CHARLESTON BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP

THE ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF BUDDHISM

Compiled from various sources by

Allan R. Bomhard

Basic / Introductory Series

The Essential Teachings of Buddhism

COMPILED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES BY
Allan R. Bomhard

Charleston Buddhist Fellowship
Charleston, SC USA

2022 (2566)

The main part of this book is based upon a radio lecture given in Colombo, Śri Lanka, in 1933 by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera (1878—1957) entitled "The Essence of Buddhism" and published by the Buddhist Publication Society as part of *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures* (Wheel Publication no. 394/396 [1994]), pp. 1—13. The current version has been thoroughly revised, rearranged, and greatly expanded (material has been included from many different sources) — numerous quotations from the early scriptures have been added, and Pāḷi terms are given for key concepts.

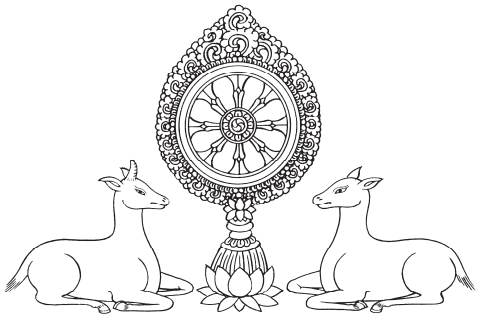
Originally prepared in 2010 (2554).
Updated in September 2022 (2566).

The doctrinal positions expressed in this book are based upon the original teachings (*aggavāda*) of the Buddha.

Table of Contents

PART ONE

Some Salient Charateristics Of Buddhism



Some Salient Characteristics of Buddhism

1. Buddhism is a moral and philosophical system that expounds a unique path to Enlightenment and is not a subject to be studied from a mere academic standpoint.
2. Buddhism is based on personal experience. As such, it is rational and not speculative.
3. The Buddha discarded all authority and developed a Golden Mean that was purely his own.
4. Rational understanding is the keynote of Buddhism.
5. Blind beliefs are rejected.
6. Instead of beliefs and dogmas, the importance of practice is emphasized. Mere beliefs and dogmas cannot liberate a person.
7. Rites and rituals, so greatly emphasized in the Vedas, play no part in Buddhism.
8. There are no gods to be propitiated.
9. There is no priestly class to mediate.
10. Morality (*sīla*), Concentration (*samādhi*), and Wisdom (*paññā*) are essential to achieve the goal — *Nibbāna*.

♦♦♦

11. The foundations of Buddhism are the Four Noble Truths, which can be verified by one's own experience.
12. The Four Noble Truths are associated with one's being — hence, Buddhism is homocentric (anthropocentric) and introverted (introspective).
13. The Four Noble Truths were discovered by the Buddha, and He was not indebted to anyone for them. In His own words: "They were not heard of before".
14. Being truths, they cannot change with time.

♦♦♦

15. The first Truth of Suffering (*dukkha*), which deals with the constituents of "self", or "individuality", and the vicissitudes of life, is to be analyzed, scrutinized, and examined. This analysis, scrutiny, and examination leads to a proper understanding of oneself.

16. Rational understanding of the first Truth leads to the eradication of the cause of suffering — the second Truth, which deals with the psychological attitude of the ordinary man towards external objects of sense.

♦♦♦

17. The second Truth of the Cause of Suffering is concerned with a powerful force latent in us all — craving (*taṇhā*), or attachment.
18. It is this powerful, invisible mental force that is the cause of all the ills of life.
19. The second Truth indirectly deals with past, present, and future births.
20. The existence of a series of births is therefore acknowledged by the Buddha.
21. The doctrine of *kamma*, its corollary, is thereby implied.

♦♦♦

22. The third Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, though dependent upon oneself, is beyond logical reasoning and is supramundane, unlike the first two Truths, which are mundane.
23. The third Truth is purely a self-realization.
24. This Truth is to be realized by complete renunciation. It is not a case of renouncing external objects but of renouncing internal attachment to the external world.
25. Thus, the third Truth is realized with the complete eradication of attachment to the external world. It should be noted that mere complete destruction of the force is not the third Truth — *Nibbāna*. That would be tantamount to annihilation. *Nibbāna* has to be realized by eradicating that which binds one to the mundane.
26. It should also be understood that *Nibbāna* is not produced but is attained. It can be attained in this life itself. It therefore follows that, though rebirth is one of the chief doctrines of Buddhism, the goal of Buddhism does not depend on a future rebirth.

♦♦♦

27. The third Truth has to be realized by developing the fourth Truth.
28. To eradicate one mighty force, eight powerful factors have to be developed — the Noble Eightfold Path.
29. All these eight factors are purely mental.
30. Eight powerful wholesome mental forces are summoned to attack one latent unwholesome mental force.
31. Absolute purity, complete deliverance from all repeated births, a mind released from all defilements, and immortality are the attendant blessings of this great victory. Is this deliverance a perfection or absolute purity? The latter is preferable. In each case, one might ask the questions — What is being perfected? What is being purified? Buddhism does not recognize a being or permanent entity, only a stream of consciousness. It is thus more correct to say that it is this stream of consciousness that is purified by eradicating all defilements (*kilesas*).

♦♦♦

32. Buddhism offers one way of life to Monks and Nuns and another to lay followers. Bound by a strict set of rules and regulations, Monks and Nuns devote their entire lives to study, practice, and service, while lay followers, guided by Buddhist principles, serve not only their religion but also their country and the world in their own way. The monastic life offers its members not only a blameless means of livelihood but also structure, discipline, tradition, and communal support.

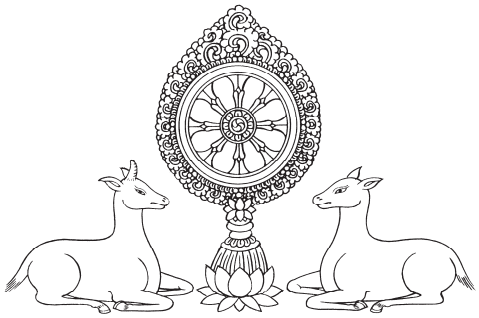
33. All Buddhists are expected to lead a noble and useful life.

34. Buddhism possesses an excellent code of morals consisting of:

    a) The five precepts: not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to engage in false speech, not to indulge in intoxicating drinks;
    b) The four sublime states: loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity;
    c) The ten transcendental virtues: generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness, and equanimity;
    d) The Noble Eightfold Path: right understanding, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. ■

PART TWO

Life of the Buddha



Life of the Buddha

The Buddha was born in 623 B.C.E. in the kingdom of the Sākyas, on the borders between present-day Nepal and India. As the son of Suddhodana, the king, and Mahāmāyā, the queen, the Buddha thus came from a Khattiya family (that is, the warrior caste, or ruling class). Ten lunar months after conception, the queen and her retinue left Kapilavatthu, the capital of the Sākya kingdom, to visit her parents. On the way, she passed through Lumbinī, a park that was owned jointly by the people of both cities. There, she gave birth to the Buddha in a curtained enclosure in the park on the full-moon day of the month of Vesākha (May). The purported site of his birth, now called Rummindei, lies within the territory of Nepal. A pillar placed there in the third century B.C.E. in commemoration of the event by Emperor Asoka still stands.

Immediately upon hearing of the birth of the Buddha, the sage Asita, who was King Suddhodana's teacher and religious adviser, went to see the prince. From the auspicious signs on the prince's body, Asita recognized that this child would one day become a Buddha, and he was overjoyed and smiled. Because he was very old, however, he grew sad and wept, knowing that he would not remain alive to see the prince's subsequent Enlightenment. Suddhodana, because of this strange display of alternate emotions, was concerned about possible dangers to his son, but Asita explained why he had first smiled and then wept and reassured the king about the prince's future. Both the sage and the king then paid homage to the prince.

On the fifth day after birth, for the name-giving ceremony, 108 Brahmins were invited, among whom eight were specialists in interpreting bodily marks. Of these eight specialists, seven predicted two possibilities: if the prince remained at home, he would become a universal monarch; if he left home, he would become a Buddha. But Koṇḍañña, the youngest of the eight, predicted that he would definitely become a Buddha. Later, Koṇḍañña became one of the Buddha's companions and was one of his first five disciples. The prince was given the name Siddhattha, which means "one whose aim is accomplished".

On the seventh day after his birth, his mother died, and the prince was brought up by her sister Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, Suddhodana's second wife. A significant incident in the Buddha's boyhood is recorded in ancient Pāḷi commentaries. One day, the little Siddhattha was taken to the state plowing festival, in which the king, with his ministers and the ordinary farmers, took part, according to the custom of the Sākyas. The boy was left with his nurses in a tent under a rose-apple tree. The nurses, attracted by the festivities, left the prince alone in the tent and went out to enjoy themselves. When they returned, they found the boy seated cross-legged, deeply absorbed in meditation. The king was immediately informed and saw his little son in the

meditative posture. Upon seeing his son sitting in this fashion, he paid homage to the prince a second time. Many years later, the Buddha himself, in one of his discourses, briefly mentions his attaining to the first *jhāna* under the rose-apple tree.

The young prince was brought up in great luxury, and his father, always concerned that his son might leave home to become a wandering ascetic as the Brahmins had predicted, took every care to influence him in favor of a worldly life. At the age of 16, Siddhattha married his cousin, the princess Yasodharā, who was also 16 years old. Although Suddhodana tried his utmost to make Siddhattha content by providing him with luxury and comfort, the young prince's thoughts were generally elsewhere, occupied with other concerns.

The turning point in Prince Siddhattha's life came when he was 29 years old. One day, while out driving with his charioteer Channa, he saw "an aged man as bent as a roof gable, decrepit, leaning on a staff, tottering as he walked, afflicted, and long past his prime". The charioteer, questioned by the prince as to what had happened to the man, explained that he was old and that all men were subject to old age. The prince, greatly perturbed by this sight, went back to the palace and became absorbed in thought. Another day, again driving with his charioteer, he saw "a sick man, suffering, and very ill, fallen, and weltering in his own excrement". Because Siddhattha was perturbed, the charioteer explained, as before, that this was a sick man and that all men are subject to sickness. On a third occasion, the prince saw a dead body and again the charioteer provided the explanation. Finally, Siddhattha saw "a shaven-headed man, a wanderer who has gone forth, wearing the yellow robe". Impressed with the man's peaceful demeanor, the prince decided to leave home and go out into the world to discover the reason for such a display of serenity in the midst of misery. On his way back to the palace after seeing the yellow-robed ascetic, Siddhattha received the news of the birth of his son, whom he named Rāhula, meaning "Fetter", or "Bond".

Upon receiving this news, Siddhattha decided to give up the princely life and become a wandering ascetic. Waking up in the middle of the night, he ordered his charioteer to saddle his favorite horse and went to the bedchamber to have a last look at his sleeping wife and their son. He did not enter the chamber for fear of awakening his wife, which would be a sure obstacle to his plan. He thought he would one day come to see them again. That night, Siddhattha left the city of Kapilavatthu, accompanied by his charioteer. By dawn, he had crossed the Anomā River. He then gave all his garments and jewelry to his charioteer, assumed the garb of an ascetic, and sent both his charioteer and horse back to the palace.

As an ascetic, Gotama went south, where centers of learning and spiritual discipline flourished, and arrived, in due course, at Rājagaha, the capital of the Magadha kingdom. Bimbisāra, the king of Magadha, was impressed by the handsome appearance and the serene personality of this strange ascetic and visited him when he was seated at the foot of a hill. The king, after he discovered that the ascetic was a former prince, offered him every comfort and suggested that he should stay with him to share his kingdom. Gotama, however, rejected the king's offer, saying that he had no need of those things that he had renounced and that he was in search of truth. Bimbisāra then requested that, when Gotama obtained Enlightenment, he return to visit Rājagaha again, to which Gotama agreed.

Leaving Rājagaha, Gotama went in search of teachers to instruct him in the way of truth. He first went to Āḷāra Kālāma, a renowned sage, and expressed his wish to follow Āḷāra's system; Āḷāra gladly accepted Gotama as his pupil. Gotama studied and rapidly mastered

Āḷāra's whole system and then asked his teacher how far the master himself had realized that teaching. Āḷāra told him that he had attained the "sphere of nothingness". Gotama soon attained the same mystical state himself. Āḷāra admitted that that state was the highest he could teach and declared that Gotama and himself were now equals in every respect — in knowledge, practice, and attainment — and invited the Sākyan ascetic to guide, along with him, the community of his disciples. The Buddha later spoke of this occasion in a *sutta*: "In this way did Āḷāra Kālāma, my teacher, set me, his pupil, on the same level as himself and honored me with the highest honor". Gotama, however, was not satisfied with attaining the sphere of nothingness, though it was a very high mystical state. He was in quest of absolute truth, *Nibbāna*, and thus he left Āḷāra Kālāma.

He then went to Uddaka Rāmaputta, another great teacher, who taught him to attain the "sphere of neither-perception-nor-nonperception", a higher mystical state than the sphere of nothingness. Gotama, however, was not satisfied with this either, and he continued his search for the truth.

Traveling through the Magadha country, Gotama arrived at a village near Uruvelā and, according to his own words, found "a beautiful stretch of land, a lovely woodland grove, and a clear flowing river with a pleasant ford, and a village for support close by". He was joined there by a group of five ascetics, among whom was Koṇḍañña, the Brahmin who had predicted at the name-giving ceremony that the prince Siddhattha would definitely become a Buddha one day.

Gotama's real struggle in his search for the truth began in the area around Uruvelā, near modern Gayā. Here, for nearly six years, he practiced various severe austerities and extreme self-mortifications. These austerities are vividly described in several discourses attributed to the Buddha himself. As a consequence of these severe bodily austerities, Gotama became so weak that he once fainted and was believed by some to be dead. From these experiences, he realized that such mortifications could not lead him to what he sought; he therefore changed his way of life and again began to eat proper amounts of food. His five companions, who had much faith in him, were disappointed at his rejection of extreme asceticism and left him in disgust. Gotama thus remained alone in Uruvelā, regained his health and strength, and then followed his own path to Enlightenment.

One morning, seated under a banyan tree, Gotama accepted an offering of a bowl of milk rice from Sujātā, the daughter of the landowner of the near-by village. This was his last meal before his Enlightenment. He spent the day in a grove of sal trees and, in the evening, went to the base of a pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*), now known as the *bodhi*-tree, and sat cross-legged, determined not to rise without attaining Enlightenment.

At that point, the greatest of Gotama's struggles began: Māra, the Evil One, the Tempter who is the lord of the world of passion, determined to defeat him and prevent him from attaining Enlightenment; he approached Gotama with his hideous demonic hordes. Gotama, however, sat unmoved in meditation, supported only by the ten *pāramitās* ("great virtues", or "perfections") that he had perfected during innumerable past lives as a *Bodhisatta* in order to attain Enlightenment. (In order to attain Buddhahood, all *Bodhisattas* [that is, those who aspire to become Buddhas] have to perfect, during innumerable lives, these ten *pāramitās*: generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness, and equanimity.) Māra was thus vanquished and fled headlong with his armies of evil spirits.

Having defeated Māra, Gotama spent the rest of the night in deep meditation under the tree. During the first part of the night, he gained the knowledge of his former existences. During the second part of the night, he attained the "superhuman divine eye", the power to see the passing away and rebirth of beings. In the last part of the night, he directed his mind to the knowledge of the destruction of all cankers and defilements and realized the Four Noble Truths. Thus, the sage Gotama, at the age of 35, attained Enlightenment, or Awakening, and became a supreme Buddha during the night of the full-moon day of the month of Vesākha (May) at a place now called Bodh Gayā.

After his Enlightenment, the Buddha spent several weeks (five or seven weeks according to different accounts) in Uruvelā, meditating on the various aspects of the *Dhamma* that he had realized, particularly on the most important and difficult doctrine of causal relations, known as dependent origination, or conditioned genesis (*paṭīcca-samuppāda*). This doctrine views everything as relative and interdependent and teaches that there is no eternal, everlasting, unchanging, permanent, or absolute substance, such as the soul, the self, or the ego, within or outside man.

Four weeks after his Enlightenment, seated under a banyan tree, the Buddha is reported to have thought to himself:

> *I have realized this Truth, which is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand… comprehensible by the wise. Men who are overpowered by passion and surrounded by a mass of darkness cannot see this Truth, which is against the current, which is lofty, deep, subtle, and hard to comprehend.*

With these thoughts in mind, the Buddha hesitated to try to explain to the world the truth that he had just realized. At this point, according to the traditional account, the Brahmā Sahampati intervened in order to convince the Buddha to teach others what he had realized. This great Brahmanic deity set forth for him an image of a lotus pond: in a lotus pond, there are some lotuses still under water; there are others that have risen only up to the water level; and there are still others that stand above the water and are untouched by it. In a similar way, in this world, there are people of different levels of development. Thus challenged, the Buddha determined to proclaim the insight he had gained to all who would listen. At the outset, he faced the problem of choosing those who would be the first to hear him preach the *Dhamma*. He first thought of his two former teachers, Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, but they had died by this time. He then thought of the five companions who had left him and were now staying in the Deer Park in the Place of the Holy Men (Isipatana) near Benares (now called Vārāṇasī) and decided to go there. On meeting the five ascetics, the Buddha told them that now he was an *Arahant*, a "Fully Enlightened One" (*Sammasambuddha*), that he had realized the "immortal", and that he wished to instruct and teach them the *Dhamma*. They replied to him: "But, Venerable Gotama, even by all that conduct, that practice, that austerity, you did not realize this supreme knowledge, this supreme state. So how can you now realize it when you live in abundance, when you have given up striving and have reverted to a life of abundance?" The Buddha denied that he had given up striving and that he had reverted to a life of abundance. He requested again that they listen to him. Again, however, they replied in a similar manner. A third time the Buddha repeated what he had said and asked them to listen to him, and they repeated their remark. The Buddha then

asked them a question: "Do you admit that I have never spoken anything like this before?" They were struck by such straightforwardness and knew how sincere and earnest he was. Convinced that he had attained what he claimed to have attained, they no longer addressed the Buddha as "Venerable Gotama" but changed their attitude toward him and answered him: "Lord, you have not". The Buddha then delivered to them his first sermon, known as the "Sermon on Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth", at Isipatana (now called Sarnath). At the end of the sermon, these five ascetics, the Buddha's first disciples, were admitted by him as *Bhikkhus* (monks) and became the first members of the *Sangha* ("community", or "order"). A few days later, this sermon was followed by a discourse dealing with the doctrine of no-self, at the conclusion of which all five *Bhikkhus* became *Arahants* ("Perfected Ones").

The Buddha spent about three months in the vicinity of Benares. During this period, an important and influential wealthy young man named Yasa became his disciple and entered the order. Yasa's father and mother, along with his former wife, were also converted. They were the first lay disciples to take refuge in the "Triple Jewel": the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*. Later, four of Yasa's close friends followed his example and entered the order. Enthusiasm for this new movement became so impelling that fifty of their friends also joined them in the *Sangha*. All these became *Arahants* in due course, and the Buddha soon had sixty disciples who were Perfected Ones. The Buddha then sent them out into the world to spread his message of peace, compassion, and wisdom, and the sixty disciples went in various directions to spread the teaching of the Buddha. The Buddha himself set out for Uruvelā. On the way, he converted another thirty young men, who then entered the order. In the region of Uruvelā, he also converted three leading ascetics along with a large number of their disciples. To these ascetics, formerly known as "those with matted hair", the Buddha delivered the famous "Fire Sermon", which states that all man's existence is burning with the fire of lust (*lobha*), the fire of hatred (*dosa*), and the fire of delusion (*moha*). From Uruvelā, the Buddha went on to Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha, fulfilling his promise to visit King Bimbisāra after his Enlightenment. Many people, including the king, became his lay disciples. The king offered his park, Veḷuvana, as a monastery site to the Buddha and his order. During this visit, a very important event that had far-reaching effects took place: Sāriputta and Moggallāna, two Brahmanic ascetics who later became the Buddha's two chief disciples, joined the order. Sāriputta had first heard of the Buddha and his new teaching from Assaji, one of the original five disciples. At the request of his father, the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu with a large number of his disciples. In that city, where as prince he had lived in great splendor and luxury, he went about begging for his food from house to house. His father, King Suddhodana, was grieved and upset by this, but, upon learning that this was the custom of all Buddha's, he conducted the Blessed One and his disciples to eat a meal at the palace. All the ladies of the court went to him to offer reverence, except his former wife, Yasodharā. She refused, saying that the Blessed One himself should come to her if he thought she had any virtue in her and that she would then pay homage him. The Buddha, with his two chief disciples and the king, went to see her in her apartment. She fell at his feet, clasped his ankles with her hands, and put her head on his feet. The Buddha's father, his aunt Mahāpajāpatī, Yasodharā, and large numbers of Sākyans (who were fellow members of the Gotama clan) became his followers. On the following day, he ordained his half-brother Nanda and a few days later his son, Rāhula. All this troubled the old king so much that he asked the Buddha to lay down a rule that no son should be ordained without the consent of his parents.

Accordingly, the rule was formulated, and it continues to be followed by the *Sangha* to this day. Anāthapiṇḍika, a banker of Sāvatthī, the capital of the Kosala kingdom, had met the Buddha at Rājagaha and had become deeply devoted to him. He invited the Blessed One to his city, where he built for him the famous monastery at Jetavana. This monastery in Sāvatthī became the virtual headquarters of the Buddha's activities. There, he spent most of his time and delivered most of his sermons. The Buddha and his new teaching became so popular that monasteries were built for him and his *Sangha* in almost all the important cities in the valley of the Ganges, and the number of his followers among all classes of people increased rapidly. The order of nuns, the *Bhikkhunī-sangha*, was instituted after some hesitation. Ānanda, the Buddha's cousin and later his chief attendant and constant companion, pleaded with the Master on behalf of women. The Buddha's own aunt Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and her friends were the first women to enter the order. Members of some hostile sects, who became jealous of the Buddha's success and popularity, made several attempts to vilify him.

Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin and brother-in-law, an ambitious man of ability and guile, was his rival from early days. He, too, joined the order but was never sincerely devoted to the Master. He became popular and influential with some people, however, and, about eight years before the Buddha's death, Devadatta conceived the idea of becoming the Buddha's successor and suggested to him that the leadership of the *Sangha* should be handed over to him in view of the Master's approaching old age. The suggestion, however, was rejected. The Buddha stated that he would not pass on the leadership of the order to anyone, not even to Sāriputta or Moggallāna. Rather, the *Sangha* was to be run in accordance with democratic principles. Its constitution was to be the *Vinaya* ("discipline") rules that the Buddha himself had laid down to guide the spiritual and material life of the individual monks and nuns and to regulate the structure and dynamics of monastic life. After being rebuffed in this way, Devadatta vowed vengeance. He made three cleverly designed attempts on the life of the Buddha, all of which failed. Devadatta next tried to bring about a schism in the *Sangha*, taking with him a group of newly ordained monks to establish a separate community. All those who were misled by Devadatta, however, were later persuaded to go back to the Master by Sāriputta and Moggallāna. After this event, Devadatta became seriously ill and died after about nine months of illness.

After the Buddha had trained learned, well-disciplined followers and his mission was fulfilled, at the age of 80, with a group of monks, he set out on his last journey, from Rājagaha toward the north. As usual, he passed in leisurely fashion through cities, towns, and villages, teaching the people on his way and stopping wherever he wished.

In due course, he arrived at Vesālī, the capital city of the Licchavis. The Buddha spent that rainy season not in the park in Vesālī, which had just been donated to him by Ambapālī, the celebrated courtesan of that city, but in the adjoining village. There, the Buddha became seriously ill. He thought, however, that it was not right for him to die without preparing his disciples, who were dear to him. Thus, with courage, determination, and will, he bore all his pains, got the better of his illness, and recovered; but his health was still poor.

After the Buddha's recovery, Ānanda, his most devoted attendant, went to his beloved Master and said: "Lord, I have looked after the health of the Blessed One. I have looked after him in his illness. But at the sight of his illness, the horizon became dim to me, and my faculties were no longer clear. Yet there was one little consolation: I thought the Blessed One would not

pass away until he had left instructions concerning the Order of the *Sangha*". The Buddha, full of compassion and feeling, replied:

> *Ānanda, what does the Order of the Sangha expect from me? I have taught the Dhamma without making any distinction as to exoteric and esoteric. With regard to the Truth, the Tathāgata has nothing like the closed fist of a teacher who keeps something back. Surely, Ānanda, if there is anyone who thinks that he will lead the Sangha and that the Sangha should depend on him, let him set down his instructions. But the Tathāgata has no such idea. Why should he then leave instructions concerning the Sangha? I am old now, Ānanda… As a worn-out cart has to be kept going by repairs, so, it seems to me, the body of the Tathāgata can only be kept going by repairs… Therefore, Ānanda, dwell by making yourselves your island, making yourselves, not anyone else, your refuge; making the Dhamma your island, the Dhamma your refuge, nothing else your refuge.*

Later, the Buddha told Ānanda that he would die in three months and asked Ānanda to assemble in the hall at Mahāvana all the monks who were at that time residing in the neighborhood of Vesālī. At this meeting, the Buddha advised the monks to follow what he had taught them and to spread it abroad for the good of the many, out of compassion for the world. He then announced that he would die in three months. Leaving Vesālī, the Buddha gazed at the city in which he had stayed on many occasions and said: "This will be the last time, Ānanda, that the Tathāgata will behold Vesālī. Come, Ānanda, let us proceed".

Stopping at several villages and townships, the Buddha eventually arrived at Pāvā and stayed in the park of Cunda the goldsmith, who was already one of his devoted followers. At his invitation, the Buddha and the monks went to his house for a meal. Cunda had prepared, besides various delicacies, a dish called *sūkara-maddava*. This is interpreted in the ancient commentaries in several ways: (1) as pork (this is generally accepted), (2) as bamboo sprouts trodden by pigs, (3) as a kind of mushroom growing in a spot trodden by pigs, (4) as a rice pudding rich with the essence of milk, or (5) as a special preparation intended by Cunda to prolong the Buddha's life. Whatever it might have been, the Buddha asked Cunda to serve him with *sūkara-maddava* and to serve the *Bhikkhus* other dishes. At the end of the meal, the Buddha requested Cunda to bury in a hole whatever was left of the *sūkara-maddava*, saying that only a Tathāgata would be able to digest it. This was the Buddha's last meal. After it, the Buddha became sick and suffered violent pains but bore them without complaint. He set out for Kusinārā, accompanied by Ānanda and other monks. Explaining that he was tired, he stopped and rested in two places.

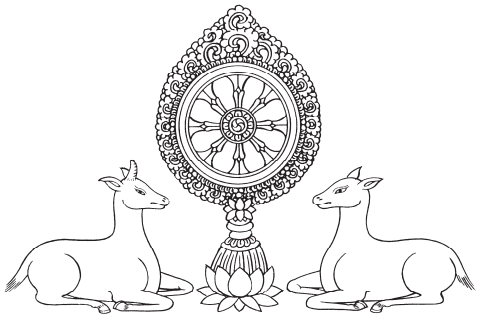
In due time, the Buddha arrived at Kusinārā toward evening, and, on a couch between two sal trees in the sal grove of the Mallas, he "laid himself down on his right side, with one leg resting on the other, mindful and self-possessed". This was the full-moon day of the month of Vesākha (May). Ānanda asked the Buddha what they should do with his remains. He told Ānanda they should not occupy themselves with honoring the remains of the Tathāgata but should rather be zealous in their own spiritual development. The lay devotees, he said, would busy themselves with the remains.

Ānanda left the immediate area and cried out: "My Master is about to pass away from me — he who is so kind to me". The Buddha inquired where Ānanda was and, on being told that he was weeping, called to him and said: "No, Ānanda, don't weep. Haven't I already told you that separation is inevitable from all near and dear to us? Whatever is born, produced, conditioned, contains within itself the nature of its own dissolution. It cannot be otherwise". Then, the Master spoke to the monks in praise of Ānanda's wonderful qualities and abilities. The Mallas, in whose realm Kusinārā was located, came with their families to pay homage to the Blessed One. A wandering ascetic named Subhadda asked for permission to see the Buddha, but Ānanda refused, saying that the Blessed One was tired and that he should not be troubled. The Buddha, overhearing the conversation, called Ānanda and asked him to allow Subhadda to see him. After an interview with the Buddha, Subhadda joined the order the same night, thus becoming his last direct disciple.

After addressing Ānanda and advising him that, if the *Sangha* wishes it, they can abolish the lesser and minor precepts (rules), the Buddha next addressed the monks and requested them three times to ask him if they had any doubt or question that they wished clarified, but they all remained silent. The Buddha then addressed the monks: "Impermanent are all compound things. Work out your own liberation with diligence". These were the last words of the Tathāgata. A week later, his body was cremated by the Mallas in Kusinārā. A dispute over the relics of the Buddha arose between the Mallas and the delegates of rulers of several kingdoms, such as Magadha, Vesālī, and Kapilavatthu. It was settled by a venerable old Brahmin named Dona on the basis that they should not quarrel over the relics of one who preached peace. With common consent, the relics were then divided into eight portions to the satisfaction of all. *Stūpas* were built over these relics, and feasts were held commemorating the Buddha. ■

PART THREE

The Essential Teachings of Buddhism



The Essential Teachings of Buddhism

The Four Noble Truths

This *Dhamma*, or universal moral law, discovered by the Buddha, is summed up in the Four Noble Truths (*Ariya-Sacca*): (1) the truth about the universal sway of suffering (*dukkha*), (2) about its origin (*samudaya*), (3) its cessation (*nirodha*), and (4) the path (*magga*) leading to its cessation.

1. The first truth, about the universality of suffering, teaches, in short, that all forms of existence are uncertain, transient, contingent, and devoid of intrinsic self-identity and are, therefore, by their very nature subject to suffering.

   Now, monks, this is the Noble Truth as to suffering: Birth (earthly existence) indeed is suffering; old age is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; likewise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. Contact with the unpleasant is suffering, separation from the pleasant is suffering; not to get what one wants is also suffering. In brief, the five aggregates of clinging are suffering.

2. The second truth, about the origin of suffering, teaches that all suffering is rooted in selfish craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). It further explains the cause of this seeming injustice in nature by teaching that nothing in the world can come into existence without a reason or a cause and that, not only all our latent tendencies, but our whole destiny, all weal and woe, results from causes that can be traced partly in this life and partly in former states of existence.

   The second truth further teaches us that the future life, with all its weal and woe, must result from the seeds sown in this life and in former lives.

   And again, monks, this is the Noble Truth as to the origin of suffering: It is that craving, associated with enjoyment and desire and seeking pleasure everywhere, which produces separate existence and leads to future births, and which keeps lingering on and on, that is the cause of suffering. In other words, it is craving

for sense-pleasure, the desire for birth in a world of separateness, and the desire for existence to end.

3. The third truth, or the truth about the cessation of suffering, shows how, through the abandoning of craving and ignorance, all suffering will vanish, and liberation from *saṁsāra* will be attained.

   And this, monks, is the Noble Truth as to the cessation of suffering: It is the complete cessation, giving up, abandoning of craving; it is release and detachment from craving.

4. The fourth truth shows the way or the means by which this goal is to be reached. It is the Noble Eightfold Path of Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

   And this once again, monks, is the Noble Truth as to the path to the cessation of suffering: It is indeed that Noble Eightfold Path: Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. The Middle Path, monks, leads to Nibbāna.

Each truth requires that it be acted upon in its own particular way — *understanding* suffering (anguish), *letting go of* its origin, *realizing* its cessation, and *cultivating* the path. In describing to the five ascetics what his awakening meant, the Buddha spoke of having discovered complete freedom of heart and mind from the compulsions of craving. He called such freedom the taste of *Dhamma*.

Here, we shall investigate those points from the Four Noble Truths that are essential for a general knowledge of the *Dhamma*. In so doing, we shall, at the same time, refute a number of widespread misunderstandings concerning the Buddha's teachings.

The Noble Eightfold Path

Let us first, however, outline the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya-Aṭṭhangika-Magga*), for it is this path of righteousness and wisdom that really constitutes the essence of Buddhist practice — the mode of living and thinking to be followed by any true follower of the Buddha's teachings.

1. The first stage of the Eightfold Path is Right Understanding, that is, to view in accordance with reality suffering (*dukkha*), its origin (*samudaya*), its cessation (*nirodha*), and the way (*magga*) leading to the cessation of suffering. This leads to an understanding of the true nature of existence and of the moral laws governing the same. In other words, it is the right understanding of the *Dhamma*, of the Four Noble Truths.

2. The second stage of the Eightfold Path is Right Thought (Right Intention), that is, thoughts of renunciation, free from craving, of good will, free from aversion, and of compassion, free from cruelty. This leads to a pure and balanced state of mind, free from sensual lust, ill will, and cruelty.

3. The third stage is Right Speech. It consists in abstinence from false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech, and useless speech. In other words, right speech is speech that is not false, not harsh, not scandalous, not frivolous, that is, it consists of speech that is truthful, mild, pacifying, gentle, and wise.

4. The fourth stage is Right Action, that is, abstaining from intentional killing or harming any living creature, abstaining from taking what is not freely given, abstaining from sexual misconduct (adultery, rape, and seduction), and abstaining from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness.

5. The fifth stage is Right Livelihood: giving up wrong livelihood, one earns one's living by a right form of livelihood, that is, from a livelihood that does not bring harm and suffering to other beings (avoiding soothsaying, trickery, dishonesty, usury, and trading in weapons, meat, living beings, intoxicants, or poison).

6. The sixth stage is Right Effort. It is the fourfold effort to put forth the energy, to prod the mind, and to struggle:

   a. To prevent unarisen unwholesome mental states from arising;
   b. To abandon unwholesome mental states that have already arisen;
   c. To develop wholesome mental states that have not yet arisen;
   d. To maintain and perfect wholesome mental states that have already arisen.

   In other words, it is the fourfold effort that we make to overcome and avoid fresh bad actions by body, speech, and mind; and the effort that we make in developing fresh actions of righteousness, inner peace, and wisdom, and in cultivating them to perfection.

7. The seventh stage is Right Mindfulness, or alertness of mind. It consists of abiding self-possessed and attentive, contemplating according to reality:

   a. The body;
   b. Feelings;
   c. The state of the mind;
   d. The contents of the mind;

   Seeing all as composite, ever-becoming, impermanent, and subject to decay. It is maintaining ever-ready mental clarity no matter what we are doing, speaking, or thinking and in keeping before our mind the realities of existence, that is, the impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactory nature (*dukkha*), and egolessness (*anattā*) of all forms of existence.

8. The eighth stage is Right Concentration of mind. It consists of gaining one-pointedness of mind and entering into and abiding in the four fine-material absorptions (*rūpa jhānas*) and the four immaterial absorptions (*arūpa jhānas*). Such a kind of mental concentration is one that is directed towards a morally wholesome object and always bound up with Right Thought, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness.

Thus, the Noble Eightfold Path is a path of morality (*sīla*), of mental training (*samādhi*), and of wisdom (*paññā*).

Morality consists of Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. Mental training consists of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. Wisdom consists of Right Understanding and Right Thought.

Thus, this liberating Eightfold Path is a path of inner training, of inner progress. By mere external worship, mere ceremonies and selfish prayer, one can never make any real progress in righteousness and insight. As the Buddha said:

> *Be your own island of refuge, be your own shelter, seek not for any other protection. Let the truth be your island of refuge, let the truth be your shelter, seek not after any other protection.*

To be of real effect and to ensure absolute inner progress, all our efforts must be based upon our own understanding and insight. All absolute inner progress is rooted in right understanding, and without right understanding there is no attainment of perfection and of the unshakable peace of *Nibbāna*.

According to the Buddha's teaching, belief in the moral efficacy of mere external rites and rituals constitutes a great obstacle to inner progress. One who takes refuge in mere external practices is on the wrong path. For, in order to achieve real inner progress, all our efforts must necessarily be based on our own understanding and insight. Any real progress is rooted in right understanding, and, without right understanding, there will be no attainment of unshakable peace and holiness. Moreover, this blind belief in mere external practices is the cause of much misery and wretchedness in the world. It leads to mental stagnation, to fanaticism and intolerance, to self-exaltation and contempt for others, to contention, discord, war, strife, and bloodshed, as the history of the Middle Ages in Europe or even the religious extremism of our own times quite sufficiently testify. This belief in mere external practices dulls and deadens one's power of thought and stifles every higher emotion in man. It makes him a mental slave and favors the growth of all kinds of hypocrisy.

The Buddha has clearly and positively expressed himself on this point. He says:

> *The man enmeshed in delusion will never be purified through the mere study of holy books, nor sacrifices to gods, nor fasts, nor sleeping on the ground, nor difficult and strenuous vigils, nor the repetition of prayers. Neither gifts to priests, nor self-castigation, nor performance of rites and ceremonies can bring about purification in one who is filled with craving. It is not through the partaking of meat or fish that man becomes impure but through drunkenness,*

obstinacy, bigotry, deceit, envy, self-exaltation, disparagement of others, and evil intentions — through these things man becomes impure.

There are two extremes: addiction to sensual enjoyment and addiction to bodily mortification. The Perfect One has rejected these two extremes and has discovered the Middle Path that makes one both see and know. It is this Middle Path which leads to peace, penetration, enlightenment, and liberation — this Middle Path is indeed that Noble Eightfold Path leading to the end of suffering, namely, Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration of mind.

Inasmuch as the Buddha teaches that all genuine progress on the path of virtue is necessarily dependent upon one's own understanding and insight, all dogmatism is excluded from the Buddha's teaching. Blind faith in authority is rejected by the Buddha and is entirely opposed to the spirit of his teaching. In the *Kālāma Sutta*, the Buddha says:

In cases where occasion for doubt exists, it is right and proper to doubt. Do not go by mere report or tradition or hearsay; nor should you accept something merely because it is written in the scriptures or because it agrees with (unsupported) thinking or specious reasoning; nor should you accept something because it agrees with accepted conventions or upon the authority of one who may appear competent; nor should you be guided by the feeling of reverence, thinking, "This is our teacher". But, Kālāmas, when you yourselves know (by observation, experience, and right judgment): "Such things are wrong, such things are blameworthy; such things are censured by the wise; such things when undertaken and followed lead to harm and ill" — then you should abandon such things. But when you yourselves know: "Such things are good, such things are praiseworthy; such things are commended by the wise; such things when undertaken and followed lead to the good and welfare of all beings" — then you should accept, hold to, and follow such things.

One who merely believes or repeats what others have found out is compared by the Buddha to a blind man. One who desires to make progress upon the path of deliverance must experience and understand the truth for himself. Lacking one's own understanding, no absolute progress is possible.

The teaching of the Buddha is perhaps the only religious teaching that requires no belief in traditions nor in certain historical events. It appeals solely to the understanding of each individual. For, wherever there are beings capable of thinking, there the truths proclaimed by the Buddha may be understood and realized, without regard to race, country, nationality, or position in society. These truths are universal, not bound up with any particular country or any particular epoch. And, in everyone, even in the lowliest, there lies latent the capacity for seeing and realizing these truths and attaining to the Highest Perfection. And, whosoever lives a noble life, such a one has already tasted the truth and, in greater or lesser degree, travels on the Eightfold Path of Peace, which all noble and holy ones have trodden, tread now, and shall tread in the future. The universal laws of morality hold good without variation everywhere and in all times,

whether one may call oneself a Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, Christian, Moslem, Sikh, Baha'i, or by any other name.

It is the inward condition of a person and his deeds that count, not a mere name. The true disciple of the Buddha is far removed from all dogmatism. He is a free thinker in the noblest sense of the word. He falls neither into positive nor negative dogmas, for he knows: both are mere opinions, mere views, rooted in blindness and self-deception. Therefore, the Buddha has said of himself:

> *The Perfect One is free from any theory, for the Perfect One has seen: thus is corporeality, thus it arises, thus it passes away; thus is feeling, thus it arises, thus it passes away; thus is perception, thus it arises, thus it passes away; thus are the mental formations, thus they arise, thus they pass away; thus is consciousness, thus it arises, thus it passes away.*

The Threefold Training

Beneath this world of changing phenomena, there is a changeless reality. This changeless reality can be realized by any human being. There are spiritual disciplines, very difficult and demanding, that provide the means to realize this changeless reality. These disciplines are not just to be studied, read, or heard — they are to be practiced. The practice of these disciplines brings out what is best in human beings physically, mentally, intellectually, and spiritually. In Buddhism, these spiritual disciplines consist of training in (1) morality (*sīla*), (2) concentration (*samādhi*), and (3) wisdom (*paññā*).

MORALITY

For Buddhist monks, the training in morality consists of the observance of 227 rules (in the Theravādin tradition), or 250 rules (in the Dharmaguptaka and Chinese traditions), or 253 rules (in the Mūlasarvāstavādin and Tibetan traditions), while Buddhist nuns must follow an additional set of rules. The collection of these rules is called the *Pāṭimokkha*, that is, the "Code of Conduct" or "Disciplinary Rules", and is a part of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

Lay practitioners observe either five or eight rules of moral training, the so-called "five precepts" or "eight precepts". In any kind of spiritual development, we need to establish our practice on moral principles so that we feel self-respect and stability. The training rules provide a guide that we can use for behavior in our daily lives, and they provide the foundation for the practice of meditation and the attainment of wisdom.

Five Precepts (*Pañca Sīla*):

1. To abstain from taking life
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct
4. To abstain from false speech

5. To abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness.

Eight Precepts (*Aṭṭhanga Sīla* or *Uposatha Sīla*):

1. To abstain from taking life
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given
3. To abstain from all sexual activity
4. To abstain from false speech
5. To abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness
6. To abstain from eating any solid food after noon
7. To abstain from dancing, singing, music, and unseemly shows; from the use of garlands, perfumes, and unguents; and from things that tend to beautify and adorn
8. To abstain from high and luxurious beds and seats.

The purpose of moral training is to bring physical and verbal action under control.

> *Now I will tell you of the rules of conduct for a householder, acting according to which, he becomes a good disciple. If there be monk-duty to be performed, such duty cannot be fulfilled by him who possesses household property.*
>
> *Let him not destroy life nor cause others to destroy life and, also, not approve of others' killing. Let him refrain from oppressing all living beings in the world, whether strong or weak.*
>
> *Then, because the disciple knows that it belongs to others, stealing anything from any place should be avoided. Let him not cause to steal, nor approve of others' stealing. All stealing should be avoided.*
>
> *The wise man should avoid non-celibate life as if it were a burning charcoal pit. If he is unable to lead a celibate life fully, let him not transgress with another's wife.*
>
> *Whether he is in an assembly or in a public place, let him not tell lies to another. Let him not cause others to tell lies nor approve of others' telling lies.*
>
> *The householder who delights in self-control, knowing that taking intoxicants results in its loss, should not indulge in taking intoxicants, nor should he cause others to take them nor approve of others doing so. Fools commit evil deeds as a result of drunkenness and cause other people, who are negligent, to act accordingly. One should avoid this sphere of evil deeds, this madness, this delusion, this delight of fools.*
>
> *(1) One should not destroy life; (2) should not take that which is not given; (3) should not tell lies; (4) should not be a drinker; (5) should refrain from all unchastity; (6) should not eat untimely food at night; (7) should not wear ornaments nor use perfumes; (8) should lie on a mat spread on the ground. This they call the eightfold sacred observance proclaimed by the Buddha, who came to do away with sorrow. Being happy-minded, one should observe this virtue of*

eight precepts on the fourteenth (or the fifteenth) and eighth days of the lunar fortnight [and during the three rainy months together with those preceding and following this season, five months in all]. Then, on the following morning, the wise one who has observed eight precepts should happily provide the Community of Monks with food and drink in a suitable manner.

Let him support his father and mother in a proper manner and also pursue a blameless career. The householder observing these duties with diligence is reborn in the sphere of "self-luminant" beings.

The first precept, to abstain from taking life, involves non-violence, non-killing. As we become more developed in the spiritual life, we realize the need to live so that we are not creating violence around us. The more considerate, compassionate, and loving we are of other beings, both human and non-human, the more we develop our own sense of self-respect, and the more we feel a sense of inner peace and calm.

Thus, training in the first precept means refraining from thoughts, speech, or actions that are violent or harmful both to other beings and to ourselves. It means respecting all living beings and relating to them in a more sensitive, accepting, and open way.

The second precept is refraining from taking what has not been freely given. Obviously, this precept refers to refraining from overt stealing and robbing, but, in a more refined sense, this precept also refers to respecting the property of others. It means that we do not waste time coveting what other people have. Now, it is difficult not to want more, not to covet what others have in a society that is constantly bombarding us with messages of more, more, more. But this is not the way to develop the spiritual life. So, by following the second precept, we do not take what does not belong to us, we respect what others have without coveting it, and we lessen our own wants.

The third precept is refraining from sexual misconduct. Many people have miserable problems such as guilt, fear, and worry because our society does not understand nor respect the sexual nature of the human body. Because we are taught to relate to sexuality with guilt, fear, and worry, we do not feel our sexuality on a natural, instinctual level. Instead, we create endless problems for ourselves and others by exalting sexuality, or hating it, or fearing it, or becoming obsessed with it, or feeling guilty about it. We have lost our sense of proportion about what it should be in our lives. To follow this precept means to accept and understand our sexuality. This means awakening to and understanding the impulses and energy we all have and coming to terms with our sexuality in a way that we can respect. We come to see that sexuality is not something that has to be divisive, exploitative, or selfish.

Buddhist monks and nuns are required to refrain from any expression of sexual desire and from all sexual activity. In joining the Order of Monks or Nuns, they have made a conscious decision to make a maximum effort to attain liberation, and many of the rules, as well as the organization of the Orders, help monks and nuns avoid unnecessary stimulation of sensual desires. A man or a woman who is incapable of restraint is encouraged to leave the Orders and become a lay practitioner again, with no stigma attached, and they are free also to return to the

Orders. For lay practitioners, however, things are more complicated. The Buddha did not expect lay practitioners to practice sexual abstinence. To them, he advised restraint and mindfulness and avoidance of being excessively attached to sex.

Sexuality has to be considered with honesty and integrity so that we are not exploiting it just for pleasure, as an escape, or as an obsessive habit. If sexuality is used in ways that humiliate other people or ourselves, it can cause endless pain, suffering, fear, divisiveness, and disruption. Adultery, rape, and seduction are always painful, divisive, and disruptive. They are not activities that promote respect and trust — they will not help us develop a spiritual life. Sexuality is a vital, instinctive drive. It needs to be understood, not judged, and it must be respected so that it can be used in ways that benefit ourselves and others.

It may be noted here that Buddhism condemns neither premarital sex nor homosexuality.

The fourth precept is abstaining from false speech. This precept also requires abstaining from vulgar speech, sarcasm, gossip, idle chatter, and all heedless ways in which we can use speech. It is actually quite difficult to practice this precept because our society involves us in so many negative speech habits. It is socially acceptable to talk about what other people are doing, to chit-chat, to exaggerate, and to chatter endlessly just to break the silence. We can also be very cruel with our speech. If we are developing a spiritual life, we have to be very careful about what we say to others or about others so that we are not intentionally causing them pain. It is inevitable that we will sometimes say things that upset people — we cannot help that. But our intention should be to refrain from speaking with malicious intent. We should take responsibility for what we say, for how we speak, and for the suggestions we give to others.

The fifth precept is about abstaining from drinking alcoholic beverages and using drugs. This precept is important because, for our spiritual growth, we are trying to develop a consciousness that is clear and focused. This cannot happen when we are being influenced by alcohol or drugs.

When we meditate, we start from where we are now. We do not take drugs in order to feel at one with the universe. The way to insight, unity, and oneness is not through drugs, but through Right Understanding, that is, through seeing things as they really are.

The five precepts provide the moral foundation for our practice. They need to be reaffirmed daily and made an integral part of our lives. That is to say that we must make a constant effort — we must keep reminding ourselves — to refrain from unwholesome thoughts, speech, and actions and to nurture and perform wholesome thoughts, speech, and actions until they become second nature to us.

In all of this, mindfulness (*sati*) is the key for *knowing* what we are thinking, saying, or doing, and is thus the starting point. Mindfulness is the tool for *shaping* the mind, and is thus the focal point. Finally, mindfulness is the manifestation of the achieved *freedom* of the mind, and is thus the culminating point. Learning to control attention is the key to gaining access to the vital energy that drives the whole organism we call our self and to using that energy wisely. No skill in living is more useful.

CONCENTRATION / MEDITATION

In Buddhism, there are two types of meditation (*bhāvanā*): *samatha*, or calm-abiding (also called "tranquility meditation"), and *vipassanā*, or insight meditation (also called "analytical meditation"). Concentration (*samādhi*) involves the mind resting one-pointedly on an object so that the mind becomes stable and calm. The purpose of developing one-pointed attention is to slow down the flow of thoughts. The mind cannot focus on something when it is distracted by thoughts, that is, when it is swept away by or attached to thoughts. It is this inner noise that is the shield that prevents us from knowing our highest self. In *samatha* meditation, the mind is focused one-pointedly without being distracted. If we can focus the mind one-pointedly without being distracted, we have achieved *samatha*. Thus, *samatha* is not a state of "no thought" but, rather, a state of "non-distraction". When we develop one-pointed concentration (*ekaggatā*), the mind becomes so relaxed that it rests in itself, just as it is, undistracted by thoughts.

When the mind becomes very calm and stable, it can distinguish and discriminate very clearly between all phenomena and see everything as very distinct. This ability to see all things clearly just as they are is called insight.

WISDOM

Wisdom (*paññā*) is the understanding, through personal experience, of the true nature of all conditioned things, that is, impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and absence of a permanent entity such as a soul or self (*anattā*). Wisdom is achieved through insight, or *vipassanā*, meditation. In insight meditation, the mind is set to a perfect state of balance, and then the attention is projected to the changing nature or the unsatisfactory nature or the impersonal nature of physical and mental phenomena. It is not a mere intellectual appreciation or conceptual knowledge of these truths, but an indubitable and unshakable personal experience of them, obtained and matured through repeated meditative confrontation with the facts underlying those truths. It is the intrinsic nature of insight that it produces a growing detachment and an increasing freedom from craving, culminating in the final deliverance of the mind from all that causes its enslavement to the world of suffering. It is the nature of insight to be free from desire (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) and to see clearly all things in the inner and outer world as bare phenomena, that is, as impersonal processes.

Anicca and *Anattā*: Impermanence and Non-self

This important truth of the phenomenality and emptiness of all existence can be, and ought to be, understood by everyone for oneself.

According to the Buddha's teaching, our so-called individual existence is in reality nothing but a mere process of physical and mental phenomena, a process which, since time immemorial, was already going on before one's apparent birth, and which, also after death, will continue for immemorial periods of time. In what follows, we shall see that the five *khandhas*,

or aggregates of existence, in no way constitute any real ego-identify, or *attā*, and that no ego-entity exists apart from them, and hence that the belief in an ego-identity is merely an illusion.

That which we call our physical body is merely a name for a combination of manifold component parts and in reality constitutes no entity, no personality. This is clear to everyone without further argument. Everybody knows that the body is changing from moment to moment, that old cells are continually breaking down and new ones arising; in brief, that the body will be quite another body after a few years, that nothing will have remained of the former flesh, bones, blood, etc. Consequently, the body of the baby is not the body of the school boy, and the body of the young man is not the body of the gray-haired old man. Hence, the body is not a persisting entity but rather a continually changing process of arising and passing away, consisting of a perpetual dying out and arising anew of cells. In like manner, that which we call our mental life is a continually changing process of feeling (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), mental formations (*saṁkhāra*), and states of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). At one moment, a pleasant feeling arises; the next moment, a painful feeling; one moment, one state of consciousness; the next moment, another. That which we call a human being, an individual, a person does not in himself or herself, as such, possess any independent abiding reality. In the absolute sense (*paramattha*), no individual, no person, is there to be found, but merely perpetually changing combinations of physical states, of feelings, volitions, and states of consciousness.

That which we call a "chariot", for example, has no existence apart from and independent of axle, wheels, shaft, etc. That which we call a "house" is merely a convenient name for bricks, wood, plaster, paint, pipes, electrical wires, etc. put together after a certain manner, so as to enclose a portion of space, but there is no separate house-entity as such in existence.

In exactly the same way, that which we call a "being", or an "individual", or a "person", or by the pronouns "I", or "he", or the like, is nothing but a constantly changing combination of physical and mental phenomena and has no real existence in and of itself.

The pronouns "I", "you", "he", etc. are merely terms found useful in conventional or current speech (*vohāra-vacana*) but do not designate realities. For neither do these physical and mental phenomena constitute an absolute ego-entity, nor yet does there exist, outside these phenomena, any ego-entity, self, or soul who is the possessor or owner of the same. Thus, when the Buddhist scriptures speak of persons, or even of the rebirth of persons, this is done only for the sake of easier understanding and is not to be taken in the sense of ultimate truth (*paramattha-sacca*). This so-called "being", or "I", is, in the absolute sense, nothing but a perpetually changing process. Therefore also, to speak of the suffering of a "person", or "being", is incorrect in the absolute sense. For it is not a "person", but a psychophysical process that is subject to transiency and suffering.

In the absolute sense, there are only innumerable processes, countless life-waves, in this vast, ever-surging ocean of bodily states, feelings, perceptions, volitions, and states of consciousness. Apart from these phenomena, there exists nothing that is persistent, not even for the brief span of two consecutive moments.

These phenomena have merely momentary duration. They die every moment, and every moment new phenomena are born; a perpetual dying and coming to birth, a ceaseless heaving of waves up and down. All is in a state of perpetual flux. The old forms fall to pieces, and new ones arise. One feeling disappears, another appears in its place. One state of consciousness exists this moment, another the following moment. Everywhere there is found a perpetual

change of material and mental phenomena. In this way, moment follows upon moment, day upon day, year upon year, life upon life. And so this ceaselessly changing process goes on for thousands, even eons upon eons of years. An eternally changing sea of feelings, perceptions, volitions, and states of consciousness; such is existence, such is *saṁsāra*, the world of arising and passing away, of growing and decaying, the world of sorrow, misery, lamentation, and despair.

Without a real insight into this phenomenality, or egolessness (*anattā*) or impersonality of all existence, it is impossible to understand the Four Noble Truths correctly.

The Five Aggregates

All phenomenal things — that is, all things known to us by direct experience — exist only in momentary relationships; they are interdependent and have no real existence apart from their conditioned relativity. That is why the Buddha taught that all the physical and mental phenomena of this world are impermanent (*anicca*), subject to suffering (*dukkha*), and devoid of self-existence (*anattā*). Neither mind nor body is a "self-existing" entity. They are phenomena that arise conditioned by preceding and co-existing phenomena, and they subside and pass away when the natural causes producing them cease to take effect and then give place to others. Thus, the entire universe of animate and inanimate matter, of living beings and the vast galaxies of stars we see in the sky at night, is not a permanent self-existing structure but, rather, a process of continual change and transformation.

Mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*) are both impermanent and unstable. Everything that exists is composed of *kalāpas* (subatomic particles), each arising and dying out simultaneously. Each *kalāpa* is a mass formed by the combination of the eight nature-elements. The first four are the essential material qualities that are predominant in a *kalāpa*. They are extension (earth), cohesion (fluidity or water), heat (hot and cold), and motion (air). The remaining four elements are merely subsidiaries that are dependent on and derived from the first four. They are color, smell, taste, and nutritive essence. It is only when the eight nature-elements are combined together that the entity of a *kalāpa* is formed. In other words, during the very brief moment of the co-existence of these eight nature-elements, there is an entity that is known as a *kalāpa*. These *kalāpas* are in a state of perpetual change or flux (*anicca* or impermanence) — they are nothing but a stream of energy. The body, as we call it, is not an entity as it seems to be but a continuum of matter with a co-existing life force.

What is normally called a living being is seen in Buddhism as nothing but a combination and continuous arising and dissolution of mental and physical phenomena. The personality and the apparent continuity of a person is nothing other than the ceaseless activity of a stream of *dhammas* held together as a temporary unity by the force of habitual patterns. Thus, there is no enduring "soul" (*attā*) or any entity of that kind. That which leads to rebirth is simply volitional mental impulses of the past motivated by craving (*taṇhā*). Individual personality exists only as an aggregate of tendencies — the so-called "habit-formations" of modern psychology —, and even these are subject to continual change. A living being, or an individual, is merely a combination of ever-changing physical and mental forces or energies, which can be divided into five groups or aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). The five aggregates are:

1. Matter (*rūpa*)
2. Feeling (*vedanā*), or sensation — the bare feeling based on contact
3. Perceptions (*saññā*) — the tendency to recognize an object
4. Predisposing mental formations (*saṁkhāra*) — the subsequent emotion based on an appraisal of the meaning of a feeling
5. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)

Let us now look at each of these aggregates in detail:

1. The first aggregate is that of matter (*rūpakkhandha*), which includes the four elements: (1) the element of solidity (earth), which is the quality of extension, or heaviness and lightness, in material form; (2) the element of fluidity (water), which is the quality of cohesion; (3) the element of heat (fire), which is the quality of hot and cold; and (4) the element of motion (air), which is the quality of movement in the material elements. Also included are the five material sense organs, that is, the faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body plus their corresponding objects in the external world — visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangible objects. Thus, the whole world of matter, both internal and external, is included in the aggregate of matter (*rūpa*). *Rūpa* is the only *khandha* that corresponds to the external physical world. The remaining four *khandhas* correspond to the mental side of the mind/body system. The physical-material world is known as data presented to the senses. However, in this case, not only are the sense objects themselves included, but also the senses. This reflects the fact that, if we do not forget the role of our own psychophysical organism in the role of perception, then, we find that what appears to the mind at a moment of perception of an object of sight is that object together with the sense of seeing, and so on for the other senses. We never merely see an object, we always experience seeing that object at the same time.

2. The second aggregate is that of feelings (*vedanākkhandha*), or sensations. All kinds of feelings (pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral), experienced through the contact of physical and mental organs with the external world, are included in the second aggregate. There are six kinds of feelings: the contact of the eye with visible forms, ear with sounds, nose with smells, tongue with taste, body with tangible objects, and mind with mental objects (images, thoughts, or ideas). Feeling is the automatic affective response to an object before any higher conceptual process enters in, a bare reaction of "pleasant," "unpleasant," or "neutral." This does not refer to a distinct emotional response but to a simple positive, negative, or neutral evaluation that accompanies cognition of any primary form. While *rūpa* corresponds to the physical-material pole of dualistic experience, and *khandhas* three through five correspond to the mental pole, the second *khandha* connects the physical and the mental. In "body," it manifests as the inner feeling of the body as pleasurable, painful, or neutral. In "mind," it manifests as affective arousal, the instinctive response to the basic "thingness" of the outside and the basic responses of "like" or "dislike."

3. The third aggregate is that of perceptions (*saññākkhandha*). Perception refers to the faculty that recognizes feelings (*vedanā*). Like feelings, perceptions are of six kinds, in relation to

six internal faculties and six external objects — they are produced through the contact of our six faculties with the external world. It is perceptions that recognize objects, whether physical or mental. Perception is the first discernment that there is a specific object — the beginning of concept formation. It forms the concept of one's "self" as that "self" relates to the particular form occupying one's attention. It abstracts the characteristics of any object that has been determined by feeling to be of interest to oneself, thus enabling one to name it. Because one can name it, one can also grasp onto it and hold it in one's field of attention, that is, in one's "world."

4. The fourth aggregate is that of predisposing mental formations (*saṁkhārakkhandha*), or, simply, mental formations. All volitional, or mental activities, both good and bad, are included in this aggregate. Feelings and perceptions are not volitional actions — they do not produce karmic effects. It is only volitional actions that can produce karmic effects. Predisposing mental formations (*saṁkhāra*) comprise all mental elements other than feeling and perception. This *khandha* comprises the conceptual contents of experience. A variety of positive, negative, and indifferent emotions; simple and complex thought patterns as well as systems of thought such as various philosophical, religious, and psychological belief systems; and various mental functions and attitudes are all included in this category.

5. The fifth aggregate is that of consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*). Consciousness is a reaction, awareness, or response, that arises at one of the six sense bases (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind). Consciousness does not recognize an object. It is only a sort of awareness — awareness of the presence of an object. It is the third aggregate (perceptions) that recognizes an object. It must be noted that what consciousness infers about what it is experiencing may be quite different from what the organism as a whole is experiencing. That is not to say that consciousness is not experiencing what it seems to be experiencing. That is necessarily true, since consciousness is consciousness of just what seems, and nothing else. But it is saying that the conclusions consciousness jumps to may be wrong.

The five *khandhas* together comprise all the psychophysical constituents of the human personality. There is nothing left out that can actually be noted in our experience; the five *khandhas* constitute all that we call "I" and "the world". The idea of a "self" affects perception at unconscious levels and distorts it so that our view of "what is" is constantly colored by this idea, and is, therefore, constantly deceived. In the Buddhist view, understanding this fact, not just at the surface rational level, which is superficial and deceptive, but at the deep subconscious levels of perceptual processing, is the necessary step to awakening out of this self-deception in order to perceive things as they truly are.

In Right Contemplation, the practitioner makes an analytical study of the nature of matter first, then of the nature of mind and of mental properties. He begins to see that mind and matter are in constant change — they are impermanent and fleeting. As his power of concentration increases, the true nature of the forces within him become more and more vivid.

Predisposing Mental Formations (*Saṁkhāra*)

The word *saṁkhāra* can mean "conditioner", the cause that conditions. It can also mean "condition", the result of the action of conditioning. Finally, it can mean "conditioning", the activity or process of conditioning.

Saṁkhāra is the imprint left behind by past actions, that is to say that everything we think, say, or do leaves a residue of conditioning in the mind. The slightest thought has consequences, as does the slightest act. Over the years, it is the sum of all these consequences, large and small, that shapes our lives. *Saṁkhāra* is what impels us to continue experiencing sense stimuli. Everything we see, hear, taste, smell, feel, or think as a result of contact of the senses with an object is conditioned by the force of past *kamma* or *saṁkhāra*. This means that we cannot help being controlled by our *saṁkhāras*; we have no way of avoiding the *kamma* of our nature. However, the way in which we react to new sense stimuli does not necessarily have to be conditioned by our *saṁkhāras* — we have a choice. We can either face our *saṁkhāras* squarely, or we can turn around and give up.

There are three possible ways of reacting to a new sensory contact: (1) skillful (*kusala*) reaction; (2) unskillful (*akusala*) reaction; and (3) neutral (*avyākata*) reaction. Neutral reaction is practically possible only for an *Arahant*, that is, for someone who experiences neither greed (*lobha*) nor anger (*dosa*) and whose mind is not clouded by any form of delusion (*moha*) about the Four Noble Truths. Skillful reaction, however, lies within the power of every intelligent being. In order to be able to react skillfully, one has to have control not only over one's own physical and verbal actions, but also over one's mind.

Thoughts are the very source of *kamma*, for from our thoughts flows everything: words, actions, desires, decisions, destiny. The source of all *kamma* is self-will, the deep, driving desire for personal satisfaction.

> *Mind is the starting point in shaping who we are — as we think, so we become. If one speaks or acts with evil intentions, suffering will follow, just as the wheels of a cart follow the oxen that pull it along.*

> *Mind is the starting point in shaping who we are — as we think, so we become. If one speaks or acts with pure intentions, happiness will follow, like a shadow that never leaves one's side.*

Past and future are both contained in every present moment. Whatever we are today is the result of what we have thought, spoken, and done in the past — just as what we shall be tomorrow is the result of what we think, say, and do today. That is the real implication of the law of *kamma*, and it puts the responsibility for both present and future squarely in our hands.

> *All beings are the owners of their deeds. Every deed, both wholesome and unwholesome, committed by oneself is one's own property. They follow one throughout the whole of one's life.*

Every single negative thing we have ever thought or done has ultimately arisen from our grasping at a false self (*attā*) and our cherishing of that self, making it the dearest and most important element in our lives. All those negative thoughts, emotions, desires, and actions that are the cause of our negative *kamma* are engendered by self-grasping (*ahaṁkāra*) and self-cherishing. They are the dark, powerful magnet that attracts to us, life after life, every obstacle, every misfortune, every anguish, every disaster, and so they are the root cause of all the sufferings of *saṁsāra*.

Kamma and Rebirth

Let us come back to the second Noble Truth, the origin of suffering, rooted in selfish craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). In order to understand this truth better, it will be necessary to speak of a doctrine that is often wrongly interpreted and misunderstood — it is the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth. With regard to this teaching, Buddhism is often accused of self-contradiction. Thus, it is said that Buddhism, on the one hand, denies the existence of the soul, while, on the other hand, it teaches the transmigration of the soul. Nothing could be more mistaken than this. Buddhism does not, in any way, teach transmigration. The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth, which is really the same as the law of causality extended to the mental and moral domain, has nothing whatever to do with the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation, or transmigration. There exists a fundamental difference between these two doctrines.

According to the Hindu doctrine, there exists a soul (*ātman* in Sanskrit) independently of the body, which, after death, leaves its former physical body and passes over into a new body, exactly as one might throw off an old garment and put on a new one. It is quite different, however, with the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth. Buddhism does not recognize in this world any existence of mind apart from matter. All mental phenomena are conditioned through the six faculties of sense, and without these they cannot exist. According to Buddhism, mind without matter is an impossibility. And, as we have seen, the mental phenomena, just as all bodily phenomena, are subject to change, and no permanent element, no ego-entity, no soul, is there to be found. Hence, since there is no real unchanging entity, no soul, one cannot speak of the transmigration of such a thing.

How then is rebirth possible without something to be reborn, without an ego or soul? Here, it is necessary to point out that even the word “rebirth” in this connection is not really quite correct, but used as a mere makeshift. What the Buddha teaches is, correctly speaking, the law of cause and effect working in the mental and moral domain. For, just as everything in the physical world happens in accordance with this law, as the arising of any physical state is dependent upon some preceding state as its cause, in just the same way, this law must have universal application in the mental and moral domain too. If every physical state is preceded by another state as its cause, so also this present psychophysical life must be dependent upon causes anterior to its birth. Thus, according to Buddhism, the present life-process is the result of craving for life in a former birth, and the craving for life in this birth is the cause of the life-process that continues after death.

But, since there is nothing that persists from one moment of consciousness to the next, so also no abiding element exists in this ever-changing life-process that can pass over from one life to another.

Nothing transmigrates from this moment to the next, nothing from one life to another life. This process of continually producing and being produced may best be compared to a wave on the ocean. In the case of a wave, there is not the smallest quantity of water that actually travels over the surface of the sea. The wave-structure that seems to hasten over the surface of the water, though creating the appearance of one and the same mass of water, is, in reality, nothing but a continuous rising and falling of ever new masses of water. And the rising and falling is produced by the transmission of force originally generated by wind. Just so, the Buddha did not teach that it is an ego-entity (*attā*), or a soul, that hastens through the ocean of rebirth, but that it is in reality merely a life-wave which, according to its nature and activities, appears here as a man, there as an animal, and elsewhere as an invisible being.

Nibbāna

There is another teaching of the Buddha that often gives rise to serious misunderstanding. It is the teaching of *Nibbāna*, or the extinction of suffering. This third Noble Truth points out that, through the cessation of all selfish craving and all ignorance, of necessity all suffering comes to an end, to extinction, and no new rebirth will take place. For, if the seed is destroyed, it can never sprout again. If the selfish craving that clutches convulsively at life is destroyed, then, after death, there can never again take place a fresh shooting up, a continuation of this process of existence, a so-called "rebirth". Where, however, there is no birth, there can be no death. Where there is no arising, there can be no passing away. Where no life exists, no suffering can exist. Now, because, with the extinction of all selfish craving, all its concurrent phenomena, such as conceit, self-seeking, greed, hatred, anger, and cruelty, come to an end, this freedom from selfish craving signifies the highest state of selflessness, wisdom, and holiness.

> *There is, Monks, that sphere wherein there is neither earth nor water, nor fire, nor air; wherein is neither the sphere of infinite space, nor that of infinite consciousness, nor that of nothingness, nor that of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; wherein there is neither this world nor a world beyond, nor moon and sun. There, Monks, I declare is no coming, no going, no stopping, no passing away, no arising. It is not established, it does not continue on, it has no object. Thus, indeed, is the end of suffering.*
>
> *There is, Monks, an unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and unconditioned state. If, Monks, there were not this unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and unconditioned, an escape from the born, originated, made, and conditioned would not be possible. Inasmuch as there is an unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and unconditioned state, an escape from the born, originated, made, and conditioned is possible.*

Now, it is sometimes erroneously believed that annihilation of the self, that is, annihilation of a real being, takes place since, after the death of a Holy One, an *Arahant*, this psychophysical life-process no longer continues, and it is therefore maintained that the goal of Buddhism is simply annihilation. Against such a misleading statement, one must enter an emphatic denial. How is it ever possible to speak of the annihilation of a self, or soul, or ego, where no such thing exists? As we have seen, in reality, there is no such thing as an ego-entity, or soul, and therefore no "transmigration" of such a thing to a new mother's womb.

That bodily process beginning anew in the mother's womb is in no way a continuation of the former bodily process but merely a result, or effect, caused by selfish craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging to life of the so-called "dying individual".

Here, once again, it may be expressly emphasized that, without a clear perception of the phenomenality or egolessness of all existence, it is impossible to obtain a real understanding of the Buddha's teaching, especially that of rebirth and *Nibbāna*.

The Four Stages of Sainthood

Between the states of delusion, bondage, and suffering and that of complete release lie the paths and fruits of attainment, marked by the progressive elimination of ten fetters, that is, ten mental obstructions that stand in the way of self-purification and that bind us to the wheel of existence (*saṁsāra*):

1. Personality belief — the delusion of "selfhood"
2. Skeptical doubt
3. Attachment to rites and rituals
4. Desire for gratification of the senses
5. Ill will
6. Craving for fine-material existence
7. Craving for immaterial existence
8. Conceit
9. Restlessness
10. Ignorance

One who has put an end to the first three fetters is known as a Stream-Winner (*Sotāpanna*); he has entered the stream of liberation, and his destiny has become fixed. He cannot be born in any sphere lower than the human, and if he does not attain full liberation earlier, he is bound to do so within the course of seven lives at the most. One who has reached this stage becomes incapable of committing any of the unwholesome deeds that lead to rebirth in sub-human realms of suffering. When, in addition, the next two fetters are weakened, he becomes a Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmī*), who will not have to endure more than one rebirth in the sensory spheres, which means that, if he fails to reach *Nibbāna* in the current life, he is bound to do so in the next birth. When all of the first five fetters, which are known as the grosser fetters, are completely destroyed, he becomes a Non-Returner (*Anāgāmī*), who will not be born again in the sensory spheres — if he does not gain *Nibbāna* before he dies, he will reach it in the

next birth, which takes place in the Pure Abodes. There he attains Arahantship and passes straight to *Nibbāna* without returning to the sensory planes. When all ten fetters are destroyed, he attains the state of *Arahant*. He has then realized the paths and fruits of the holy life, and, for him, the painful round of rebirth has come to an end. These four stages of Sainthood are sometimes separated by intervals, sometimes they follow immediately after one another, but at each stage the "fruit" or attainment follows instantly upon the realization of the path in the series of thought-moments. When the thought-moment of insight flashes forth, the meditator knows beyond all doubt the nature of his attainment and what, if anything, still needs to be accomplished.

When, by the total eradication of lust, hatred, and delusion, the *Arahant* gains *Nibbāna*, he obtains with it the type of enlightenment, known as the Disciple's Enlightenment (*Sāvaka-bodhi*), which goes with his attainment. That is, he fully understands the causes of existence and how they have been counteracted, and he experiences an extension of his faculties as a consequence of the breaking down of the delusion of selfhood, which normally acts as a barrier to the mind, isolating it in the personal realm of sensory experience. But the enlightenment of a Supreme Buddha is of a higher order and of an illimitable range. Over and above the knowledge pertaining to Arahantship, a Buddha acquires the perfect understanding of all things. This he gains as the result of his determination, formed in a previous life and realized through the cultivation of transcendent virtue, to become a Fully Enlightened One, a World Teacher for the welfare of all beings; for without that completeness of knowledge, he could not set in motion the Wheel of the *Dhamma*. But, by the nature of things, the greater part of his knowledge is not communicable to others. Nor is there a need to communicate it. In speaking of natural phenomena, the Buddha used the language and ideas of those whom he was addressing, and to whom any other ideas would have appeared bizarre and incredible. One does not speak of the general theory of relativity to a person who can barely understand Euclid. When he was questioned about whether he taught his disciples all that he knew, the Buddha replied with a simile. Placing a pinch of dust on his fingernail, he asked which was greater, the pinch of dust he was holding or the remainder of dust on the ground. The obvious answer was given, whereupon he said: "In like manner the knowledge of the *Tathāgata* is much greater than that which he has taught".

From this, attempts have been made to prove that the Buddha had an esoteric teaching that he reserved for a select body of disciples. But the meaning is made clear by the following: "Nevertheless, everything necessary for complete liberation has been taught by the *Tathāgata*". And again: "The *Tathāgata* has taught the *Dhamma* without making any distinctions of esoteric and exoteric doctrine. The *Tathāgata* does not have the closed fist of a teacher who keeps some things back". The things the Buddha knew but did not teach were those that did not lead to liberation and, therefore, had no bearing on the task of guiding others across the ocean of *saṁsāra*.

The Buddha did not encourage metaphysical speculation. He did not offer theories: "The *Tathāgata* holds no theories" is a phrase that occurs frequently in the scriptures. Having "seen the Truth face to face", he has discarded views based on mere reasoning and imperfect knowledge. Reason is a good guide — none is better so far as it goes —, and certainly nothing that is contrary to reason should be accepted as true; but the point of departure for the ultimate destination is where unaided reason can carry us no farther. It is there that the higher mind

(*Adhi-citta*) takes over and completes the journey. Until such time as it is allowed to do so, the analytical processes of the discriminating, conceptual mind remain to some extent a hindrance.

Dependent Origination (*Paṭīcca-Samuppāda*)

Now let us look at how cause and effect work in conjunction with our volitional acts. This doctrine, which is known as dependent origination (*paṭīcca-samuppāda*), is one of the basic teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda:

> *Deep indeed is dependent origination, Ānanda, and it appears deep. It is through not understanding, through not penetrating this doctrine, that these beings have become entangled like a matted ball of thread, become like muñja grass and rushes, unable to pass beyond the woeful states of existence, the cycles of rebirth.*

This is the doctrine that is referred to by Venerable Assaji when Sāriputta asked him to explain the doctrine of his teacher. Just two lines mentioning this doctrine were sufficient for Venerable Sāriputta to reach the first fruition stage of awakening:

> *The Perfect One has explained the cause of all phenomena, and that which is their cessation — such is the doctrine of the Great Recluse.*

The doctrine is not something invented by the Buddha nor a cleverly worked out philosophical system open to modification and amendment. It is not the invention of some divine being. Dependent origination is the ultimate reality of all phenomena — the arising of conditioned states and the cessation of conditioned states. This goes on whether there is a Buddha or not.

> *When this is, that comes to be.*
> *With the arising of this, that arises.*
> *When this is not, that does not come to be.*
> *With the cessation of this, that ceases.*

This ultimate truth of dependent origination was discovered by the Buddha through his awakening. After he was awakened, he sat by the foot of the *Bodhi*-tree at Gayā, experiencing the supreme bliss of emancipation. After seven days had passed, he emerged from his concentrated meditation and, during the first watch of the night, he thought over the arising aspect of dependent origination: "When this is, that comes to be. With the arising of this, that arises".

In the middle watch, he thought over dependent origination from the point of view of cessation: "When this is not, that does not come to be. With the cessation of this, that ceases". And, in the last watch of the night, the Buddha reflected on dependent origination both arising and ceasing: "This is the arising of suffering, the origin of suffering. This is the end of suffering".

This world, Kaccāyana, usually bases (its views) on two things: on existence and non-existence.

Now, he who, with right insight, sees the arising of the world as it really is, does not hold with the non-existence of the world. And he who, with right insight, sees the passing away of the world as it really is, does not hold with the existence of the world.

The world, for the most part, is given to approaching, grasping, entering into and getting entangled (as regards views). Whoever does not approach, grasp, and take his stand upon that proclivity towards clinging, approaching, and grasping that mental standpoint, namely, the thought: "This is my soul", he knows what arises is just suffering and what ceases is just suffering. Thus, he is not in doubt, is not perplexed, and herein he has knowledge that is not merely another's. Thus far, Kaccāyana, he has right view.

"Everything exists" — this is one extreme. "Nothing exists" — this is the other extreme. Not approaching either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the doctrine of the middle-way. "Conditioned by ignorance, volitional activities come to pass…"

Here are the eleven steps of dependent origination:

1. Dependent on ignorance, volitional formations arise.
2. Dependent on volitional formations, consciousness arises.
3. Dependent on consciousness, the mind-body phenomenon arises.
4. Dependent on the mind-body phenomenon, the six bases for the senses arise.
5. Dependent on the six bases for the senses, contact arises.
6. Dependent on contact, sensations arise.
7. Dependent on sensations, craving arises.
8. Dependent on craving, clinging arises.
9. Dependent on clinging, conditioned existence arises.
10. Dependent on moral and immoral actions in the present existence, the process of rebirth arises.
11. Dependent on the process of rebirth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair arise.

Thus does the whole mass of suffering arise.

From the point of view of cessation, dependent origination involves the same eleven steps. When any one of these steps ceases, then the next step ceases as well, and so on to the cessation of the whole mass of suffering.

Now, the first link, ignorance (*avijjā*), is not to be understood as a first beginning. It is impossible to conceive of a first beginning. The origin of suffering can only be known as an on-going process that we can understand through observing it as it works. No one, not even a Buddha, can trace this process back to a first beginning.

Let us look at the various steps in a little more detail. In past lives, we have done good and bad volitional acts with mind, word, and deed, because we were ignorant of the true reality of conditioned states. So our ignorance (*avijjā*) has led us to set loose these mental forces (*saṁkhāra*), which have led to our present existence. Thus, not apprehending things as they really are (delusions) arises from this ignorance, and these delusions constitute the compositional factor (the formation of *kamma*).

In our present life, because of our past deeds, we have consciousness, a life continuum (*viññāṇa*), which is continually supporting this mind-body phenomenon (*nāma-rūpa*) which we call "I, mine".

> *Feeling, perception, intention, contact, attention — these, O Friends, are called "name". The four great elements and form dependent on them — these, O Friends, are called "form".*

This mind-body phenomenon has six senses — sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and thinking and imagining —, which make it possible for there to be contact (*phassa*) with the objects that stimulate the senses. This contact gives rise to sensations (feelings) (*vedanā*). We react to these sensations, which we find to be either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, and thus craving (*taṇhā*) arises. We crave to prolong the agreeable sensations. We crave to get rid of the disagreeable sensations. So this craving leads to attachment (clinging) (*upādāna*). Our clinging results in conditioned existence (*bhava*), and, during our new existence, we commit innumerable volitional acts that are either good or bad. In this way, we go to a new birth (*jāti*), which once again brings old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.

This is the vicious circle of cause and effect. And we are responsible for the whole process. It is our desire and clinging that leads us to do good and bad actions that bind us to this whole process of suffering.

But it can all be stopped. If any one link in the chain is broken, the whole process will stop. And we are following the teachings in order to do just that.

> *Just as, friend, two bundles of reeds were to stand one supporting the other, even so consciousness is dependent on name-and-form, and name-and-form is dependent on consciousness, and the six spheres of sense on name-and-form, contact on the six spheres, feeling on contact, craving on feeling, grasping on craving, becoming on grasping, birth on becoming, and old-age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, unhappiness, and despair are dependent on birth. Thus is the arising of the entire mass of suffering. But, friend, if one of those two bundles of reeds is drawn out, the other one would fall down. Even so, friend, with the cessation of name-and-form, consciousness ceases, with the cessation of consciousness, name-and-form ceases, with the cessation of name-and-form, the six sense-spheres cease. Thus comes to be the cessation of this entire mass of suffering.*

There is one link in the chain that is particularly appropriate for lay practitioners to work on — the link between reaction and sensations. As we sit meditating, watching our passing

sensations, the whole process is happening an innumerable number of times each second. Each sensation is the result of some volitional act done through ignorance in the past. If we can become engrossed in the knowing of *anicca* — the change taking place in a sensation —, we will be automatically developing that balanced attitude, that equanimity, which will enable us one day to cut through the link to the next step. We will be working towards cutting off the craving that we normally allow to arise. We will not be able to break the link until we are able to attain liberation, and this takes much preparation.

Bringing Practice into Daily Life

Here are some of the ways that lay practitioners can benefit themselves and others by bringing their practice into their daily lives:

GENEROSITY

This involves the giving of material things, for instance, to support Monks and Nuns, to give to the poor, the hungry, or the needy, and so forth. There is no lack of opportunity to practice this in our over-populated world, and those who have wealth and enough clothing, food, shelter, and medicine to fulfill their own needs, should practice generosity, bearing in mind that what is given away is truly well preserved, while what is kept is wasted. This practice, which runs counter to the worldly way of craving and attachment, is very important in the present Western materialistic civilization with its emphasis upon gain and accumulation of possessions. Nothing much can be achieved in one's spiritual practice until one is prepared to open one's heart and one's hands to others.

MORAL CONDUCT

The Five Precepts have been mentioned above. Besides these precepts, which are guides to good conduct, one should study those discourses of the Buddha in which he has given the principles that will lead to a harmonious society. This must be founded upon wholesome mental states in the individual, for which the practice of meditation is essential.

MEDITATION

We must choose — or make, if we have to — a time for meditation when we can sit for half an hour in uninterrupted peace. As our meditation deepens, we can sit for increasingly longer periods of time, or, if we wish, we can add half an hour in the evening. Early morning, particularly prior to sunrise, is the best time to meditate. We must resolve to have our meditation every day — no matter how busy our schedule, no matter what interruptions threaten, no matter whether we are sick or well. We should also meditate at the same time every day. Meditation should become a habit, an integral part of our daily routine.

We should set aside a place for meditation and not change it — it should be cool, clean, and quiet. It does not have to be elaborate — it can be as simple as a corner of a room big

enough to accommodate us and our meditation cushion.

The main object we choose to concentrate upon during a particular meditation session may be a visualized image of the Buddha or a *Dhamma* topic such as impermanence. It may even be the cultivation of a clear state of mind free from discursive thought. But, no matter which main meditation we are going to practice, we should prepare ourselves beforehand by letting go of everything that might interfere with clear concentration. This letting go is accomplished on several different levels. Physically, we sit in an upright posture that allows the pockets of tension that have accumulated in our body to dissipate most easily, and, mentally, we try to cultivate an open, fresh state of mind free from expectations and self-centered motivations.

SLOWING DOWN

Hurry makes for tension, insecurity, inefficiency, and superficial living. It also sets us up for illness. To guard against hurrying throughout the day, we should start the day early and simplify our lives so that we do not try to fill our time with more than what we can do. When we find ourselves beginning to speed up, we can refocus, breathe deeply, and relax the tension that is beginning to build up in our bodies.

It is important not to confuse slowing down with laziness. In slowing down, we should attend meticulously to details, giving our best even to the smallest undertaking.

GIVING ONE-POINTED ATTENTION

Doing more than one thing at a time divides attention and fragments consciousness. When we read and eat at the same time, for example, part of our mind is on what we are reading and part on what we are eating; we are not getting the most from either activity. Similarly, when we are talking with someone, we should be giving him or her our full attention. These are little things, but altogether, they help us unify consciousness and deepen concentration.

Everything we do should be worthy of our full attention. When the mind is one-pointed, it is secure, free from tension, and capable of concentration that is the mark of genius in any field of endeavor.

TRAINING THE SENSES

In the food we eat, the books and magazines we read, the movies we see, all of us are subject to the conditioning of rigid likes and dislikes. To free ourselves from this conditioning, we need to learn to change our likes and dislikes freely when it is in the best interests of those around us or ourselves. We should choose what we eat by what our body needs, for example, rather than by what the taste buds demand. Similarly, the mind eats too, through what we feed it through the senses. In this age of mass media, we need to be particularly discriminating in what we read and what we choose for entertainment, for we become in part what our senses take in.

PUTTING OTHERS FIRST

Dwelling on ourselves builds a wall between us and others. Those who keep thinking about their needs, their wants, their plans, their ideas cannot help becoming lonely and insecure. A simple and effective technique to learn to put other people first is to begin with the circle of our family and friends, where there is already a basis of love on which to build. When two people try to put each other first, they are not only moving closer to each other, they are also removing the barriers of their ego, and this helps to deepen their relationships with everyone else as well.

"Putting others first" does not mean making a doormat of ourselves. Rather, it means putting the welfare and growth of others first, which is often very different from doing what they want. One of the necessary skills of love is to be able to say "no" tenderly and persuasively.

We must not allow people to do wrong to us. Whenever someone does something wrong, he or she harms others at the same time that he or she harms himself or herself. If we allow him or her to do wrong, we are encouraging him or her to do wrong. We must use all of our strength to stop him or her, but with only good will, compassion, and sympathy for that person. If we act with hatred or anger, then we only aggravate the situation. But we cannot have good will for such a person unless our mind is calm and peaceful. So, we must practice to develop peace within ourselves, and then we can solve the problem.

READING INSPIRATIONAL LITERATURE

We are so surrounded today by such a low concept of what human beings are that it is essential to give ourselves a higher image. For this reason, it is important to devote at least half an hour or so each day reading the scriptures or the writings of great spiritual masters. Just before bedtime, after evening meditation, is a particularly good time, because the thoughts we fall asleep in will be with us throughout the night.

There is a distinction between works of inspiration and works of spiritual instruction. Inspiration may be drawn from many different writers and from different spiritual traditions or religions. Instructions in meditation and other spiritual disciplines, however, can differ from and even contradict each other. For this reason, it is wise to confine instructional reading to the works of one teacher or one spiritual path. It is important here for us to choose our teacher carefully. A good teacher lives what he or she teaches — it is the student's responsibility to exercise sound judgment in choosing a teacher. Then, once we have chosen, we should give our teacher our full loyalty.

SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP

When we are trying to change our lives, we need the support and encouragement of others with the same goal. If we have friends who are meditating according to the same tradition, it is a great help to meditate together regularly. We can share times of entertainment as well — relaxation is an important part of spiritual living.

Once, the Venerable Ānanda, who was deeply devoted to the Master, spoke of noble friendship as being "half of the holy life", believing he had duly praised its worth. The Buddha

replied: "Do not say so, Ānanda, do not say so: it is the entire holy life to have noble friends, noble companions, noble associates".

The Nature of Buddhism

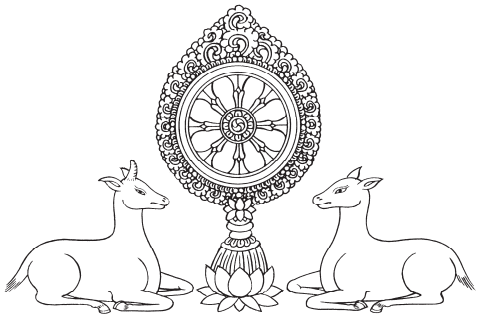
A reproach often leveled against Buddhism, namely, that it is a gloomy and "pessimistic" teaching, proves entirely unfounded by the statements already made. For, as we have seen, the Buddha not only discloses and explains the fact of misery, but he also shows the way to find total release from it. In view of this fact, one is rather entitled to call the Buddha's teaching the boldest optimism ever proclaimed in the world.

Truly, Buddhism is a teaching that assures hope, comfort, and happiness, even to the most unfortunate. It is a teaching that offers, even to the most wretched criminals, prospects of final perfection and peace, and this, not through blind belief, or prayers, or asceticism, or outward ceremonies, rites, and rituals, but through walking and earnestly persevering on that Noble Eightfold Path of inward perfection, purity, and emancipation of the heart.

The Buddha's Teachings are the greatest heritage mankind has received from the past. The Buddha's message of nonviolence and peace, of love and compassion, of tolerance and understanding, of truth and wisdom, of respect and regard for all life, of freedom from selfishness, hatred, and violence, delivered over two thousand six hundred years ago, stands good for today and will stand forever as the Truth. It is an eternal message. ■

PART FOUR

The Two Main Schools of Buddhism



The Two Main Schools of Buddhism

Several hundred years after the passing away of the Buddha, there arose eighteen different schools, or sects, all of which claimed to represent the original Teachings of the Buddha. The differences between these schools were basically due to different interpretations of the Teachings of the Buddha. Over a period of time, these schools gradually merged into two main schools: Theravāda and Mahāyāna. Today, the majority of the followers of Buddhism belong to one of these two schools. Tibetan Buddhism, also known as Vajrayāna or "Diamond Vehicle", is considered to be a branch of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Mahāyāna Buddhism believes that each individual carries within himself or herself the potential for Buddhahood — this is the doctrine of "Buddha Nature", or *Tathāgatagarbha*. This doctrine is not found in the canonical texts, being a later development. This belief is rejected by Theravādin Buddhism.

Theravādin Buddhists maintain that liberation can only be achieved through individual effort, while Mahāyāna Buddhists believe that they can attain liberation through the intervention of other superior beings called *Bodhisattvas* (*Bodhisatta* in Pāḷi). According to this view, *Bodhisattvas* are future Buddhas who, out of compassion for their fellow beings, have delayed their own attainment of Buddhahood until they have helped others attain liberation. In the Pāḷi Canon and commentaries, the designation "*Bodhisatta*" is given only to Prince Siddhārtha (Siddhattha in Pāḷi) before his enlightenment and to his former existences. The Buddha himself uses this term when speaking of his life prior to Enlightenment. Bodhisattvahood is never mentioned nor recommended as an ideal higher than or as an alternative to Arahantship; nor is there any record in the Pāḷi scriptures of a disciple declaring it as his aspiration. At a later date, however, the *Boddhisattva* Ideal was borrowed by Theravādin Buddhism from the Mahāyāna.

Bodhicitta is one of the fundamental tenets of Mahāyāna Buddhism. *Bodhicitta* is the aspiration, nurtured by limitless compassion, to attain liberation for the sake of all sentient beings. This tenet does not exist in Theravādin Buddhism. Another fundamental tenet is renunciation. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, renunciation has two aspects: the first is a strong determination to free oneself of one's problems and their causes. The second follows from the first: in order to free oneself of one's problems and their causes, one must be willing to abandon certain disturbing mental factors (attachment, anger, selfishness, tension, worry, anxiety, etc.). In Theravādin Buddhism, renunciation means both the renunciation of attachment to worldly pleasures as well as the renunciation of mental hindrances. Ultimately, renunciation means that nothing whatsoever should be grasped at or clung to as being "I" or "mine". Grasping and

clinging are the causes of suffering. When there is no grasping and clinging, there is no suffering.

> *The joys of a life devoted to seeking the Truth are attainable for anyone who follows the path of unselfishness. If you cling to your wealth, it is better to throw it away than let it poison your heart. But, if you do not cling to it but use it wisely, then you will be a blessing to all. It is not wealth and power that enslave men but the clinging to wealth and power.*
>
> *My teaching does not require anyone to become homeless or resign the world unless he wants to, but it does require everyone to free himself from the illusion that he is a permanent self and to act with integrity while giving up his craving for pleasure.*
>
> *Alone we come, alone we go. Non-attachment is happiness in this world.*

The final fundamental tenet of Mahāyāna Buddhism is the development of the correct view of emptiness (*śūnyatā* in Sanskrit). The correct view of emptiness means seeing all things as fundamentally devoid, or empty, of independent, lasting substance — seeing them as nothing more than appearances, empty of inherent self-existence. In Theravādin Buddhism, emptiness refers exclusively to the *anattā* doctrine, that is, the insubstantiality of all phenomena:

> *Void is the world … because it is void of a self and anything belonging to a self.*

Some Mahāyāna Buddhists have expressed the view that Theravādin Buddhism is selfish because it teaches that people should seek their own liberation. But how can a selfish person attain enlightenment? He cannot — it is impossible. There is nothing selfish in the noble ideal of Arahantship, for Arahantship can only be attained by eradicating all forms of selfishness. Moreover, all liberation depends upon individual effort — no one can liberate another:

> *By oneself indeed is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself indeed is one purified. No one can purify another.*
>
> *You, yourselves, must make the effort — the Tathāgatas are only teachers.*
>
> *Impermanent are all compound things. Work out your own liberation with diligence.*

Theravādin Buddhists follow orthodox traditions that were established by the Buddha Himself. Indeed, the Theravādins maintain that their school alone is orthodox and that all other schools are degenerations and corruptions of the original teaching. Consequently, they totally reject the Mahāyāna scriptures — they do not consider them to represent the authentic Teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha Himself said:

> *What the Tathāgata has laid down should not be discarded, and what has not been laid down by the Tathāgata should not be added on.*

The Mahāyāna, on the other hand, consider their school to be the complete path and regard the Theravādin school as both incomplete and inferior (hence the derogatory term "Hīnayāna", or "Lesser Vehicle").

The Mahāyāna has created a whole host of mythical *Bodhisattvas*. It also places great importance on the performance of rites and rituals, and it has developed secret rites (*tantra*) that had no place in the original Teachings of the Buddha.

In spite of these basic differences between the two schools, however, there is no disagreement concerning the Teachings as contained in the sacred canonical texts (the *Tipiṭaka*). Moreover, both the Theravāda and the Mahāyāna are one in their reverence for the Buddha.

The areas of agreement between the two schools are as follows:

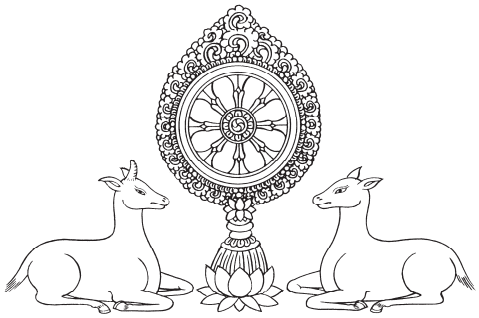
1. Both accept the Buddha as the Teacher.
2. The Four Noble Truths are exactly the same in both schools.
3. The Noble Eightfold Path is the same in both schools.
4. The doctrine of Dependent Origination is the same in both schools.
5. Both reject the idea of a supreme being who created and governs this world.
6. Both accept *anicca* (impermance), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anattā* (non-self) and *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom) without any difference.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the terms "Hīnayāna" and "Mahāyāna" are later introductions and are unknown in the canonical texts or their commentaries. Historically, the Theravāda existed long before these terms came into being. Theravādin Buddhism was introduced to Śri Lanka in the 3rd century B.C.E. during the reign of Emperor Asoka of India. At that time, the Mahāyāna School did not even exist — it developed some three centuries later. The Theravāda remained intact in Śri Lanka and did not play any role in the Hīnayāna ~ Mahāyāna dispute that arose at a later period in India. Therefore, it is not legitimate to include Theravāda in either of these two categories.

In summary, it can be said that the Teachings of Theravādin Buddhism come directly from the mouth of the Buddha Himself, while those of Mahāyāna Buddhism do not. Rather, the Teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism are best described as being based upon, or derived from, what the Buddha taught. ■

PART FIVE

Books on Buddhism



Books on Buddhism

I. General, Introductory Works

Bechert, Heinz and Richard Gombrich (editors). 1984. *The World of Buddhism*. London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd.

Conze, Edward. 1975. *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*. New York, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers.

Conze, Edward. 1980. *A Short History of Buddhism*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Faure, Bernard. 1998. *Buddhism*. Translated by Sean Konecky. New York, NY: Konecky & Konecky.

Herbert, Patricia. 2005. *The Life of the Buddha*. San Francisco, CA: Pomegranate Communications, Inc.

Keown, Damien. 2009. *Buddhism*. New York, NY, and London: Sterling Publishing Co.

Mitchell, Robert Allen. 1989. *The Buddha: His Life Retold*. New York, NY: Paragon House.

Percheron, Maurice. 1982. *Buddha and Buddhism*. Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press.

Robinson, Richard H. and Willard L. Johnson. 1997. *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*. 4th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Sangharakshita (born D. P. E. Lingwood). 1987. *A Survey of Buddhism*. 6th edition. London: Tharpa Publications.

Sangharakshita. 1985. *The Eternal Legacy: An Introduction to the Canonical Literature of Buddhism*. London: Tharpa Publications.

Schumann, Hans Wolfgang. 1974. *Buddhism: An Outline of its Teachings and Schools*. Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House.

Skilton, Andrew. 2000. *A Concise History of Buddhism.* New York, NY: Barnes & Noble. Originally published in 1994 by Windhorse Publications.

Snelling, John. 1987. *The Buddhist Handbook. A Complete Guide to Buddhist Schools, Teaching, Practice, and History*. London: Century Hutchinson, Ltd. Reprinted by Inner Traditions, 1991. Hardcover reprint by Barnes & Noble, 1998.

Strong, John. S. 2009. *The Buddha: A Beginner's Guide*. Oxford: OneWorld Publications. Originally published as *The Buddha: A Short Biography* in 2001 by OneWorld Publications.

II. Theravādin Buddhism

A. Introductory Works / Surveys / Basic Teachings

David-Neel, Alexandra. 1977. *Buddhism: Its Doctrines and its Methods*. Translated by H. N. M. Hardy and Bernard Miall. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Dhammananda, K. Śri. 1987. *What Buddhists Believe*. 4th edition. Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society.

Nārada Mahāthera. 1988. *The Buddha and His Teachings*. 4th edition. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society.

Nyanatiloka Thera. 2002. *The Buddha's Path to Deliverance*. Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions.

Rahula, Walpola. 1974. *What the Buddha Taught*. 2nd edition. New York, NY: Grove Press, Inc.

Saddhatissa, Hammalawa. 1971. *The Buddha's Way*. New York, NY: George Braziller.

B. Meditation

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. 1997. *Mindfulness with Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners*. Translated from the Thai by Santikaro Bhikkhu. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications. This is a revised edition of *Ānāpānasati. Mindfulness with Breathing. Unveiling the Secrets of Life: A Manual for Serious Beginners*. 1st edition 1988, 2nd edition 1989. The first two editions were published by The Dhamma Study-Practice Group.

Goldstein, Joseph. 1987. *The Experience of Insight: A Simple and Direct Guide to Buddhist Meditation*. Boston, MA and London: Shambhala.

Goldstein, Joseph and Jack Kornfield. 1988. *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom: The Path of Insight Meditation*. Boston, MA and London: Shambhala.

Gunaratana, Henepola, Mahāthera. 1993. *Mindfulness in Plain English.* Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Gunaratana, Henepola, Mahāthera. 1988. *The Jhānas in Theravāda Buddhist Meditation*. The Wheel Publications Nos. 351/353. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Ñāṇamoli Thera. 1982. *Mindfulness of Breathing. Ānāpānasati. Buddhist Texts from the Pāḷi Canon and from the Pāḷi Commentaries*. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Nyanaponika, Thera. 1962. *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc.

Paramananda (John Wilson). 2000. *A Practical Guide to Buddhist Meditation*. New York, NY: Barnes & Noble. Originally published in 1996 under the title *Change Your Mind*.

Paravahera Vajirañāṇa Mahāthera. 1987. *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice*. 3rd edition. Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society.

Snyder, Stephen, and Tina Rasmussen. 2009. *Practicing the Jhānas. Traditional Concentration Meditation as Presented by the Venerable Pa Auk Sayādaw*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Solé-Leris, Amadeo. 1986. *Tranquility and Insight*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.

C. Scripture

Anuruddha, Ācariya. 2000. *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. The Abhidhammattha Sangaha: Pāḷi Text, Translation, and Explanatory Guide*. Bhikkhu Bodhi, General Editor. Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu (editor). 2005. *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāḷi Canon*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu (translator). 2000. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha. A New Translation of the Saṁyutta Nikāya*. Two volumes. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu (translator). 2012. *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha. A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu (translator). 2017. *The Suttanipāta. An Ancient Collection of the Buddha's Discourses together with Its Commentaries*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Burlingame, Eugene Watson (translator). 1979. *Buddhist Legends.* Translated from the original Pāḷi Text of the *Dhammapada Commentary*. Three volumes. London: Pāḷi Text Society.

Buddhaghosa, Bhadantācariya. 1999. *Visuddhimagga*. *The Path of Purification*. Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli. Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions.

Daw Mya Tin (translator). 1986. *The Dhammapada: Verses & Stories*. Edited by the Editorial Committee of the Burma Piṭaka Association. Rangoon, Burma: Burma Piṭaka Association.

Easwaran, Eknath (translator). 2007. *The Dhammapada*. 2nd edition. Petaluma, CA: Nilgiri Press.

Horner, I. B. (translator). 1990. *Milinda's Questions*. Two volumes. London: Pāḷi Text Society.

Nārada Mahāthera (translator). 1954. *The Dhammapada*. London: John Murray. Reissued by Tuttle 1993.

Nārada Mahāthera (translator). 1978. *The Dhammapada*. Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society. This and the preceding book are actually two different translations by the same person, Venerable Nārada Mahāthera. Both are considered very accurate from a doctrinal perspective.

Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. 1992. *The Life of the Buddha according to the Pāḷi Canon*. 3rd edition. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society. Reprinted in 2001 by BPS Pariyatti Editions (Seattle, WA).

Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu and Bhikkhu Bodhi (translators). 1995. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha. A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya.* Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi. 1999. *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: An Anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikāya*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press.

Parrinder, Geoffrey (compiler). 1977. *The Wisdom of the Early Buddhists*. New York, NY: New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Pruitt, William and K. R. Norman. 2001. *The Pāṭimokkha*. Oxford: Pāḷi Text Society.

Saddhatissa, Hammalawa (translator). 1985. *The Sutta-Nipāta*. London: Curzon Press.

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu. 1996. *The Buddhist Monastic Code: The Pāṭimokkha Training Rules*. 2nd edition. Valley Center, CA: Mettā Forest Monastery.

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu. 2001. *The Buddhist Monastic Code II: The Khandhaka Rules*. Valley Center, CA: Mettā Forest Monastery.

Walshe, Maurice (translator). 1995. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications. Originally published in 1987 under the title *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha. A New Translation of the Dīgha-Nikāya*.

D. Essays, Specialized Studies, Miscellaneous Works

Ajahn Chah. 2002. *Food for the Heart. The Collected Teachings of Ajahn Chah*. Foreword by Jack Kornfield. Introduction by Ajahn Amaro. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu. 2000. *The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering*. Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions.

Bronkhorst, Johannes. 2009. *Buddhist Teaching in India*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. 1994. *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree. The Buddha's Teaching on Voidness*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Confalonieri, Pierluigi (editor). 1999. *The Clock of Vipassanā Has Struck. A Tribute to the Saintly Life and Legacy of the Lay Master of Vipassanā Meditation Sayagyi U Ba Khin, 1899—1971*. Seattle, WA: Vipassanā Research Publications.

Flickstein, Matthew. 2001. *Swallowing the River Ganges: A Practice Guide to the Path of Purification*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Gombrich, Richard. 1988. *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*. London and New York, NY: Routledge.

Hecker, Hellmuth. 2009. *Similes of the Buddha: An Introduction*. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Jayatelleke, K. N. 1979. *Facets of Buddhist Thought*. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Jones, John Garrett. 1979. *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha: The Jātaka Stories in Relation to the Pāḷi Canon*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Khantipalo Bhikkhu. 1974. *Lay Buddhist Practice*. The Wheel Publication no. 206/207. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Khema, Ayya. 1987. *Being Nobody, Going Nowhere: Meditations on the Buddhist Path*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Khema, Ayya. 1991. *When the Iron Eagle Flies: Buddhism for the West*. London: Arkana (The Penguin Group). Republished by Wisdom Publications.

Khema, Ayya. 1997. *Who Is My Self? A Guide to Buddhist Meditation.* Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Khema, Ayya. 2001. *Visible Here & Now*. Boston, MA, and London: Shambhala.

Nyanaponika Thera. 1998. *Abhidhamma Studies: Buddhist Explorations of Consciousness and Time.* Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Nyanatiloka Mahāthera. 1994. *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures.* Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Pandita, Sayadaw U. 1991. *In This Very Life: The Liberation Teachings of the Buddha*. Translated by Venerable U Aggacitta. Edited by Kate Wheeler. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Rewata Dhamma. 1997. *The First Discourse of the Buddha: Turning the Wheel of Dhamma*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Rosenberg, Larry. 2000. *Living in the Light of Death: On the Art of Being Truly Alive.* Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Saddhatissa, Hammalawa. 1976. *The Life of the Buddha*. London: Unwin Paperbacks.

Saddhatissa, Hammalawa. 1987. *Buddhist Ethics: The Path to Enlightenment*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Sīlānanda, Venerable U. 1990. *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Soma Thera. 1981. *The Way of Mindfulness: The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Commentary*. 5th revised edition. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Story, Francis. 1973. *The Buddhist Outlook: Essays, Dialogues, Poems. Collected writings, vol. I.* Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Story, Francis. 1976. *Dimensions of Buddhist Thought. Collected writings, vol. III.* Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Sumedho, Ajahn. 1995. *The Mind and the Way: Buddhist Reflections on Life*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Swearer, Donald K. 1995. *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Thatcher, Cynthia. 2008. *Just Seeing. Insight Meditation and Sense-Perception*. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Tin, Saya U Chit. 1989. *Knowing Anicca and the Way to Nibbāna*. Wiltshire, England: The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, U.K.

Webb, Russell (editor). 1991. *An Analysis of the Pāḷi Canon*. (= The Wheel Publication no. 217/220.) 2nd edition. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Wijayaratna, Mohan. 1990. *Buddhist Monastic Life According to the Texts of the Theravāda Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

III. Tibetan Buddhism

A. Introductory Works / Surveys / Basic Teachings

Blofeld, John. 1970. *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet: A Practical Guide to the Theory, Purpose, and Techniques of Tantric Mediation*. New York, NY: E. P. Dutton & Co. Reprinted in 1987 by Shambhala. Reprinted in 1992 by Arkana.

Dalai Lama. 1995. *The World of Tibetan Buddhism: An Overview of its Philosophy and Practice*. Translated, edited, and annotated by Geshe Tupten Jinpa. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse. 2007. *What Makes You NOT a Buddhist*. Boston, MA, and London: Shambhala Publications.

Hopkins, Jeffrey. 1999. *The Tantric Distinction: An Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. Revised edition. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Powers, John. 1995. *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.

Thurman, Robert. 1995. *Essential Tibetan Buddhism*. San Francisco, CA: Harper.

Wallace, B. Alan. 1993. *Tibetan Buddhism from the Ground Up. A Practical Approach for Modern Life.* Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

B. Meditation

Lamrimpa, Gen. 1992. *Calming the Mind: Tibetan Buddhist Teachings on Cultivating Meditative Quiescence*. Translated by B. Alan Wallace. Edited by Hart Sprager. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.

McDonald, Kathleen. 1984. *How to Meditate: A Practical Guide*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Thrangu, Khenchen. 1993. *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight: A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation.* Boston, MA: Shambhala.

C. Scripture / Lam-Rim

Āryaśūra. 1983. *Jātakamālā. The Marvelous Companion: Life Stories of the Buddha*. Berkeley, CA: Dharma Publications.

Asaṅga. 2001. *Abhidharmasamuccaya*. French translation by Walpola Rahula. English version by Sara Boin-Webb. Fremont, CA: Asian Humanities Press.

Dalai Lama. 2002a. *Essence of the Heart Sūtra*. Translated by Geshe Thupten Jinpa. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Dalai Lama. 2002b. *Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment.* A Commentary on Atisha Dipankara Shrijnana's *A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* and Lama Je Tsong Khapa's *Lines of Experience*. Translated by Geshe Thupten Jinpa. Boston, MA: Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive for Thubten Dargye Ling, Long Beach, CA.

Hixon, Lee (translator). 1993. *Mother of the Buddhas: Meditations on the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books (The Theosophical Publishing House).

Mu Soeng. 2010. *The Heart of the Universe. Exploring the Heart Sūtra*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Pabongka Rinpoche. 1991. *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications. Paperback edition 1997.

Śāntideva. 1997. *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life (Bodhicaryāvatāra).* Translated from the Sanskrit and Tibetan by Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.

Sparham, Gareth (translator). 1983. *The Tibetan Dhammapada: Sayings of the Buddha. A Translation of the Tibetan Version of the Udānavarga*. Compiled by Dharmatrata. Translated and introduced by Gareth Sparham with guidance from Lobsang Gyatso and Ngawang Thekchok. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Tsongkapa. 1988. *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*. With a commentary by Pabongka Rinpoche. Translated by Geshe Lobsang Tharchin with Michael Roach. Howell, NJ: Mahāyāna Sutra and Tantra Press.

Tsongkapa. 2000—2004. *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment: Lam Rim Chen Mo*. 3 vols. The Lamrim Chenmo translation committee: Joshua W. C. Cutler, Editor-in-Chief, Guy Newland, Editor. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.

Vasubandhu. 1991. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*. 4 vols. French translation by Louis de la Vallée Poussin (1869—1938). English translation by Leo M. Pruden. Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press.

Wangchen, Geshe Namgyal. 1995. *Awakening the Mind: Basic Buddhist Meditations*. Revised edition. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

D. Essays, Specialized Studies, Miscellaneous Works

Batchelor, Stephen. 2000. *Verses from the Center: A Buddhist Vision of the Sublime*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.

Coleman, Graham. 2009. *Meditations on Living, Dying, and Loss: The Essential Tibetan Book of the Dead*. New York, NY: Viking.

Cozort, Daniel. 1998. *Unique Tenets of the Middle Way Consequence School.* Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.

Dalai Lama. 2000. *Transforming the Mind: Teachings on Generating Compassion.* London: Thorsons.

Dalai Lama. 2001. *An Open Heart: Practicing Compassion in Everyday Life*. Boston, MA, New York, NY, London: Little, Brown and Company.

Dalai Lama. 2002. *How to Practice: The Way to a Meaningful Life*. New York, NY, and London: Pocket Books.

Dalai Lama. 2009. *The Middle Way: Faith Grounded in Reason*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Dalai Lama and Alexander Berzin. 1997. *The Gelug / Kagyü Tradition of Mahāmūdra*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.

DeCharms, Christopher. 1997. *Two Views of Mind: Abhidharma and Brain Science.* Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. 1993. *Enlightened Courage: An Explanation of Atisha's Seven Point Mind Training*. Translated from the Tibetan by the Padmakara translation group. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.

Dorje, Gyurme (translator). 2006. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Edited by Graham Coleman, with Thupten Jinpa. New York, NY: Viking.

Dudjom Rinpoche. 1991. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Garfield, Jay L. 1995. *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā.* New York, NY, and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hopkins, Jeffrey. 1983. *Meditation on Emptiness*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Hopkins, Jeffrey. 2001. *Cultivating Compassion [A Buddhist Perspective].* New York, NY: Broadway Books.

Rabten, Geshe. 1988. *Treasury of Dharma: A Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Course*. London: Tharpa Publications.
Sogyal Rinpoche. 1992. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying.* San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins.
Wallace, B. Alan. 2001. *Buddhism with an Attitude: The Tibetan Seven-Point Mind-Training.* Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.
Yeshe, Lama and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. 1976. *Wisdom Energy: Basic Buddhist Teachings*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.
Yeshe, Lama. 1987. *Introduction to Tantra: A Vision of Totality*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.
Zopa, Lama. 1993. *Transforming Problems into Happiness.* Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

IV. Miscellaneous

A. Scripture / Anthologies

Cheng Chien Bhikshu. 1993. *Manifestation of the Tathāgata: Buddhahood According to the Avataṁsaka Sūtra*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.
Cleary, Thomas (translator). 1993. *The Flower Ornament Scripture. A Translation of the Avataṁsaka Sūtra.* Boston, MA, and London: Shambhala Publications.
Conze, Edward (translator). 1959. *Buddhist Scriptures*. London: Penguin Books.
Goddard, Dwight (translator). 1966. *A Buddhist Bible*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

B. Essays, Specialized Studies, Miscellaneous Works

Batchelor, Stephen. 1997. *Buddhism Without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.
Batchelor, Stephen. 2010. *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*. New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau.
Batchelor, Stephen. 2015. *After Buddhism. Rethinking the Dharma for a Secular Age*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press.
Batchelor, Stephen. 2017. *Secular Buddhism. Imagining the Dharma in an Uncertain World*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press.
Coleman, James William. 2001. *The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Dalai Lama, Herbert Benson, Robert A. E. Thurman, Howard E. Gardner, Daniel Coleman, et alii. 1991. *MindScience: An East-West Dialogue*. Edited by Daniel Coleman and Robert A. E. Thurman. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.
Feldman, Christina. 2001. *The Buddhist Path to Simplicity: Spiritual Practice for Everyday Life*. London: Thorsons.
Fields, Rick. 1992. *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America*. 3rd. edition. Boston, MA, and London: Shambhala.

Hayward, Jeremy W. 1987. *Shifting Worlds, Changing Minds: Where the Sciences and Buddhism Meet*. Boston, MA, and London: Shambhala.

Katagiri, Dainin. 1988. *Returning to Silence: Zen Practice in Everyday Life*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Levey, Joel and Michelle. 1987. *The Fine Arts of Relaxation, Concentration and Meditation*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Lopez, Donald S., Jr. 2001. *The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to Its History & Teachings*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.

Murti, T. R. V. 1960. *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of the Mādhyamika System.* 2nd edition. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Ricard, Matthieu, and Trinh Xuan Thuan. 2001. *The Quantum and the Lotus: A Journey to the Frontiers where Science and Buddhism Meet*. New York, NY: Crown.

Stevens, John. 1990. *Lust for Enlightenment: Buddhism and Sex*. Boston, MA, and London: Shambhala.

Wilson, Martin. 1987. *Rebirth and the Western Buddhist*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Books on Buddhism can be ordered from one of the following:

1. **Wisdom Publications**
   199 Elm Street
   Summerville, MA 02144

   (800) 272-4050 (order line)
   (718) 935-9647 (fax)
   www.wisdompubs.org

2. **Snow Lion Publications**
   P.O. Box 6483
   Ithaca, NY 14851

   (800) 950-0313 (order line)
   (607) 273-8519 (business line)
   www.snowlionpub.com

3. **Pariyatti Book Service**
   867 Larmon Road
   Onalaska, WA 98570

   (360) 978-4998 (business line)
   (360) 978-4557 (fax)
   www.pariyatti.com

4. **Shambhala Publications**
   2129 13th Street
   Boulder, CO 80302

   https://www.shambhala.com/contact-us/

Books by Eknath Easwaran can be ordered from:

Nilgiri Press
Blue Mountain Center of Meditation
P.O. Box 256
Tomales, CA 94971

(800) 475-2369 (order line)
(707) 878-2369 (information)
(707) 878-2375 (fax)

CHARLESTON BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP

Mission Statement / Policies

1. Theravādin Buddhism:

Theravādin Buddhism is the school that comes closest to the original form of Buddhism. The Theravādin scriptures, composed in the Pāḷi language, come directly from the mouth of the Buddha.

"Theravāda" means "Doctrine of the Elders." According to tradition, the name is derived from the fact that the doctrine was fixed by 500 Elders of the Holy Order soon after the death of the Buddha.

The teachings of the Theravādin School consist essentially of the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the doctrine of Conditioned Arising, and the doctrine of No Self or No Soul.

The emphasis in the Theravādin tradition is on the liberation of the individual, which takes place through one's own efforts (in meditation) and through observation of the rules of moral discipline.

Theravādin Buddhism is the dominant form of Buddhism in the countries of Southeast Asia — Śri Lanka (Ceylon), Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, and Cambodia.

2. Purpose of the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship:

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship is an educational organization whose purpose is to preserve and promote the original teachings (the *Dhamma*) of the Buddha in the West.

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship actively encourages an ever-deepening process of commitment among Westerners to live a Buddhist way of life in accordance with the *Dhamma*.

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship provides free educational material to those who want to learn about Buddhism and about how to put the *Dhamma* into practice.

3. Goals of the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship:

- To provide systematic instruction in the *Dhamma*, based primarily on Pāḷi sources.
- To promote the practice of the *Dhamma* in daily life.
- To provide guidance on matters relating to the *Dhamma*, its study, and its practice.
- To prepare and distribute free educational material.

4. Activities/Programs

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship sponsors the following activities/programs:

- Informal seminars on Buddhism.
- *Dhamma* study groups.
- Instructions in meditation (mindfulness of breathing [see below]).
- Retreats (at IMC-USA).

Mission Statement / Policies

Seminars are designed to present basic information about Buddhism to the general public — anyone may attend.

Study groups and meditation instructions, however, are open to members only.

Retreats last ten days and are coordinated through IMC-USA in Westminster, MD (410-346-7889). Fees are set by IMC-USA. Advance registration is required.

One-on-one discussions about one's individual practice or about Buddhism in general are also available upon request. These discussions are accorded confidential treatment.

5. Membership:

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship encourages sincere practitioners to become members and to become active in promoting and supporting the activities of the organization.

Members receive mailings and the right to participate in programs sponsored by the organization. Members also receive free copies of all educational material produced by the organization.

There are absolutely no membership dues or other fees required to participate in any of the activities or programs offered by the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship.

6. Commitment:

Buddhism is not concerned about converting or convincing anyone, and no one will be expected to change his/her religious beliefs in order to attend study groups dealing with the life and basic teachings of the Buddha.

Advanced instructions, however, are only available to those who have committed to live a Buddhist way of life. That is to say that they must consider the Theravādin Buddhist path as their primary spiritual practice.

7. What is expected of an instructor/teacher:

- An instructor/teacher must be disciplined in morality/ethics (lay teachers must observe either the five or the eight precepts [when participating in or conducting retreats]).
- An instructor/teacher must be calm and patient.
- An instructor/teacher must be enthusiastic about the *Dhamma*.
- An instructor/teacher must have a solid understanding of the *Dhamma* from study.
- An instructor/teacher must have concern for the spiritual development of his/her students. This means putting their spiritual welfare first, putting their spiritual growth first, which can sometimes be very different from allowing them to do what they want. One of the responsibilities of an instructor/teacher is to inform students when they have gone astray and to redirect their efforts back to the path.
- An instructor/teacher must have skill in instructing students.
- An instructor/teacher must never become tired of giving an explanation over and over again.

Mission Statement / Policies

8. What is expected of students:

- Students must be impartial, that is, must listen to the teachings with an open mind and not with preconceived ideas or biases.
- Students must strive to improve their understanding of the *Dhamma* and to put the *Dhamma* into practice. That is to say, students must take full responsibility for their own spiritual development.
- Students must give full attention to the teachings when they are being given by an instructor/teacher or when studying on their own.
- Students must show respect for the *Dhamma*, for the instructor/teacher, and for fellow students (that is to say, they must not be antagonistic towards any of these three, nor must they bring an agenda).
- Students must follow instructions meticulously, without improvisation or deviation of any kind, especially the instructions concerning meditation.

9. Disagreements/disputes:

Should disagreements/disputes arise concerning instructions in particular spiritual techniques or disciplines, interpretations of aspects of the teachings of the Buddha, and/or one's own individual practice, the actual words of the Buddha, as recorded in the Pāḷi scriptures, along with the Commentaries that accompany and elaborate upon those scriptures and non-canonical works such as the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Milindapañha*, will be the final and binding authority. Personal opinions, personal preferences, interpretations unsupported by scriptural evidence, doctrinal positions of other Buddhist schools or other spiritual traditions, and the like will carry no weight.

10. *Dhamma* study groups:

The purpose of the study groups is to explore particular aspects of the *Dhamma*, in accordance with the doctrinal positions of the Theravādin School of Buddhism, in a relaxed, open, and uninhibited environment that promotes the free exchange of ideas and information. Questions and comments are encouraged.

Study groups must not be confused with instructions: instructions must be followed exactly as expounded in the scriptures, without deviation of any kind, while study groups are unstructured forums.

11. Meditation instructions:

The mind is essentially a process, a flow of thoughts. The faster and more turbulent the flow is, the harder it is to go below the surface level of awareness into the unconscious realms where our desires and fears, problems and aspirations arise. In *samatha* meditation, we train the mind to concentrate on a single object such as the inhalation and exhalation of the breath. In this way, we can gradually slow down the furious rush of thought, giving increasing self-mastery and, in so doing, provide a sound basis for further development.

Mission Statement / Policies

Meditation is simple, but it is far from easy — it is a very demanding discipline. We have to be very patient with ourselves and not demand miracles overnight. Whether the results are perceived by us or not, every bit of effort helps. It takes a lot of hard work to purify one's mind, but through patience, determination, and continuous practice, the day will come when negative responses will no longer arise in our mind.

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship provides basic group instructions in mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) and conducts group sittings using this technique. Students are expected to follow the instructions meticulously — right motivation, right posture, right method, and right dedication, both in and out of class:

- Right motivation: The stronger our motivation is, the more likely we are to succeed. When we start a meditation session, it is important to understand why we are doing it and to generate a positive motivation toward the meditation process. We should choose to practice meditation of our own accord — we should not practice it under pressure from others.
- Right posture: This means sitting, standing, or walking to and fro (if engaged in walking meditation), keeping the back perfectly straight at all times. Lying down may also be used as a meditation position, but only if one is disabled or if one is sick. Unless one is hospitalized or bed-ridden for some reason, one should not meditate in one's bed or any other place where one normally rests or goes to sleep.
- Right method: The instructions given by the Buddha must be followed without modification of any kind. This means no changes should be made based upon personal preferences or based upon what is taught by other Buddhist schools or other spiritual traditions.
- Right dedication: We always complete our meditation session by dedicating the positive energy that has been generated to all sentient beings, that they may be happy, that they may be well, that no harm may come to them, that they may cause harm to no one, that they may achieve enlightenment.

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship takes no responsibility for those who choose to ignore the instructions or who choose to explore other types of meditation or other meditation topics on their own. Moreover, the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship reserves the right to refuse to give instructions to those who violate the above policies/rules.

Instructions and/or guidance on other meditation topics and more advanced meditation techniques will be provided on an individual basis to those who have successfully completed at least one ten-day retreat at IMC-USA (see above for details). ■

Revised June 2019
Charleston Buddhist Fellowship, Charleston, SC

Behavioral Guidelines Regarding the Dhamma

Countless and lasting benefits are received from *Dhamma* practice. Certain basic modes of behavior express our gratitude for these benefits. As our awareness of the sacred nature of all objects and relationships connected to the *Dhamma* increases, various rules of behavior are integrated into a natural and unselfconscious way of being. Until that time, the following observances are offered as reminders:

1. Shoes are taken off before entering a shrine room or meditation hall.

2. The bottoms of the feet are never shown to an altar, a teacher, a text, or any sacred object. Thus, it is better not to stretch one's legs out in a shrine room during a teaching, a meditation, or an interview.

3. Sacred images and texts are always put in high places and never put on the floor. When carrying a text or an object of the *Dhamma*, it is held up, not hanging down at arm's length. One does not step over sacred texts or other sacred objects or images. One does not write in or on sacred texts or deface them in any way whatsoever.

4. Candles should not be blown out on a shrine; they should be snuffed out or pinched out.

5. Three prostrations may be done before sitting down to meditate or before an interview or a teaching, but prostrations are never done when leaving a shrine room or an interview.

6. When approaching spiritual teachers for any reason, one bows down as low as possible and kneels before them if their chair is low.

7. Whenever we are seated and a spiritual teacher walks into the room or walks past us, we should stand up out of respect until he or she has motioned to us to sit down.

8. One should always arrive early for a teaching or an interview.

9. We should wear clothes that show respect for the *Dhamma*. This generally means long pants for men and long skirts or tunics and slacks for women.

10. There should be no drinking of alcohol, smoking, or drugs of any kind in the presence of a spiritual teacher or before an interview, teaching, or meditation. There should be no food or drink in a shrine room or meditation hall.

11. Shrine rooms and meditation halls are sacred places and should be used for spiritual practices only. They should not be used to socialize or to hold conversations.

12. Other religions or spiritual traditions should not be mentioned or discussed or compared when attending teachings, including *Dhamma* study groups. It is, however, appropriate to discuss and ask questions about the *Dhamma* or about one's own *Dhamma* practice.

13. We should always maintain silence if someone is meditating. We should also avoid playing music or making any kind of distracting noise.