mind is not still it has no way of extinguishing craving. Furthermore, if the mind is still, it will be sufficiently clear and bright to identify the defilements remaining in the mind, and it will be possible to banish these defilements from the mind. This way or path of practice to bring the mind to a standstill consists of eight components — which is why it is called the Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path can be found at all levels of advancement, whether it be the Sensual Sphere [kÅmavacarabhËmi], the Form Sphere [rËpÅ-vacarabhËmi], the Formless Sphere [arËpavacara-bhumi] or the Transcendental Level [lokuttarabhËmi]. If it arises at the Transcendental Level then it is called the Transcendental Path [*lokuttaramagga*]. If it arises in the Triple World then it is called the Mundane Path [*lokiyamagga*] — although the way it is applied changes with the level of practice (*see Table 33.1. right*)

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TABLE 33.1: Practising the Eightfold Path on Mundane and Transcendental Levels

	Mundane [*lokiya*]	**Transcendental** [*lokuttara*]
Right View [sammÅ diÊÊhi] **Right Intention** [sammÅ saÌkappa] **Right Speech** [sammÅ vÅcÅ] **Right Action** [sammÅ kammanta] **Right Livelihood** [sammÅ ÅjÈva] **Right Effort** [sammÅ vÅyÅma] **Right Mindfulness** [sammÅ sati] **Right Concentration** [sammÅ samÅdhi]	Confidence in the working of the Law of Karma and the power of the Triple Gem. Overcoming Eight Sorts of False View The wholesome intention to remove oneself from the influence of sensual desire, vengefulness and aggression by being generous, keeping Five Precepts and meditating Avoiding telling lies, divisive speech, harsh speech and idle chatter. Refraining from killing and cruelty towards living beings, stealing and sexual relations outside marriage. Doing things by the rules. Refraining from earning one's living by selling weapons, slaves, animals to the slaughterhouse, alcohol, drugs, poison or prostitution, 'fixing' weights and measures used for business or otherwise misleading customers. Avoiding evils not yet done, breaking of bad habits, development of virtues not yet done and maintenance of virtues already mastered. Keeping our mind on wholesome thoughts without any deviation, especially by practising meditation until attaining one-pointedness of mind Following the absorption of the mind onto equanimity.	Fiercely accurate understanding of life and the world based on thorough understanding of the Four Noble Truths and without further influence of ignorance or the defilements. Insight into the becoming of the Five Aggregates Release from the three types of wrong preoccupation [*akusala-vitakka*] and bias [*agati*] Every word as artful speech or else maintaining noble silence. Practice for the removal of every last trace of ignorance and craving. Earning one's living in a compassionate way. Dedicating oneself actively to the attainment of Nirvana. Cultivating the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Seeing and knowing the Four Noble Truths and the Three Universal Characteristics in the Five Aggregates until releasing oneself from the action of the defilements. Attainment of Cessation of Suffering and entry upon Nirvana.

TABLE 33.2: Correlation between Eightfold Path Factors & the Threefold Training

Eightfold Path Factors	**Threefold Training**
Right View Right Intention	Wisdom
Right Speech Right Action Right Livelihood	Self-Discipline
Right Effort Right Mindfulness Right Concentration	Meditation

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For as long as a meditator cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path purely, completely and according to the principles of the Middle Way (i.e. with the mind entering continuously upon the pathway at the centre of the body), the mind will be liberated from mood influences in the outside world. Once the mind has adjusted itself, the meditator will see the diamond clear PaÊhama Magga Sphere (DhammÅ-nupassanÅsatipaÊÊhÅna Sphere) at the centre of his or her body. At its smallest it will be the size of a star. Medium-sized, it will be the size of the full moon. At its largest it will be the size of the midday sun. The PaÊhama Magga Sphere arises when all eight components of the Noble Eightfold Path are present and fuse into unity [maggasamaÌgÈ]. This is the trailhead of the pathway to Nirvana. You need to train yourself simultaneously in all eight of the following the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path can be expanded into the whole of the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha or contracted into the Threefold Training [sikkhÅ] of self-discipline [sÈla], meditation [samÅdhi] and wisdom [paññÅ] — (*as shown in Table 33.2. p.377*)

C. SEEING THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

C.1 How the Noble Truths can be seen

At this point we now know how many sorts of suffering exist — but so far this is only theoretical knowledge. In fact, for the *ariyasacca* to work, we must see them twelve times — three cycles in twelve characteristics. (*See Table 33.4*) Seeing the Noble Truths is different from seeing other things because seeing them, one's self is transformed by the act of seeing. Seeing, for example 'craving', one immediately will relinquish craving and having relinquished it, you see that one has done so. It is equivalent to seeing 'this is the medicine', while automatically realizing 'this medicine should be taken' and eventually recognizing 'this medicine has already been taken'. This is possible only because it is not the physical eye or imagination which we use to see the truths but the Eye of the DhammakÅya or '*dhamma-cakkhu*'.

Of course the other inner bodies of experience already mentioned in Blessing Thirty-two also have their equivalent form of 'inner eye' but, as we shall see, (*See Table 33.3*) these eyes are not sufficiently refined to be able to see the Four Noble Truths in the way described:

The comparative wisdom of available to the inner bodies at each level was described by the Great Abbot of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen (Phramonkolthepmuni) as follows:

> "If you are able to attain the body of enlightenment (DhammakÅya) you will find that it is many tens of times wiser than our human physical body. If you attain the subtle human body it is already twice as wise. Attaining the angelic body, it is twice as wise again. Attaining the subtle angelic body, it is three times wiser. Attaining the form-brahma body, it is four times wiser. Attaining the subtle form-brahma body, it is five times wiser. Attaining the formless-brahma body, it is six times wiser. Attaining the subtle formless-brahma body, it is seven times wiser Attaining the body of enlightenment and subtle body of enlightenment, they are eight and nine times wiser respectively. This is the nature of their successive wisdom
>
> — you should familiarize yourself with their relative wisdoms."

What is the true meaning of 'insight' [vipassanÅ] meditation? In fact insight is insightful vision or seeing things according to their true nature, seeing them thoroughly from every perspective. The 'Dhamma' eye is the eye of the 'Body of Enlightenment' which has the ability to penetrate to the truth, especially to know the origins of defilements, how they come to enslave the mind and how we can overcome them. This is a major difference from the eyes of bodies belonging to the mundane levels of mind to which the defilements are invisible.

C.2 Characteristics of the Body of Enlightenment

Luang Phaw Wat Paknam explained that the Dhamma Body is similar in shape and form to a

TABLE 33.3: Correlation between state of mind, inner experience & capacity for insight

sphere		subjective experience	equivalent inner eye
mundane states of mind [*lokiya*]	sensual form formless	Physical Body: Angelic Body Form-Brahma Body Formless-Brahma Body	physical eye [maÕsa-cakkhu] angelic eye [*dibba-cakkhu*] the eye of wisdom [paññÅ-cakkhu] all-seeing eye [*samanta-cakkhu*]
transcendental states of mind [*lokuttara*]		Dhammakaya GotrabhÈ Body of Enlightenment and higher	Buddha eye [*buddha-cakkhu*]

TABLE 33.4: Seeing the Four Noble Truths - Three Cycles with Twelve Characteristics

Ariyasacca SaccañÅÁa KiccañÅÁa KatañÅÁa	***Dukkha*** knowledge of the existence of suffering knowledge of what should be done in relation to suffering knowledge that what needs to be done has been done in relation to suffering	***Samudaya Ariyasacca*** knowledge of the existence of the origin of suffering knowledge of what should be done in relation to the origin of suffering knowledge that what needs to be done has been done in relation to the origin of suffering	***Nirodha Ariyasacca*** knowledge of the existence of the cessation of suffering knowledge of what should be done in relation to the cessation of suffering knowledge that what needs to be done has been done in relation to the cessation of suffering	***Nirodhag*** Å ***m*** È ***n*** È ***Ariyasacca PaÊipad***Å ***Ariyasacca*** knowledge of the existence of the path to the cessation of suffering knowledge of what should be done in relation to the path to the cessation of suffering knowledge that what needs to be done has been done in relation to the path to the cessation of suffering

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TABLE 33.5: Stages of Inner Attainment at which fetters are uprooted

attainment/practice	***remaining fetters [saÕyojana]***	***destroyed fetters [samyojana]***
DhammakÅya GotrabhÊ Body using the Dhamma eye of this body to examine the Noble Truths as they pertain to the physical body, the DhammakÅya SotÅpana Body can be attained	self-view [sakkayadiÊÊhi] doubt [vicikicchÅ] attachment to rites and rituals[sÊlabbataparamÅsa] sensual grasping [kÅmarÅga] annoyance [pÅtighÅ] attachment to the form realms [rÊparÅga] attachment for the formless realms [arÊparÅga] stubbornness [mÅna] absent-mindedness [uddhacca] ignorance [avijjÅ]	none
DhammakÅya SotÅpana Body using the Dhamma eye of this body to examine the Noble Truths as they pertain to the angelic body, the DhammakÅya SakidÅgÅmÊ Body can be attained	sensual grasping [kÅmarÅga] annoyance [pÅtighÅ] attachment to the form realms [rÊparÅga] attachment for the formless realms [arÊparÅga] stubbornness [mÅna] absent-mindedness [uddhacca] ignorance [avijjÅ]	self-view [sakkayadiÊÊhi] doubt [vicikicchÅ] attachment to rites and rituals [sÊlabbataparamÅsa]
DhammakÅya SakidÅgÅmÊ Body using the Dhamma eye of this body to examine the Noble Truths as they pertain to the Form Brahma body, the DhammakÅya AnÅgÅmÊ Body can be attained	sensual grasping [kÅmarÅga] annoyance [pÅtighÅ] attachment to the form realms [rÊparÅga] attachment for the formless realms [arÊparÅga] stubbornness [mÅna] absent-mindedness [uddhacca] ignorance [avijjÅ] desire [rÅga](diminished) hatred [dosa] (diminished) delusion [moha](diminished)	self-view [sakkayadiÊÊhi] doubt [vicikicchÅ] attachment to rites and rituals [sÊlabbataparamÅsa]
DhammakÅya AnaagÅmÊ Body using the Dhamma eye of this body to examine the Noble Truths as they pertain to the Formless Brahma body, the DhammakÅya Arahant Body can be attained	attachment to the form realms [rÊparÅga] attachment for the formless realms [arÊparÅga] stubbornness [mÅna] absent-mindedness [uddhacca] ignorance [avijjÅ]	self-view [sakkayadiÊÊhi] doubt [vicikicchÅ] attachment to rites and rituals [sÊlabbataparamÅsa] desire [kÅmarÅga] annoyance [pÅtighÅ].
DhammakÅya Arahant Body	none	self-view [sakkayadiÊÊhi] doubt [vicikicchÅ] attachment to rites and rituals [sÊlabbataparamÅsa] sensual grasping [kÅmarÅga] annoyance [pÅtighÅ] attachment to the form realms [rÊparÅga] attachment for the formless realms [arÊparÅga] stubbornness [mÅna] absent-mindedness [uddhacca] ignorance [avijjÅ]

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Buddha image (of the sort with a lotus bud on the topknot) — but crystal clear and sparkling like a mirror — but exquisitely beautiful and proportioned. The Dhamma Body is the most refined of all the inner bodies described so far — and itself exists at differing levels of refinement:

- Dhammakaya GotrabhË Body
- Dhammakaya SotÅpana Body
- Dhammakaya SakidÅgÃmÈ Body
- Dhammakaya AnÅgÃmÈ Body

● Dhammakaya Arahant Body The DhammakÅyas are all transcendental [*lokuttara*] in nature — that is they are not made up of conventional aggregates [*khanda*] but are made up of transcendental aggregates [*dhammakhanda*] — the physical form, feeling, perception, memory and cognition still exist at the level of the Dhamma Body, but they are all purified to the point of perfection. By contrast the aggregates that make up the body at the level of the human, angel, form-brahmÅ and formless-brahmÅ are still on the mundane level [*lokiya*] and lead the owner of those bodies to be reborn further in the cycle of existence. Meditators who attain the Dhamma Body to the degree that their mind becomes irreversibly unified with the Dhamma Body, thereby make themselves invulnerable to the action of defilements. The progression through the Dhamma bodies, eradicating the final ten subtle defilements, or fetters

[saÔyojana] from the mind is shown in Table 33.5. (*opposite*):

C.3 Three Cycles withTwelve Characteristics

Seeing the Noble Truths in each one of the inner bodies has three stages or 'cycles of examination'. As there are four Noble Truths, multiplied together, seeing the Noble Truths the Buddha or the *arahant*s are able to eradicate all the defilements from their minds is achieved by the same sequential method described below. These twelve stages of the Cycle of Examination are the product of multiplying the Four Noble Truths by the Three Cycles of Examination. The cyclical pathway of attainment is rather like the way a nut gradually makes progress along the screw-thread of a bolt by rotating (not like an electric fan which rotates without getting anywhere). For progress with enlightenment, progressing in the cycle eradicates the defilements as it rotates. It was because the Buddha and all the *arahant*s had completed all three cycles with their twelve components in their entirety, that they can attain full enlightenment — with no further rebirth.

Once you have seen the Noble Truths clearly, over and over again, it will gradually reduce the number of defilements in the mind. When the defilements become permanently less, you will be able to attain Buddhist sainthood at the level of stream-entry [sotÅpana], once-returner [sakidÅgÃmi], non-returner [anÅgÃmÈ] or *arahant*.

In conclusion, you need to practice sequentially if you are going to be successful in your practice and the sequence of progress ofthe mind towards 'seeing' the Noble Truths.

Importantly, it should be noticed that the noble truths can not be seen by those who have not yet attained the DhammakÅya. However, those who have attained the DhammakÅya from the level of DhammakÅya GotrabhË upwards are able to do the final work of eradicating the Ten Fetters from the mind by seeing the Noble Truths and can eventually become fully-enlightened.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Milakkha-Tissa Thera (AA.i.21, SA.ii.199ff.)

In the time of the Buddha there was a hunter called Milakkha. Every day of his life since his youth, he had been involved with killing animals in one way or another. He had done evil every day of his life until there was virtually nothing left in his heart in the way of virtue. One day, the miniscule amount of good deeds he had done in his past caught up with him. He started to think of his state of affairs. He had been setting his traps in the forest and was thirsty. He saw some monks practising meditation in the forest and walked straight into their encampment looking for something to drink. The monks were sitting in meditation or practising walking meditation, trying to maintain the quality of their minds. Even though some of the monks were already *arahant*s, he didn't feel anything special when

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he saw them, because his mind was still caught up with the usual concerns of trapping and killing. Thus he ignored the monks and walked straight into one of the monk's *kuti*s looking for something to drink. He opened up the water jar in the monk's *kuti*, but even though the jar was full of water, it looked completely empty to him. As a result of seeing the water jar all dried up with his unquenched thirst, he turned round and insulted the monks saying, "What do you do all day long? Sitting around, walking up and down but leaving your water jars empty when your neighbours are thirsty. You go preaching to everyone else to be generous and hospitable, but when it comes to playing the host yourself, you don't show any interest".

An *arahant* nearby knew that the hunter had been blinded by his own bad karma. He said, "Take a rest from your insulting in the shade and I will bring you some water." He brought more and more cups of water until the hunter had quenched his thirst and could start to talk some sense. The hunter started to notice the things around him. He saw how radiant the *arahant* was and what good manners he had. He thought,"Even after being insulted he has shown no anger but has even brought water for me to drink. If it had been me on the receiving end of some insults I would probably have killed the offending person by now. Even though I have still not gone to a new existence, I still cannot see the water that is filling a water jar. Supposing I were to die, I would surely go to hell. Even though good things are there before my eyes, I cannot see them. My life is indeed in a sorry state." Therefore the hunter sat and discussed the Dhamma with the *arahant*. He received abundant food for thought from the *arahant*. He realized how much evil he had collected for himself. Only then did he realize that his whole life had been concerned with evil. If anyone had told him that killing was bad before he would say, "What do you think you're saying? Don't you eat meat then?" Today he listened to the teaching of the *arahant*, and as the result, for the first time in his life he started to fear evil. Thus he asked to ordain. The *arahant* looked at the potential of the man and allowed him only to ordain as a novice. He thought that as a monk he would never make it.

The *arahant* taught the new novice meditation, but because of all the evil he had done in his past, his meditation was always disturbed and haunted by images. Everytime he closed his eyes for meditation he could never imagine the object of meditation. He always felt as if all the animals he had killed had come back to haunt him, twitching as if in their death throes on his lap. He couldn't close his eyes without being disturbed. In the end he went to the *arahant* and asked to disrobe because he felt his original inspiration for practice had burned out. He asked permission to revert to his old livelihood of hunting. He thought to himself that if he was going to be born in hell anyway that there was not much harm in falling into hell a little bit deeper than before . . .

The *arahant* didn't try to persuade the novice otherwise, but he asked the novice to do one final chore before disrobing — to bring some green wood to make a fire.The novice did as the *arahant* said, but as hard as he tried, he could not manage to light the fire. Once the novice had tired himself out, the *arahant* asked the novice to stand to one side and said that he would light it for him. The *arahant* meditated and split the earth deep down until both of them could see the deepest level of hell [*aveci*]. The *arahant* took an piece of embers from Aveci hell, the size of a firefly and lit the green wood. It burned to a cinder in a fraction of a second as if it were nothing more than tissue paper.

The novice was frightened. Before he hadn't realized how hot the fires of hell were. His teacher said, this is how hot a cinder from hell is. Supposing the whole of you has to fall into hell, can you imagine how hot that will be? Milakkha no longer dared to disrobe — no matter how badly he was haunted when he meditated, he was not discouraged. He kept up his practice for several years with an earnest. The hauntings became less frequent and eventually disappeared altogether. His mind became more peaceful and radiance arose from within. The *arahant* allowed him to take full ordination as amonk.

Milakkha practiced with earnest. Eventually he came to the day when he managed to maintain the

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positivity of mind to the full. His old merits together with the new merits of his continuous practice came to fruition. His teacher saw his progress and saw that he was ready to hear his teaching. He said:

> "Honour will accrue to all who are earnest, who have mindfulness, right livelihood and acting only as the result of consideration in advance. When self-controlled and abiding in the Dhamma without recklessness."

Milakkha examined himself: seeing that he had earnest (ever since seeing the fires of hell), mindfulness (no longer was he disturbed by haunting images), right livelihood (as a monk his maintenence of the monastic discipline was unblemished), thinking before speaking or acting and certainly not reckless. Milakkha saw that he had accomplished all that his teacher had set for him. He felt content and refreshed by his own conduct. The satisfaction of keeping the Precepts properly is considerably more powerful than any worldly achievement. For Milakkha, the contentment allowed his mind to become unified and stop. He attained DhammakÅya, and used the DhammakÅya to consider the Four Noble Truths until he became enlightened at the level of the non-returner [anÅgÅmÈ]. He couldn't attain arahatship because he had not trained himself sufficiently in previous lifetimes. When he passed away, he could not yet enter upon Nirvana but was born in the BrahmÅ world called the Pure Abodes [SuddhÅvÅsa]. There he continued to purify his mind until he could enter upon Nirvana.

D.2 Ex. KisÅgotam**È **Ther**È **(DhA.**ii.270ff.)***

KisÅ GotamÈ lived in SÅvatthÈ. She was known as KisÅ GotamÈ because of her slim body. She married a rich young man and a son was born to them. The son died when he was just a toddler and KisÅ GotamÈ was stricken with grief. Carrying her dead son, she went everywhere asking for medicine that would restore her son to life. People thought she had gone mad. But a wise man seeing her pathetic condition, decided to send her to the Buddha. He advised her, 'Sister, the Buddha is the person you should approach. He has the medicine you want. Go to him.' Thus she went to the Buddha and asked him to give her the medicine that would restore her dead son to life.

The Buddha knowing her distracted mental condition told her to go looking for some mustard seeds from a home where there had been no death. Overjoyed at the prospect of having her son restored to life, KisÅ GotamÈ ran from house to house, begging for some mustard seeds. Everyone was willing to help her but she could not find a single home where no death had ever occurred. The people were only too willing to part with their mustard seeds, but no-one could claim never to have lost a loved one in death. As the day dragged on, she realised that hers was not the only family that had faced death and that there were more people dead than living. As soon as she realised this, her attitude towards her dead son changed; she was no longer attached to the dead body of her son and she realised how simply the Buddha had taught her a most important lesson: that everything that is born must eventually die.

She did a funeral for her dead son and told the Buddha that she could find no family where death had not occurred. Then the Buddha said,"GotamÈ, you should not think that you are the only one who has lost a son. As you have now realised, death comes to all beings. Before their desires are satiated death takes them away."

Perceiving the fleeting nature and impermanency of life, KisÅ GotamÈ decided to renounce the worldly life.

She then requested the Enlightened One to admit her to the Order of Nuns. Accordingly, the Buddha sent her to the community of nuns and directed that she be admitted.

She was a very hardworking nun and was always mindful and conscientious of her religious duties, and strove diligently for her spiritual development to purify her mind of all mental defilements.

One night, she lit some oil lamps. Having lit them, she went and sat down a short distance away. As she observed the flames, her mind focussed and she noticed that while some flared up some others flickered out. With her mind concentrating on the flames as the object of meditation, she meditated as follows, 'Even as it is with these flames, so also is it

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with living beings in this world: Some flare up, while others flicker out; only those who have attained Nirvana are no more seen.'

Through his supernormal power, the Buddha saw that KisÅ GotamÈ was ripe for enlightenment. He sent forth his radiance and exhorted her to continue meditating on the impermanent nature of all conditioned things. The Buddha also commented, "Though one should live a hundred years without perceiving the Deathless State (Nirvana), yet better indeed, is a single day's life of one who perceives the Deathless State.'

At the conclusion of the discourse, KisÅ GotamÈ attained Arahanthood.

Blessing Thirty-Four: The Attainment of Nirvana

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Place of Blessing Thirty-four in the order of things

Nirvana is the ultimate state of existence and the highest state of mind a person can attain. It is something which makes Buddhism unique amongst the world religions. Not only to attain Nirvana, but even to understand the concept of Nirvana is a challenge because it requires a steadfast understanding of almost all of the preceding Blessings studied in groupings Eight and Nine:

- ***Blessing Twenty-nine: The Sight of a true monk***: Those with a mundane level of knowledge tend to form an understanding about the new things they encounter, in terms of the experiences they already have. If a new thing has an added dimension, it is hard for them to understand it in terms of their previous experience. It is like trying to describe the colours of a garden to someone who has been blind since birth. This is why in Blessing Twenty-Nine we had to see a true monk to alert us to the existence of the transcendental — as with the tale of the turtle and the fish! (*Bl.29 §D.8*) Understanding the qualitative differences between teachings for practice and higher philosophy learned in Blessing Twenty-nine is particularly important when studying Nirvana.
- ***Blessing Thirty: Regular Discussion of the Dhamma***: Since the thirtieth blessing it has become harder and harder to explain the virtues under examination in material terms. Especially when enumerating guidelines for the discussion of Dhamma we discovered that we should not immediately reject items of Dhamma we don't immediately understand (*see Bl. Thirty §C.1*). The right attitude is to use the principle of 'live and let live' when confronted by differences in Buddhist doctrine. Being 'democratic' in Buddhism is to support any skilful means [kusala upÅya] that encourages people to do wholesome deeds that conform to those propounded by Buddhism — whether it be practising the Noble Eightfold Path, the Three Trainings, the Six Directions, the Three Modes of Merit-Making or avoiding the roads to ruin [apÅyamukha]. We should give support and encouragement to anyone who is inspired to practise these skilful means rather than creating conflicts over points of philosophy which might serve only to dissuade them from continuing with their practice. Even though different schools might differ in opinion concerning the higher philosophy by referring to different parts of the scriptures, or have differences of interpretation, surely we would be better to 'agree to disagree' on these subjects rather than to let these differences divide us? All spiritual cultivators are rather like long-distance travellers in the cycle of rebirth [vaÎÎasaÔsÅra]. Even though we might differ as to the expectations of what we expect our destination to be like, we can still share the same path of progress together

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and help each other along the way! As long as we stay with the Middle Way of practice, we can continue to make progress, and one day when we reach our destination, we will each be able to see the nature of our destination for ourselves without any need to differ in our opinions any more. If on the contrary we fight amongst ourselves over differences of opinion on the way, or we walk the way separately, it does nothing but waste valuable journey time. Moreover, if we refuse to walk the path at all, or backslide on the path by refusing to keep the Precepts or meditate, spending all our time arguing about the characteristics of higher teachings, for sure, we will never arrive at our destination!

- ***Blessing Thirty-two: Practising the Brahma-faring***: The equivalence of states of mind [bhËmi] and realms of existence [*bhava*] discovered in Blessing Thirty-two holds true also in the present blessing. We will find in the present blessing that just as angelic states of mind have their equivalent realm of existence — liberated states of mind represented by the Arahant body of enlightenment [dhammakÅya] have their own equivalent state of being which is called Nirvana.
- ***Blessing Thirty-three: Seeing the Four Noble Truths***: the Noble Truths have to be seen with the eye of the DhammakÅya because they cannot be seen with the human eye. If the Noble Truths could be seen with the naked eye, surely undertakers would come to and end of defilements before anyone else — because they see dead people every day! On the contrary, we are surrounded by birth, old age, sickness and death every day of our lives, but we fail to see the Noble Truths! Indeed, not even the angels, Brahmas or formless-Brahmas can see the Noble Truths, unless they practice meditation to the degree they can attain the DhammakÅya. The reason why DhammakÅya *can* see the Noble Truths while the mundane inner bodies can't, is because the DhammakÅya no longer has any admixture of defilements in the mind — this is why its aggregates are called Dhamma-aggregates [*dhamma-khandha*]. Only with such a pure body can one clearly see the Four Noble Truths.

The previous blessing was not the last, however, because simply to see the Four Noble Truths is not enough. You have to remove the defilements from all the bodies that are still defiled so that they are as pure as the DhammakÅya — something which is not easily realized. To attain the DhammakÅya is only like someone who has succeeded in their education up to the level of passing their entrance examinations to get into university. Managing to pass your entrance exam doesn't mean that you will go on to get your university degree. There are plenty of people who drop out at in their first year, their second year or even in their third year. It is the same for your practice of meditation. If you are able to attain the DhammakÅya but don't continue to pursue your practice, you will slip back into your old ignorant ways. You have to practice further, until you cannot only *see* the Four Noble Truths, but *become unified* with them. This is why we must practise further until Nirvana can be attained.

4.2 Two levels of Buddhist teachings

Before embarking on academic study of things like 'Nirvana', a few words of caution are necessary concerning the best approach to the studies of higher teachings. Buddhist teachings can be categorized into two levels:

1. Teachings for practice: such as the Noble Eightfold Path [ariyamagga], the Threefold Trainings [sikkhÅ], the Four Bases of Sympathy [saÌgahavatthu], the Six Directions [disa], the Three Modes of Merit-making [puññakiriyÅvatthu], the Four Foundations of Success [iddhipÅda];

2. Teachings on Metaphysics [abhiprajñÅ]: transcendental phenomena which are above the direct experience of mundane states of mind, such as heaven and hell, the law of Karma, Nirvana, cosmology or the supernatural.

No special caution is required when discussing the 'teachings for practice' (apart from applying the right practice to overcome the right problem). However, when treating subjects of higher philosophy (the so-called 'unfathomable' [acinteyya] A.ii.80) (such as whether there will be an end of the world or not; or whether the TathÅgatha still exists or

not after death) often the Buddha would intentionally *avoid* giving a direct or comprehensive answer — not because he didn't know the answer but because he knew if the enquirer had not practised to a sufficiently high level, they would misunderstand or fail to believe his answer — thus in balance, a comprehensive answer might do more damage than good. As students of Buddhism, it is therefore necessary for us to accept that the Buddha never gave detailed descriptions of subjects of metaphysics. He would simply leave us with implications. It is our duty to fill in the details through the results of our own practice.

The lack of detail is a double-edged sword because although it ensures a lack of dogmatism amongst those who have not yet reached direct experience of metaphysics in their own practice — it also leaves room for interpretation. Even though we try to avoid being dogmatic — it is also a mistake to give *no* guidelines. In the majority of the Buddhist textbooks, the higher stages of practice are generally not very clearly described, because all of these things are taken to be merely 'the results' of meditation. It is all very well leaving the student to discover things by themselves — but for some people doubts might lead to discouragement. They might worry, "Does Nirvana really exist or not?" or "Is Nirvana just a fairy story?" For such practitioners, some guidelines are useful, if only to inspire them with the confidence to practice until they can know Nirvana for themselves. Giving too many guidelines may be counterproductive for those who tend to think, "Now I know Nirvana is a reality, there is no point trying to prove it for myself any more — I'll go back to bed instead of meditating."

When studying Nirvana, it is thus necessary to take as some form of guidance the little scriptural evidence the Buddha *did* give us. When speaking of Nirvana,the Buddha *did* assert that Nirvana exists, but his description of the characteristics of Nirvana consists of a series of negations (not confirmations) for the reasons already mentioned. As a result of this lack of detail we can make no firm conclusion about certain characteristics of Nirvana from the scriptures (*see also §B.3 below*). However, what we *can* say about Nirvana for sure is that it does exist. Thus whatever we believe about the detail of Nirvana, as Buddhists, should take confidence in, is that the Buddha asserted that Nirvana *does exist* and it is the end of all suffering. As such, it is the ultimate goal in the pursuit of goodness of all Buddhists.

B. NIRVANA

B.1 Definition

The word 'Nirvana' (in the Pali language 'nibbÅna') has a variety of meanings. Nirvana can be translated as 'extinguishing' or it can mean 'escape'. Where Nirvana means 'extinguishing' it means the extinguishing of *defilements* or of *suffering*. Where Nirvana means 'escape' it means to escape from the three prisons of the *Triple World*. Looking at the translation of the word 'Nirvana', it can have two shades of meaning

- Nirvana as a state of mind of a person with no further defilements or;
- Nirvana as a place where those who have freed their mind of all defilements can go to partake of eternal bliss.

B.2 Terminologies concerning Nirvana

Given that the word 'Nirvana' leaves room for interpretation, usually in the study of Buddhism we make what we are talking about clearer through the addition of pre-fixes. Thus, at this point it is worth pausing in order to clarify their definitions:

1. Nirvana as a state of mind [sa-upÅdisesanibbÅna]: Sa-upÅdisesa Nirvana is our experience of Nirvana as a mental state — that is our living experience of Nirvana — that is, we don't have to die first and be reborn to attain it. We touch upon Nirvana in our experience when we have purified our mind from all defilements but our five aggregates [*khandha*] have not yet broken up. DhammakÅya will be manifest inside ourselves imparting the same happiness to us as if we were really inside Nirvana as a realm of existence — but we are still 'alive' in our human body.

2. Nirvana as a realm of 'existence' [anupÅdisesa-nibbÅna]: AnupÅdisesa Nirvana is the Nirvana

that exists as a realm outside our body and mind. Sometimes it is called 'posthumous' Nirvana because you can only go there after the breaking up of your five aggregates for the last time (you will not be reborn again). The DhammakÅya which one has attained by becoming unified with Sa-upÅdisesa Nirvana will be drawn through the centre of the body and enter upon AnupÅdisesa Nirvana — the quest of all Noble Ones. Nirvana is an empty area outside the Triple World which is beyond the reach of suffering. This place is the abode of all the bodies of enlightenment of all the fully-enlightened Buddhas, *paccekabuddha*s and arahants who have attained enlightenment in the past. Nirvana is full of all of these 'DhammakÅyas'. In that place there is only happiness, because no suffering can reach there. There is no rebirth, aging, sickness or death, because everything is made up of Dhamma-aggregates. This place cannot support people or angels or Brahmas because these things are not made up of Dhamma-aggregates. Only DhammakÅyas can enter thereon. This is the type of Nirvana that you can only attain when you are an arahant, *paccekabuddha* or fully-enlightened Buddha who passes away from this world for the last time. When the five aggregates of his physical body break up at death, his DhammakÅya will be attracted directly into Nirvana.

3. ***Nirvana as the location of Nirvana*** [Åyatana-nibbÅna]: Åyatana Nirvana is the location of Nirvana. Åyatana Nirvana actually exists but it is not made up of normal elements like earth, water, wind and fire in the same way as things we can see with the naked eye. It is neither in this world or another world. It is not the sun, the moon or the stars because all of those things are still within the Three Spheres [*bhava*] and are hence mundane [*lokiya*]. Nirvana is outside the Three Spheres and is trancendental [*lokuttara*]. In Nirvana there is no movement, no coming or going. Those who have attained Åyatana Nirvana are able to see past Buddhas sitting deep in meditation [nirodha samÅpati] there, more numerous than all the grains of sand in the four (cosmic) oceans. All that remains of them are their Dhamma Bodies — but Dhamma Bodies more exquisite than any Dhamma Body you can perceive within yourself — Dhamma Bodies that are self-sufficient with boundless happiness independent of any outside influence

— because the mind of those Buddhas has transcended all suffering entirely, having attained the true fulfilment of life. In this respect, the scriptures explain (Pathama NibbÅna Sutta [Ud.80]:

> O! Monks! There is the existence a sphere in which earth, water, fire, air, sphere of infinity of space, sphere of infinity of consciousness, sphere of nothingness, sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, this world, the next world, the moon, the sun have no part. O! Monks! I do not say that that sphere has coming, going, existence, arising, falling away, in a place that has no abode, without feeling . . . this, is the end of suffering.

4. Nirvana as the final destination [parinibbÅna]: A last term which it is necessary to know to make sense of Buddhist texts is the word 'parinibbÅna'

— which is usually used as a verb to indicate the action of entry into AnupÅdisesa Nirvana for the final time by an arahant or by the Buddha. Sometimes it is used as a noun to indicate the occasion of the final entry of an arahant of Buddha into AnupÅdisesa Nirvana at death.

Although in the scriptures, a clear distinction is made between the terms 'Sa-upÅdisesa Nirvana' and 'AnupÅdisesa Nirvana' (It.38), most of our knowledge of the difference between these terms comes to only courtesy of the commentary by the Great Abbot of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen (Phramonkolthepmuni). Without understanding this distinction, the more you read about Nirvana in the textbooks, the more confused you will become. The reason is that most of the textbooks have been based on interpretation of older texts rather than being based on experience. Some texts even go so far as to say that Nirvana doesn't exist. They

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say that it is just a metaphor for having come to an end of defilements. Some even say that animals can go to Nirvana. This is no surprise because even heaven and hell, let alone something as lofty as Nirvana, have become subject to interpretation. Some believe that the two realms are nothing more than states of mind — they say that when you do good deeds, you feel relieved and fulfilled just as if you were in heaven; when you do bad deeds you feel guilty and anxious just as if you were in hell; and they would have us believe that there is nothing more to heaven and hell than states of mind — that the corresponding realms do not exist. At the same time there are others who believe that heaven really exists as a realm with its angels and heavenly mansions and that hell exists as a realm with its fire and cauldrons of molten metal to incinerate its denizens. It is therefore our good fortune to have clear guidance on Nirvana still available to us within living memory, so that our inspiration to cultivate ourselves until being able to attain Nirvana for ourselves is not misplaced.

B.3 The Characteristics of Nirvana

From the passage quoted from the PaÊhama NibbÅna Sutta above, we can see that there are three major characteristics of Nirvana in contrast to the characteristics of matter still within the grasp of the three Universal Characteristics [sÅmañña-lakkhaÁa]:

Conditioned Dhammas such as the Five Aggregates (with Three Characteristics)	**Nirvana** as a non-conditioned phenomenon (without Three Characteristics)
impermanent suffering not/no-self	permanent happy self...?

TABLE 34.1: Scriptural evidence for the Universal Characteristics in Conditioned and Unconditioned Phenomena

Nirvana is asserted to be outside the influence of the Three Characteristics [ti-lakkhaÁa][1] — specifically it is permanent rather than impermanent:

1. The three Universal Characteristics [sÅmañña-lakkhaÁa] are the same as the Three Characteristics [ti-lakkhaÁa]

> ... asaÔhÈraÔ asaÌkuppaÔ
> ... it cannot be taken away or changed
>
> Nd[2].56

. . . and the Buddha taught that anything that is permanent is no longer subject to suffering or 'notself' . . .

> YadaniccaÔ taÔ dukkhaÔ yaÔ
> dukkhaÔ tadanattÅ
>
> whatever thing is (of the nature of) impermanence is also (of the nature of) suffering; whatever thing is (of the nature of) suffering is also (of the nature of) no/not-self.
>
> S.iii.22

Furthermore, the Buddha specifically said that Nirvana is of the nature of happiness [sukhaÔ]

> NibbÅnaÔ paramaÔ sukhaÔ
> Nirvana is the highest happiness.
>
> Dh.57

Thus Nirvana is specifically said to be of the nature of happiness and permanence. However, it is only by implication that Nirvana is said to be of the nature of 'self' or not of the nature of 'not-self'. The major debate concerning the characteristics of Nirvana concerns whether it is of the nature of 'self' [*atta*] or 'non-self' [anattÅ] is an issue which they have been unable to agree upon since ancient times shortly after the time of the Lord Buddha's parinibbÅna. This issue has been with us throughout the history of the development of Buddhism. Even in the present day, there are academic scholars of the West and the East who are still debating this issue. In fact, there are several separate issues concerning this issue which they are debating:

1. The existence of the teaching of the existence of true self [*atta*] in Buddhist teachings: There are those who believe that there exists such a thing as 'true self' and those who believe that a 'true self' doesn't exist. Proponents of 'true self' in Buddhism appear to be greater in numbers than opponents. Amongst their numbers are established western scholars such as Mrs. Rhys Davids[3].

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and Miss I.B. Horner[2]. Both of these were scholars of incomparable dedication and expertise in the study of Buddhist scriptures. Both had an important role to play in the compilation of the Pali Text Society (PTS) edition of the Pali TipiÊaka, which is recorded in Romanized script

— the edition of the Pali TipiÊaka accepted by scholars throughout the world as the most authoritative. Among other scholars subscribing to the same view are Christmas Humphreys[3] and Edward Conze[4]. Such scholars agree upon two major arguments:

1. That the Buddha never clearly denied that the true self [*atta*] doesn't exist or that true self doesn't exist in any level of the truth.

2. That the original teachings of the Buddha implies that the true self exists in a state that is higher than the level of the Five Aggregates [khandha] or conditioned phenomena.

They say that the Buddha never referred directly to the existence of a true self is because those who have not attempted to practice meditation for themselves might misunderstand that the 'true self' in Buddhism was the same as the one in Hinduism. References for these arguments are found in texts as diverse as the Pali TipiÊaka, the Sanskrit texts, the Chinese TipiÊaka, the Tibetan TipiÊaka and texts in other languages. Even so there are still scholars who assert that there is no such thing as 'true self' in the teaching of the Buddha and equally they have their own scriptural sources and arguments.

2. The real meaning of the words 'atta' and 'anattÅ': A lot of confusion arises in academic circles as the result of scholars who encounter technical terms in the scriptures and assume that one word has the same meaning in every place it appears in the scriptures. Each time the Buddha preached he adapted his teaching to the character and needs of the listener. Thus the use of words in the scriptures, even the same ones, may have hundreds of different implications. In the case of the words 'atta' and 'anattÅ' are no exception. Some say that the word '*atta*' means 'self' in the same way that 'atman' means 'self' in Hindu teachings. Hindus teach that there is a 'self' inside every one of us, which will ultimately be re-united with the Great Being [paramÅtman]. They are afraid that if Buddhists accept 'self' then they will be giving in to Brahminism. In fact, these fears are ill-founded because the word 'atta' has many possible meanings. It can mean 'imagined self' ('me', 'my') or the higher concept of 'me' and 'my' for an angel or a god, which must be qualitatively very different. The word 'atta' can also mean 'true self' in an ultimate sense, of the sort that the Buddha advocated us to adopt as our 'island' or 'refuge'.

AttadÈpÅ viharathi, attasaraÁÅ
anañÑasaraÁÅ, dhammadÈpÅ
dhammasaraÁÅa, anañÑasaraÑÅ

May you all take your self as your island. May you take yourself as a refuge. Take no other thing as your refuge. May Dhamma be your island. May Dhamma be your refuge. Take no other thing as your refuge.

MahÅparinibbÅna Sutta D.ii.72

In this case 'atta' obviously has a different meaning from the word 'atta' as used in the case of 'imagined self' or the word 'atta' as used by the Hindus. Thus in the study of the TipiÊaka, it is essential to distinguish the definition of the vocabulary we meet independently for each occurrence. For the word 'anattÅ' we need to be no less careful. There are those who believe that the word 'anattÅ' means 'no-self' (i.e. self-lessness) and others who believe that it means 'not-self'
(i.e. that which is not a self). It is the same as looking at the word 'manusso' which means 'person'. The word 'amanusso' also exists. Should it mean 'no-person' (i.e. person-lessness) or 'not-person' (i.e that which is not a person)? This gives a different angle when we look at the usage of the word 'self' — for example, when

1. late president of the Pali Text Society (1922-42) in Steven Collins (1997) *Selfless Person: Imagery and thought in TheravÃda Buddhism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.7
2. late president of the Pali Text Society (1959-81) in Peter Harvey (1995) *The Selfless Mind*, Curzon Press, p.17
3. *Buddhism* (1959) Penguin Books, p.88
4. *Buddhist Thought in India*, (1962) George, Allen and Unwin, p.39

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the Buddha taught that the Five Aggregates [khandha] are not the 'self', the implication is that the real 'self' is elsewhere, outside of the Five Aggregates. Thus the Buddha taught us that real 'self' is our refuge, and that you can attain true 'self' by the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness [satipaÊÊhÅna]: seeing the body in the body, feeling in the feeling, mind in the mind and *dhamma* in the *dhamma*. This issue attracts a great deal of controversy.

3. In the words, 'sabbe dhammÅ anattÅ' (all phenomena are 'anattÅ'), what is the scope of the word '*dhamma*' (phenomena)? Some commentaries include Nirvana amongst the 'phenomena' (NdA.8,219 [Mahachula Royal Institute edition]), others not (*ibid*. part 7, p.62). In the latter the scope of 'phenomena' extends to nothing more than the Five Aggregates but does not include Nirvana.

For each of the arguments put forward, there are many supporting references from primary sources in various languages. There is analysis of each in comparison with the principle teachings of Buddhism. There are conclusions of possible implications and conclusions from each side of the argument — for example, if there happened to be no 'self' how can we explain the operation of the laws of karma between one lifetime and the next? There is no concensus of opinion to the contrary, but does nothing to quench the ferocity of the debate.

C. THE PRACTICALITY OF ATTAINING NIRVANA

C.1 Sequential practice for the attainment of Nirvana

For sure, if you are to attain any of these forms of Nirvana, you have to practice the Noble Eightfold Path perfectly. You need possess all eight components at the same time: Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. Put another way, you need to practice the Precepts (Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood), Meditation (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration) and wisdom (Right View, Right Intention) perfectly. It is like when you are cooking, you need to add all the ingredients to get the end product you require.

TABLE 34.2 – The threefold training at different levels of practice

level of practice	Precepts	Meditation	Wisdom
Dhammakaya GotrabhË	perfect	reasonable	reasonable
Seeing the Four Noble Truths	perfect	perfect	reasonable
Arahantship	perfect	perfect	perfect

In order to attain the DhammakÅya at the initial level [dhammakÅya-gotrabhË], you need to practise the Precepts perfectly, even if your meditation and your wisdom are not so well developed (*see Table 34.2 above*). If you develop your meditation further you will soon be able to see the Noble Truths (Precepts perfect, meditation perfect, wisdom reasonable) and if all Precepts, meditation and wisdomare perfect then you have the chance to attain Nirvana. As your wisdom improves you will be able to attain the DhammakÅya of an *arahat*.When an arahant passes away, his physical body will be buried or cremated. His DhammakÅya will enter upon AnupÅdisesa Nirvana. There will be no further rebirth for them. In conclusion, if you want to attain Nirvana, you have to attain Nirvana that is inside yourself. Only those who have practised the whole of The Manual of Peace from the first blessing onwards (emphasizing strict practice of the Noble Eightfold Path), have a chance of attaining).

C.2 Nirvana: Accessible to all

Buddhism is not an exclusive religion. Anyone who has cultivated as many good deeds as the Buddha or the arahants can, like them, enter upon Nirvana. Anyone who practises the Noble Eightfold Path properly will eventually attain it for themselves. Thus, once we know Nirvana exists, and know the method, we should make the requisite effort to attain it — in accordance with the guidelines laid out in this blessing — by practising good deeds incorporating the Noble Eightfold Path, keeping of the Precepts, practising meditation and accruing wisdom.

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D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Ex. Vaḷgisa Thera Vatthu (DhA.iv.226ff.)

Once in RÅjagaha there was a brahmin by the name of Vaḷgisa who could tell the afterlife destination of a corpse simply by tapping its skull. The brahmins were very proud of Vaḷgisa and took him to many villages where people flocked to him and paid handsomely to find out from him where their various dead relatives had been reborn.

On one occasion, Vaḷgisa and his party came to a place not far from the Jetavana monastery. Seeing many people who were going to the Buddha, the brahmins invited them to come to Vaḷgisa who could tell where their relatives had been reborn. But the people said to them, "What does Vaḷgisa know! Our Teacher is one without a rival, he alone is the Enlightened One." As a result there was a heated argument between the people and the brahmins. Finally one person said, "Come now! let us go and find out which of the two knows more, Vaḷgisa or the Buddha." So they all went to the Jetavana Monastery.

The Buddha, knowing their intention, instructed a monk to gather together five skulls, one of a person reborn in hell, one of a person reborn in the animal world, one of a person reborn in the human world, one of a person reborn inthe *deva*world and one of an *arahant*. Having found the five skulls the monk placed them in a row. When Vaḷgisa was shown the skulls, he could tell where the owners of the first four skulls had been reborn; but when he came to the skull of the *arahant*, he was at a loss. The Buddha asked, "Vaḷgisa don't you know? I know where the owner of that skull is." Vaḷgisa then urged the Buddha to teach him the skill by which he would have the ability to tell where that particular person was reborn. The Buddha told him that the condition of learning such and ability was to enter the Holy Order.

Vaḷgisa reluctantly agreed to join the monastic order. He told his brahmin friends to come back for him later when he had learned the skill. As a monk, he was instructed by the Buddha to contemplate the thirty-two parts of the body. He diligently practised meditation as instructed and within a short time attained Arahanthood.

Later, when the other brahmins came back, one asked him whether he had acquired the skill. Vaḷgisa said, "You all had better go now. There is no need for me to learn the skill any more. I will no longer be going along with you." On overhearing this, the other monks asked the Buddha, "Venerable Sir! Vaḷgisa claims to have attained Arahanthood. Is it true?" The Buddha replied, "Monks! He really knows the death and rebirth of beings. He is an *arahant*."

Thus, as a result of this tale, we learn that Nirvana is not just a higher level of heaven — it is outside the Triple World system completely — if it were just another level of heaven Vaḷgisa would have been able to find the afterlife destination of the arahant.

D.2 Ex. KuÊumbiyaputta-Tissa Thera (MA.i.188ff)

A young man called Tissa heired from a wealthy KuÊumbiya family of SÅvatthÈ. He renounced a legacy of forty crores and became a monk dwelling in the forest. His younger brother's wife who had inherited the wealth in his place was afraid that he might give up his vocation as a monk and come home asking for his fortune back. She could not sleep in peace and therefore decided to send five hundred ruffians to kill him.The ruffians went to where Tissa was meditating in the forest and surrounded him. Tissa asked them why they had come. The ruffians replied that they had come to kill him. He didn't resist, but begged them to spare his life for one further night (to give him enough time to strive for enlightenment). The ruffians asked who would guarantee that he would not run away in the night. Because there was no-one else who could be his witness, he picked up a stone and used it to break both his own thigh-bones as a token that he would not attempt to escape — asking them whether that would be sufficient guarantee. The ruffians, however, were not entirely satisfied and built a fire nearby on the place where the monk normally did his walking meditation and slept there. During the night he overcame his pain and, reflecting on the purity of his own self-discipline, meditated for the whole of the night to became an *arahant* at dawn.

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The Tenth Group of Blessings

"The Fruits of Having Practised until reaching an end of defilements"

Having rid ourselves even of the subtlest defilements as a result of our practice in in Group IX culminating in the Attainment of Nirvana (Blessing Thirty-Five) — the only remaining work on the Buddhist path of progress, is to receive the fruits of our labours. Group X is entitled 'the fruits of having practised until reaching an end of defilements'. In fact, there is no practice left to do in this grouping, and the remaining blessings are more a description of the fruits of one's practice. It is like having washed oneself thoroughly, all there is left is the feeling of cleanliness and refreshedness. This grouping contains four blessings:

- Blessing Thirty-Five: A Mind Invulnerable to Worldly vicissitudes
- Blessing Thirty-Six: The Sorrowless Mind
- Blessing Thirty-Seven: Freedom from Subtle Defilements
- Blessing Thirty-Eight: The Blissful Mind

The Group describes the qualities of a mind freed from the influence of defilements. The first of these we are to examine in this chapter is the state of invulnerability to worldly vicissitudes.

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Blessing Thirty-Five: A Mind Invulnerable to Worldly Vicissitudes

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 The Place of Blessing Thirty-Five in the order of things

Cultivation of invulnerability has already largely been dealt with in *Blessing Twenty-Four (§E.3)* although some tips are given here for how to minimize your vulnerability to worldly vicissitudes for those whose mind is not yet at the transcendental level. Having practised all the forgoing blessings, you will have attained a body of enlightenment within yourself which has an appearance like a living Buddha of crystal at the centre of one's body. Your doubts about reality and world will be almost completely overcome, having used the DhammakÅya to examine the nature of the world, especially the Four Noble Truths. You will be able to understand for yourself the answers to so many of those questions that are useless to have explained to you by anyone else. If you can attain the ability to see the Four Noble Truths, and see Nirvana for yourself, the next outcome of your practice is that your mind starts to become invulnerable to the temptations of the world. If you are an *arahant*, you will be completely invulnerable to the temptations of the world — however, if you have attained the DhammakÅya at any other level, although you will still be vulnerable to the temptations of the world, you will only be partially vulnerable.

A.2 The point of studying vulnerability for those who have not yet attained

The subject matter of this blessing concerns invulnerability to the temptations of the world. Some might ask whether there is any point in studying this blessing for people who have not yet become *arahant*s — but in fact, by studying the invulnerability to the temptations of the world as one of the possible results of persevering with meditation practice, it is hoped to be inspiration to readers to practice further until they can attain such invulnerability for themselves. The objective is not to 'be invulnerable' without having attained DhammakÅya, the Four Noble Truths and Nirvana, because without these things, your invulnerability is not yet watertight.

A.3 Definitions

The title of this blessing in Pali 'phuÊÊassa-lokadhammehi cittaÔ yassa na kampati' is 'Invulnerability (lit. untouched) to the vicissitudes of the world'. To define each of the constituent terms in turn:

- ***The Mind:*** When talking about the invulnerability of the mind, by 'mind' we mean our good quality of mind;
- ***Invulnerable:*** Invulnerable means not being dulled by aversive consequences such as loss of fame, loss of possessions or loss of loved ones. It also means not being elated by desirable consequences. If your mind is affected in either of the two ways mentioned, then it is still vulnerable.

● ***vicissitudes of the World*** [*lokadhamma*]: These are features of life in the world which are fraught with uncertainty and which no-one can avoid for as long as they live in the world. The varieties of the vicissitudes are examined in more detail below. It is just like it is the nature of the ocean to have waves on it. If anyone goes to sea then they must meet with waves. If you go into the forest, then you cannot avoid trees because it is the nature of the forest to have trees. The nature of the world is to have vicissitudes which are always fluctuating for the better or the worse. If we allow these fluctuations to dictate our mood, our quality of mind will be like a roller-coaster! In fact, there is only one type of person who is not affected by the vicissitudes of the world and those are the *arahant*s. Their mind has sufficient self-confidence and steadfastness to be equanimous or indifferent in the face of worldly vicissitudes. Even though they too are subject to worldly vicissitudes, their mind is not *upset* by unpleasant vicissitudes and it is not *elated* by desirable vicissitudes. The mind of such a person sees all vicissitudes as things that will not last forever, and lends them no more importance than they deserve.

A.4 Why make our minds invulnerable to worldly vicissitudes?

The Buddha warned of the dangers of acquiring the desirable vicissitudes when one doesn't know how to prevent oneself from becoming attached to them. He compared acquired wealth in such a case as being like fish bait (BaÒisa Sutta S.ii.226), a hunter's dart (Kumma Sutta S.ii.226), a thornbush entrapping long-haired sheep (DÈghalomi Sutta S.ii.228) and turns those previously of good conscience into those who would rather tell a lie than lose what they have acquired (MÅtarÈ etc. Suttas S.ii.242ff.).It is for this reason that if we are not yet invulnerable to such vicissitudes, we have to train ourselves in contentment (*as explained in Blessing Twenty-Four, §E.3*).

B. WORLDLY VICISSITUDES

B.1 Varieties of Worldly Vicissitudes

There are a total of eight types of vicissitudes in the world (A.iv.157). These eight are divided into two groups — the first group of desirable [iÊÊhÅramaÁa] vicissitudes which can make the mind elated:

1. Wealth [lÅbha]: this is anything which we gain or which comes to us as profit, such as possessions, a spouse, land, houses or jewelry;

2. Honour [yasa]: This is receiving promotion to a better position or status or being accorded more powers;

3. Praise [pasaÔsÅ]: This is receiving compliments or flattery or a tribute;

4. Happiness [sukha]: This is receiving comfort or convenience of body or mind. The second group of vicissitudes is the opposite to all of the above because they are all undesirable [aniÊÊhÅramaÁa]:

1. Loss of Wealth [alÅbha]: You lose what you used to own — whether it is your wealth, your house, your land, your spouse, your children or your jewelry;

2. Loss of Honour [ayasa]: This means demotion or being fired or having your powers withdrawn;

3. Malicious Gossip [nindÅ]: This means being criticized for your faults, or someone talking about your faults to your face or behind your back;

4. Suffering [dukkha]: This is hurt or torture of the body or mind. For all of these desirable things, before we have them, we spend years worrying about how to gain them. Once we have got them,we are possessive and scared that we will lose them. If we lose them, we spend years lamenting their loss. When ordinary people encounter the vicissitudes of the world, they cannot but help be elated or disappointed. For the enlightened ones however, encountering the same vicissitudes, they cause no disturbance to the mind. When the *arahant*s are praised or insulted, their the suffering is different to that of a mundane person because the suffering of illness affects only their body. They have their 'bunker' inside the

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depths of mind which they can use to shelter from suffering the whole of the time. The happiness of the world is no temptation to the arahant who already knows the superior happiness of Nirvana.

It is like a millionaire with assets of $100 million is offered a 'free gift' of $5. He will feel indifferent. It is like the ocean full of water feels indifferent if two or three drops more of rain should fall. An *arahant* is like a millionaire of happiness. If you offer him a little more insignificant piece of happiness, it is unlikely to interest him. If he hears the praise or condemnation of others he will feel indifferent because he knows what the truth is — there is no need for him to listen to the opinions of others about what the truth might be like. Praise and gossip is no more than the sound of a crow or a dog barking to someone who would prefer to discuss the Dhamma. If he were to obtain a new robe or some nice food or a new *kuti* to live in — all of these things are functional but the happiness they give is insignificant compared to the happiness of reaching an end of defilements.They are nothing compared to the requisites available in the heavenly world which they have already seen and had the chance to compare the things of the world with.

B.2 The Three Universal Characteristics

Everything in the world has its own characteristics. Some characteristics are unique — some are shared with others. Gold, for example, has the characteristic that when it is pure, it will have a yellow colour and will sparkle. It is hard to alloy it with other elements. Iron has the characteristic that it is a hard metal but it rusts easily. Mercury is a fluid metal that is heavy. These are the specific qualities of certain materials. People have their own characteristics too. They are able to speak and move about and can be knowledgeable about things. However, for all their differences, there are three characteristics that are shared by all things in the world. It was these that the Lord Buddha called the Three Universal Characteristics [sÅmaññalakkhaÁa] (S.iv.1, Dh.277-29):

1. ***Impermanence*** [aniccatÅ]: The first Universal Characteristic is impermanence. Sometimes we think that material things are unchanging, but in fact this is not the case. If you don't believe it, try taking photos of yourself as a demonstration — you are born as a baby (take a first picture), take another picture after a month, after a year, at teenage, in middle-age, in old age. If on the last day of your life you were to compare all the pictures that have been taken throughout your life you will find that there are no two pictures alike. This is true, not just for people, but for all things in the world is this characteristic applicable. Everything is in flux. There is degradation and deterioration built into everything around us. Metal rusts. Paint blisters. Cloth frays. This is true, not only for material objects, but even abstract phenomenon in the world. Last year they said they loved you, but this year, that seems to have changed. Last year, they looked beautiful in your eyes, but this year, that seems to have changed. Even if you try weighing the most precious of materials like your gold ring, you will find that year by year, the weight will systematically decrease. The price of the gold sometimes goes up and sometimes goes down. Even if you were to sell the ring back to the shop tomorrow, there is nothing to guarantee the price that you will recover the amount of money for which you bought the ring. Even the state of our mind is impermanent. When you pass your entrance exams to go to university you make up your mind to work so hard for your degree that you will get a 'first-class honours'. However after seven-days of diligence, you change your mind in favour of the night life. At the end of the year you get thrown out of university...! So much for steadfastness of mind!

2. Suffering [dukkhatÅ]: The second Universal Characteristic is suffering. Normally we understand suffering as pain, but the word 'dukkhatÅ' in the Pali has the wider meaning that it is the quality of things that they 'have decay as their nature' with all the shades of meaning (*already discussed in Blessing Thirty-Three, §B.1*).

3. Being without self [anattatÅ]: The third Universal Characteristic is 'not-self'. Nothing in the world has implicit identity. You look at a meditation mat and ask what about the meditation

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mat makes it a mat. If you were to take it apart into all its components, you will just be left with a pile of components — there is no particular part which makes it a 'mat'. If you look at it with a microscope all you can see is a collection of cells. You cannot even see the components any more. In the same way people look at their own bodies and they say "This is me", "This is what makes me who I am". However, if they were to look closely at their body and see that it is just a collection of organs, bones, tissues and nerves, it will make them wonder what about their body makes them who they really are. The word 'anattatÅ' has a second important meaning and that is the quality of something that is 'outside your control'. From the point of view of practice this is a very important definition. You might notice when you sit for meditation that you cannot stop yourself from feeling aches and pains. You cannot even keep your mind on the thing you want to concentrate on for your meditation. Even if you don't want to look old, you cannot stop the signs of aging from appearing on your body. Your hair turns grey without you being able to stop it. All you can do to stop it from changing colour is to dye it. Your hair falls out without you being able to stop it. All you can do to save yourself from baldness is to buy a wig.

Whether the Buddha arises in the world or not, these Three Characteristics are the nature of things in the world. However, if it wasn't for the teaching of the Buddha, we might never realize.

Don't take the teachings that way however — some people hear the teachings that everything in the world is impermanent and they think to themselves, "Why bother to invest one's time and effort in doing any good deeds?" If you don't understand this point correctly you will be like many Buddhists who use this teaching as an excuse for doing whatever they like — killing, stealing, corruption and lying — why? — because they believe that there is no lasting effect from any of their actions. They forget that the Buddha taught that if you do good you will receive good fruits from your actions. If you do evil deeds, you will receive evil results from your action and that DhammakÅya and Nirvana are the ultimate result attainable through good deeds.

The reason why such people are confused is that they don't realize that certain things exist that are not subject to the Three Characteristics — that are permanent, happy and true self — the characteristics of Nirvana (*described in Blessing Thirty-Four, §B.3*)

C. BECOMING LESS VULNERABLE TO VICISSITUDES

C.1 Some principles

In general, the more uncontrollably people laugh when they are elated, the louder they will cry when they are disappointed. If people only smile slightly when they are pleased about something, when they are disappointed the trauma will be only minor. We must continually remind ourselves not to allow ourselves to be too elated or disappointed when we encounter the vicissitudes of the world, and before long, the resulting stability of mind will soon lead us to attain the DhammakÅya for ourselves, attain the Four Noble Truths and attain Nirvana.

C.2 Some things to remind yourself

Even the best of people, the Buddha himself, still had to encounter vicissitudes. Thus don't be too upset if you too encounter such vicissitudes — just minimize the damage they do to your mind. The people of old gave the general advice that if you are put under pressure by the vicissitudes of the world, you should soften the blow by reflecting that:

- ***The darker it gets the later it must be. The later it gets, the closer it gets to dawn. Darkness in this world can last for twelve hours at the most. In the thirteenth hour it must reach the dawn.***

  Even if you are at breaking point as the result of the pressure you have been put under, know that before much longer you will be close to an end of suffering. The word for 'hindrances' or 'obstacles' in the Pali, '*upasakka*' actually means 'close to heaven'. Even the unpleasant things of the world are subject to the Universal Characteristics — just as they have come into being, before long they must decay;

- ***the good things coming to you are not forever***: Instead of becoming elated one should reflect that when the vicissitudes have worked in our favour, such good fortune cannot last for ever.

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Even wealth, honour, praise and worldly happiness has suffering and change as its nature. Because of the lack of such elation and disappointment, they manage to escape the clutches of birth, old age, death, pain, feeling slighted and despair.

- ***everything that evolves must also decay:*** When the Three Universal Characteristics are the reality of the world, Buddhists have long had the tradition to remind themselves that it is the nature of everything in the world to evolve, to sustain and then to decay. No-one can stand in the way of this process. It is no use trying to create eternity in this world. Not even Buddhist teachings with all their powers can last forever. Even after 2,500 years there are already those who have their doubts about whether Buddhism is genuine because peoples' memories are subject to the Three Universal Characteristics.
- ***don't take the vicissitudes personally:*** The eight vicissitudes will happen to people no matter whether they attain the stages of Buddhist sainthood or not. Don't think that just because someone is a Buddhist saint, nothing unpleasant will happen to you. For all of us who have not yet attained DhammakÅya, the Noble Truths and Nirvana, of course our mind is still not completely invulnerable to the vicissitudes of the world — but if we know that we are not alone in being victim to such vicissitudes, and that even those who are more fortunate than us still suffer from them, somehow it will make us feel better about them.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE TALES

D.1 Ex. Visayha JÅtaka (J.340)

When the Buddha was still pursuing perfections as the bodhisattva, he was born in the family of bankers and had the name 'Visayha'. He was extremely wealthy but was of the habit always to give alms. He gave alms daily to 600,000 persons in six parts of the city. He would not only give alms in large amounts, but he would give only refined things and delicacies — of the same quality that he used himself. He would give away vast quantities of alms each day and was thus a refuge to paupers and those in suffering alike. He was like the moon shining forth its light for the benefit of the manyfolk.

Sakka, the king of heaven, felt a warming of his throne as the result of Visayha's generosity and thought Visayha's generosity was surely intended to outshine his own goodness. He feared to lose his own position — so Sakka decided to use his powers to reduce Visayha to poverty overnight — so that he would no longer be able to give gifts to others. Sakka saw to it that all of Visayha's wealth disappeared leaving nothing to give away.

Waking up to find all his wealth gone, Visayha reflected to his wife, "If our life is without giving, it is an empty life indeed. We cannot quit from our giving."He told his wife to go and search the entire house for anything that could possibly be used as a gift. The wife scoured the house and found only a scythe, a yoke-bar and a rope forgotten by a servant by the gate. These she brought to her husband. Visayha said,"Never in my life have I been reduced to cutting grass — but today I'm going to have to learn to become a grass-cutter in order to have fodder to sell, so that we can have something to give."

Having spent the day cutting grass he amassed enough fodder to sell and made the promise to himself that he would keep half the earnings acquired to support himself and his wife, while giving away the other half. That day, however, there was a particularly large number of paupers who came begging — so by force of habit he gave away everything he had — that day he and his wife going without any food themselves. The same thing happened for six consecutive days. On the seventh day, Visayha was carrying a sheaf of grass in the fierce heat of the midday sun when his fatigue and hunger got the better of him and he fell to the ground in exhaustion.

Sakka had been following the banker around unseen and at this point made himself visible to Visayha, floating in the air before him and calculated to give Visayha's generosity its final blow with the taunt, "Before you were wealthy — but you have squandered your wealth on the poor — and now look at you! If only you are to cling on to your wealth, before long you can return to your usual wealth! Promise me that from now on you will put an end to this foolish generosity!"

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Hearing the voice, Visayha recovered consciousness and challenged Sakka, saying,"Who do you think you are?"

"I am Sakka — king of heaven"

"Normally Sakka is one for practising generosity, observing the precepts and the quarter moon days and practising the seven virtues that make one the king of heaven [*vattapada*] (namely: 1. cherishing one's parents; 2. respect for elders in one's family; 3. speaking politely; 4. speaking to engender harmony; 5. being generous to banish stinginess; 6. speaking the truth, and; 7. banishing anger) but Your Majesty is telling me to stop my generosity — which contradicts everythingthat brought your own greatness — if you are truly Sakka, Your Majesty is acting out of keeping with your own nature! May no wealth ever accrue to me which makes me possessive of it! Whatever practice is virtuous or supreme which I have done in the past, may I always continue — may I never stop. Even though I have to cut grass for a living, I will continue with my generosity until my dying day!"

Sakka could not succeed in dissuading Visayha from his generosity — so he asked instead, the reason for Visayha's determination to cultivate giving. Visayha said that his generosity was in no way aimed to attaining the position of the king of heaven

— but in order to accrue perfections with the view to attain enlightenment as Buddha — to lead all beings out of suffering.

Hearing Visayha's answer, Sakka could not help but be happy — and he patted Visayha's back, so replenishing Visayha with superhuman power. Sakka restored all Visayha's wealth and more, so that there was always wealth in Visayha's house for endless giving to his dying day. . .

D.2 Ex. Buddha left hungry by Brahmin Verañja

Having discussed the Dhamma witha certain Brahmin called Verañja (*as related in Blessing Thirty §E.4*) the brahmin was so impressed that he invited the Buddha and the whole monastic community to stay in his province for the duration of the Rainy Season. The Buddha accepted the invitation but a short time later in that province, the harvest failed and there was a famine in the area. There was hardly enough food to go round. Verañja, as one of the administrators of the province, was so busy solving the problems of the starving people in the province that he completely forgot to look after the Buddha and the community of five-hundred monks who had accompanied him. The Ven. MoggallÅna offered his services to the Buddha saying, "The Brahmin is too busy to be able to look after us. May I fly away to another continent (world) to look for alms there, to bring such alms back and feed our hungry community?"

The Buddha said, "There is no need to go to so much trouble".

"Then shall I penetrate down deep into the earth to find the 'ambrosia' that is buried there and bring it back to feed our community?"

The Buddha said, "No, don't do that. Show a little patience."

"Why do we need to be patient?"

The Buddha replied, "Even, if you *were* to access the ambrosia from under the ground and the word spread around, before long people would stop offering almsfood to the monks in order to see which monk is an *arahant* able to access such ambrosia. It would be a disaster for the monks who are not yet *arahant*s. Be patient just for three months so that the monks to come in the future will not suffer as the result."

Eventually the monks survived to the end of the rainy season on the 'red rice' usually used for feeding horses. The happiness for the Buddha didn't come from the food he ate but from the purity of the mind arising from enlightenment.

D.3 Ex. LakuÁÎaka Bhaddhiya Thera (DhA.*ii.*148ff.)

Bhaddiya was one of the *bhikkhu*s staying at the Jetavana monastery. Because of his short and childlike stature he was known as LakuÁÎaka (the dwarf). LakuÁÎaka Bhaddiya was very good natured — even young *bhikkhu*s would often tease him by pulling his nose or his ears or by patting him on the head. Very often they would jokingly say, 'Uncle, how are you? Are you happy, or are you bored with your life here as a *bhikkhu*?' Bhaddiya never retaliated in anger, or abused them. In fact he was al

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ways serene and pleasing to the eye.
When told about the patience of Bhaddiya, the Buddha said, 'An arahant never loses his temper, he has no desire to speak harshly or to think ill of others. He is like a mountain of solid rock. As a solid rock is not shakeable by wind so also, an *arahant* is unperturbed by scorn or by praise.' Only then did the other monks come to know that Bhaddiya had long before attained arahantship and was invulnerable to worldly vicissitudes.

Blessing Thirty-Six: Sorrowlessness

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 True love and possessive love

Second only to wisdom, compassion [karuÅÅ] — or true love — is considered one of Buddhism's key virtues. The further we can extend our mind, the more broadly and impartially we will be able to spread our love. Compassion is not a virtue to make you a narrower or more egoistical person. On the contrary, it will lead to a breaking down of the barriers between yourself and the rest of the world. For *arahant*s such love comes naturally.

However, for those who are still unenlightened, the love we experience, although called by the same name, is *possessive* in its nature. Possessive love is subject to the three Universal Characteristics and cannot last forever. It also re-inforces our egoism unlike its enlightened equivalent, 'compassion'. However, worst of all, possessive love has a painful withdrawal symptom called 'sorrow' — the nature of which we will discover later in this blessing.

Because an *arahant* has no further possessive love he is thus free of sorrow. Thus sorrowlessness is another of the four characteristics of an *arahant* described in Group X. In fact 'sorrowlessness' is closely concerned with virtues discussed in the immediately preceding Blessings. In Blessing Thirty-three we talked about two types of suffering — the inevitable and the miscellaneous (largely avoidable). In Blessing Thirty-Five we have already been introduced to the vicissitudes of the world: which are all features of life in the world which are unavoidable — but to which you can make your mind invulnerable by attaining arahantship — allowing one to see the desirable and undesirable things of the world as subject to the Three Universal Characteristics.

This blessing deals with making oneself invulnerable to the second category of suffering which is avoidable — those that resemble sorrow. As we shall see, sorrowlessness is a fruit of attaining arahantship — but even though we may not have reached arahantship ourselves, it doesn't stop us from drawing some conclusions (*see §C. below*) for how to reduce potential sorrow in our life — even if we cannot completely eradicate it.

A.2 Definitions: Sorrow & Sorrowlessness

The word 'sorrow' or '*soka*' has already been introduced since the Four Noble Truths of Blessing Thirty-three. It is a term which refers to the suffering state of a mind that is torn by dryness. A mind of sorrow is a mind that feels dry and cracked like the earth in a land suffering from drought. It is like a leaf that has become so dry that it has lost its life and freshness. Sorrow arises when someone encounters an undesirable situation which makes us feel burned out and helpless. The antonym for sorrow, the word 'sorrowless' (or in the Pali '*asoka*') refers to the mind that is not vulnerable to sorrow — and is the title for this blessing.

B. NATURE OF SORROW

B.1 Cause of Sorrow

The problem of the untrained mind is that it tends to pick up indiscriminately on all the negative emotions of perceptions coming to us through the senses. The mind will not stay still but will constantly try to find some new perceptual food to feed the senses. However whatever sort of thing it senses, it will not stay with that thing for long, but will soon be on the move searching for something new. If you listen to some pleasant music, after only a few minutes you will become bored and start looking for something tasty to eat instead. Before you have eaten much, you think to yourself that you would rather lie down and take a sleep. Before you have been asleep for very long, you would rather go outside and take a walk. There is never any satisfaction with any particular sensation.

There is only one sort of sensation with which the mind never gets bored — and that is when one falls in love with someone or something. Such possessive love causes the mind to be fixated firmly with no more wandering. Once the mind has attached itself to possessive love it can no longer get itself free. In such a state of mind, any day you don't get a glimpse of your lover, you feel that you have no appetite. Even to hear their voice on the telephone, to see a glimpse of their face, or to catch sight of their house can help to satisfy you. If they love you in return, the suffering remains within the limits of toleration — but what if they don't love you in return? Or what if they start out by loving you and later change their mind — or love someone else — or die? It is at this point that the mind will become so dry that it will feel like it will tear in two. Now if you hear a love song, you would rather cry. Now if someone invites you to go and see a romantic movie, you would rather stay at home. From a mind that used to be interested in absorbing many different stimuli, now it has had such an overload from the stimulus of falling in love that it no longer wants to absorb any stimuli at all. Thus, sorrow is like a withdrawal symptom from possessive love — in the words of the Buddha:

Piyate jhayate soko

Sorrow is caused by things that are dear to us

J.iii.162, DhA.iii.277

Thus if anyone wants to live sorrowlessly in the world, they should avoid absent-mindedly falling in love and life will be that much easier.

Possessive love doesn't just refer to people, but loving anything to the point you become attached — whether it be your house or your car. Anything that has anything to do with love is like a thorn that one day will produce sorrow.

In spite of our common sense, and in full awareness of the perils of falling in love — however, circumstances sometimes get in the way of our better judgement. Many women decide they could better use their time devoting their time to their work or to their spiritual development, but they cannot stand be labeled an 'old maid' by their relatives so half-heartedly go looking for love. Some parents want to put an end to their responsibility for looking after their children so they rush them to get married.

B.2 The Degree of Sorrow

With relation to possessive love, Buddha taught:

"If you love a hundred (of them) you will have
a hundred measures of suffering;
If you love 90 you will have 90 measures of suffering;
If you love 80 you will have 80 measures of suffering;
If you love 70 you will have 70 measures of suffering;
If you love 60 you will have 60 measures of suffering;
If you love 50 you will have 50 measures of suffering;
If you love 40 you will have 40 measures of suffering;
If you love 30 you will have 30 measures of suffering;
If you love 20 you will have 20 measures of suffering;
If you love 10 you will have 10 measures of suffering;
If you love 5 you will have 5 measures of suffering;
If you love 4 - 3 - 2 -1 of them, you will have 4
3 - 2 -1 measure(s) of suffering. If you love noth
ing and no-one when you will not have suffer
ing about anything. Such a person will be with
out suffering and without regrets as to their life.
In fact the existence of suffering, despair and
sorrow in the world is only brought about be
cause of the love we have for physical things.
When there is no further physical thing that we
love (be it our body, people, animals or posses
sions) there will be no further suffering, despair
and sorrow. Whosoever can put aside their love

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for such physical things will attain happiness in this world. Those who wish to evade sorrow in this world would be better to avoid falling in love with the physical things of the world."

Ud.(verse 176)

If you want to conclude in more colloquial lan guage:

> The more your possessive love, the more the sorrow. The less your possessive love, the less the sorrow. If you have no possessive love, there will be no sorrow. The more your pos sessive love, the more the tears. The end of possessive love is the end of tears.

C. PRACTICES FOR MINIMIZING SORROW

The minds of those who have already attained Nirvana (i.e. those who have already attained the DhammakÅya Arahant) will be insulated from sorrow. For those who have attained the DhammakÅya GotrabhË, for as long as they can maintain their mindfulness, they will not experience sorrow. However, even with such a high attainment, such people cannot keep their mind in Nirvana twenty-four hours-a-day. There will be times when their mindfulness is disturbed and they will be left vulnerable to sorrow. It is only the arahant who is sheltered from sorrow for the whole of the time. For the anÅgÅmÈ, sakidÅgÅmÈ and sotÅpana, the protection is not continuous. Sorrowlessness lasts for only as long as they can maintain full mindfulness.

Strictly speaking, on the subject of 'sorrowlessness' in this Blessing, there is not much left to say. It is a result that arises as the result of coming to an end of defilements. However, for those who are not yet *arahant*s, there is still much to be learned from sorrowlessness because if we know enough we can reduce our vulnerability to sorrow for the things we already love and we can avoid exposing ourselves to sorrow for the things we do not yet love thereby . . . If you don't yet have transcendental attainment at your disposal — not to fear — there are still behavioural and attitudinal changes you which you can use to reduce your liability to sorrow.

As mentioned in the introduction, we cannot *es cape* the eight vicissitudes of the world — but sorrow is something we *can* choose to avoid. In fact we could choose to walk away at any time but, most people fail to make that choice. The thought to cultivate oneself towards enlightenment has not even occurred to most people. Some are even afraid to practice meditation in case their defilements run out. They are afraid they will have no love left for anyone in the world any more — which is rather a misunderstanding of the true meaning of love. They pin all their hopes on the happiness of marriage, only later to be disappointed. Thus, if you want to take the choice to reduce your sorrow, if you still love things, you should try to reduce such attachments before you experience the resulting sorrow. What can you do though, if your mind still feels the need to love things? There are several ways:

1. Distinguish between possessive love and true love: you should cultivate *true* love while avoiding *possessive* love as much as possible. It is not that Buddhists cannot express appreciation for things or people they like — but you should not allow your attraction for things to err into the possessive form of love. The surest way to know that love has started to become possessive is that it will tend to disembody your mind (especially by causing your mind to be drawn further and further away from the centre of your body);

2. Love yourself truly: This is not an invitation to egoism — but instead of loving other people, why don't you try loving yourself instead? If you love yourself a lot, then you have to express your love for yourself. The best way to express love for yourself is to put effort into doing the maximum of wholesome deeds for yourself by:

> Avoid the evil things you have not yet done;
> Give up evil things you have already done;
> Start doing the good things you have not yet done, and; continue doing the good things you have already started to do;

3. Meditate regularly: You should also meditate a lot and in that way you will be less likely to be caught in the sticky glue of passion;

4. Cultivate self-discipline: By keeping the Five Precepts you will be able to protect yourself from

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antisocial behaviours coming from your possessive love. Moreover, if you can keep the Eight Precepts you will be able to start to throw off the ties that bind you to the stickiness of possessive love at its roots. The best sort of protection from such sorrows is the life of a monk. Thus if you think you want to avoid all sorrow, you should be quick to ordain!

5. Recollect death and cultivate mindfulness of body: By recollecting death and cultivating mindfulness of the deterioration of the body, it will gradually reduce the tendency of the mind to thirst for sensual stimulation. If you practice the recollection of death habitually it will help you in your practice of meditation because it will stop your mind becoming distant from your body. It will allow you to escape from the trap of the senses. If you are in love, then your mind is fixated on something external to the body for long periods of time. However, if you recollect death habitually, it will release your mind from the attachment to love and because you consider the state of yourself, it will teach your mind to stay habitually within your body, instead of continually being hungry for new sorts of sensual stimuli. Thus if you ask the real reason for organizing funerals, in fact it is not the occasion for people to get together to cry tears of sorrow

— but as the occasion for everyone to recollect on the implications of death for themselves. Instead of being sorry for the deceased, in future we can train ourselves to be *sorry for ourselves* instead.

With the help of these practices, even though you are not yet an *arahant*, your mind will be better centred within the body and less easily enamoured by attraction for things that must eventually lead to sorrow.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Metaphor: Monkey-trap

In the olden days hunters had an ingenious way to catch monkeys. They would leave a piece of wood covered in glue lying next to a fruit tree. Monkeys eating the fruit would accidentally touch the sticky wood and its hand would get stuck firmly to the wood. Next it would try to pull the wood off using its other hand — but the other hand would get stuck to the wood as well. Accordingly, it would try to kick its hands free with one foot — but its foot would get stuck to the wood. Of course, it would try to kick its hands free with the other foot — but its other foot would get stuck to the wood as well. There was only one more thing it could do — to try to bite itself free. It would try to bite the wood, but its mouth would get stuck to the wood. Finally, it would roll around in a ball on the ground and wait for the hunter to come and collect it. When talking of falling in love, people are no more sensible than birds or monkeys. The expression on the face of the trapped monkey and the expression on the face of a jilted lover are exactly the same . . .

D.2 Ex. Mallika Sutta (S.i.75)

Queen Mallika was the favourite queen of King Pasenadi of Kosala — and a woman renowned for her wisdom. One day the king asked his queen, "Who do you love the most in the world?" In his mind he wanted the queen to answer, "You of course!" The queen answered after a great deal of deliberation, "I have been thinking about your question and I observe that all the animals in the world love themselves above all others — and I think that I am just the same!"

D.3 Ex. Death of VisÅkhÅ's grandchild (DhA.iii.278ff.)

VisÅkhÅ had been a stream-enterer [sotÅpana] since the age of seven. As a stream-enterer she had attained the DhammakÅya and had seen the Four Noble Truths in the physical body, but not yet in the angelic body or any of the higher ones. Her attainment, as with all stream-enterers was to be able to uproot three of the ten fetters [saÔyojana] in her mind, namely:

1. ***False view of self-view*** [sakkayadiÊÊhi]
2. ***Doubt*** [vicikicchÅ]: meaning specifically doubt concerning the action of the karma.
3. ***Belief in Superstition*** [sÈlabbata-paramÅsa]:

belief in ritual and superstition. The other seven forms of fetters including sensual desire [kÅmarÅga] in her mind had still not been

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destroyed or uprooted. When VisÅkhÅ was a young woman, she married. She had ten sons and ten daughters — a total of twenty children in all. Because she had so many children, before long she had a lot of grandchildren. One day, her favourite granddaughter DattÅ died. Even as a stream-enterer, she forgot herself and went crying to the Buddha.

The Buddha asked, "VisÅkhÅ, you once wished your children and grandchildren to fill the whole of SÅvatthÈ, didn't you?"

"That is correct," said VisÅkhÅ.

"Do you know how many people day each die in the town of SÅvatthÈ?"

"Some days ten people, some days nine, some days eight, some days seven, some days six, some days five, some days four, some days three, some days two, some days one — at least one person dies each day in SÅvatthÈ," said VisÅkhÅ who had a good general knowledge of her town.

"When there is a death every day in SÅvatthÈ, it is better that you save your tears because otherwise you will have someone to cry for every day." With the help of the Buddha's reminder, VisÅkhÅ realized that the more love you have for all your children, the more tears you will have to shed when they die.

D.4 Ex. UrÅga JÅtaka (J.354)

When the Buddha was still pursuing Perfections as the Bodhisattva, he was born as a Brahmin farmer. At that time he enjoyed a harmonious family life. He had a young son and a young daughter. Later, his household expanded with the addition of a son-in-law and a servant.

One day he was ploughing in a field some distance from his home together with his son, who was weeding and burning the weeds. The bonfire made a lot of smoke — some of which went into the burrow of a snake. The snake could not breath so it came out of its burrow and bit the son. By the time the father realized, his son was already dead from the poison.

Normally a father would cry at the death of his son, but for the Bodhisattva, he saw that there was nothing more he could help with, so he continued to plough the field. A neighbour passed the Bodhisattva on the way to the homestead and the Bodhisattva told him to give the message to his wife that she should only send one portion of food for the packed lunch that day instead of two. When those at home received the message, they guessed what had happened. All of them came rushing to the field and saw the son lying dead. However, like the Bodhisattva, the mother, sister, wife and servant did not cry, but helped to cremate the son.

As they were cremating the corpse, an old Brahmin with a radiant complexion appeared from nowhere and asked, "Whose body is this you are cremating?"

"My son's," replied the Bodhisattva.

"Normally a father must cry at the death of his son — or at least his mother or sister or wife or servant must cry."

"We have our reasons for not crying," explained the Bodhisattva and he continued," because when the life of someone's body is expended it is like a snake which must slough off an old skin. I see my son as no more than a snake shedding its skin. Therefore I have no sorrow. My son will have another life ahead of him — if he has been good he will have a good birth. If he has done evil he will have an unfortunate birth. Even if I were to cry, it would make no difference to my son's afterlife destination." The father was not crying because he didn't love his son, but because he could love him but also let go.

The mother did not cry either. She said, "When my son was born, no-one invited him to come. When he left us, he didn't say farewell. He has gone in the same manner that he came. When this is the reality, what is the point of crying over spilt milk. Even if I were to cry, my son would have no way of knowing — because he has already gone elsewhere."

The little sister didn't cry. She said, "If I were to cry it would just spoil my looks. It would just make me ill so they would have to waste time looking for a doctor. It would just make me emaciated for no good reason. It would just increase the worries of the rest of the family — so why cry? No-one is going to be any happier as the result of my crying."

The wife said, "There is no more use crying than there is use in a child crying for the moon that has set on the horizon. Even though we have come together for this cremation, it doesn't make any difference to the feelings of the deceased because he has already gone wherever he must go."
The servant said, "You cannot pick up the pieces of a broken pot and make it what it used to be. In the same way, it is no more use crying over a dead body — do we think it would bring them back to life again? He has already gone wherever he must go."

Even the servant had a metaphor and an explanation for her lack of sorrow — so how could they train themselves to think like this? It turned out that wherever the brahmin farmer went, he would teach his wife and children and even his servant,

> "You should make the recollection of death habitual. You have to think of death habitually because death is for sure. Life is not certain. Our aggregates are not permanent and they are of a nature to decay. Therefore you should never be reckless towards the accumulation of merit both by day and night. Make recollection of death your habit."

It turned out that on that occasion, the old man who had come to ask them the questions was Sakka, the king of heaven in disguise.
In the case of the Brahmin farmer, the whole of the family looked upon death without any sorrow because they recollected death habitually. The recollection of death will have the effect of minimizing the number of things in life that will cause us sorrow. If you do your morning and evening chanting on a daily basis you will remember the words at the end of the evening chanting:

> 'We are of a nature to age, we have not gone beyond aging; we are of a nature to sicken, we have not gone beyond sickening; we are of a nature of a nature to die, we have not gone beyond dying;'

If you do your chanting with true recollection every day and sit for meditation too, you will soon find that you start noticing the changing state of your own body in the direction of deterioration.

When you are a child and you get a cold, just by taking a nap you can soon recover. However, by the age of twenty it might take you all night before you are able to get over your cold. By the age of thirty, it takes two or three days to get over your cold. By the age of forty, it takes four or five days to recover. By the age of fifty, to get over a cold might take a week or even two weeks for some people. By the age of sixty, it might take a month to get over a cold. By the age of seventy, you feel as if you have had a cold continuously. By the age of eighty, if you get a cold, you feel as if you are going to die! If you remind yourself of death often, if you fall in love it won't be for long and it won't be with too much attachment because you will always have the feeling that the 'Grim Reaper' is stalking you wherever you are going and that will help to put your life in perspective.

However, it is noticeable from this particular tale that the Bodhisattva, even though he had trained himself in the recollection of death to this degree, still was attracted to have a family of his own and not to remain single. However, if his wife were to die, he wouldn't waste any time grieving. Thus if you practice the recollection of death, if you are still not in love, you will not be drawn into the potential sorrow of such a relationship. If you are already in love then at least you will be able to maintain your own 'personal space'.

D.5 Ex. Pa*ÊÅc*A*r*Å *Ther*È *(DhA.ii.260ff.)
PaÊÅcÅrÅ was the daughter of a rich man from SÅvatthÈ. She was very beautiful and was closely guarded from suitors by her parents. One day, however, she fell in love with a man-servant and eloped with him to a village far away from SÅvatthÈ. In due course she became pregnant. As the time for giving birth drew near, on several occasions she asked permission from her husband to return to her parents in SÅvatthÈ for the birth (in accordance with the tradition of the time). Her husband, however, fearing that he would be beaten up by her parents, discouraged her from going. One day, however, while her husband was away, she set out alone for the home of her parents. Her husband managed to catch up with her on the way and pleaded with her

to return home, but she refused. Unfortunately she went into labour there and then, she gave birth to a son in the forest. After the birth of her son, she returned home with her husband.

Not long afterwards, she became pregnant again and she made the same request to her husband as before but again was turned down. As the time forgiving birth to her second child drew near again she set out for the home of her parents in SÅvatthÈ, taking her son with her. Her husband followed her and caught up with her on the way; but as it started to rain heavily, she went into labour again.The husband went to look for a suitable place to give birth but while he was clearing a little patch of land, he was bitten by a poisonous snake, and died on the spot. Meanwhile, while PaÊÅcÅrÅ waiting for his return, gave birth to her second son. In the morning, she searched for her husband, but found only his corpse. Full of grief, and blaming herself for the death of her husband, she continued on her way to her parents.

Because it had rained incessantly the whole night, the river was so swollen it was not possible for her to cross the river carrying both sons at once. Thus, she left the elder boy on the near bank of the river, while crossing the river with her baby, leaving him on the far bank. She then went back for the elder boy. While she was midstream, a hawk hovered over the baby thinking it was a piece of meat. She shouted to frighten away the hawk, but all was in vain; the hawk carried the baby away. Meanwhile, the elder boy heard his mother shouting from the middle of the river and thought she was calling for him. He attempted to cross the river himself but was carried away by the strong current. Thus, PaÊÅcÅrÅ lost both her sons as well as her husband.

She wept and lamented loudly, 'A son is carried away by a hawk, another son is carried away by the current, my husband is also dead, bitten by a poisonous snake!' Later, she met a man from SÅvatthÈ and fearfully asked after her parents. The man replied that due to a violent storm in SÅvatthÈ the previous night, the house of her parents had fallen down and that both her parents, together with her only brother had died, and had been cremated. On hearing this tragic news, PaÊÅcÅrÅ went com

pletely mad. She did not even notice that her clothes had fallen from her and that she was half-naked. She went about the streets, shouting out, 'Woe is me!'

At this time the Buddha was preaching at the Jetavana monastery, and he saw PaÊÅcÅrÅ at a distance; so he willed that she should come to the congregation. The crowd seeing her coming tried to stop her saying, 'Don't let the mad woman come in.' However, the Buddha told them to make way for her. When PaÊÅcÅrÅ was close enough to hear him, he told her to control her mind and to keep calm. As she became aware of herself, she realised that she did not have her skirt on and quietly crouched down. Someone gave her a piece of cloth to cover herself. She then told the Buddha how she had lost her sons, her husband, her parents, and her only brother.

The Buddha consoled her, 'PaÊÅcÅrÅ, have no fear; you have now come to one who can protect you and can really guide you. Throughout this round of existences, the amount of tears you have shed on account of the death of sons, husbands, parents and brothers is voluminous.' Then, the Buddha expounded to her the Anamatagga Sutta (S.ii.178ff.),which dealt with countless existences, and she felt relieved and calmed. The Buddha added that one should not worry too much about those who were gone, but that one should purify oneself and strive to realise NibbÅna. On hearing this discourse PaÊÅcÅrÅ realised the uncertainty and futility of existence and attained stream-entry.

PaÊÅcÅrÅ became a bhikkhuÁi. One day, she was cleaning her feet with water from a water-pot. As she poured the water for the first time, it flowed only a short distance and disappeared; then she poured for the second time and the water went a little farther, but the water she poured for the third time went the farthest. As she looked at the flow and the disappearance of water poured out successively for three times, she pondered, "even so do mortals die, either in childhood, in middle age or in old age". The Buddha, seeing her through his supernormal powers from the Jetavana monastery sent forth his radiance and exhorted her, 'PaÊÅcÅrÅ, you are now on the right path, and you now have

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the true perception of the aggregates [khandha] of life. One who does not perceive the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and insubstantiality of the component things is useless even if he were to live for a hundred years.' Soon after, PaÊÅcÃrÃ attained Arahanthood and was later to be praised by the Buddha as the foremost amongst the nuns for knowing the Vinaya.

D.6 Ex. Tigers in the Town (traditional)

Once upon a time, there was an old Chinese monk who built a temple deep in the forest at the top of the mountains. The monk had stayed inside the temple he had built without going anywhere else for almost the whole of his life. One day the monk found an orphaned boy in the forest. The monk brought up the child until he was a teenager. Like the monk, the boy had spent nearly the whole of their life in the temple. The only contact they had with the outside world was when they had monks come to visit them from other temples. All his life, the boy could not remember having met anyone else but monks.

One day the monk needed to go on some errands in the nearby town and he needed to take the boy along too, to help carry things. Thus on the day before they had to make the journey, the monk gave the boy a warning. He warned, "There is a type of animal that lives in the town that is very frightening. The animal looks just like you, but it has long hair, red cheeks and red lips. Such animals have strange effeminate habits. Whatever you do, don't get close to any of these animals. They are worse than tigers! If you don't follow my advice, you will never get back to our temple alive. Keep your distance."

The two of them went into town and the town was full of the sort of tigers that the monk had warned him of. The boy looked at the 'tigers' but he didn't find them at all frightening. To him they looked quite attractive. Whenever the monk was not watching him, he would stare at every 'tiger' that passed. On the way back to the temple, the boy was not his usual cheerful self, but hung his head, dragged his feet and would hardly speak at all. The monk asked him, "Is anything wrong?".

The boy replied, "I am thinking about tigers".

The monk thought to himself, "Here we go again — after bringing up a boy the whole of his life in seclusion, he is still making the same mistake as the rest of them!" The boy's mind was so dry, that he could hardly enjoy his life any more. This is the dryness of mind that we mean by 'sorrow'.

Blessing Thirty-Seven: Freedom from Subtle Defilements

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Place of Blessing Thirty-Seven in the order of things

The subject matter of this blessing is in fact a result of practising all the previous blessings from not associating with fools up until the practise of the Brahmafaring. As a result of training, the mind becomes progressively more refined until one can see the Four Noble Truths — in the same way that the Buddha did. Ultimately we must work on ourselves until there are no remaining defilements in the mind. Even for the Buddha, it was not possible to achieve such attainments instantly. Even in his final lifetime it took six full years. Having become enlightened, as a result of his teaching, others too were able to come to an end of defilements.

Defilements, like litter, have gross and subtle forms. Gross litter can be picked up and put in a trash can — fine litter is more difficult to detect. In the same way, the defilements of the mind have subtle forms which can be compared to fine dust so small that that it cannot even be seen with normal eyesight. Such defilements are equivalent to the dust that clings to a mirror, making it dull — you only notice such dust when you can clean away such dust so that you can see clearly in the mirror again.

It is the absence of these subtle defilements which is the subject matter of this blessing. Of course, such a state is the result of the practice of those who have already come to an end of defilements — but for the benefit of the general reader, we take the opportunity in this Blessing to examine the nature of the subtle defilements and give some possible advice for uprooting them.

A.2 Definitions

Defilements are like pollutants or impurities found in the mind which stop the mind from working in its normal efficient way. They are equivalent to bacteria or viruses in the body — external carriers of disease which cause the body the suffer from various illnesses. The Pali word used to refer to this blessing is 'virajaÔ' which literally means 'stainless', 'faultless' or 'freedom from defilements and passion'. In the commentaries it is used specifically to mean freedom from the subtlest of defilements. Attaining freedom even from such subtle defilements is beneficial because for as long as such subtle defilements are still present, the mind will lose its lustre — the subtle defilements will penetrate, encapsulate and infiltrate the mind making the mind lose its radiance. The mind which is free of subtle defilements is indeed free of all defilements, whether they be gross, medium or subtle. All have been completely uprooted and no longer hold sway over the functioning of the mind. So definitively have the defilements been eradicated from the mind that they can never grow back. Thus the mind is pure and chaste and radiant as is the case for the mind of an *arahant*.

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B. DEFILEMENTS

B.1 Comparison of Different Groups

In all there are three types of defilements — greed, hatred and delusion — each of which has its identifying characteristics:

Defilement Family	Seriousness of Potential Damage	Duration of Potential Damage
Greed/Desire	Slight	Long-lived
Hatred/Anger	Grave	Short-lived
Ignorance/Delusion	Grave	Long-lived

TABLE 37.1: Damage Characteristics of Different Defilement Groups

In a little more detail:

- ***Desire*** has the characteristic of not being very damaging but requiring a long time to recover from its negative effects. Once we have made a mistake regarding desire, it will be a long time before we can remedy everything to be as it was before. As a clear example, think how long it takes to recover from a broken heart — or the sorrow described in *Blessing Thirty-six*. The effects of desire (in the absence of aggression) are not particularly damaging either in spiritual or in worldly ways — with incest and theft being about the most extreme consequences.
- ***Hatred and anger*** are very damaging but it doesn't take long to recover from them. However, under the sway of hatred, there is no end to the violence and cruelty one can do. One can even go as far as to kill one's own teacher and parents. The worldly retribution for violence is severe — you can be put in prison all your life or executed. Spiritual retribution is also severe — especially for the serious actions such as killing an *arahant*, or one's parents. The grasp of hatred and anger are usually short-lived, however. If one is angry, often all that is needed is for someone to say sorry, and the tension is gone. Sometimes anger disappears as quickly as it comes — and one cannot even remember what one was supposed to be angry about. Sometimes one cannot imagine in retrospect how one could have done something one did whilst one was angry. Thus if you have collected up spite from conflicts in your past, be quick to settle those disputes by forgiveness even if the disputes are with those who should really be asking *your* forgiveness.

- ***Ignorance*** has the character of being very damaging and also it takes a long time to remedy its action. The most frightening thing about ignorance is that we don't know that we don't know. It is like a blind man who has lost his way. The worldly and spiritual retributions for ignorance are both serious. If one does something without understanding, one will keep on making the same mistakes without end. Ignorance is also the root of desire and hatred. It is very hard even to know where to start dealing with ignorance if one has not yet attained the DhammakÅya. Even when you have attained the DhammakÅya, to eradicate ignorance still takes a lot of effort. Some stream-enterers [sotÅpana] need to practice further for up to seven lifetimes before they can get completely free of their ignorance.

B.2 Classification of Defilements

For each of the three families of defilements — greed, hatred and delusion — there are gross, medium and subtle levels of the defilements (*as illustrated in the table on the right*):

This blessing primarily concerns the subtle defilements, however, by way of comparison, we will start by describing the grosser defilements — moving through each family of defilements in decreasing order of seriousness.

B.2.1 Greed Group [rÅga]***:*** The group of defilements of greed and desire includes all defilements which have positive attachments generating love, passion or desire. In approximate order of decreasing seriousness, greed and desire come in the following varieties:

1. ***Desiring things in a Dishonest Way*** [*lobha*]: This is the desire which if given the opportunity, would cause one to use dishonest means to get the object of the desire. It is when one lets one's greed get out of hand to the point it starts to erode one's better judgement to the point one would steal or use aggression to get someone else's possessions. Suppose you want to obtain something that belongs to someone else — by

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	Greed	*Hatred*	*Delusion*
Heavy	Desiring things in a Dishonest Way [lobha]	Vengefulness [byÅpÅda]	Wrong View [micchÅ diÊÊhi]
Medium	Open Covetousness [abhijjhÅvisamalobha] Discrete Covetousness [abhijjhÅ] Wanting to obtain things by unscrupulous earnings [pÅpicchÅ] Wanting in excess of your fair share [mahicchÅ] Lust [kÅmarÅga] Deviousness [mÅyÅ]	Directed Anger [dosa] Undirected Anger [kodha]	Delusion [moha]
Subtle	Grasping for the Sensual Realms [kÅmarÅga] Grasping for the Form Realms [rÊparÅga] Grasping for the Formless Realms [arÊparÅga]	Irritability [pÅÊigha] Dislike [arati]	False View of Individuality [sakkayadiÊÊhi] Doubt [vicikicchÅ] Adherance to Superstitions [sÊlabbatapÅrÅmasa] Conceit [mÅna] Absent-Mindedness [uddhacca] Ignorance [avijjÅ]

TABLE 37.2 Heavy, Medium & Subtle Defilements in the Three Defilement Groups

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honest means you could save up to buy it (such a feeling is not desiring for things in a dishonest way) — however, even if you have a big salary, but you think to cheat someone else in order to get the thing you want, instead of paying for it — such a feeling is desiring things in a dishonest way;

1 ***Open Covetousness*** [abhijjhÅvisamalobha]: This is the desire for something so strong that you can no longer keep the desire to yourself. You cannot stop yourself from showing an interest, from staring at the thing you want or even using unscrupulous means to get what you want;

2 ***Discrete Covetousness*** [abhijjhÅ]: This is the desire for something which is strong, but not so strong that you cannot conceal your interest;

3 ***Wanting to obtain things by unscrupulous earnings*** [pÅpicchÅ] this sort of greed doesn't go as far as stealing things, but means when people use money of uncertain origin to pay for what they desire. They pay using earnings accrued in an unscrupulous way. It is like someone who wants to get rich and he will do any sort of work to achieve his end — even if it means selling drugs or stolen goods or gambling or going into prostitution to earn their living. Besides indirectly bringing harm to society, of course such desire will detract from one's credability;

4 ***Wanting in excess of your fair share*** [mahicchÅ]: This is when one's greed gets out of hand to the point one loses one's consideration for others. It is like someone who takes more than their fair share of food on the table — or a member of a group who shares a taxi with them but who refuses to contribute his fair share of the taxi fare at the end of the journey. It is also illustrated by the sort of person who goes into a business partnership, but who is reluctant to pay for anything extra if he knows that the returns will be shared. However, his reluctance soon disappears if the profit ever comes to him personally! It is not stealing, or income from unscrupulous livelihood, but it is still taking ad vantage of others;

1 ***Lust*** [kÅmarÅga]: This is being attracted obsessively to someone or something — like someone who is attracted to someone of the opposite sex (even if he never mentioned his love to anyone). Some people might ask whether such love is wrong, because it doesn't take advantage of anyone else — in fact it may not be harmful to anyone, but it is a defilement, a subtle one. It is of no harm if the object of your love is not already married — but as we have learned in Blessing Thirty-Six, wherever there is love, tears must follow. Even if you have only ever loved your lawful wedded spouse and have never taken an interest in anyone else, it is still unwise to harbour this defilement of sensual pleasure in your mind, because it may cause you problems some time in the future;

2 ***Deviousness*** [mÅyÅ]: This is when you would like to get something but you are too embarrassed to ask for it directly — therefore you find an indirect way of obtaining what you want — like saying, "I guess you don't use this any more? If you leave it lying around it will probably go rusty!" in order that someone gives you something they own but which you want. You wouldn't have the courage to ask for such a thing directly. It also includes all the daft things young people do in front of a mirror before they go courting a boy-/girlfriend;

3 ***Grasping for the Sensual Realms*** [kÅmarÅga]: This is when you still have an attraction for sensual pleasure which will cause you to be reborn in the sensual sphere;

4 ***Grasping for the Form Realms*** [rËparÅga]: This is when you still have some attraction for the pleasures of the form absorptions. When one meditates to the degree one attains the first absorption or higher, one attains happiness that money cannot buy. Of course, the happiness of complete liberation from defilements is superior to this — but some people who attain such meditation think that it is the ultimate, because some people who attain this level can even perform miracles. Therefore they don't try to make

any further progress. Their spiritual progress gets stuck at this point and they lose sight of their long-term goal. However, to have attained form absorptions to become deluded by is still far superior to attaining nothing at all!;

10. Grasping for the Formless Realms [arËparÅga]: If you attain the formless absorptions but you become elated by your attainment instead of training yourself further then you will be subject to this subtle defilement and be unable to make any further progress;

B.2.2 Hatred Group [dosa]***:*** Hatred includes all the defilements which react with aversion to unpleasant stimuli. It can mean the thoughts or expressions of aggression towards others, their possessions or their reputation — and includes anger and illwill. In approximate order of decreasing seriousness, hatred comes in the following varieties:

1. Vengefulness [byÅpÅda]: This is anger, grudges, spite or the wish to destroy others that is so strong that if you don't succeed in destroying someone today, you will make sure you succeed on a future occasion. It is like water boiling so violently that it will spit out of the container and scald the people nearby;

2. Directed Anger [dosa]: This is anger itself with the thought to kill the object of your anger or burn down their house or kick them or insult them or discredit them. This is like water at a rolling boil, where you can hear the sound of the bubbles breaking;

3. Undirected Anger [kodha]: This again is anger, but not yet with the accompanying thought of how to express the anger. It is the sort of anger that comes from biting your tongue when you are eating or inadvertantly stubbing your toe. You have not yet put the blame on anyone — it is just a feeling. This is like the fizz of water that is starting to simmer;

4. Irritability [paÊigha]: This is not so serious as anger, but it is the feeling of friction in one's mind when there is aversion present. When a mother wants to sit for meditation and her daughter has the radio turned up loud, she will say, "Can't you turn down the volume, I would like to meditate now?" When her daughter says, "Why do you have to meditate now?" although the mother is not angry, she will be irritated by her daughter's lack of co-operation. Although irritability *per se* is of negligable harm, you have to overcome it because it has the potential to developing into fully-fledged anger;

5. Dislike [arati]: This is the sort of feeling of awkwardness when you have a slight difference in taste from another person but you have to share in their activities or share the same workplace. Thus you would prefer not to share in the same activities as this person. If you still have such a feeling, your mind is still under the sway of the subtle defilements of the mind.

B.2.3 Ignorance Group [moha]***:*** Delusion is ignorance or drunkenness especially that which causes us not to know the difference between what is good or bad for our quality of mind. It is not an ignorance of arithmetic or computers. It is an ignorance of the spiritual values in life which are essential for everyone to know — and which include the knowledge of right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. It is a sort of blindness of the mind. It doesn't depend on your level of education or even if you can read and write — but it depends on your attitude to the world. Someone who is well educated might even be more subject to delusion than his uneducated counterpart because they think their graduation certificate is a substitute for wisdom. In approximate order of decreasing seriousness, delusion comes in the following varieties:

1. ***Wrong View*** [micchÅ diÊÊhi]: This is the most coarse form of delusion. It includes the belief that good is evil or that evil is good or that heaven and hell don't exist or that we have no debt of gratitude to our parents. We have already covered the importance of discretion since the first blessing — and as we have seen it is the sort of delusion that opposes any sort of self-development in the cycle of existence. Even the serious misdeeds [anantariyakamma] such as killing our own parents, or *arahant*s are not so serious

as wrong view because some day you can escape the effects of the karma. However, there is no light at the end of the tunnel for those with wrong view;

2. Delusion [moha]: This is delusion which obstructs our understanding of the difference between right and wrong.

3. False View of Individuality [sakkayadiÊÊhi]: This is the view that you are superior to others. In fact our individuality is on many different levels and for as long as our view of ourselves extends no further than the physical body, we will be caught up in false view of individuality;

4. Doubt [vicikicchÅ]: This is doubt as to whether the law of karma really works or not. It is doubt as to whether it is really possible to make progress in meditation or whether it is really possible to become enlightened;

5. Adherence to superstitions [sÈlabbata-parÅmÅsa]: This means being caught up in superstitious rites and rituals (ones without reasons). Some people believe that eating certain foods will allow them to gain salvation — for others ritual bathing in some sacred river, fortune tellers, spirit worship or other forms of superstition are seen as a refuge from suffering. The only way to come to a real end of such beliefs is to attain the DhammakÅya. Until you manage to attain the DhammakÅya, you will find that you will always be believing the last thing you heard.

6. Conceit [mÅna]: There are three ways in which people may be conceited about themselves:

1. Assuming themselves to be of the same status as others
2. Assuming themselves to be of lower status (inferiority complex)
3. Assuming themselves to be of higher status (superiority complex) In fact, all three are wrong. If we assume ourselves to be superior to others, and by virtue of our skills or experience or behaviour we are superior to them, we cut off our opportunity to improve ourselves further. It will make us reckless. If we assume ourselves to be superior but in fact we are just the same as them, then it is a form of bullying. If we think we are superior even though we are inferior, then our mistake of attitude will be even worse. Instead of comparing ourselves with others, we should compare ourselves today with how we were yesterday or last week and look for any improvements.

7. Absent-mindedness [uddhacca]: This is restlessness of mind of the sort you experience when you try to keep your mind on the object of meditation, but your mind wanders onto every other subject under the sun.

8. Ignorance [avijjÅ]: This is lack of true knowledge or possession of the wrong sort of knowledge in a person. This is the lack of knowledge about the important matters of 'where we have come from', 'why we are here', 'when we will die' and 'where we will go when we die'. For such knowledge, you need to attain the DhammakÅya to get any real answers — not just the initial DhammakÅya, but the DhammakÅyas of the higher Buddhist saints.

B.3 Conclusion as Fetters

The subtle defilements can also be concluded in the form of the Ten Fetters [saÔyojana] which are sequentially uprooted by each of the stages of Buddhist sainthood as already discussed in Blessing Thirty-three (*see §C.1, Table 4*).

B.4 Why we can't afford to tolerate the subtle defilements

Although the subtle defilements on the face of it seem harmless, we cannot afford to tolerate their presence of mind. It is just like a spark which can cause the whole of a city to burn down. The Buddha thus taught us to see danger even in the smallest things [aÁumattesu vajjesu bhaya-dassavÈ]. Even though all these mental taints might be considered minor — no more than 'rust' in the mind, we have to try to get rid of them because otherwise they will be damaging to us in the future. For most people, the mental taints are so subtle that they feel that it doesn't really matter whether they are there or not. They are like tiny bacteria which can cause much more serious diseases. Often if we are still living the household life with a husband or wife and children, it is difficult to appreciate the dan

gers of these taints. However, when we leave the household life and dedicate ourselves to mental training, we see that these taints cannot be ignored. Thus you have to be careful of defilements of all levels. You cannot afford to overlook even the smallest. The best security is to uproot all — until no further remain.

B.5 Overcoming the Subtle defilements

Most of the ways of overcoming the subtle defilements have been dealt with in detail in the preceding Blessings:

- ***Greed*** can be overcome by practising contentment (*see Blessing Twenty-Four*) and by getting life properly in perspective through meditation;
- ***Stinginess*** can be overcome by practising generosity (*see Blessing Fifteen*):
- ***Sensuality*** needs to be transcended by: contentment with one's own spouse, giving up frivolous behaviour, using funerals to your benefit, associating with good friends (*see Blessing Two*), loving yourself unselfishly (*see Blessing Thirty-Six*), spreading loving kindness limitlessly, staying single, keeping the Eight Precepts and staying celibate (*see Blessing Thirty-Two*) and persistence (*see Blessing Twenty-Seven*).
- **Anger** has different ways of overcoming it depending on which situation you meet it in: if you are so angry that you have lost control of your temper, it is better to withdraw amicably and come back later, while recomposing your mindfulness — if you are still in control of your temper, you should say or do nothing harmful while thinking clearly through the full range of options and outcomes available to you for overcoming the problem causing your anger — in the meantime, if you are of a personality liable to anger, you should try to cultivate loving kindness, train yourself in patience (*see Blessing Twenty-Seven*) and try to avoid associating with angry people (*see Blessing One*);
- ***False View*** needs to be overcome by cultivating wisdom, meditating more, overcoming doubts while giving Buddhist teachings the benefit of the doubt.
- ***Conceit*** needs to be overcome by being humble (*see Blessing Twenty-Three*), being wary of comparing yourself with others, checking yourself for false views, associating with good friends (*see Blessing Two*) and avoiding flatterers (*see Blessing One*), being thorough in all that you do, not finding fault with others, cultivating respect (*see Blessing Twenty-two*)and training yourself in gratitude (*see Blessing Twenty-Five*) since childhood.

C. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

C.1 Metaphor: Droplet of water on a lily pad

Just as a droplet of water skates around on a lily pad without sticking — for those who have attained Nirvana, even the subtlest of defilements can no longer attach to the mind.

C.2 Ex. Monks overestimate their attainment (DhA.iii.111ff.)

In the time of the Buddha there was a group of monks who had been practising in isolation in the forest, keeping their Precepts strictly and practising hard. They had been practising for so long that they became convinced that they had already overcome all the defilements in the mind. They thought they had no remaining greed, hatred or delusion. All the monks felt fulfilled and left their practice in the forest to return to the temple. They planned to visit the Buddha. The Buddha knew through his meditation that this group of monks had overestimated their attainment and in fact had still not reached an end of defilements! The Buddha told Ānanda to wait for the monks at the gate of the temple and tell them to go to stay in the cemetery instead of coming to see the Buddha immediately. In the cemetery there was the corpse of a beautiful woman who had just recently died. When the monks saw the corpse of the woman they would be attracted by her (former) beauty. The monks would then know that there were still subtle defilements remaining in their minds and they would know that they needed to practice further. In this case, without the right circumstances to magnify the subtle defilements into a recognizable emotion, the small defilements in the minds of these monks had remained hidden without them realizing it.

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C.3 Ex. The Revenge of the KÅÒÈ Ogress *(DhA.i.37ff.)*

Once there was a householder whose wife was barren. Being unable to bear a child and afraid that she would be mistreated by her husband or her mother-in-law, with the best of intentions she arranged for her husband to marry a second woman. In spite of her original goodwill, on two occasions, as soon as she knew the second wife was pregnant, the barren wife gave the other food mixed with miscarriage-inducing drugs. When it came to the woman's third attempt, she wife kept the pregnancy secret. However, when the barren wife came to know about it, again she caused an abortion. Eventually the second wife died in childbirth. Before her death, the unfortunate woman was filled with hatred and vowed vengeance on the barren wife and her future offspring. Thus the feud started.

Next lifetime, the second wife was born as a villager near SÅvatthÈ. She kept a hen (the barren wife of the previous existence) and every time it laid an egg, the woman would destroy it. The hen became very angry and as a result, it was reborn as a cat and the woman was reborn as a hen in the same house. The cat ate up the eggs of the hen. In their next existence, the hen became a leopard and the cat became a deer. The leopard ate up the deer as well as its offspring. Thus their feud continued for several existences.

When it came to the time of the Buddha, one of them was born as a woman and the other as an ogress [yakkhiÁÈ]. On one occasion, the woman was returning from the house of her parents to her own house near SÅvatthÈ accompanied by her husband and young son. While they were resting by a roadside pond, her husband left her to bathe himself. During his absence, the woman was approached by the ogress in human guise. Despite, the ogress's transmutation, the woman still recognised her — and fled with her child straight to the monastery where the Buddha was expounding the Dhamma. She put her child at the Buddha's feet. The ogress, in hot pursuit of the woman, was unable to enter the monastery. Nonetheless, the Buddha summoned the ogress to his presence. He admonished both of them for their long and bitter feud, 'If you two had not come to me today, your enmity would have continued endlessly. Enmity cannot be appeased by enmity; it can only be appeased futher by loving-kindness.' Reflecting on the admonition, both realised the futility of their hatred, admitted their mistakes and resolved to help each other mutually from that day on instead of continuing with their senseless feud.

C.4 Ex. KÅma JÅtaka(J.467)

There was once a king who had two sons. When the king passed away, the older prince did not want to take the throne. He renounced the throne to his younger brother and went to live as a regular citizen in the border country. The action of the older prince looked like renunciation, but in fact, the prince had not yet overcome his desires. A local millionaire knew that the ex-prince would not be very gifted at earning a living, so he helped by supporting him in every way. The millionnaire had his conditions. He told the ex-prince to tell his little brother not to collect taxes in their area, so that the millionnaire could use these funds to support the ex-prince instead. The ex-prince did as he was advised and the king exempted them from taxation. Everyone was happy, but the defilements in the mind of the prince gradually became more powerful. The neighbouring provinces got jealous and asked to be exempted from paying taxes in the same way. As the special incomes of the ex-prince increased, his greed became insatiable. He wanted to go back to being the king again. His younger brother would not agree at first, but later allowed him to return as king. The king had done many good deeds in the past and Indra the king of the gods wanted to teach him a lesson, to put him back on the correct path of life. Indra appeared to the king in human guise and told the king, "There are another three domains greater than the ones you have which you have not conquered."Before the king could ask, Indra disappeared. The king became dissatisfied with what he had. He wanted to invade border territories and conquered three neighbouring provinces. The king was so impassioned to acquire the three domains he had never seen that he became ill just thinking about them day and night. No doctor

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could cure the king of his illness.

At that time, the Bodhisattva had just finished his studies and volunteered to cure the king. He found out what the cause of the illness was and healed the king without medicine, but by using questions to make the king regain his mindfulness. The Bodhisattva knew the king had one kingdom but wanted govern another three — a total of four. He asked, "When your majesty sleeps does your majesty sleep in four beds?"

"No, only one!" replied the king.

"When your majesty eats does your majesty fill your stomach four times?"

"No, to be full just one meal at atime is enough!"

"Then why does your majesty want to rule four kingdoms when you already have a kingdom of your own?"

The king was miraculously cured of his illness.

Blessing Thirty-Eight:
The Blissful Mind

A. THE DIFFICULTY OFFINDING BLISS IN LIFE

A.1 The Darkness of Unknowing

Besides being the last blessing of the series, the subject matter of this Blessing is the *summum bonum* of the whole of The Manual of Peace — like the sense of relief of a traveller who has reached his destination safely or like a mariner who has reached the far shore. It is a relief because all along our journey, we have been amidst dangers which have constantly threatened the chances of reaching our destination.

Especially, for as long as the night is dark, in the absence of light, we have no idea how many dangers surround us. Because we don't know, we fear. Even a familiar place like our own bedroom can become a frightening place as soon as the lights go out. However, if we have a little light to throw on the situation — whether it be literal light like that of a torch or a spotlight, or more profoundly the inner brightness that arises as the result of meditation — the darkness of unknowing will be chased away. The dangers that lurk in the darkness will be vanquished at the same time. In a word, wherever there is darkness, there is also danger — wherever there is illumination there is safety.

Our mind also has a darkness inside. It is darkness that has been with us for innumerable lifetimes
— it is a darkness that blocks our ability to answer the eternal questions, such as: "Why were we were born", "where have we come from?" or "What is the meaning of life?" or "When we die where do we go?" Because we have no solutions to the fundemental questions that give meaning to life, the assumptions on which we base our life are no more than guesswork. Sometimes we guess correctly, sometimes not. Tragically, the errors we make only serve to worsen the darkness — and we continue to be haunted by the dangers that lurk there.

It makes no difference how influentual you are in worldly ways. Even if you are the most powerful king, emperor or millionaire in the world, it doesn't help you to escape from the inner ignorance of the eternal questions of life, and so you cannot evade the fears that lurk in the darkness of life.

A.2 Dangers lurking inthe darkness

We can divide all the sorts of dangers we encounter in life into two main categories (note the similarity here with the categories of suffering mentioned in Blessing Thirty-three [*§B.1*]):

1. Built-in Dangers: Everyone without exception co-exists with dangers since the day they are born
— dangers which no-one can avoid sooner or later meeting — and even the fear of meeting them can cripple our efforts to cultivate good deeds in our lives — these dangers corresponding to:

- the danger of birth [jÅti-bhaya];
- the danger of old-age [jarÅ-bhaya]
- the danger of illness [byÅdhi-bhaya];
- the danger of death [maraÅa-bhaya].

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2. External Dangers [upaddava]: This is when we still have to contend with dangers in the world that we confront in our everyday lives. The dangers might come from:

- 1 *the ability to recollect one's own previous existences* [pubbenivasanussatiÑÅa];
- 2 *the ability to recollect the previous existences of others* [cutÛpapÅtañÅÅa];
- 3 *the knowledge of an utter end to all defilements* [Åsavakkhayeñ Åa]

- *people* e.g. thieves, false friends, murderous bandits, exploitative wives or bad neighbours;
- *natural disasters* e.g. flooding, earthquakes, volcanos or forest fire;
- *evil retribution* i.e. when the retribution of evil deeds we have done in our past eventually catches up with us.

A.3 The Four Shackles

The reason why we find ourselves surrounded on every side by suffering and why we cannot break free of these, being born only to die, life after life, is because we are shackled by bonds or shackles [*yoga*] (D.iii.230, A.ii.10) which imprison us in the three realms of existence. These bonds are not physical but act by limiting the access to the wisdom in our minds. These bonds are four in number:

1. the shackle of sensual-indulgence [kÅmayoga]: For as long as we are still partial to hearing beautiful music, tasting delicious food, wearing well-cut clothes, seeing beautiful images, touching soft things, having an attractive spouse or filling our house with possessions, this shackle will tightly bind us, ensuring that we never stray from the sensual sphere (check) in our future lives;

2. the shackle of attachment to the absorptions [bhavayoga]: This shackle may occur when we become attached to our mental attainments at the level of the form- and formless-absorptions. As soon as a person breaks free of the shackle of sensual indulgence, they will usually be ensnared by this one instead. If one dies while still caught in this shackle, instead of being able to go to Nirvana at death, one will be reborn in the Brahma-world;

3. ***the shackle of views*** [diÊÊhiyoga]: This is being entrenched in one's own erroneous views — such as believing that one has no debt of gratitude to one's parents, believing in the non-reality of this world and the next or believing one can escape suffering by doing rites and rituals — such views only add to the darkness in the mind, obscuring reality — which is why we refer to them as the third shackle . . .;

4. the shackle of ignorance [avijjÅyoga]: This is the imprisonment in one's own delusion — delusion that prevents one from realizing the *Sadhamma* (truth necessary for attaining enlightenment). One's ignorance is the result of a deficit on internal illumination — not being able to see the path to self-liberation. Thus ignorance is counted as the fourth of the shackles.

B. BLISS

'Bliss', the subject of this final blessing is the sense of relief and liberation in the mind which arises when one has, through the acquisition of wisdom (internal light) surrounded the influence of all dangers and fetters previously mentioned.

B.1 Definitions

The quality of mind described by the Pali word 'khemaÔ' from which this Blessing takes its name, is translated as 'blissful'. The meaning of this word goes deeper than simply happiness, however— with two characteristics which explain the arising of such bliss:

1. invulnerability to danger: for those who have attained complete enlightenment, all four forms of shackles mentioned above have been cracked open. The mind is thus free — with no further limitation, encroachment or awkwardness. No further danger can interfere with the mind — through the virtue of having one's mind permanently immersed in the eternal bliss of Nirvana;

2. endowment with knowledge: a second way of understanding the bliss of the mind found in this blessing is that the mind has gained knowledge so far-reaching that no further form of delusion can obscure one's wisdom. This special wisdom coming to one as a result of enlightenment can be summarized in several different ways.

B.2 Knowledge accessible to the blissful mind

B.2.1 The Threefold Supraknowledge **[**tevijjÅ**]** ***(D.iii.220, A.v.211)***

The Threefold Supraknowledge is insightful wisdom acquired during the final stages of enlightenment and includes the following three sorts of knowledge:

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B.2.2 The Sixfold Mental Powers [abhiññÅ] ***(D.iii.281, A.iii.280)***

The sixfold mental powers are another way of describing the by-products of the wisdom of the enlightened:

1 ***magical powers*** [iddhividhÅ]: the ability to perform certain miracles to do with changing the nature of objects — such as floating in the air, transmuting the body, enlarging or shrinking oneself or making oneself invisible;

2 ***supranormal audition*** [*dibbasota*]: being able to hear sounds not audible to others

3 ***reading the minds of others*** [cetopariyañÅÁa]: knowing what others are thinking;

4 ***the ability to recollect one's own previous existences*** [pubbenivasanussatiñÅÁa];

5 ***the ability to recollect the previous existences of others*** [cutËpapÅtañÅÁa];

6 ***the knowledge of an utter end to all defilements*** [Åsavakkhayañ ÅÁa]

For the sixfold mental powers, the first five are worldly [lokiya] accomplishments, the sixth alone being transcendental [lokuttara] — this last being something that can only be achieved by one's own efforts and which is impossible to replicate or know from listening to others' experiences. Reaching this level in one's practice, one will know for oneself.

B.2.3 The Fourfold Analytical Insights [paÊisambhidÅ] ***(A.ii.160)*** These are mental abilities concerned with the teaching of Dhamma to others. They are attained by those who have reached an end of defilements:

1 ***analytic insight into consequences*** [atthapaÊisambhidÅ]: the masterful wisdom allowing one to enlarge upon any subject of the Dhamma;

2 ***analytic insight into causes*** [dhammapaÊisambhidÅ]: the masterful wisdom allowing one to summarize any subject of the Dhamma without losing the core meaning;

1 ***analytic insight into language*** [niruttipaÊisambhidÅ]: masterful insight into language allowing one to know the meaning of all forms of human and animal communication;

2 ***analytic insight into wit*** [paÊibhÅÁapaÊisambhidÅ]: the gift of quick-wittedness in expounding the Dhamma allowing one to 'think on one's feet' and answer questions 'on the spot';

C. BORN TO PURSUE PERFECTION

All these sets of supranormal knowledge are fruits which may accrue to a greater or lesser extent to those earnest in their Dhamma practice. It is for this reason that all of us should try to put *all* thirty-eight blessings into practice — if we practise *truly*, before long we will avail ourselves of *true* knowledge of the core of Buddhism and have a knowledge of the supranormal in the footsteps of the Buddha and all the *arahant*s.

If we practice more and more, we will start to understand for ourselves the answers to the eternal questions of life. We will begin to know for ourself our purpose in life and as we see how the Buddha practised virtues (which are none other than those outlined in this series of thirty-eight blessings) we will realize too that to practice in his footsteps is our real task in life. As humans we were not born to indulge in materialism, or even to find a place for ourselves in heaven. Like the Buddha, our aim in life should stop nowhere short of Nirvana. Our true aim in life is encapsulated in the eternal words of the Great Abbot of Wat Paknam:

> Born in search of the Triple Gem — but when you find them disperse them! Craving cheats us, falsity deludes us and ensnares our roiling, tortured mind — put an end to craving, escape falsity, remove yourself from sensuality, follow the threefold aggregates without let, complete the sixteen tasks: until invulnerable to hardship — you can call it Nirvana if you like . . ."

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D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Metaphor: Released prisoner

Whenever a prisoner is released from confinement and can escape the reach of instruments of torture, the freedom he feels will bring him happiness that fills both his body and mind. In the same way, those who attain Nirvana who have escaped the touch of all defilements and fetters, will also have a mind suffused with bliss.

D.2 Ex. MahÅ-Kappina Thera (J.iv.180, A.i.25, SN.A.ii.440, Vsm.393)

Once, during the time of the Buddha, a king called MahÅ-Kappina with his queen AnojÅ reigned in the frontier kingdom of KukkhuÊavatÈ. Every morning, MahÅ-Kappina would send out messengers from the four gates of the city to seek news from passing traders as to the arising of an Enlightened One in the world.

One day, after the Buddha had arisen in the world, a group of traders from SÅvatthÈ were visiting KukkhuÊavatÈ. They told King MahÅ-Kappina of the arising of the Buddha. Just hearing the word 'Buddha' King MahÅ-Kappina swooned from rapture. The traders mentioned the word 'Buddha' a total of three times — the king swooning each time he heard the word — and the same happened when the traders mentioned the arising of the Dhamma and the SaÌgha — he swooned a total of nine times.

Without further ado, the king renounced the throne and after rewarding the the merchants handsomely, left the palace in search of the Buddha, accompanied by all his ministers. The group set off in the direction of SÅvatthÈ, but in their way were three rivers which they must cross on horseback: the AravacchÅ, the NÈlavÅhana and the CandabhÅgÅ. Each time they reached the bank of one of the rivers, MahÅ-Kappina would make an act of truth saying "if the teacher for whom we are seeking is truly a fully-enlightened Buddha, let not even the hooves of our horses be wetted when crossing the river". Miraculously, the river became temporarily solid like land, allowing MahÅ-Kappina and his ministers to cross to the other side. In this manner they crossed the three rivers.

In his meditation, the Buddha perceived MahÅKappina's approach and travelled through the air to the banks of the CandabhÅgÅ where he seated himself under a Banyan tree facing them and sent forth radiance as a signal to MahÅ-Kappina. When MahÅ-Kappina and retinue met up with the Buddha and had paid respect, the Buddha taught them the Dhamma and they eventually became arahants, joining the order of monks.

AnojÅ and her courtiers renounced the world in a similar way and crossed he three rivers as their husbands had done to meet the Buddha. The Buddha made the womens' husbands invisible to them so that they would be no distraction as he preached the Dhamma

— and the women too could become stream-enterers, entering the order under UppalavaÁÁa BhikkhuÁÈ.

MahÅ-Kappina Thera spent his days in the extasy of deep meditation and was so full of happiness that he constantly repeated the words 'Oh! The Happiness. Oh! The Happiness' [aho sukhaÔ aho sukhaÔ] which made the other monks suspect that he was longing for the pleasures of kingship he had left behind, until the Buddha dispelled their doubts.

C.3 Ex. SakamÅna Sutta (S.i.7)

Once during the midday rest period, there was a large gathering of forest animals and the sound of all their cries was a fearful racket. One angel took a dislike to the horrendous sound finding it got on their nerves. However, hearing the same sound, the response of the Buddha was completely different. He declared, "Even when all the forest animals gather together at lunchtime and make such a noise, I am still happy because after my almsround and having eaten, it is my time of meditation." Understanding that which constitutes true happiness, even perceiving the same things as another person, one's better understanding of reality will always allow one to respond in the most positive manner appropriate.

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