Blessing One: Not Associating with Fools ***1***

a manual of peace:

38 Steps towards Enlightened Living

2 *A Manual of Peace: 38 Steps towards Enlightened Living*

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Blessing One: Not Associating with Fools ***3***
May the meritorious fruits accruing
from the study of this book
be dedicated for the benefit of
George, Annie, Alice, Lilian, Richard, Harry, Alfred George, Arthur, Norman, Ivan (née Lee) & Evelyn Ayre, Ellen Mary Stokell, Hannah Carr, George

& Charles F. Lee, Elizabeth, John & Margaret Curry, Anne Fenwick, Annie Jarman, Dennis George, Dennis Arthur & Malcolm Woods, Emily Mary Casbon, William Jabez & Ethel Dawes, Moses Edmund, Gladys, Hilda, Cecil, Reginald and Marie Heaton wherever they have been reborn.

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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.

3. Doing that virtue so regularly that it becomes
our habit
4. train up the people around you

to practise the
thirty-eight blessings as their
habits.
The important conclusion we get
from this threestage
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

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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

A Manual of Peace: 38 Steps towards Enlightened Living
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 crossreferenced 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

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+ 5. In Scotland, for Scottish Levels SG + HS. Although study of Buddhism at Key Stage 4 is timelimited, 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

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- Pali index
- index of similes
- index of illustrative examples

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

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Maha
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10 *A Manual of Peace: 38 Steps towards Enlightened Living*

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

The Manual of Peace

widespread because the value and benefits of it are
not yet widely known.
Furthermore, because it is evaluated on the basis of inner experience, it is
difficult to measure success in empirical terms.
Nonetheless, great opportunities exist for
pioneering work in IPE. There's already a great deal
of expertise in this field, with an emerging group

of people who realize their lack of knowledge
concerning peace and who are willing to learn. If
we can overcome the obstacles that prevent us from
realizing the real nature of peace and avoid the
influences of segregation and bias which are so
easily instilled by race, nationality and religion —
through interactive communication we can really
start to understand peace *from the inside out*. Thus
although IPE is derived from

Buddhist values, it
emphasizes key human qualities
that *transcend*
cultural differences. It is
something that should be
a part of every child's education
from their earliest
years.The idea of IPE is that the
attitudes it instils,
will not be erased by
circumstances. It will remain
in a child's character, shaping him
to be reasonable
rather than emotional when
making decisions,
instilling a sense of responsibility
toward himself,

his nearest and dearest, his
economy, society and
the environment. To be studied,
IPE concepts need
to be translated into learning
activities by teachers
or parents. By intensive study of
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
Thailand have been touched by the IPE curriculum
— and this can have made no small contribution to
peace in the world community — helping children
to open up their hearts to listen to

the teacher inside
and understand the reality of life
and the world —
healing differences, celebrating
similarities and
promoting world peace through
inner peace.

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

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.

of all nationalities, races and

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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

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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School Track Record:

- 2,600 students from kindergarten to Grade 6 have joined the ‘Path of Progress’ Ethics Quiz Contest every year from 1990 to present;
- first prize winner in the primary school category for 1998;
- first prize in the primary school team category for 2000, 2001 and 2002;

● recognized by the Thai Ministry of Education as
'best school for cultivation of virtue in students'
Singha Samutra High School, Chonburi, Thailand
"The intention of our school in joining the
'Path of Progress' scheme was originally only
to evaluate the level of knowledge of our
students concerning the Buddha's teachings
and also to see where our students stood as
compared to other schools.

However, when I saw the students' enthusiasm in joining the competition, I too started to read the book, the *Manual of Peace*. I started to be involved gradually with tutoring the students for competitions. After teaching for a while, I became fascinated by the Buddha's 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.

other kids but it's not so.
It started when I was in high

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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
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.

called *A Manual of Peace* to
prepare myself for a
contest. I did not know why I went

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through it.
Surprisingly, I was very touched by the
content the book offered. This book was the
turning point of my life. I learned to love myself,
my parents, my teachers, my friends and others
in a more productive way. I was taught to think
wisely before acting, to choose eloquent and
useful words to express myself in and to do
good deeds towards myself and other people.

From then on, I avoided people who
attempted to poison me with drugs or any other
bad things. I stopped coming home late. I tried
to help my mother in every way I could. Right
now, my mother and I understand each other
more. I do well at school and my friends now
welcome me to join class activities with them.
All I would like to say is a big ‘thank you’ to
the Path of Progress. They have

changed my
life. They helped me find the way out of the
dark. I will try to help spread the project to more
people in my community. There are many
young people who are still stuck in vicious
circles. They do not know how to go out of
them. Please show them the light at the end of
the tunnel. And please try to reach us before
the mistakes we make in our lives are too grave.

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 Nationsaccredited 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
Thailand who sacrifice their time
to organize ethical
activities primarily for youth.
Their success is a
result of the dedication, hard work
and devotion
of an 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.

IBS has become a major player in Thai youth development an active role in promoting peace 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

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.

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

- ***Leadership Training Program:*** this scheme attracts young people by providing advanced

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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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towards Enlightened Living
A. AÌguttara NikÅya (PTS Edition)
AA. ManorathapËraÁÈ - AÌguttara NikÅya Commentary (PTS Edition)
Ap. ApadÅna (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. JÅtaka (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)
Nd1 MahÅ Niddesa (PTS Edition)
Nd2 CËla Niddesa (PTS Edition)
Nd2A. 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. UdÅna (PTS Edition)
Vbh. Vibhanga (PTS Edition)
Vin. Vinaya (PTS Edition)

Vism. Visuddhimagga (PTS Edition)
Vv. VimÅnavatthu (PTS Edition)
VvA. VimÅnavatthu Commentary (PTS Edition)

Abbreviations

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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 nurtur e 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-

Orientation

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’ [maÌgala]. 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
‘maÌgala’ 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 everyone.
However, if you put alcohol or poison in the
glass, then the glass is immediately eyed with suspicion.
The worth of a drinking glass thus depends
on its content.
In the same way, a human being has two important
parts: body and mind. By body we mean all

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 preinstalled
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:

- ***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
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.

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:

1 Progressive & Sequential: The

thirty-eight blessings
are arranged according to the
degree of dif*Orientation*
23
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
pindown
in such a simple scientific
situation, it is
hardly surprising that ethics based
on 'means'

and 'ends' are virtually impossible

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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 thirtyeight
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.

9 Transcending 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 thirtyeight
blessings are representedby a set of
thirtyeight
identifiers, like tips-of-the-iceberg,
which
signal thepresence of a nest of
much deeperrooted
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.

Orientation 25

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, noone
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.

Blessing One: Not Associating with Fools **27**

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

Blessing One: Not Associating with Fools

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".
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with Fools ***29***

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

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— 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 regulations:

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

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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 [añña datthuhara]
2. The Man of Empty Promises [vacÈparama]
3. The Flatterer [anuppiyabhÅÁÈ]
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

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,

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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

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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 (Ku*Êi*d*Ë*ssaka 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
Blessing One: Not Associating

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.

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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 mind1 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.
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. 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’.

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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
[puññña] 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

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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 ÅjÈva] 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 [kataññÑË]: 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***42***
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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".

If you smile at him, he'll interpret

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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 behaviours
— 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;

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

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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.

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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
SiÌgalovÅda 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 diÊÊhi] 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 selfdiscipline
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).
Blessing Two: Associating with the Wise **47**
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
replacing
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

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

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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
Blessing Two: Associating with the Wise ***49***
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.

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Blessing Three: Expressing Respect to Those Worthy of Respect ***51***

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

Blessing Three: Expressing Respect to Those Worthy of Respect

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*Blessing*

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

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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),

Blessing Three: Expressing Respect to Those Worthy of Respect **55**

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 [SaÌgha] (who can be divided into those who are devoid of all defilement [ariyasaÌgha] 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
[sammutisaÌgha].
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;
2. 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

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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 SaÌgha,
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

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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
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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 society
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: Lowquality

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);

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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 selfdiscipline

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:

Blessing Three: Expressing Respect to Those Worthy of Respect ***61***

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

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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 Ānanda 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,

Blessing Three: Expressing Respect to Those Worthy of Respect ***63***

"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 colour
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

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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 lifetimes
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.
*Blessing One: Not Associating
with Fools* ***65***

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
socalled
‘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.

66 *A Manual of Peace: 38 Steps towards Enlightened Living*

AMENABLE National Local Neighbourhood Household LOCATION Level Level Level Level

A m e n a b l e Location

A m e n a b l e Food

A m e n a b l e Neighbours

A m e n a b l e

Dhamma Teachings

Unextreme Climate,
not too rugged,
accessible
from other countries
Self-sufficient in
food
Righteous monarch
or government,
population
honest, no terrorists
or anarchists
who threaten solidarity
Just law and customs
Ease of earning an
honest living, good
social infrastructure,

no infectious
diseases.
Supply of good all
year round
Lack of criminals,
outlaws and mafia
Good educational
system in worldly
and spiritual matters
Good water &
electricity supplies,
good roads,
no traffic jams,
good communications,
no natural
disasters
Proximity of market

Access to doctors,
patrons/benefactors,
wise men, no
dens of vice
nearby
Monks pass on
almsround, temples
and schools in
area
Well planned house,
sufficient spaces,
good ventilation,
trees for shade, parks
nearby, no disturbance
from noise
A cottage garden, a
good cook in the

house
Heads of the household
must be virtuous
and not engage
in roads to ruin
Atmosphere of
learning and teaching
Dhamma in the
home, having at least
one communal meal
daily

TABLE 4.1
AMENABLE LOCATION ON DIFFERENT LEVELS OF DESCRIPTION

Blessing Four: Living in an

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-

Blessing Four: Living in an Amenable Location

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 neighbour hood level
might mean the proximity of the market.

B.2.4 Household Level

An amenable food supply at the household level

can be summarized with just a few brief hints:

1. You should have a supply of vegetables used

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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 emptyhanded.
Put another way, life has been
fruitless for
them.

Blessing Four: Living in an Amenable Location ***71***

Even though some people are born
on the doorstep
of Buddhism, they still leave the
world emptyhanded
— 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 emptyhanded" 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 [sampÅyikatthapayojana] (*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

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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

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 twentyfive.
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
1. Location
2. Food
3. Neighbours
4.Dhamma
Blessing Four: Living in an Amenable Location **73**
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

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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

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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 citystates
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*Blessing*
Four: Living in an Amenable
Location 75
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 welltrained
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
still impressed in their minds from that previous
lifetime, and recollecting the words of the
Abhidhamma were soon able to become enlightened
as arahants.

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Thus, it is easy to see that simply living in an amenable
location is not just advantageous for people
— even lowly animals can experience the benefits!

Blessing Five: Having Done Good Deeds in One's Past 77

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

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

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:

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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].

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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
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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*Blessing*
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One's Past ***85***
kindness towards them. If you are
angry with
anybody, don't let the anger last
overnight. It's

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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].

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

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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 *Blessing Five: Having Done Good*

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.

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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

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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
saÌghadÅna (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.
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Blessing Six: Setting Oneself up Properly in Life ***91***

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-

Blessing Six: Setting oneself up properly in life

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*Blessing*
Six: Setting Oneself up Properly in Life ***93***
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 wellplanned
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

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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 ‘lowdown’,
‘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 [sampayikatthapayojana].
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 spiritual:

You should devote yourself to spiritual practice starting from the time when you are still young and healthy. In fact even to start templegoing from the time you are twenty is still too

late. If you start temple-going from the age of

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 selfsufficient 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*Blessing*
Six: Setting Oneself up Properly in
Life ***97***
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***

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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

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“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.

The Learned The Wise

much knowledge maybe not much knowledge
maybe not much virtue much virtue maybe do not apply knowledge to do good deeds use what knowledge

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they have to do good deeds
must have good memory not
necessary to have good memory
must be educated irrespective of
literacy or education
no guarantee that they will not will
not make a mess of his life
make a mess out of their life

TABLE 7.1 COMPARISON OF QUALITIES FOR THE LEARNED & THE WISE

Blessing Seven: Artfulness in Knowledge ***103***

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.

Blessing Seven: Artfulness in Knowledge

2. Loss of responsibility towards the sense of human dignity of others: if teachers or

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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

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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;

2 . 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;

3. 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

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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 inter ested 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 try 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

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 SiÌgalovÅda 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

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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 [manasÅnupekkhitÅ]

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*Blessing*

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

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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
SaÌgha, 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.

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-Po*Ê*hila (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

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.

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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.

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 ‘sippaÔ’, 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,

Blessing Eight: Artfulness in Application

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
Blessing Eight: Artfulness in

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

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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 not 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*Blessing*

fessor to listen to him hold forth on
many different
subjects. He was very impressed
with the learning

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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

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.

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.

Blessing Nine:
Artfulness
in Usage

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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

mind. When we can avoid causing suffering to ourselves

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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,

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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

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.

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- 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

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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

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

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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.);

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;

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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

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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

[paccayapaccavekkhaÁa]**:**
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 selfdiscipline.
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 attainingselfdiscipline
is to remove oneself from the influence
of the Tenfold Path of

Unwholesomeness
[akusaladhammapatha],
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
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way to turn one person against another, mudslinging
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 vengefulness.
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.

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 unwholesome
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.
AN.XI.6

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***134***
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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

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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

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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 selfdiscipline
[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

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 Æsops' 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. Ma*Ô*sa J*Å*taka (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

some of your meat to eat.” The butcher heard his

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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.
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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.

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

[kataññËñ]

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

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.

Blessing Eleven: Cherishing our parents

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.
Blessing Eleven: Cherishing our Parents ***143***
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***144***

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 SiÌgalovÅda 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 oneself
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.
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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

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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

From the SiÌgalovÅda Sutta we learn that a child
has duties towards his parents and parents have

duties towards their children (*see detail Blessing Twelve §B.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

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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 children
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 goldplated
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.
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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

be hard to repay that debt of gratitude within a single life-time. Thus it is one of the

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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

G.13 Orphan with a Debt to Pay (traditional)

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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 newborn
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?”

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Blessing Twelve: Raising our Children ***153***

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,

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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 SiÌgalovÅda 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:

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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. storehouse
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 actions,
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

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
MÅyÅ 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 mother'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 'SammÅ-arahaÔ',
the baby, when it is born, will immediately be at
ease whenever it hears the words 'SammÅarahaÔ'.
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

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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
Blessing Twelve: Raising our Children ***159***
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 TilamuÊÊhi 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 settingup
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: [gharavÅsadhamma]: 1. truthfulness [sacca]; 2. training oneself [dama]; 3. patience [khanti], and; 4. selfsacrifice [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;
Blessing Twelve: Raising our Children ***163***
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

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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 [paññÅ]
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***164***
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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
SaÌgha).
J.i.487ff.

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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

Blessing Thirteen: Cherishing our husband or wife

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 longlasting, 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 overcome
the mind of a man like those of a woman and no sight, sound, scent

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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

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towards Enlightened Living
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 singlehanded

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.

Blessing Thirteen: Cherishing our

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

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bank account" [saÌgahavatthu] 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 SiÌgalovÅda
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

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wife. The feelings of a person who is found guilty
of sexual misconduct are described in the Sutta
Nipata:
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 depr essed . . .
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
be especially careful what she says
to them because
a few ill chosen words can have
serious
consequences.

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

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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

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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 thr ough 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
Blessing Thirteen: Cherishing our Husband or Wife ***175***
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 maneating
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 maneating
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

reminding others of things they are

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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 anything
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

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

[paÊirËpakÅrÈ]. 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 that you are lethargic then maybe you should take up sport.

(/Òavaka Sutta S.i.214)

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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

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.

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Blessing One: Not Associating with Fools ***183***

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’.

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Introduction to Blessing Fifteen

Buddhism places great importance on generosity
because it is seen as the origin of

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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

Blessing Fifteen: Generosity

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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

give because they want others to
see them doing
so, or they want to become famous
as the

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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;

- 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

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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

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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 longterm
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

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 [paÊipuggalikadÅna] 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 1012 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;
8. to a person has attained sainthood at the level of once-returner [sakidÅgÅmi]
then the merit is

even more;
9. 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

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

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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 [saÌghadÅna]
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
SaÌgha 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
SiÌgalovÅda 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 SaÌgha. 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.

Thus it falls upon earnestly
practising monks to
co-operate in trying to salvage the

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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

(/diya 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, onehalf
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*Blessing*
Fifteen: Generosity ***193***
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.

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The Buddha
taught that a noble man will give:
1. with faith (i.e. with full faith in the favourable
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: Mah*Å*paday*È *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

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. C*ËÒ*as*Å*taka Brahmin (DhA.*ii*i.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

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 Vim*Å*navatthu (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 (TavatiÔsa). 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

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it was always a donation to the monastic community [saÌghadÅna] 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. J*Ë*jaka Brahmin & his wife Amittat*Å*pan*Å

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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*Practice **197***

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

Blessing Sixteen: Dhamma Practice

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

'*dhammas*'. 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 [sÈla];
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***202***
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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

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student died. The
Buddha told his teacher that where he lived, noone
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 longlived
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.

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Blessing Seventeen: Looking After One's Extended Family ***205***

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-

Blessing Seventeen: Looking After One's Extended

Family

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, uncles, cousins, grandparents etc.), those who we trust and have concern for, close

friends (but
maybe not those who are no more
than acquaintances
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" [saÌgahavatthu] 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
[saÌgahavatthu] 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

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 society
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***208***
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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 [saÌgahavatthu]:

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

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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 extended
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

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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 J*Å*taka (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*Ìga**
(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

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.’

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Blessing Eighteen: Blameless Work ***213***

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 population:***

If the public are made ill by unethical business practices, the medical costs it is the victims who end up paying the bill

through

Blessing Eighteen: Blameless Work

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

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

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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

down to trading a product or a service. For Right

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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’ [saÌgahavatthu] 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*Blessing*
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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

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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 SiÌgalovÅda 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.

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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

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*Å *J*Å*taka (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. S*Ë*ci J*Å*taka (J.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.

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The Sixth Group of Blessings

"Preparation of Mind"

The first eighteen blessings form the first half of the MaÌgala 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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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.

Blessing Nineteen: Abstaining from Unwholesomeness

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
Blessing Nineteen: Abstaining
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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.
Nd1.32
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 unwholesome
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 values,
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*Blessing*
Nineteen: Abstaining from Unwholesomeness ***229***
cused of stealing. Such avoidance of evil occurs
as the result of the important ability to
teach oneself i.e. the fear and

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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 [samucchedavirati]**:**
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-
AarahaÔ 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]

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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

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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 lifetimes.”
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 (Ma*Ì*galad*È*pan*È *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. Kukku*Ê*amitta 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

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*.

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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.
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Under the influence of alcohol, all
these bad features
of the mind have the chance to
manifest themselves

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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

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(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 [katañññË]
- 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:

Blessing Twenty: Restraint from Drinking Intoxicants ***237***

1. The first thing you have to do is see through to
the danger of alcohol.

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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. Bhagragha**Ê**a J**Å**taka 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

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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

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!

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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 spending
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

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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 /nanda 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, Ānanda asked the
reason. The Buddha replied,
“Ānanda! 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.
Ānanda!
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

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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

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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.

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B. NON-RECKLESSNESS

B.1 Definition of non-recklessness

'Non-recklessness' means being in control of oneself the whole of the time, no matter whether one is thinking, speaking or doing overt actions — never allowing yourself slip into complacency, and never letting the opportunity to do good deeds pass by unanswered. You need to be focussed on the things which you have to do and things which you need to avoid. You have 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.

TABLE 21.1

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We might easily overlook the
importance of ‘nonrecklessness’
at this particular point in the
thirtyeight
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
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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 nonrecklessness.
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

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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 bottom 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.

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E. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

E.1 Proverbs

AppamÅdo amataÔ padaÔ
Non-recklessness is the pathway to immortality.
PamÅdo maccuno padaÔ
Recklessness is the pathways to death.
Dh. v21

When the wise remove
recklessness by nonrecklessness;
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

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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.

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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).

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

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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, faultfinding
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.

Blessing Twenty-Two: Respect

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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 nowadays
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*Blessing*
Twenty-Two: Respect ***255***
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 respectful
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.

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 Buddha'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

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;

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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 SaÌgha

The SaÌgha were those who have trained themselves
and help to teach others to follow in their
footsteps. We can pay respect to the SaÌgha 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

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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 dhutaÌga 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,

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

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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 Nd1.80*]) 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 independent
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

Blessing Twenty-Three: Humility

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
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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

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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 manin 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.

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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 uninintentionally, 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 S*Å*riputta (Vu*ÎÎ*hi 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 swordbrandishing
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. Vid*Ëd*abha & Mah*Å*n*Å*ma, 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

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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.

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Contentment ***269***

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 different
— 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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Contentment

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 selfdevelopment
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 selfdevelopment.
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*Blessing*

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

president for my father?" Some people blame
their parents for being so poor,

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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 neighbour
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*Blessing*
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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

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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 handservant,
don’t go dreaming of being an employer
— e.g. not choosing
status-symbols inappropriate
to our actual status — like a highbacked
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,

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

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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*Blessing*

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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.
Blessing Twenty-Four:
Contentment ***277***
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

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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. Asit*Å*bhu J*Å*taka (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 *kinnarees* .
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 hometown.
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.

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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*Ô*sa 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
such people in every period of
history and they
have brought only suffering and
degradation to
society in all cases. The illness
such people suffer
from is that they ‘never know
enough’ of something
or to be more specific, they lack
contentment.

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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 [kataññÑ-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;

Blessing Twenty-Five: Gratitude

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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
sincerest
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 [kataññÑË]: 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’, kataññÑË, 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,
‘kataññ̃Ë’ 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 [katañññË-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

university level because it is the most highly developed virtue concerning gratitude. If someone

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just thinks, “my parents have done me a favour
by bringing me up so I will return the favour by
looking after them in their old age” then it is only
goodness 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*)

- Our parents (*see Bl. Three §C4*)

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- Our teachers (*see Bl. Three §C5*)
- Virtuous Employers (*see Bl. Three §C6*)
- Virtuous Monarchs (*see Bl. Three §C3, i.e. those established in the Ten Rajadhammas, see Bl. Sixteen §C2*)

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 inanimate
(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.

2. Be grateful to your own body:
by using it only
for good deeds. Don't go
destroying your health

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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. Noone
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. Gu*Á*a/S*È*ha J*Å*taka
(J.157)

A second disciple of the Buddha
well known for
his gratitude was /nanda. /nanda
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 Ānanda
in every way
— washing his robes, sweeping the
lodging and
massaging his feet because Ānanda
himself had
many other responsibilities to
attend to, especially
as secretary to the Buddha. Even
though Ānanda
did not have much time to spare to
look after his
charges, he thought of his junior
monks with gratitude.

One day when Ānanda went to teach in the
palace he was offered 500 sets of robes. Ānanda
offered all 500 to that faithful student of his. Some
people wondered why Ānanda was biased towards
this particular student and whether he was really a
stream-enterer [sotāpana] as others claimed. Why
didn't he divide up the robes equally? In any case
the faithful student divided up the five-hundred

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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 Ānanda had done. The Buddha explained that
Ānanda 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 Ānanda 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. S*È*lavan*Å*ga J*Å*taka (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.
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E.6 Ex. JavasakuÁa 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

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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 SaÌgha, 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.

Blessing Twenty-Six: Listening Regularly

to Dhamma Teachings

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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
Blessing Twenty-Six: Listening Regularly to Dhamma Teachings

of the mind that you are
experiencing. If you are
feeling slighted or sorry for

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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 [kÅmavitakka]:
when your mind is overcome with
desire (especially sensual
temptation);
2. preoccupation with vengefulness
[byÅpÅdavitakka]:
(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 [vihiÔsÅvitakka]:
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,

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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

Blessing Twenty-Six: Listening Regularly to Dhamma Teachings

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.

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

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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

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— 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
[bojjhaÌga] 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 chanting
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. Janas*Åna *Ascetic
(MahÅvaÔsa-ÊÈkÅ
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***298***
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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 Vedas1.
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.

D.4 Ex. Saccaka Nigantha
M.i.234ff., MA.i.469ff.

In the JÅyamaÌgalagÅthÅ
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-

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.

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time, he was soon able to become a valuable Buddhist missionary.

D.5 Ex. KÅÒÈ ***Kuraragharik***Å ***(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 [sÈla] 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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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

Blessing Twenty-Seven: Patience

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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

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— 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 of fer 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 [*hiri*] 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

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

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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. Khantiv*Åd*È J*Å*taka (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. Pu*ÁÁ*ov*Å*da 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

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

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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 cooperate.
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 M*ÅÁ*avika

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

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

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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. M*Å*gandiy*Å**

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, Ānanda could not stand it any more. He suggested to the Buddha that they go to another town.

The Buddha asked Ānanda, "And what happens if in the next town there are also people coming to

insult us?”
Ānanda 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.

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,

Blessing Twenty-Eight: Openness to Criticism

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 JÅtaka (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 twentyeighth
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 selfimprovement,
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!

4. 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.

5. 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."

6. Will show the greatest humility:

They will re*Blessing*

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

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,

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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

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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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. Those who have to have the last word if criticized

[kodhano hoti kodhasÅmantaÔ vÅcaÔ
nicchÅretÅ]***:*** unable to control what they say
when criticized.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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

further by using the advice as the

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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
añña̱n’
añña̱Ô 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 err ors 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 goodwill

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 mushrooms
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

hidden treasure, it is always better and never
worse, to cultivate such an association.

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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. Noone
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*Blessing*

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

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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. Brahmada*ÁÎ*a
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.
Ānanda 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
Ānanda 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 underrobe
(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 sevenyear
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 ***321***
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 understanding
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 MaÌgala 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.
- ‘SÅmaÁera’: 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 Taoism,
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 unsuitable
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

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:

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 selfawareness***

[sampajañña]**:** This means not allowing 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 Supranormal
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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[asavakkhayañÅÁa]
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 SÅmañññaphala 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;
2. 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;
3. 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;
4. Gambling or encouraging supporters to waste time with gambling;
5. Being interested to converse on worldly subjects:
Such subjects include waging war

or fashion
— or other subjects not directly concerned
with monastic duties;
6. 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;
7. 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.

8. 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

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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*Blessing*
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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

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. MaÊÊ***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 manner 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. MahÅnÅga 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*Blessing*

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

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

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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!

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 The place of Blessing Thirty in the order of things

Many people can talk all day and

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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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- ***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:***

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*Blessing*
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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;

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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 comprehend 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]; wellprepared

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*Blessing*
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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

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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

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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 [vimuttiñÅÁadassana].
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:

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

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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 transcendental
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
[*deva*s] 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 reason
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 [ÅsavakkhayañÅÁa].
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. B*Å*var*È *& 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 thirtyfive*
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

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
Blessing Thirty: Regular

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
[ÅkiñcañññÅyatana-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-rËpa] 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***342***

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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.
PiÌgiya: 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.
PiÌgiya: 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 PiÌgiya who became a non-returner [anagÅmi]
because he was thinking of BÅvarÈ as the Buddha

preached. PiÌgiya 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. PiÌgiya 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*Blessing*
Thirty: Regular Discussion of the Dhamma ***343***
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!

Blessing One: Not Associating

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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 DhammakÅya;

- ***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 DhammakÅya, 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.

Striver's Reasoning

" 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

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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”
“I should be quick to meditate before
there is a relapse”

Situation

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 . . .
Having just recovered

from
illness . . .

Backslider's Reasoning

"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”
“If I sit for meditation it might cause
a relapse —
so better that I sleep instead”

TABLE 31.1
Backsliders vs. Strivers’ Outlook on the World

Blessing Thirty-One: The Practice of Austerities ***347***

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

Blessing Thirty-One: The Practice of Austerities

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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

lovingkindness
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 [dhutaÌga]:

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 dhutaÌga
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

[paÔsukËlikaÌga]

Wearing only robes made from rags retrieved
from a dust heap or from a charnel ground (§1).

2. Triple-robe wearer's Practice

[tecÈvarikaÌga]

Usually just three robes are allowed for monks
to use, that is the upper robe [uttarasankaÔ],
the outer robe [saÌghatiÔ] 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
dhutaÌga, 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 dhutaÌga 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 [piÁÎapÅÊikaÌga]

Eating only food that has been

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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 [sapadÅnacÅrikaÌga]

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

[ekÅsanikaÌga] 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

[pattapiÁÎikaÌga] 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 [khalupacchÅbhattikaÌga]

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

[ÅraññikaÌga] This practice entails living only in shelters in the for*Blessing Thirty-One: The Practice of Austerities* ***351***
est and never using accommodation in the town (§8).

2. Tree-root dweller's practice

[rukkhamËlikaÌga]

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 [abbhokÅsikaÌga]

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 [sosÅnikaÌga]

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

[yathÅsantatikaÌga]

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 [nesajjikaÌga]

This practice entails avoiding lying down. Usually when one stays on a dhutaÌga retreat, one is there to meditate anyway. If you keep this sort of dhutaÌga 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 'dhutaÌga 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 dhutaÌga 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 dhutaÌga 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.

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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
Blessing Thirty-One: The Practice of Austerities ***353***
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 celebrities
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
[yathÅbhËtañÅÁadassana] — 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;

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

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."
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-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-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 Ånusaya],

annoyance
[pÅÊighÅ Ånusaya] and subtle
ignorance [avijjÅ Ånusaya]. When
the mind is sufficiently
pure to be released from these three
defilements, the mind will attain the
first Dhamma
Body [DhammakÅya GotrabhË].
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], nonreturner
[anagami] and arahant (*detail is given in Blessing Thirty-Three*).

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TABLE 32.1

Correlation of inner experience to sphere of mental experience

sphere of mind subjective

experience

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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

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Hindrances, (*see Blessing Nineteen §D.2.2.*) the mind can become unified at the level of the first formabsorption [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
[arËpavacarabhËmi]:
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 inside
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 [lokuttarabhËmi]

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 ⁄Òara
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?
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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:

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-

Hell-Like Cases

Lifeless or threatening apparitions
Barren or ugly expanse
Threats, screams, silence
Danger and the possibility of violence and/or torture
A feeling of cold (or of temperature extremes), and a sense of hell

Heaven-Like Cases

Friendly beings
Beautiful, lovely environments
Conversations and dialogue
Total acceptance and an overwhelming sensation of love

A feeling of warmth and a
sense of heaven

TABLE 32.2: Categorization of Near Death Experiences

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 besensual
plane
[kÅmavacarabhËmi]

form plane
[rËpavacarabhËmi]
formless plane
[arËpavacarabhËmi]
transcendental
plane of mind sphere of existence underpinning
/bhËmi**/ /**bhava**/ virtue**
sensual sphere
[kÅmabhava]
form sphere
[rËpa-bhava]
formless sphere
[arËpa-bhava]
Nirvana
<human>
Five Precepts intact

<angelic> shame of evil
[*hiri*] and fear of evil
[*ottappa*]
The four divine
abidings [brahmavihÅra]:
1. loving kindness;
2. compassion; 3.
sympathetic joy;
4. equanimity.
arupajhÅna absorptions
Noble Eightfold Path
(*more in Blessing 33*)

TABLE 32.3: Spheres of Existence as they relate to Underpinning Virtues

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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.

Nirvana

· ***Realm of neither perception nor non-perception***
[NevasaññÅnÅsaññÅyatana]

· ***Realm of nothingness***
[/kiñcaññÅyatana]

· ***Realm of infinite consciousness***
[viññÅÁañcÅyatana]

· ***Realm of infinite space***
[ÅkÅsÅnañcÅyatana]

· ***Realm of the supreme Brahmas***
[AkaniÊÊhÅ]

· ***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***
[SubhakiÁhÅ]
· ***Realm of Brahmas with infinite aura***
[AppamÅÁasubhÅ]
· ***Realm of Brahmas with limited aura***

[ParittasubhÅ]

· ***Realm of Brahmas with radiant lustre***

[/bhassarÅ]

· ***Realm of Brahmas with infinite lustre***

[AppamÅÁÅbhÅ]

· ***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]

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]

sphere realms of existence

t r a n s c e n -
dental
f o r m l e s s -
planes
form-planes
s e n s u a l -
planes

TABLE 32.4: The Thirty-One Realms of Existence

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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 continuity
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

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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 temptation.
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

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);

4. 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')

5. 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.)

6. 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 someone
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*Blessing*
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cer in a marriage. Especially when
your spouse
is not a particularly moral person,
the level of

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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

— 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*** [*sadarasantusa*]: 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 quartermoon
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.

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

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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 information
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 dis-

1. in orthodox or Theravaada Buddhism cipline, we are no more than a householder with

a shaven head and saffron robes. To masquerade as a monk is no better than to steal from the

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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

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 dhutaÌga
because he kept the dhutaÌga
practices throughout

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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 formlessabsorptions
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
dhutaÌga.

E.3 Ex. B*Å*hiya D*Å*ruc*È*riya 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

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.

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A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Blessing Thirty-three in the order of things

This blessing and the remaining five blessings of
the MaÌgala 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:

Blessing Thirty-Three: Seeing the

Four Noble Truths

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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 10140 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

[nirodha-ariyasacca], and;
4. The Noble Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering [magga-ariyasacca or dukkhanirodha-gÅminÈ-paÊipadÅ-ariyasacca].
If you were to compare these with our system of curing illness, you can compare:

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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 Hell Realms
9. the Suffering of Birth in the Animal Kingdom
10. the Suffering of Birth in the Realm of Hungry Ghosts

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 [maraÁa]*:* 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

- having to face pre-death omens and visions
- the struggle of clinging to possessions in vain
- the struggle of clinging to loved ones in vain
- special torment of death in the case of execution

B.1.2 Miscellaneous Suffering [pakiÁakkadukkha]***:***

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 [upÅyÅssa]*:* 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 r esult. 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.

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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 defilements
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 sensepleasure
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

wish to be reborn in the formless

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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 [rËpÅvacarabhËmi],
the Formless Sphere [arËpavacarabhumi]
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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Right View
[sammÅ diÊÊhi]
Right Intention
[sammÅ saÌkappa]
Right Speech
[sammÅ vÅcÅ]
Right Action
[sammÅ kammanta]
Right Livelihood
[sammÅ ÅjÈva]

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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.

Mundane [*lokiya*] **Transcendental** [*lokuttara*]

Right View
Right Intention
Right Speech
Right Action
Right Livelihood
Right Effort

Right Mindfulness
Right Concentration
Wisdom
Self-Discipline
Meditation

TABLE 33.1: Practising the Eightfold Path on Mundane and Transcendental Levels

TABLE 33.2: Correlation between Eightfold Path Factors & the Threefold Training

Eightfold Path Factors Threefold Training

For as long as a meditator cultivates the Noble

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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
(DhammÅnupassanÅsatipaÊÊhÅna
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 selfdiscipline [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

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sphere subjective experience	**equivalent inner eye**
sensual Physical Body: physical eye [maÔsa-cakkhu]	
Angelic Body angelic eye	
mundane [*dibba-cakkhu*]	
states of form Form-Brahma Body	
the eye of wisdom	
mind [paññÅ-cakkhu]	
[*lokiya*] formless Formless-Brahma Body all-seeing eye [*samanta-cakkhu*]	
transcendental Dhammakaya GotrabhË Body	
states of mind of Enlightenment and higher Buddha eye [*lokuttara*] [*buddha-cakkhu*]	
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
N i r o d h a g Å ***m*** È ***n*** È

***Ariyasacca Pa*Ê*ipad*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

TABLE 33.3: Correlation between state of mind, inner experience & capacity for insight

TABLE 33.4: Seeing the Four

Noble Truths - Three Cycles with Twelve Characteristics

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DhammakÅya GotrabhË 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
DhammakÅya SotÅpana Body
using the Dhamma eye of this body to examine
the Noble Truths as they pertain to the angelic
body, the DhammakÅya SakidÅgÅmÈ Body can

be attained
DhammakÅya SakidÅgÅmÈ Body
using the
Dhamma eye of this body to examine
the Noble
Truths as they pertain to the Form
Brahma
body, the DhammakÅya AnÅgÅmÈ
Body can
be attained
DhammakÅya AnaagÅmÈ 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

DhammakÅya Arahant Body
self-view [sakkayadiÊÊhi]
doubt [vicikicchÅ]
attachment to rites and rituals [sÈlabbataparamÅsa]
sensual grasping [kÅmarÅga]
annoyance [pÅtighÅ]
attachment to the form realms [rËparÅga]
attachment for the formless realms [arËparÅga]
stubbornness [mÅna]
absent-mindedness [uddhacca]
ignorance [avijjÅ]
sensual grasping [kÅmarÅga]
annoyance [pÅtighÅ]
attachment to the form realms [rËparÅga]

attachment for the formless realms [arËparÅga]
stubbornness [mÅna]
absent-mindedness [uddhacca]
ignorance [avijjÅ]
sensual grasping [kÅmarÅga]
annoyance [pÅtighÅ]
attachment to the form realms [rËparÅga]
attachment for the formless realms [arËparÅga]
stubbornness [mÅna]
absent-mindedness [uddhacca]
ignorance [avijjÅ]
desire [rÅga](diminished)
hatred [dosa] (diminished)
delusion [moha](diminished)
attachment to the form realms

[rËparÅga]
attachment for the formless realms
[arËparÅga]
stubbornness [mÅna]
absent-mindedness [uddhacca]
ignorance [avijjÅ]
none
none
self-view [sakkayadiÊÊhi]
doubt [vicikicchÅ]
attachment to rites and rituals
[sÈlabbataparamÅsa]
self-view [sakkayadiÊÊhi]
doubt [vicikicchÅ]
attachment to rites and rituals
[sÈlabbataparamÅsa]
self-view [sakkayadiÊÊhi]
doubt [vicikicchÅ]

attachment to rites and rituals [sÈlabbataparamÅsa]
desire [kÅmarÅga]
annoyance [pÅtighÅ].
self-view [sakkayadiÊÊhi]
doubt [vicikicchÅ]
attachment to rites and rituals [sÈlabbataparamÅsa]
sensual grasping [kÅmarÅga]
annoyance [pÅtighÅ]
attachment to the form realms [rËparÅga]
attachment for the formless realms [arËparÅga]
stubbornness [mÅna]
absent-mindedness [uddhacca]
ignorance [avijjÅ]
attainment/practice remaining

fetters [saÔyojana] destroyed fetters [samyojana]

TABLE 33.5: Stages of Inner Attainment at which fetters are uprooted

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

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exists at differing levels of refinement:

- Dhammakaya GotrabhË Body
- Dhammakaya SotÅpana Body
- Dhammakaya SakidÅgÅmÈ Body
- Dhammakaya AnÅgÅmÈ 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 with Twelve 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 [sakidÅgÅmi], non-returner [anÅgÅmÈ] 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

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

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. Kis*Å*gotam*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

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

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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.

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 Twentynine

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

Blessing Thirty-Four: The Attainment of Nirvana

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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.

A.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

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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’

[anupÅdisesanibbÅna]: AnupÅdisesa Nirvana is the Nirvana

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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 [ÅyatananibbÅna]:
/yatana Nirvana is the location of
Nirvana. /yatana 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
/yatana 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

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 [sÅmaññña-lakkhaÁa]:
Nirvana is asserted to be outside the influence of
the Three Characteristics [ti-lakkhaÁa]1 — specifically
it is permanent rather than impermanent:
... asaÔhÈraÔ asaÌkuppaÔ

... it cannot be taken away or changed
Nd2.56
. . . 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 Davids1,
C o n d i t i o n e d
Dhammas such as the
Five Aggregates (with
Three Characteristics)
impermanent
suffering
not/no-self
Nirvana as a non-conditioned phenomenon
(without Three Characteristics)

permanent
happy
self...?
1. The three Universal Characteristics [sÅmaññña-lakkhaÁa] are
the same as the Three Characteristics [ti-lakkhaÁa]
TABLE 34.1: Scriptural evidence for the Universal Characteristics in Conditioned and Unconditioned Phenomena

and Miss I.B. Horner2. Both of these were scholars
of incomparable dedication and

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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
Humphreys3 and

Edward Conze4. 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
anañña saraÁÅ, dhammadÈpÅ
dhammasaraÁÅa, anañña sarañÅ
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 TheravÅda 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

Blessing Thirty-Four: The Attainment of Nirvana ***391***

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’
(Nd2A.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: Threefold training at Different levels of attainment

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 practice 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.

D. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

D.1 Ex. VaÌgisa Thera Vatthu (DhA.iv.226ff.)

Once in RÅjagaha there was a brahmin by the
name of VaÌgisa who could tell the afterlife destination
of a corpse simply by tapping its skull.
The brahmins were very proud of VaÌgisa 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, VaÌgisa 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 VaÌgisa
who could tell where their relatives
had been reborn.
But the people said to them, “What
does
VaÌgisa 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, VaÌgisa 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 VaÌgisa 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, "VaÌgisa don't you know? I know where the

owner of that skull
is." VaÌgisa 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.
VaÌgisa 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.
VaÌgisa 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! VaÌgisa 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

VaÌgisa would
have been able to find the afterlife
destination of
the arahant.

D.2 Ex. Ku*Ê*umbiyaputta-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 selfdiscipline,
meditated for the whole of the night to
became an *arahant* at dawn.
Blessing One: Not Associating with Fools ***393***

The Tenth Group of Blessings

"The Fruits of Having

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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 ***395***

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
‘phuÊÊassalokadhammehi
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.

Blessing Thirty-Five: A Mind Invulnerable to Worldly Vicissitudes

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● ***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
Blessing Thirty-Five: A Mind Invulnerable to Worldly Vicissitudes ***397***
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

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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!"

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. Laku*ÁÎ*aka 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*?’

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Bhaddiya never retaliated
in anger, or abused them. In fact he
was al*Blessing*
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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

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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.
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Blessing Thirty-Six:
Sorrowlessness ***403***
A. INTRODUCTION
A.1 True love and possessive love
Second only to wisdom,
compassion [karuÁÅ] —
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.

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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 nothing
and no-one when you will not have suffering
about anything. Such a person will be without

suffering and without regrets as to their life.
In fact the existence of suffering, despair and
sorrow in the world is only brought about because
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 possessions)
there will be no further suffering, despair
and sorrow. Whosoever can put aside their love
Blessing Thirty-Six:

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 language:
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 possessive
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 *escape*
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

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
Blessing Thirty-Six:
Sorrowlessness ***407***
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. PaÊÅ***c***Å***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

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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 completely
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

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, PaÊÅcÅrÅ
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 ***411***

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*.

Blessing Thirty-Seven: Freedom from Subtle Defilements

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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:

putes 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
Defilement Family Seriousness of Duration of

Potential Damage Potential Damage

Greed/Desire Slight Long-lived
Hatred/Anger Grave Short-lived
Ignorance/Delusion Grave Long-lived

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 dis-

TABLE 37.1: Damage Characteristics of Different Defilement Groups

Desiring things in a Dishonest Way [lobha]
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]
Grasping for the Sensual Realms
[kÅmarÅga]
Grasping for the Form Realms
[rËparÅga]
Grasping for the Formless Realms
[arËparÅga]
Vengefulness
[byÅpÅda]

Directed Anger
[dosa]
Undirected Anger
[kodha]
Irritability
[pÅÊigha]
Dislike
[arati]
Wrong View
[micchÅ diÊÊhi]
Delusion
[moha]
False View of Individuality
[sakkayadiÊÊhi]
Doubt
[vicikicchÅ]
Adherance to Superstitions
[sÈlabbatapÅrÅmasa]

Conceit
[mÅna]
Absent-Mindedness
[uddhacca]
Ignorance
[avijjÅ]
Heavy
Medium
Subtle
Greed Hatred Delusion
TABLE 37.2
Heavy, Medium & Subtle Defilements in the Three Defilement Groups

honest means you could save up to

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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;

2. 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;

3. Discrete Covetousness

[abhijjhÅ]: This is the
desire for something which is strong, but not
so strong that you cannot conceal your interest;

4. 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;

5. 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
advantage

of others;
6. 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;
7. 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;

8. 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;

9. 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 [sÈlabbataparÅmÅsa]:
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*Blessing Thirty-Seven: Freedom from Subtle Defilements* ***417***
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

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.

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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
[maraÁa-bhaya].

Blessing Thirty-Eight:

The Blissful Mind

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2. External Dangers: Apart from the built in dangers,
we still have to endure the dangers around
us in the world that we confront in our everyday
lives. The dangers might come from:

- *people*: e.g. fools, false friends, malevolent husbands,
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 wellcut
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 Brahmaworld;

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:

1. the ability to recollect one's own previous existences [pubbenivasanussatiñÅÁa];

2. the ability to recollect the previous existences of others [cutËpapÅtañÅÁa];

3. the knowledge of an utter end to all defilements [Åsavakkhayañ ÅÁa]

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;

3. analytic insight into language [niruttipaÊisambhidÅ]:

masterful insight into language allowing one to know the meaning of all forms of human and animal communication;

4. 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* thirtyeight
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 . . .”

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

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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 MahÅ-
Kappina'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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Meditation is a state of ease, inner peace and happiness
that we can bring into being, ourselves. It is
a practice recommended by Buddhism for happiness, non-recklessness, mindfulness and wisdom
in everyday life. It is no mystery, but something
which can be easily practised by all following the
technique taught by Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro), Luang Phaw Wat Paknam as follows:

Step-by-Step Instructions for the

Meditation Technique

(1) Paying respect to the Triple Gem: To start one should soften one's mind by paying respect to the Triple Gem, before taking Five or Eight Precepts to consolidate one's virtue;

(2) Recollect your goodness: Kneel or sit with your feet to one side and think of all the good deeds you have done throughout the day, from your past, and all the good deeds you intend to do in the future. Recollect such good deeds in such a way,

until you feel as if your
whole body seems to be filled with
tiny particles of
goodness;
(3) Sit for meditation, relaxing body and mind: Sit in
the half-lotus position, upright
with your back and
spine straight — cross-legged with
your right leg over
the left one. Your hands should
rest palms-up on your
lap, and the tip of your right index
finger should touch
your left thumb. Try to find a
position of poise for
yourself. Don’t take up a position

where you have to
force or stress yourself unnaturally
— but at the same
time, don't slouch! Softly close
your eyes as if you were
falling asleep. Don't squeeze your
eyes shut and make
sure you have no tension across
your eyebrows. Relax
every part of your body, beginning
with the muscles of
your face, then relax your face,
neck shoulders, arms,
chest, trunk and legs. Make sure
there are no signs of
tension on your forehead or across
your shoulders.

Focus on the task in hand, creating a feeling of ease in your mind. Feel that the you are entering upon a supreme state of calm and ease with both body and mind.

(4) Imagine a crystal ball as the object of your meditation:

Imagine a clear, bright, flawless crystal ball as if it is floating at the centre of your body (see seventh base of the mind in the illustration). The crystal ball should be pure and soothing, like twinkling starlight to the

eye. At the same time, softly repeat the sound of the
mantra ‘SammÅ-ArahaÔ’ to yourself as ‘recollection
of the Buddha’ over and over again. Alternatively you
can start by imagining the crystal ball at the first base
of the mind, and gradually move it down to the
seventh base via the other six bases (see diagram) while
repeating the mantra to yourself. Once the crystal ball becomes
visible at the centre of the body, continue to maintain a
feeling of ease, as if the

mental object seen is part of that feeling. If the crystal ball should disappear, don't feel disappointed — just keep the same feeling of ease in your mind as before, and imagine a new crystal ball in place of the old. If the mental object should appear anywhere else other than the centre of the body, gradually lead the object to the

centre of the body, without using

even the slightest of
force. When the mental object has
come to a standstill
at the centre of the body, place the
attention at the
centre of that object, by imagining
that there is an
additional tiny star visible there.
Focus your mind
continuously on the tiny star at the
centre of the object
of meditation. The mind will adjust
itself until it comes
to a perfect standstill. At that point,
the mind will fall
through the centre and there will
be a new brighter

sphere which arises in place of the original one. This
new sphere is known as the
'PaÊhama-magga sphere'
or 'sphere of Dhamma'. This
sphere is the gateway or
trailhead to the pathway to
Nirvana.
Imagining the object of meditation is something you can
do the whole of the time, wherever you may be, whether
sitting, standing, walking,
lying-down or performing
other activities.
It is advised to imagine in such a way continuously at

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every moment of the day — but imagining without
force. No matter how well you manage, you should be
contented with your level of progress, in order to prevent
excessive craving for immediate results becoming
a hindrance to your progress. If you meditate until
having attained a steadfast, diamond-bright ‘sphere of
Dhamma’ at the centre of your body, you should try to
maintain it by recollecting it as continuously as you can.
In such a way, the benefits of your

meditation will not
only keep your life on the pathway
of happiness, success
and non-recklessness, but also
ensure your continuing
progress in meditation.

ADDITIONAL ADVICE

1. Avoid force: Never force
anything in your meditation.
Don't squeeze your eyes closed
thinking you
will see the object of meditation
more quickly. Don't
tense your arms, your abdomen or
your body —
because any form of tension will
only cause the mind

to be displaced from the centre of the body to the
place you are tensing.
2. Don't crave after seeing something: You should always maintain complete neutrality of mind. Don't let your mind be distracted from the object of meditation and the mantra. Don't worry yourself about when the object of meditation will appear. The image will appear itself when it comes to the right time, just as the sun rises and sets in its own time.

3. Don't worry about your breath:
Meditating in this technique starts with the visualization of a bright object [Åloka kasiÁa]. Once having meditated until attaining the sphere of Dhamma, one continues with meditation by passing through the refined human body (astral body), the angelic body, the form-BrahmÅ body and the formless-BrahmÅ body until attaining the Dhamma body (or DhammakÅya). Only then is one equipped to turn one's

meditation towards insight [vipassanÅ]. Thus there is no need to practise mindfulness of the breath at any stage.

4. Maintain your mind at the centre of the body all the time: Even after having finished your formal sitting, maintain your mind at the centre of the body the whole of the time. No matter whether you are standing, walking, sitting or lying-down, don't allow your mind to slip away from the centre of the body.

Continue repeating the mantra
‘SammÅ-ArahaÔ’
to yourself while visualizing the
crystal ball at the
centre of the body.

5. Bring all objects arising in the mind to the centre of the body: No matter what appears in the mind, bring

THE SEVEN BASES OF THE MIND

two finger
breadths
above
the navel

it (gently) to the centre of the

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body. If the object
disappears, there is no need to
chase around looking
for it. Just continue to rest your
attention at the centre
of the body while repeating the
mantra to yourself.
Eventually, when the mind
becomes yet more peaceful,
a new object of meditation will
appear.
The basic meditation described
here will lead to a
deepening of happiness in life. If
one doesn't abandon
the practice but cultivates
meditation regularly, to the

point that the sphere of Dhamma is attained, one should try to maintain that sphere at the centre of one's body for the remainder of one's life, while leading one's life in a scrupulous way. It will offer one a refuge in life and will bring happiness both in this lifetime and the hereafter.

SUMMARY OF THE BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

1. Personal Benefits for the meditator

- ***The Mind:*** the mind will feel at ease — calm and peaceful. Memory will also

improve;

- ***Personality:*** self-confidence will be improved.

The true nature of calm will become apparent.

Anger will diminish, leaving only the feeling of kindness towards others;

- ***Daily life:*** will be increased in quality in the newfound absence of stress. The results of work or study will be much more successful. The meditator can enjoy health of both body and mind;
- ***Ethics and decision-making:*** a

right understanding
of that which is good and that which is bad,
will be clearly seen for any given situation. Important
decisions will cause less worry because
the meditator understands the outcome of his actions.
The meditator can refrain from harmful actions
and decisions, instead being content and
confident about choices made.

2. Benefits for the Meditator's Family

- ***Peace and success:*** family life

will be more harmonious,
through the increased mutual
respect
and consideration between family
members.
Parents will be better able to lead
the family successfully;

- ***Cooperation:*** Family members will be more enthusiastic to honour their duties and co-operate towards solving shared problems.

3. National Benefits

- ***Peaceful Society:*** most grave social problems originate from unwholesomeness of mind. If everybody

learns to meditate and live peacefully,
'endemic' problems like crime and drug abuse
will be diminished;

- ***Respect:*** Respect for others will be improved simply
through keeping to a routine of meditation
and following moral precepts.
Honesty will diminish
suspicion in the community;
- ***A caring society:*** as a result of meditation, the
peacefulness of life can be more widely enjoyed
and there will be a more

widespread willingness
to participate in social work

4. Spiritual Benefits

- ***Understanding eternity:*** all people, with or without their own faith can deepen the understanding of their own spirituality through meditation.

Meditators of all faiths, through the practice of meditation, can explore their own faith in depth, particularly with reference to the understanding of eternity in their chosen faith;

- ***Inspiration:*** inspiration in your

own spiritual tradition
is strengthened as the meditator comes to
realize the profound happiness that can be found
through meditation;

- ***Prolonging the lifetime of spiritual traditions:***
the meditator's own spiritual tradition will be
maintained as newcomers have a better understanding
of moral conduct and
self-discipline.

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the gift of dhamma excels all gifts
Dh.354

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