

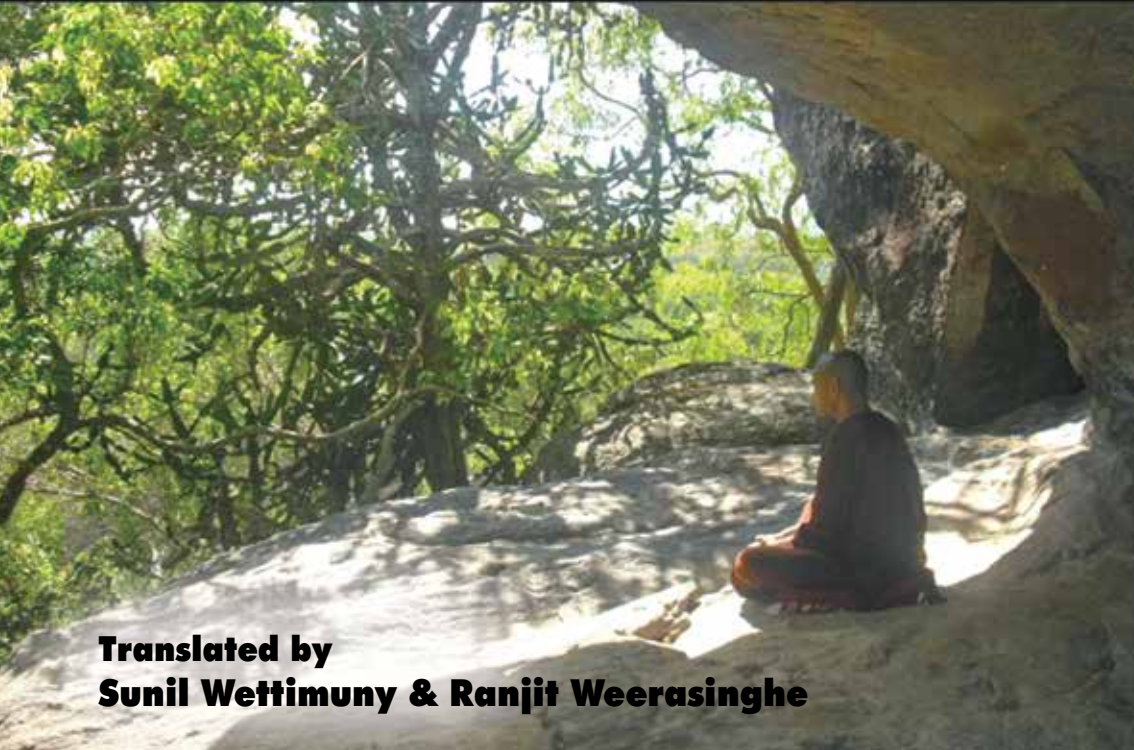


A Collection of Articles

GIVING UP 2

Maharahatun Wedimaga Osse

(On the trail of Arahat)



**Translated by
Sunil Wettimuny & Ranjit Weerasinghe**



Giving up

Part 2

**Maha Rahatun
Wedi Maga Osse**
(On the trail of Arahat)

The English Translation of the series of articles on
"Maharahatun Wedimaga Osse"
published in "The Sunday Divaina"

by **Indrajith Subasinghe**

Translated by:

Sunil Wettimuny & Ranjit Weerasinghe

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Giving up

Part 2

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May this humble effort
be a help, strength
and an easy path,
only for the clergy and the laymen,
who have clearly understood,
the in and out of this ruthless and
dreadful journey of 'Sansara'
and are trying hard,
with much determination and
perseverance, to realize
the Four Noble Truths
within this life-span itself.
May all of you be wise enough to
get the maximum benefit
for what you need or
what can ease your efforts and also
to ignore what you do not need,
what you do not accept or
any thing false in facts.
"May you be merciful to all,
May all beings be happy and
be a help unto themselves."

(Note by the Reverent Thero)

Offering

Is there any place in samsara where we were not roaming? Any experience we have not had? Having roamed so extensively and having had such experiences we obtained a human birth. Shall we go again on the same round of samsara? We always walked around the same place, suffered the same birth, old age, sickness, death.....

Where the mind turned, where the head turned, going because others are going, we went round and round. The tedium was called suffering. The noble friend who called it suffering, and who called it the comprehension of suffering and who helped the seeker by word and example, to such a noble friend I dedicate this book.

Indrajit

Contents

Translated by Sunil Wettimuny...

“Kamatahan” from the Lord Buddha	1
Let us comprehend this body instead of reconditioning!	12
Is it worth to push this body if the mind cannot be stopped?	23
Be the war warrior without salutation and gun	32
The Life of a Broiler Chicken	39
Life of A Broiler Chicken Part 2	47
The Ocean, Its comforts and its hidden dangers	56
A bride in the pretha world	66
Burning skin – the path of extinction	74
The blue-bottle fly is the same as you	83
What is the point of light on rent?	92
The ultimate technology is this world itself	97
If you were a leader such as this...	103

Translated by Ranjit Weerasinghe...

The Weapon of “Letting Go” that conquers Elephantine power	113
Make a Conviction out of a Challenge	117
Are You a Hand of a Clock, Enslaved by Time, on an Endless Journey, with no Destination?	121
Nalagiri Arrives Even Today	127
Look at Your Face Too, Through this Mirror	133
Observe the Dhamma, Not the Demon	141
Be Good Everywhere, Instead of Searching for Good Places	146
Observe Mindfully; the Dhamma is Close at Hand	149
A Birth in Hell	153

The Madness of Lust, the Death Cry of Desire	157
The Prethi in Bed	159
The Mistake Made all Through Sansara	162
The Harvest of Kroda (Wrath); How is it?	171
Are You Genuinely Devoted to your Dead Relative?	176
The Final Operation	181

“Kamatahan” from the Lord Buddha

In this very precious period of time when you have come to associate with Buddha’s Dispensation, we lay Buddhists and Buddhist monks endeavour mostly to shoulder the weight and the task of protecting the Sasana (Buddhist Order).

The fatigue you feel from depriving the daily sleep, your consistent participation in Pirith chanting, delivery of Sermons, alms giving, maintenance of temple buildings, religious festivals, social service with its duties, etc., may be viewed by you as tiredness resulting from your effort to carry the weight of protecting and propagating Sasana. This, however, is a misconception.

In reality, the Buddha Sasana should not be a burden to you; it frees all the burdens from you and gives you the consolation. Our determination must be to experience the freedom and the lightness of this Dispensation and not to shoulder the burden or the weight of it. Therefore, if you feel that tiredness or the weight, while you are practicing the Buddhist principles, then it is an indication of incorrect

practice. This question must be kept in the forefront. You must be humble to decide the correct or the incorrect path. However, if you are searching for the pleasures, happiness and good health in this life, then definitely you will feel heavy and tired, because you are searching for something that in essence really does not exist! Why we should become Buddhists and Buddhist monks is to feel the ease and lightness of Buddha's Dispensation and not to have it as a burden to us. During the practice of this Teaching if we were to feel the weight or tiredness then it must be set aside.

Monks and lay disciples perform material practices (Dana) correctly and honour the Supra Mundane Lord Buddha in a majestic fashion with all material offerings. And as a result of the merit of such offerings, the four requisites of life flow in. That is not a miracle, but it is what you get in return in this very life itself, as a meritorious result of the trust and respect you offered to Lord Buddha and it is the power of Lord Buddha. We can see this prosperity in the fortunate society very often. But when fortune flows due to the result of merit, we get ourselves entangled. This fortune flows for you to have more and more devotion to Lord Buddha and thereby to follow the path of "Virtue (Sila), Concentration (Samadhi) and Wisdom (Pañña)" and to move forward with trust and faith. Through this prosperity, trust is gained to show that 'if this is done then this is gained'. Here is the point where you must be clever to incline Materiality into Principles ("ප්‍රතිපත්ති") and practices. However, we cling to the material prosperity and get imprisoned. Thereby more and more prosperity flows in. Finally, this fortune of requisites grabs us, gets hold of us! This situation leads you to reside, where you have thought the happiness lies, makes it a resting

place, rather than inspiring you to continue your journey to Nibbana through the path of “Sila, Samadhi and Pañña”. You see no fault in this situation. Now you are intoxicated with this prosperity, fortune, and you cannot see beyond. You only see the near vicinity. You cannot see that Path of Pañña which lies ahead. Why? Because you are walking backwards now, turning your back to the light, groping in the darkness. What are we searching for? We are searching for illusive happiness and a fortune of prosperity that does not really exist. The happiness you search, the dimension, the limit, the satisfaction, the un-satisfactoriness of the prosperity of fortune you are searching for, lies within you. The judge of those is your constantly rising and ceasing (impermanent) mind. However you keep looking for that happiness and comfort which certainly is absent in the world.

The path for you to receive and also to relinquish things is shown through the devoted trust (ශ්‍රද්ධාව) in the Lord Buddha. You need to be clever in this instance. How? To be rid of the gains and instead to SEE the Lord Buddha who has shown the path to receive the benefits and luxuries of the four requisites of life. When the Lord Buddha has given you the opportunity to see him, you tirelessly keep up wasting your time searching for this illusive happiness. When you are fatigued and busy, at that moment ask yourself, “Am I looking for that non-existent happiness?”

For what purpose do all human beings exhaust themselves twenty-four hours a day? They exhaust to possess things for them to further accumulate. And what do they possess?

They accumulate and possess more comfort, happiness, responsibilities, leadership, etc. In fact, not only the humans, but also the animals are struggling, exhausting themselves in search of comfort and happiness. Devas in the heavens too, having descended to the Deva worlds to indulge in the divine comforts, divine nutrition, due to the desires for those comforts. Due to their acceptance of that comfort as eternal, permanent, they go behind and chase after further comfort and happiness; and the ultimate thing that they accumulate is craving (කණ්ණාච). Through this craving, it is only demerit, unwholesome sin that is born. In this journey of searching for unsuccessful, fruitless happiness, all beings unknowingly fall into the four hells and thereby are subject to infinite suffering. Even those Brahmas, who live in the Brahma world born with wrong view, not having taken the refuge in the Triple Gem, are subject to fall into the four hells and subject to this infinite suffering. Other than those Brahmas (or Devas or Beings) who have taken the refuge in the Triple Gem, all other beings are subject to the same fate in this pursuit of happiness. Divine prosperity is short compared to the lengthy sufferings of four hells. Devas who are continuously indulging in infinite sensual joy, being greedy for such sensual prosperity, with vigorous desires chasing after the sensual pleasures, due to the continuous increasing of the desires they accumulate demerit. Due to this reason, they quickly diminish the divine happiness. Devas yet again leave space to fall into the four hells. Therefore, the divine happiness is short. Those beings that live in the four hells, because of the sufferings they endure, enmity, ill will, anger and hate are the means of their livelihood. Through every moment of their life, they only accumulate a vast amount of

demerit, unwholesome sin. And so those beings move from suffering to further suffering. They become shareholders of the four hells. Even the Brahmas in the Brahma celestial worlds, having the opportunity for Arahathship, by seeing and reflecting on the impermanence of the joy of Samadhi (high levels of concentration), lock themselves out of the doors to Arahathship by the assumption of permanence of the joy of Samadhi.

In the Brahma world, planes of the Brahmas, there are Brahmas with wrong view. Due to their attainments of the highest forms of Samadhi in the human world, they earn the pleasures of the Brahmas. They are non-Buddhists and have not taken refuge in the Triple Gem-Buddha, Dhamma and Sanga. These Brahmas have not developed wisdom (Pañña) hence they are immersed in Ignorance (avijja). They are subject to fall into the four hells. Since they have developed the Conduct (Sila) and Samadhi (concentration) to the highest level, as a result they enjoy the bliss of the Brahmas for many eons (kalpas). At some time if they happen to meet the Triple Gem and take refuge in the Triple Gem, develop wisdom (pañña), attain to the fruit of Sovan Phala (first fruit of Stream Entry), then they can realize Nibbana-Arahathship in that world. Until then, they are same as the others who are searching for non-existent pleasures in the world. They have trained and developed renunciation during their human lives, and they have done so, not because of wisdom, but because of the greed for the state of Samadhi: because of the belief, that even at the expense of all other sensual happiness, the joy of Samadhi is permanent. All beings that are in search of pleasures are in a journey where satisfaction will never be realized. Look at your own room or hut; are there any

comfortable chairs, beds, tables, carpets, radio, food or medicine? All these are for your self-respect, comfort and pleasure. That means you are always with a second person; not alone or by yourself. Think for a while that how far are you from the concept, or the boundary of “three robes and the bowl”. The craving has become such a close friend as to void your solitude!

In the past, we have become Universal Monarchs (සක්විතිරජපදවිය), Kings, Premiers and Ministers so many times in this “Samsara”, and there we have experienced majestic prosperity to the maximum. Yet, we are in a race to find untried taste and sensual comforts because of the unawareness of what we had experienced throughout the “Samsara”. In Samsara, when you became the Universal Monarch and also at the moment of death, you were never satisfied with that majestic comfort and prosperity. And because of that, colliding with craving, repeatedly you have fallen into the journey of finding prosperity and sensual comforts. Now you are travelling in that same path. And no one else has dragged you into this other than your own ignorant mind, the greedy mind, ungrateful mind, the indiscriminate mind, that mind of yours which rises and falls, which strays after sensual comforts. Because of this greed, the distance you have already journeyed and the distance you are destined to journey cannot be expressed in figures. Whoever you may be, aren't you striving for this comfort and prosperity? You got this article to read because your mind commanded to do so, didn't it? Is that mind still there now? That mind has ceased now. That mind does not belong to you, does it? Isn't it a stranger to you? But some moment in the past, you activated that mind, thinking it was

permanent and belonged to you, didn't you? Through that you acquired a wholesome (meritorious) or an unwholesome (de-meritorious) state? Both these states of mind journey you to further be-ing (bhava). Therefore, each and every state of mind, which is not seen as impermanent (anicca) journeys you in the Samsara, doesn't it?

At one junction during your endeavour towards achieving “Nibbana”, the perception of the Lord Buddha will appear to you, and that is a definite. This perception of the Lord Buddha will give you a “Kamatahan” (කමටහන්) for you to complete the rest of your journey to achieve the Nibbana and it is given by this perception of the Lord Buddha himself. The “Kamatahana” given by the Lord Buddha is the one that tells you to see the present mind as impermanent. Since it emanates through the perception of the Lord Buddha, you will feel and realize it strongly and at the same time, you will see the mind through which you saw the Lord Buddha as impermanent. Both the physique and the “Kamatahana” of the Lord Buddha will be seen as impermanent, and this is a definite thing happening in the development of wisdom within you. Here, you will see that that the perception of the Lord Buddha is wisdom. Here, you will realize that the Wisdom and the Lord Buddha are simply one, and not as two things. In fact, we do not realize that the Lord Buddha and the Wisdom as a one unity. However, in your journey towards achieving Nibbana, you will comprehend the truth. If the Lord Buddha were alive today, it must be the same “Kamatahana” you will receive. Observe the mind, which comes into existence as impermanent, and do not pour water of craving on it hence not allowing it to be active. What you have done so far and also what you are doing at the moment is activating this mind pouring the water of craving.

See how fortunate you are. Although, it is two thousand six hundred years since the passing away of the Lord Buddha, if you are clever enough, you can get a “Kamatahana” from Lord Buddha; you can see the Lord Buddha; you can get a protection from the Lord Buddha; console yourself from the same path of Dhamma, as did the Lord Buddha. By offering eighty-four thousands of flowers, joss sticks and requisites (පිටිකරුඳ), what you see is only the productive luxurious divine and human perceptions.

Those perceptions lead to more Being (bhava-භවයාමි), further existence. But, when you observe and see that mind as impermanent (absolute essence is - one must see the mind ceasing), then you will see the Dhamma; what you see is the true nature of the world. But, if that ability or the strength has still not yet sprouted, developed within you, then you should attend to the above meritorious acts and develop that power. Yet again, you should not be a Buddhist who stagnates and resides at the same place. You should be a Buddhist who is working to achieve the realization through the experiencing and seeing. Puthujjana (the common man - one who has not realized the Dhamma) is extremely fond of delaying. Even in the past, he only delayed the practice. Majority of Buddhists even at present time wish and hope to achieve “Nibbana” by listening to the Dhamma during the time of “Metteyya” Buddha. Whether you are a monk or a lay (ගිඹ) Buddhist, by wishing so, hoping so, what you see is not the Lord Buddha “Metteyya”, but the ignorance; you are wishing for ignorance.

But if you see that mind which commanded you to listen to the Dhamma by the Lord Buddha “Metteyya” and

then to achieve the "Nibbana" as an impermanent mind, mind which has arisen and fallen, then what you really see is the "Metteyya" Buddha; the same Dhamma to be preached by the "Metteyya" Buddha. See the miracle of Dhamma! Today at this moment, you can see and experience the Dhamma to be preached by "Metteyya" Buddha. But, because of the ignorance you possess within you, you are trying to endure suffering by journeying multi eons measured in time through this Samsara. See, how beings are misled by "Ignorance". When there is the opportunity at this moment to see the "Metteyya Buddha" and the Dhamma to be preached by the Lord Buddha "Metteyya", our mind which is greedy of existence is dragging us to further suffering; by leading us to show Lord Buddha "Metteyya" it shows us the "Ignorance".

Always be clever to see the arising mind as impermanent. Be clever to see the mind does not belong to you. Be clever to see the mind as a stranger to you. See the mind as your friend who gives the suffering. When you see the mind in this way, the Four Stations of Mindfulness (සතරසතිපට්ඨානය) grows within you. What you comprehend, understand is the "Pancha Upadanaskandha" (ඵල උපාදානස්කන්ධය); or Five Clinging Aggregates; "Patichchasauppadaaya" (පටිච්චසමුප්පාදය); or Dependent Origination; "Saptha Bojjanga Dharma" (සප්තබොජ්ජංගධර්ම); or Seven Factors of Enlightenment. You do not need to go searching for them; no need to learn them. When you see arising mind as impermanent, the above facts will grow effortlessly within you; you will realize them. The one who does not see the impermanent nature of the mind goes for meditation classes; but what he searches for is there

within him. Leave all these searches behind; search only this impermanent mind, which activates this physical body formed by the mighty four great elements and tends towards a corpse. In that manner, what you search and see is the true “Dhamma” here and now.

If you want to go to Kataragama, then what you should do is to get into the Kataragama bus and buy a ticket. Then the bus will take you to the Kataragama. On your journey to Kataragama, if you observe the surroundings passing by, you will see “Kalutara Bodhiya”, Galle Harbour, Saltpan of Hambantota, the great pagoda of Tissamaharamaya and so on. However you can get to know the details and information of all these from the people in the bus stand or from a road map, but then you may desert yourself by missing the bus. Look at your mind in the same way. Then you will see and realize the Four-fold Mindfulness; the “Pancha Upadanaskandha”; “Patichchasamuppadaya”; “Saptha Bojjanga Dharma”. You should not go for tuition classes searching for these. Look at the mind. Mind is that which is impermanent; the world; beauty; ugliness; comfort; sorrow; loving-kindness, anger; Samsara; the extinction. In short, the mind is the creation of the whole world.

The mind means a heap of sorrow, yet he is your best friend. The mind is the pet who utters consoling words. He is deceiver who covers the right path and shows you the wrong one. Also, he is your saviour. Therefore, identify the mind by comprehension. Make the mind your best friend. You can do it by relinquishing the mind. Once the mind is relinquished, then you can escape from the world.

Because of the fact that sorrow knows that comfort is impermanent, the sorrow moves around the comfort. What comfort and sorrow know is that which is not known by you, because both comfort and sorrow is the strange, external mind, which does not belong to you. You do not know the mind; you do not investigate the mind. However, every day you go to the mirror and see your hair, beard, eyes, ears, tongue, teeth, face, pimples, skin and if necessary you take vitamins, apply creams. You, look inside you; beautify yourself. But, you fail to look inside the mind. "That mind of yours which searches for comfort and beauty, look into that mind with the mirror of wisdom." What you see is not you, but only a great force of energy.

Let us comprehend this body instead of reconditioning!

If you were to travel around the country, what you could see all around is attractive, elegant organizations or businesses. In the past, other than a Barbershop we did not find such things. Such businesses which add colour to the forms and figures, radio stations, television stations with attractive programs, to colour and make your body attractive, to make things glitter, so many are the programs. Those fashionable men and women directors, with such pride and conceit treat their bodies with milk, yogurt, cucumber, carrots, egg-yolk, creams, gel and dyes, etc., take great effort to defeat this body which has inherited birth, decay, sickness and death. To beautify this bodily corpse, to stop the wrinkles, to make it radiant, remove the hairs, which exist, darken the grey hairs, colour the black hairs... look at these wonderfully miraculous actions.

Having so beautified the body, polished it, with designed fashion, designed bangles, chains and rings, when the body beautifying is accomplished, how beautiful this body turns out to be! These meritorious fashionable ladies and

gentlemen, live in the present in glory without any barriers to their age. Having reconditioned their bodies, having spent their useful time and lived with pride and conceit, do you know with what degree of fear they live? Fear that, thus artificially arranged fake nature of their body, the shape, the colour will be disowned, or will fade away. What suffering and effort they undergo to stop this loss or fading. Isn't it this tireless effort, which continuously makes the huge growth in the field of attractive programs in those television stations, fashionable castles of clothing and ornaments? The reason for this rise is, the world-ling has the fear of diminishing and loss of such forms, their shape, colour, lustre, rhythm and charm.

Irrespective of age differences, the world has fallen to that sickness. They are searching for that which is not to be found. Anything is impermanent in its nature. Hence, what belongs to them is only suffering. Fashion houses, attractive programs, curd, cucumber, carrot, egg-yolk are all formulas and memorial monuments for suffering and ignorance.

If one were to go in search of those then he is helpless and completely impoverished. To get out of suffering he goes after the Mara who creates suffering. To be released from birth, decay, sickness and death, he goes in search of birth, decay, sickness and death. Those who talk only about the enjoyment of Form (Rupa), those voices of ignorance only drive you from suffering to more suffering. Not to extinguish suffering, not for satisfaction. If there is interest in you for release from suffering, for ultimate satisfaction, then you must not listen to the voice of ignorance, must not be its slave or its prey. You must have met many wise men and women

who march the Path of the Dhamma. They are those who have not fashioned this body artificially or not distorted its nature. Clad in white, well restrained and pleasant they live among the society with a calm nature. When you see them, one may imagine that it must be so in the heavenly worlds among the gods and goddesses; they are that pleasant and attractive. Their beauty and attraction is the meditation on the Virtues of the Buddha, Metta mediation, Path of Dana (gifting) and Sila (virtue). Form means death, form means disease, and form means birth. Fashioning, beautifying or designing such a thing is just the same as fashioning, beautifying or designing death, birth and disease. See how inefficient or un-clever we are? In fact, there is nothing to be surprised. When the grandmother dies, having lived 80 years or so, her coffin is placed in the middle of the hall and lit with multi-coloured bulbs, thus showing the greyed hair, wrinkled skin and swollen face very clearly. Even though they would say, the grandmother's face is beautiful and the face has a smile. See how we praise the birth, decay, disease and death!

Colouring the greying hair on the head, creaming the wrinkling skin, shadowing the eyes, painting the nails is like attending to death and disease. You must reflect thus; a bride who has to step onto the bridal podium before noon, when the beautician decorates her it means he begins to conceal, cover and suppress her birth, decay, disease and death from the early hours of the morning. Not only that, she is given advice one month prior to the wedding how to cool her body, to beautify, to be pleasant and to be radiant. What is this effort? Not to show the reality of birth, decay, disease and death. However, she is not shown how to develop loving-

kindness (Metta) to keep her mind at ease. See the work of Mara, along with the evil effects of the form while relishing the enjoyment, even Metta is not taught.

In the midst of the guests, approaching the mid-day, being tired, fatigued without rest, the bride's sweat and tears now pour down, and dissolving the powder thus show the signs of birth, decay, disease and death. Once again, the beauticians begin their work to conceal all with further creams and powders. However, back at home the bride and the groom see each other and show each one's signs of reality. All that beauty is not as beautiful in reality; and does the bride or the groom grieve about that? Not so! The birth, decay, disease and death, which are now home is taken as 'mine'. She takes him as 'mine', and he takes her as 'mine'. They come to agreement, "Even if we are to eat salt and rice we will live so." It means, 'We will take this suffering as happiness. My birth, decay, disease and death you accept; your birth, decay, disease and death, let it be mine. Let alone the suffering which belongs to one, even the other's suffering is taken as mine.' In the name of marriage what happens is, going towards happiness you have moved to own a mass heap of suffering. In effect, you have not really brought a bride home, but suffering and what belongs to suffering.

What is the cause for this stream of suffering? By taking the form as 'mine'. What then is the form? Form is this body of a venerable monk, a man, or a woman. Based on what does this body survive? On food, water, and medicine etc., and so it must be. What is it made of or based on; on what does it exist? Because of the hardness, wateriness, warmth and airiness of the four great elements, namely the solid (patavi)

element, water (apo) element, fire (thejo) element and the air (vayo) element. By the nature of these elements the body has formed. The elements do not exist individually at any stage in any single part of the body. One cannot take them separately, as 'this is the solid element, the water element; the heat element or this is the air element'. As an example if you take piece of flesh from your body, this piece has all the four elements. Its hardness is the solid element; its blood is the water element; its warmth is the fire element; its air element is the blood flowing due to pressure.

Therefore, this piece of flesh has all four elements. Normally we would call it the solid element; but this piece of flesh contains the other three elements too.

Similarly, take a portion of urine. Normally we would call it the water element, but the impinging effect is the solid element. The warmth you feel is the fire element, the nature of flowing is the water element, and the foaming effect is the air element. This shows the urine contains all four elements.

Any form, which is personal or external, the nature of all forms is as mentioned above. But our discussion is on the personal form, which is your body. Now it is clear to you that body means form and the form consists of the four great elements. These four elements always remain in difference, or changing. We perceive this change as impermanence. Birth, decay, disease and death are the symbols of change or impermanence. The world's fastest process is the impermanent nature of form. However much the world has progressed technologically, even to think of taking a photograph of the speed of change in the form is foolish. Why? Because the velocity of change in the form

is such that it cannot be perceived by this fleshy eye. Only through the eye of Wisdom (Pañña) can one perceive this. If one sees the velocity of change through the eye of wisdom, then he sees that his own body changing at the same speed. Through comprehension, he gets disgusted, and then he gets freed from form (rupa).

A monk who has comprehended impermanence of the body (form) through the eye of wisdom, in a moment's reflection of impermanence could make a huge rock to a microscopic nature and view it as air element, which floats in the air. He could view this rock as a smoke floating away due the velocity of the speed of impermanence. The one who sees this velocity of impermanence without a semblance of doubt will be freed from the desire for form.

When the four great elements are undergoing change in the above manner, a subtle space element forms among those elements that are inter-related. This space element can only be seen through the eye of wisdom. This fleshy eye cannot see the space element. Normally the space element is described as the space between the ear-holes, nose aperture or the naval. But this is just a primary understanding of the space element. The real rising and falling of the space element is created when the velocity of the rise and fall of the four elements are seen. This space element must be seen through the eye of wisdom.

Here is a simple example. Go near a table and place your palm just over table. Then straighten one finger, and make this finger touch the table and lift it continuously, touch and lift it. Now increase the speed of this movement rapidly and you will recognise the finger is touching the table but

you do not recognise that it does not touch the table. This is due to the speed of the movement. The space element is similar to that. Due to the velocity of the four great elements rising and falling, the fleshy eye cannot conceive the space element. Now the formation of the space element due to the velocity of the four elements of Solid, Water, Air and Fire will be clear.

If so, by taking this body as 'mine', belonging to me, then having beautified and fashioned it, to who does this body really belong to? Is it to you? No, it belongs to nature. How do we declare that this body belongs to nature? Because it is a part of nature and formed by the four great elements of Solid, Water, Air and Fire that form nature.

It means that the sun, moon, stars, clouds, mighty earth, trees and bushes, Devas, Brahmas, animals...all of them are formed by the four great elements. Now do you comprehend that nature is made of the four elements? The real ownership of nature is the impermanence. Nature means transience. Now prove it to yourself that your ownership of your body belongs to nature.

Begin to think in this manner. This monk would pass away; and when he passes away the people who serve him cremate his body, they burn it. When his body is burning, you do not address the burning fire as the monk! You call it the fire element. When this monk's body is sizzling and burning, this fire burns due to the fat of the body. When the fat surfaces to the skin and keeps burning you do not address the fat as the monk! You call it the water element. We do not address the smoke, which rises to the sky from the burning pyre as this monk! We call this smoke air element. After the

body has burnt we do not address the ashes and the bones as this monk, we call it the solid element. Then carefully observe that body of the monk, carried for long years, to whom did it belong? Finally, where did that body end up? To nature itself, to the nature of the four elements of solid, liquid, air and fire. We then only see the nature of impermanence in the monk, in the fire, in fat, smoke, bones and in ashes. It is only the diversity of the four great elements. Put forth effort and align to see yourself in this manner to one's own life. What belongs to nature, what belongs to impermanence, to the fire, to smoke, to ashes, what belongs to fat, having claimed ownership as mine, ownership as ours, as our husband, wife, father, ownership as our mother, we suffer immensely; so are we the unfortunate human beings. What surprises more is not that fact, but the fact that having claimed ownership of this body the multitude of demerit we acquire. We give self-respect to this body, give the first priority, be noticed, give comfort, through the three doors of thought, speech and action acquire a vast amount of de-merit and fall into the four hells. Isn't it so that we fell into such an unfortunate state because we claimed ownership of something that does not belong to us, but belongs to nature, and to impermanence?

As mentioned earlier, the bride and the groom to overcome birth, decay, disease and death are nourished with yogurt, egg white, curd, cucumber, carrot, and so forth, are nourished by the fashion designers to be given in marriage. You must reflect that all this effort to decorate is to give comfort and pleasure. This comfort and pleasure is given to the fire, smoke, ashes and oil that which does not belong to you. Therefore you must be wise and clever by inclining towards caring the body and protecting this body that no

demerits is caused. Why do you claim ownership to that body which belongs to fire, smoke, ashes and oil, and lead to the state of suffering and the way to hells? Constantly reflect the above nature of things and set forth effort to comprehend and understand. Now you can see, having claimed as 'mine', you nourish, wash the face, bathe, cleanse, medicate and bestow leadership, ministership, president, high priest, etc., to nothing but that which belongs to fire, smoke, ashes and oil. If so, then what you saw as your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, hairs, nails, teeth, skin and flesh and then as fire, smoke, ashes and oil, different states of the elements changing. It is their impermanent nature; and this nature of impermanence does not end here, the fire, smoke, ashes and oil also go through the same nature of new birth, decay, disease and death. Why so? Because they too are forms of the four great elements.

Just the same way your body will turn to fire, smoke, ashes and oil, similarly the fire as the fiery nature, smoke as the smoky nature, ashes as the ashy nature and oil as the oily nature do not remain. Due to the impermanent nature of form, they too change. They change to vapour; wind, clouds, rain, mist, and dust; and the trees, fish and animals depend on them. See the transformation of things, which has taken place from your body that you beautified with all those substances mentioned earlier. While you were walking in the street, imagine you are faced with a smelly garbage dump. It is nothing but a rotting body of a human or an animal, which in the past assumed the body as 'mine'. This is the changing nature of the elements. He would have adorned himself with gold and silver.

Look at the mighty ocean, every drop in it would be the tears flowing from the eyes of all Beings, blood and sweat of

all Beings. When the body burns, the smoke, which emanates collects as vapour forming clouds, then, pours down as rain. Every drop in the ocean in the past would be from a human body. What we see as the ocean is the ever-changing nature of the four elements, the impermanence of the form (rupa). The world's most beautiful artist, male or female, at death if the body is burnt, that body unites with the rain, with the water, with the earth, with the air and even unites with trees and leaves. Then it is this impermanent nature of the body as the rain, water, air and so on. In short, nature is made of the changing nature of the body.

Just as much due to the blood we pronounce our relation with mother, father, sister, brother, uncle, aunty, grandpa and grandma, so are we related to the rain, earth and trees etc. Why? Because in the past they too were made of our body, flesh, blood, fire, smoke and ashes. Reflect on the human body, due to the impermanence of the elements of the eyes, ears and the body it changed to clouds, water, earth, ocean and trees and even to garbage. This nature, repeatedly changing without beginning or end, drags on like a circle. Just as the rain, clouds, fire or the earth does not belong to you; your mother, father, brothers, relatives, sons and daughters, do they belong to you? All this is the diverse nature of the four great elements. And this diversity is due to impermanence. Therefore, this body belongs to four great elements, the four great elements belong to nature, and nature belongs to impermanence.

How can we claim ownership of that which is impermanent? You must comprehend the above nature and see things as they are. Then through comprehension,

understanding and seeing thus, you will be disgusted. Because of this disgust, you will begin to disown and let go of this body. This dis-ownership brings you freedom—the world's most supreme Ariyan Freedom.

Is it worth to push this body if the mind cannot be stopped?

Lord Buddha has declared to the world the non-knowledge of four things is the ignorance of the human being. These four are suffering, the arising of suffering, cessation of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. Due to the ignorance of these four noble truths, the beings are subject to birth, decay, disease and death, and they strive relentlessly to maintain this body in a healthy state. You must have seen men and women running around every playing field, bodybuilding gymnasiums, walking paths, on the roadways and even on the grassy fields. For what purpose is this?

This is to avoid birth, decay, disease and death. Fastest runner in this world is the cheetah. These animals die in their tender age, young age and their middle age. They too meet the birth, decay, disease and death. The world's most exercised animal is the monkey, jumping all day long from one branch to another; thus exercising he exists. These monkeys too die at a tender age, young age and in the middle ages. They too face birth, decay, disease and death. Therefore either through

running, walking or with exercises can one stop birth, decay, disease and death? They day we start to stop this running that would be the day we can overcome birth, decay, disease and death. Whose running do we need to stop? We need to stop that running mind with its desire for this body. The mind with its holding (upadana), when stopped, is the point where the suffering ends.

What is it that hides in this running and exercising? It is ignorance. This running is simply running more towards ignorance, towards the world, towards suffering. What we are trying to maintain healthy, is a body that inclines towards ill health at every moment. What you are trying to fill up with muscles is body that wrinkles towards ill health. There never existed or exists a person in this world that by running or exercising got a solution to relieve this body from birth, decay, disease and death. The one who sees that this body is a nursery for birth, decay, disease and death, then having been released from the lustful desire towards the form, is the one who is freed from suffering. Now the common person (Puthujjana—one who has not realised the teaching) without seeing the danger in the form and its evil effects, is subject to birth, decay, disease and death and so he grieves, trembles and fears. 'Beauty will disown me, beauty will vanish, and the good health too will vanish', and so on. The one who has a lean body will build his body and be happy and the huge one will slim his body and be happy. The fat one will get rid of his fat and try to be happy. The one who lacks vitamins will supplement with all vitamins and will try to be happy. What is it that we see in this?

What is in excess we reduce and what is reduced we add on. One holds to that which is less and the other holds

to that which is in excess. Where is the limit of all this, the border of all this and who decides this limit or the border? The decision-maker is the common (Puthujjana) mind. Having reduced or added we have reached the thin line of death and we reach that line with dissatisfaction. Why? Because we changed our nature without the thought that we will die; but holding to the view that we will remain healthy and be submerged in health. When that which is held starts to show cracks, all what remains is dissatisfaction, the fear of death and conflict.

In this conflict neither exercise, nor strength nor vitamin syrup will help. What you inherited through all the above is only suffering. During your lifetime if you only trained to gain permanency through physical strength, exercises and so forth and at the time of death if this perception appears as the last wish, if you hold to the above states, then your next birth could be in the womb of a cheetah or a monkey. Why because the way you wished to be and held to your life to run happily and to exercise happily.

One time when a Bhikkhu was in deep concentration—Samadhi—then he saw this picture in his view. About 200 meters above in the sky, a team of about 20 persons was performing gymnastics on swinging cradles like instruments. Without any fear and with rhythm they were descending to the ground and again ascending to the sky. They were performing a dangerous sport without any fear and with ease and comfort. They were somersaulting and enjoying on bridges made of coir. They do not belong to the world of the Petas (ghosts). They were a group of people in the form of humans with good bodies, clad in white shirts

and trousers. This Bhikkhu recognised them as a group of people belonging to the Devas (gods). They are those who held to such sports in the past in the human world, and now they have again congregated. They are not a productive Deva group, but a group that is just above the state of the ghosts. They did not possess the bright light or illumination of the Devas. Their bodies represent the latent nature. It is clear when there is holding (upadana) thus is the way in the future. This is said by the Bhikkhu to analyse the doctrine of dependant origination. You may run, exercise, but make sure that you indulge in them without the influence of the notion or the view of permanency towards my body, my strength, my health, my beauty, my personality and my shape, and with the full understanding that all above cannot be won over, or kept within you.

However, it is not easy to do. The Mara's mind you carry turns you round towards the direction of permanency. Due to the rock-hard existence of wrong view in the past, you even suffer to bring happiness to this body. Those naked ascetics, having rejected comfortable seats, while walking on thorny land and sleeping on them gave much pain to the body. Why was this? They went in search of happiness. Thus, they exhaust their past kammās. When you compare those runners and those who do rigorous exercises in the present times, one might tend to think that this is a shade of the naked ascetics in the past. Why, because they too run and exercise searching for happiness in the future. With whatever perception you hold to this decaying body as permanent, through that you will only reap suffering. With whatever effort you beautify these muscles, when you catch a cold or fever or any such illness, in the absence of a week's

exercises the body once again becomes like jelly. The shape too changes. However much you may run and exercise, thus keep this body healthy, when you have to attend to a wedding or some functions with lavish parties or during the festive season, we once again see our sugar, starch and fat has increased. In whatever direction you try to suppress birth, decay, disease and death, it is like the rubber ball under the water—it surfaces as soon as the pressure is released.

Those doctors who treat them, those trainers who train them, will give advice on medical aspects and advice on physical exercises. They give such advice while they themselves are subject to the same nature. They too have not escaped from that nature. When they are sick, they too need to visit another doctor for treatment. But the greatest physician who declared the treatment for this sickness is Lord Buddha. Before declaring the treatment to others, he himself got released from birth, decay, disease and sickness. The Buddha permitted his disciples to be contented with the maximum subsistence of two meals per day along with three robes and the bowl. An often-declared noble advice from his sacred mouth is that one meal a day gives an incredible lightness to the body. You must guard your tongue. Be quenched from the desire for taste. Dwell on the impurities of the food. Then without any effort your body will gain a certain degree of health, will get pleasant, will shape well, and so if you give up the greed for taste, to a certain extent it will pave the way to good health. You will experience the comfort of lightness in the giving up.

The one who is wise should not strive to spend a long life span, but as soon as possible try to escape from birth, decay, disease and death, to be released from further birth.

If one cannot achieve that purpose, at least make all effort to shorten the cycle of rebirth. Whichever one you achieve, within you make a resolve to overcome the ignorance that there is permanent good health, permanent beauty or a permanent form.

However, some even declare that though we exercise or work our bodies, we do so with the reflection on impermanence. Yet this too is a dark Dhamma of the Mara. It is similar to wishing and believing that the joy and happiness in the human and the Deva worlds come to conclusion in Nibbana. This is not possible since they are two different natures. Deva world and human world means holding to things. Nibbana means relinquishment. Therefore, at the end of holding, one cannot expect relinquishment; this would be a wrong belief, which would not be fulfilled. In this cycle of birth (samsara), we walked this journey for many multitudes of aeons because we believed and held to such wrong views.

We need to come to terms with one of these natures, either to hold on to things or to relinquish or let go of things.

The Puthujjana or commoner holds or clings to things they like with an incredible appetite for greed. What is the first thing that the human being holds in life? That is the womb of his mother. The first moment when life takes place in the mother's womb as a tiny baby, he clings tightly to the womb of the mother as mine. Inside the womb, he succumbs to a great deal of pain. Been centred inside a balloon, both hands and legs been crouched, lives among the pus, blood, fat, dirt, urine, intestines, vomit and digested and undigested food. In the middle of all that and been subject to the pressures of the air element in the womb, the warmth or the heat element

in the womb, various fluids or the watery element inside the womb, this tiny baby grows. Even though he grows up in such an indiscriminate environment, he does not dislike living in that manner inside the womb. He does not reflect that 'living in a womb is suffering'. This baby clings to the womb as 'mine'; it is his place of residence. This place he has descended, the womb, he clings it as 'mine', because of the mighty power of clinging or holding born of desire. He firmly grips it as 'mine' and sees it as a pleasure, not as a place, he has to suffer in the manner described. Nine months passes in this manner, and with much fatigue, he is given birth into this world. What a massive innocent pain the mother goes through, to set him out of this clinging. How much the mother needs to strain? How much energy she needs to expel? Why does this mother have to go through all this suffering? Because the baby has held firmly to the womb and takes the womb as his residence, as 'mine', shows dislike and now refuses to leave it. In the end, it is a tough battle between the mother and the baby. The baby sets forth effort to cling to the womb; the mother sets forth effort to bring him out to the world. During this battle between the baby who clings to the womb and the mother who wishes to see the baby and cling for the ownership of the baby, the mother, who possesses the greater strength, becomes victorious. If the mother does not have this strength the Gynaecologist intervenes, and through surgery brings the baby out by force. See the following sequence of events; the baby having clung to the womb strives to remain so. The mother through clinging "as my child" strives to carry him in her arms and claims ownership. The Gynaecologist clinging to his profession through surgery tries to bring the child out

to the world. The nurse clinging to her profession with care and without any calamity strives to bring the child out to the world. In all these four people, what is active is that clinging or holding. What each one held with desire is that which is seen as happiness.

In this manner, when the child is born he yells and weeps while emerging to this world. Why is this yelling and weeping? It is his residence for nine months and now he must disown it; it pains him and he fears of the unknown. He is shouting due to his helpless state—the mother and the Gynaecologist together dragged him out against his wishes, and he opposes it strongly. When the child yells due to disowning of his residence, the mother is exceedingly happy to hear his sounds. She sheds tears of joy: “Now I have my baby.”

The suffering due to disowning, and happiness through gaining is what both experience. However, the nature of this experience in one moment turns to impermanence. What happens to the child, having been released from the womb and later experiences the world? He then clings to the warmth of the mother and her breasts. Now the child clings to greater happiness than where he was.

He now clings to his mother’s warmth and her breasts as ‘mine’ and enjoys his existence. And now if you try to release him from the mother’s warmth and her breasts he begins to yell again, opposes greatly. Now you can see the nature of clinging, from one mode of clinging to another. The experience of the womb fell to the nature of impermanence, and he now clings to a new experience. This experience too will fall into the same nature and follows with more clinging

to further experience the father, the swing, kindergarten, school, university, job, house, wife, children, grandchildren and so forth; when one leaves, the next form is there to be held, and he enjoys things in progression and takes them as mine.

Be the war warrior without salutation and gun

In the present even if you were to live in a luxurious house with brand new furniture, very silky bed linen and wearing smooth dresses, and having used vehicles worth millions of rupees and wore gold and silver to make this body shine, in the past all of us lived in the midst of pus, blood, fat, dirt, urine, intestines, vomit, digested and undigested food, and crouched in the middle of a balloon, having taken as 'mine' the unpleasant surroundings of a womb, holding fast to it with refusal to leave. How many millions of wombs we may have owned in the past? In the end, it is not to be so; there was no ownership. So many wombs we entered and suffered with consent, in the future too we strive only to enter further wombs and to suffer similarly, and to take birth over and over again. As long as this wish is within you, other than to be sons who take the womb as 'mine', or mothers and fathers who takes sons as 'mine', there is no escape from this cycle of births.

Immediately when a baby is born to this world, what actions would you and your husband take? You name the baby, first name, surname and the birth certificate. But, why

the birth certificate, to make sure the baby is 'ours'. Not to be registered as another, therefore as per the law the baby identity is well registered so that no future contradictions would arise. In other words, you would take every conceivable action for the protection of this child, with the assumption that "this child is 'mine'." But you would not think even for a moment where this child came from. Sometimes this child could have been from another religion, from another race; and he may have even been a beggar in the former life. He could have been discarded from his caste and suffered as a social outcaste. May have even been an animal, a ghost, a demon, or even a God or a Brahma. Having been such-and-such a being in the past, he took rebirth in the womb of a mother. This child even could have been your mother, father or a relative. However, you have no idea or knowledge that this child you cradle was a being who could have been your mother, father, relative or even from another religion or from another race, or even a ghost or a God. This is the force of attachment, shamelessness, nakedness, and wrapped around by the subtle garment of craving and greed.

Begin to think in the following manner, that you were an officer in the Army and as per your rank that you fight to protect the country, race and religion. Due to your fight, many die in your hands. Let us assume that some of those who died were some people who were on the wrong path in different race. Now you feel compassionate to them and feel that pain, and feel sorry for their parents and relatives. During such time while these feelings rise and fall within you, you succumb to death in the field of war. Due to the grasping or the holding to that situation, when you meet with such a death, there is always a good possibility that

you would take birth in another mother's womb and in that very race you happened to kill. Now your new status and acceptance will be a child in that new race with a new name belonging to that race with all its genes. When this child grows up, he joins the Army, which belongs to that race and land. He now fights against his former country. Can you imagine what a cheated, contradictory situation this happens to be? For those long years, he fought as a soldier against one land, and then as a soldier, once again he fights against his former land. He sacrificed his life for two lands. This scenario does not stop here. Due to the grasping or the holding to the same situation, he renews his 'being'. So it can be very well that though you may have fought one war, been aligned to one race with great pride, it surely may have been that you were in the opposite race in the past fighting the same war. Due the same war, you may take birth again in the opposite camp, born to a mother in that race. However, we see that what we strongly grasped or held, that element called 'mine', is ever-present.

Now it should be clear to you how for many aeons of years during this cycle of births and deaths in this world, that you would have been a blood relation of every human being, savage animal, and ghost, God or a Brahma. Through acceptance, you may be recognised as different from another, but we all are blood relatives. Yet the world goes into war through racism. They do not know; they do not understand that the war is not in the field of war. Still they think the war is in the field, but the first seed of the war begins in the ignorance-filled mind of the human being. War begins in the mind. Why is this so? It's due to the holding born of greed or craving. If someone were to think that the wars in the world

could be stopped, then it is just a myth. One cannot stop the wars. Either side cannot be finished. However with the bigger power it can be subdued for a while, yet it is only temporary. The war can be stopped, not by killing the people or killing their view, but only by killing the ignorance in the minds of the people. Death of ignorance gives birth to knowledge, which means wisdom (pañña). Wisdom means victory over the greatest war in the world.

The one who thus attains to victory does not toast such victory, nor does he invite people for dinner, raise the national flag, light firecrackers, nor does he receive the guard of honour with gun salutes. Why so? Because he is one who has stopped all wars. He no longer takes form (rupa) as 'mine' and neither holds to it nor rejects, nor is in conflict with it. He does not go to war due to form, does not quarrel. He identifies through understanding that form is impermanence. Not only the war fields but also the weapons and ammunition, such manufacturing factories and the entire army has been made redundant and left aside. He has not done this through the use of the arms and ammunition. Only by the use of the weapon called Right Mindfulness and Awareness. He was not victorious by grabbing more lands, but by letting go of all. Now you should realise by holding to what did the war at home, the war in the village or the war in the country started. What you held let it go. Then the war stops. Yet, you will not like it. Why so? Because your vision only sees that those things that you held belong to me, and they are permanent. What you have held or grasped could be the country, race, religion, status, job, leadership, or whatever; but all these are of the nature of impermanence, and they are the ones with which you fashion your behaviour.

The Buddha declares that holding takes place due to craving, and it is this holding, which drags you to birth, decay, disease and death. Therefore, for a moment stop this running, exercising or bodybuilding, or while doing it when at rest reflect a moment on what this body is what this flesh is: nerves, bones, blood, dirt, urine, intestines and phlegm. Is there anything here that we could fashion to our needs, what is there in them for us to fashion, to make, to build, to nourish or even to decorate? They are not meant for any of those stated but they are meant to be given up. Let them be, letting go is the right choice. In the morning, you spit out, saying 'This does not belong to me.' The mucus of the eye, the body filled with dirt and urine, you send it out, as 'this should not belong to me.' The body filled with air that too you let it out. You wipe off the sweat in the body as that too does not belong to you. In the exact manner the ignorance-filled mind which tells you that in this body there is a 'being', a 'person', and that you must make this 'being' or 'person' be in good health, the muscles must be well-built and so forth, must be set aside by saying 'That too does not belong to me.' Release the views that "In me is 'me', in me is a 'self' or 'soul'." Aren't you ashamed, disgusted or loathsome to take a corpse, dead body, and ghost in the past life, barbarous animal in the past life as 'mine'? To identify it as 'mine', isn't this shameful? If you still do not feel shameful then you must keep re-reading. You are reading about how to be freed from your body, the way to Nibbana, and complete freedom from all. Having thought of this without being satisfied, observe that satisfaction too is impermanent. The mind that continuously rises and falls, and having seen its impermanence, inclines to the Path of Nibbana.

Observe the nature of your body carefully. Have you seen a beautiful cock decorated with multi-coloured feathers? Observe that he has form, which is pretty to look at. You must have seen that this same animal having taken to the butcher all feathers removed, cleaned up, hangs on an iron hook or is now in a freezer to be sold. Now what remain in this cock are only the skin and not those beautiful feathers.

Now observe your own body. In your mind, genuinely observe the nakedness as if you were looking through a mirror. Is there truly a difference between that cock which hangs in the butcher's shop and your body? Your body is similar to the skinned animal. Put to shame that mind filled with conceit. Make the mind uneasy. Crush the conceit. Just like the cock was beautiful due to his feathers, you were made beautiful by the clothes, jewellery and perfume you adorn. The body of the cock is externally made beautiful. You are kept further away from the truth, blinded by ignorance. The marketplace is where ignorance is sold. Merchants in the market place, having packed ignorance in bottles, boxes and packets, having beautifully labelled them, advertised on television, on billboards and with electrical decorations, go on to sell them. These people's job is to work day and night inside factories and farms to earn money through the sale of ignorance. On one side, they manufacture ignorance, and on the other side, they pay money and buy the ignorance. According to the society's ability or inability, the manufacturing and the sales qualitative nature goes up or down. Increase and development of the world's commodity and service departments mean the development, progress and advancement of ignorance. It is the increase of manufacture and sale of ignorance.

Now you too leisurely think whether you too are a servant of the ignorance. These fortunate people instead of the wasted effort to keep this body healthy, exercised that this effort must be diverted to understand the nature of your body sooner rather than later. This mind, which do not belong to you and is always foreign to you—bring it under your control. Develop mindfulness and awareness. The mind that tells you to run and exercise—let it go. Then you will let go of running and exercising. Restrain the tongue and be healthy, thus gain a healthy body. Observe the ignorance in that.

It is not to show the world a healthy body, but use it to be released from this journey of samsara. Make your body a vehicle to get close to the door of release, Nibbana. Make the way that you are not a Cheetah, which runs a fast lap, a monkey that neither exercises a lot nor be born a Ghost, which does gymnastics in the air, having held to exercises in the past.

The Life of a Broiler Chicken

Ignorance is the most common feature of this world. It typifies all states, through birth, existence, expansion and destruction. Put in other words, ignorance is inherent to birth, decay, disease and death. When the quality of the world is ignorance, then by default development of the world means development of ignorance.

The yardstick by which this is called development is measured in society, is marked by ones display of material wealth, intellectual knowledge, qualification, and stature. In short, the projection of one's progress along with a personal collection of material acquisitions will determine the distinct nature of one's development.

For example, a politicians' standing is measured by the total votes he receives. The doctor's success is measured by his popularity amongst the patients. Measure of an underworld don is judged by his entourage, his weapons, and the number of lives he has destroyed. An intellectual is measured by the degrees he holds. Therefore, by clinging vehemently to his cherished field of expertise, such an individual reinforces his grip and is called 'developed'.

The chase for social status in every form is pursued by all to excess. But in everyone's journey of accumulation is different and nor do they reach the same heights. Depending on individual strengths, and the merit/demerit accumulated on their journey in samsara, there is a vast diversity and complexity observed between these accumulations. Competitiveness in our society further drives our attempts to amass even more of that which we already have. We aspire to own all that we do not own.

When you light up this competition, a great deal of demerit (akusala) arises. Whether one is lucky enough to hold a steady job in a factory, a business or a farm, the pursuit of profit always has negative consequences on others. By restricting and controlling other people, more can be gained for ourselves, as we so desire. Thus, it is important for the Bhikkhu that he contemplates on the nature of such demerit acquired by sabotaging others. The purpose here is not to teach business management, but to further the only science relevant to a Bhikkhu – that of relinquishment towards total abolition.

Accumulation feed the urge to hoard and hold. From hoarding comes the misery and that is not the basis of the Dhamma.

The nature of the world is Dukkha – suffering. In fact, there is no other meaning to the world other than Dukkha. Why is it that the world is Dukkha? It is because there is nothing in the world that you can keep close to you, nothing that you can actually hold on to.

Due to ignorance, you see a world of development; you enjoy the yardstick of development and you pursue it

at all costs. Along the way, your personal gains amass for sure, but they come at the expense of your colleagues and their autonomy, earnings and benefits. You blindly remain unawares of the mounting demerit which results accordingly.

This Kamma and its Vipakha (ripening, retribution) is comparatively intense. If you study the animal world, you will realise that not a single mammal, bird or fish is able to sleep in comfort. Whereas you sleep well and arise feeling fresh, in the animal kingdom they have no such good fortune. They wake up trembling in fear at even the slightest movement of a fallen leaf.

It is due to their fruits of their past actions that they are unable to sleep well. In their past they have sabotaged the progress and wellbeing of other beings; they induced fear in others and suppressed other's lives. In short, they have plundered the fundamental freedom of other living beings. And so, the result or fruit of that Kamma is to have left the human world to be born into that of the animals.

The beings that are born unto our world are almost unanimously dragged in the direction of evil or akusala (unwholesome acts). To amass is to grab from others. Yet this grabbing is cloaked in pretence and respectability.

Aesthetically beautiful labels embellish the objects of our desire, displaying their values, quality, longevity, and seductive descriptions and bestowed on them by the producers. For the products' survival such marketing tactics are required, there is no argument about that. For such is the nature of worldly preoccupations and we cannot eradicate them per se. However, what we speak about here is our

tendency as consumers to accumulate indiscriminately. The repercussions of indiscriminate hoarding are grave and generate a great deal of akusala (de-merit) for the individual. As this akusal increases, so the degree of vipakha (ripening, retribution) also increases.

As a sentient being in any state of existence within the round of rebirth, the acute way which akusala ripens *must* be realised. It must be realised by you, through comprehension of this word. Examine then the life of a broiler chicken....

Erstwhile a broiler chicken may have lived for a year before being slaughtered for consumption. It lived for one year and that year at least belonged to the bird. However, because a chicken's life is in another's hand, the life span of chickens has reduced month by month until nowadays it is hardly two months alive before they are killed. Why is their life so short? Because the vipakha of kamma is accelerating, revealed in ever more extreme retribution and shortened life.

In the past, animals were slaughtered by decapitation at one year old. However, these days a chicken only lives one sixth of that time, which means the vipakha of the kamma he now endures, is more severe. So just imagine, as the world descends deeper into ignorance, new technology will appear with a capability of rearing and slaughtering chickens for consumption in a mere two weeks! The field of animal husbandry will marvel at this technology, awarding its scientists with more and more accolades. However, from the view of the wretched chickens, one sees only suffering, and the terrifying extent of the vipakha manifesting from its kamma.

Just as pending death is expedited in the chickens, so those human beings responsible for the killing, their vipakha too expedites, with every akusala deed.

So now, ask yourself ‘what was it that developed?’ Nothing but ignorance and the animal’s suffering.

In the animal kingdom, one is born as a broiler chicken, or any other animal for consumption, because of the vipakha of one’s past life kamma. Through loving kindness (*metta*), we may refrain from eating this meat, but however compassionate we may be, we are incapable of saving the chicken from experiencing his vipakha. Even if our compassion propels us to pay money to release the bird from its cage in the meat shop, he still may not survive long because of his kamma. He could even be reborn *again* from an egg to be beheaded as a broiler chicken.

Therefore, you may rescue him from death, but you will not be able to rescue him from his kamma. Repeatedly he will be born in the hells spending his vipakha, each life span limited, being killed over and over again.

Reflect now on all those men who actually kill the chickens on a mass scale. In a single day one man can easily behead 500 birds. So, over his lifetime imagine how many he would have killed. There are also people in other religions who kill for their personal consumption, in their own particular tradition, and who do not consume what others have killed. We can therefore assume that literally tens of thousands of chickens are killed every day.

Every one of these animals is killed by a human being. But ask yourself is it possible for such human beings to be

reborn after death in the heavens? Absolutely not! Because he liked the perception of the chickens, it necessitates the fruits of his actions. Due to their kamma and vipakha, they are condemned to continuously take birth inside an egg. As the akusala (unwholesome acts) keep on increasing, then by default so does the corresponding vipakha, and as it gets opportunity, it also keeps increasing. This is the law of kamma.

It is unavoidable and unforgiving vipakha (ripening) which steers the future births of the slaughter men to be reborn in the animal world. There they will suffer short life; reared solely for consumption; and destined for the torture of mass factory farming. Many engineered foods, chemicals and medicines are forced on the chickens to accelerate their growth and weight gain before slaughter. Nonetheless, they take rebirth again.

So now, we see it is unavoidable and inevitable that we are forced to pay for our mountain of bad action made in the past.

The bare truth is that a broiler chicken is none other than a 'slaughterer of chickens'. Similarly, a fat goat, a fat pig or a well-built bull was none other than a butcher of animals. It is they who have put to death thousands of goats, pigs and cows in their human life. Just because you rescue a cow from slaughter, you cannot save it from eventual death or release it from its inheritance of bad kamma. Each must pay for their kamma.

So when it comes to what to do with your time do not spend it rescuing cows but on understanding the nature of

this diversified world. Having grasped them, seek to escape from this entire suffering world, and not to be reborn as a chicken, cow, pig or goat. And this means to focus all effort on release from the hells.

So to review, we have shown that those who have slaughtered tens of thousands of chickens are born repeatedly as chickens! They are born solely to be slaughtered. For them there is no promise of a peaceful death, nor can they indulge their freedom to roam pecking for food in the yard. They are denied their basic rights to enjoy the sun and the wind, and fully deprived of the social pleasure to mingle with their own kind. These animals are reaping the fruits of their kamma, no more, no less. And we cannot rescue them from it, not even with our kindness, compassion and love.

Through the vehicle of the 'developing' intensive farming industry, every sausage, every meatball and every ounce of flesh produced comes at a karmic cost. Condemned to the vicious cycle, those who slaughtered these animals will be reborn in the animal world for aeons, to end up as meatballs and sausages themselves.

Let us examine a little more closely the fate of animals that are farmed for slaughter. These animals are kept restricted and confined to maximise output and to limit their movement and usage of calories. Packed into boxes, racks upon racks, restricted from movement, with only a window for their head to hang out to consume food, they live imprisoned until slaughter. According to technology, this is the way to fatten chickens in the shortest possible time. Whether they weigh heavily or not, still they will be beheaded, and still they will become a meatball. Ironically, the world identifies such technology as advanced!

Man is drawn to this killing because his mind is saturated in ignorance. It is only the ignorant mind, which seeks to develop such meat industry technologies. So, as the world 'develops', the akusal of human beings increases. And hence the life span of all those involved decreases. In effect, the cycle of birth and death is expedited. An increased rate of birth in these animals means increased rate of slaughter by beheading.

A certain farm rears Chinese pigs in 4x4 foot cubicles. Their world is this cubicle. Not allowed to walk fearing their weight might decrease; only food, water, and medicine are given. Due to such enormous weight, some pigs are collapsed on their sides. Yet the owners delight on seeing such heavy weight livestock. What precisely *is* this happiness they delight in? In actual fact, they unknowingly derive happiness from their sentence of rebirth to be born thousands of times as animals in the future; an inheritance of colossal suffering due to present ignorance.

However, the foolish wealthy mans' eyes are literally blinded by ignorance. Clouded by dreams of owning more, his dreams are born from deep within this ignorance. As beautiful dreams they may be, watching proudly as his bank accounts swell, he has no wisdom to see the dangerous retribution waiting in the wings. Never for a moment does this wealthy meat trader consider that this cumbersome animal collapsed before him, in a past life was an even richer person than him!

Life of A Broiler Chicken

Part 2

**Whatever your status in the workplace,
be kind to your colleagues and employees.**

The broiler chickens finally reach their day of slaughter having lived confined in their cages for forty-five days. It means that their past kamma has ripened to full fruition, and in fact the ripening manifests in two parts. On the one hand is the ripening akusala for having killed in a past life, and for this they are now beheaded. The other fruition is generated from the akusala of sabotaging another's welfare in pursuit of one's own profit or progress. For this the chickens have now been born into the animal world, for the sole purpose of slaughter. They endure a tortured existence of restriction and deprivation, and their whole world is confined to tiny cubicles.

One should be particularly wary of the second fruition, which is the restriction of another's freedom. Buddhists are generally well aware of not indulging in the gross akusala of killing. However the more subtle akusala of oppressing others' freedom is much more insidious and can be observed

amongst all classes be they wealthy, or benefactors who perform meritorious deeds, or be they industrialists, or the common man.

This said akusala could even arise from the manner with which one treats a household servant, since it constitutes different forms of exploitation, such as unreasonable working hours, unjust pay, and harsh conditions. As the world 'develops' this particular akusala, appears to flow unhindered amongst the people. Thus its resulting vipakha is also of the nature of restriction. People are increasingly confined to small and inadequate dwellings, crammed into tiny living spaces in the towns and cities, everyone competing for space.

Those days of old, when people had ample private space to play and roam are no more. Just as the chickens, we too are caged in luxury boxes called flats. Imprisoned behind high walled compounds we are lucky to even have view of a central courtyard. How our grandparents would laugh in despair at this state of affairs, recalling the old days when everyone had spacious homes with huge gardens.

It is clear therefore, that the present worldly state is fashioned according to both the gross and subtle kmmas of the beings, and the resulting vipakha, no more no less.

We live in an age of enormous buildings, towering twenty to thirty stories high and filled with fancy apartments. Yet behind this masquerade of impressive sky scrapers lies our cowering enemy – ignorance. Having ascended to the sky, this enemy taunts the world beckoning us...'Come up here, come raise your single storied house to a superior

double storied house!' We are seduced into laying our own bricks of ignorance and one by one we expand our world and raise it to the sky. We follow blindly and in ignorance, exactly as per Mara's plan. Very quickly, the masses follow suit, their competitive desire aroused to build their own piece of concrete jungle and to stake a claim of the skies.

The fortunate ones living in these huge housing colonies live luxurious lives and are in general extremely rich. It is because of their past meritorious actions that they can now indulge in this privileged life, no doubt about that! However, all is never as it seems, because beneath the blessing of this kusala vipakha a subtle form of akusala is also taking place. Remember the broiler chicken that lives in a cubicle, his food, water and medicine needs are fulfilled whilst his freedom is permanently restricted? Now truthfully examine yourself. Perhaps you can already see that however luxurious the life appears, many things are actually sacrificed, your freedom to move being one of them. In comparison to the world your grandparents lived in, your life is restricted, and despite all your newfound independence, you are no better off than the animal, which lives in a cubicle.

When you peer out into the world from the window of your luxury apartment, one experiences a kinship with the chicken that also pushes his head out and looks at the world. In fact like him you are trapped. So in order to reconnect with the unspoiled, natural, free world you have to make conscious effort to take a weekend excursion to Nuwara Eliya (place of relaxation), a national park or a rural village.

Let us reiterate that you were clearly a meritorious human being in the past existence to now be pleased with

many luxuries. However it is due to the past oppression of others, in some way, for example restricting your employees from profit sharing, that such akusala has now come to be. Therefore, in this life, treat your employees and all those who are dependent on you with great consideration and justice. Just as you donate liberally, give alms and perform meritorious deeds, do not neglect the unseen side of moral conduct and intention towards others, because this is also wealth. Otherwise, in the future, whatever luxuries you may have, they will be of restrictive nature tainted with misery, just like that of the broiler chicken.

Existence in the world is a journey, which must be navigated by each one of us. The world always tends towards destruction, but despite this we must realise that we cannot fight it or correct it because there is nothing which can be identified as consistent or permanent. It is simply impossible to attempt to change that which is not consistent, when its very nature is to change. Change means that the proportions of hardness, wateriness, fieriness and airiness which compose the form are changing, and therefore to hold on to 'it', is not only impossible but the very definition of ignorance.

Human beings will go to extremes in attempt to eradicate contagious infectious diseases in animals, such as Chicken Gunya. They annihilate millions of animals and destroy flesh products and eggs to temporarily stall the spread. But the truth is that no one can interfere with the heading on which other life forms are set. Furthermore no one can rescue another life from what is inevitable, of taking birth, then being subject to decay, disease and death. These states must be endured as a part of the natural and karmic order.

In addition, the future world environment becomes structured by the ripening akusala of those who killed (by the million), in present times. Even the animals, who die in fear, anger or hatred, by the nature of their akusala, take rebirth within a corresponding troublesome environment.

The architect of this entire construction or cycle of suffering is ignorance. Ignorance feeds itself layer upon layer. According to the Dharma of 'Dependant Arising', deadly diseases and deadly wars are necessary occasion for those whose 'time is due' to die or to be killed, according to their vipakha. Such deadly diseases and wars are in fact the singular work of the mind contaminated with ignorance (avijja). Deadly diseases are not accidental, nor are they the wrath of the Devas; they are entirely the Dhamma of Dependant Arising.

As the ignorance of the world increases, so worldly Dhammas evolve in which beings can abide, in accordance with their accumulated akusala. The deadly diseases and deadly wars are nothing but a mirror of the kamma vipakha produced in the past. If you were to look in this mirror in complete absence of ignorance, then you would see the nature of the akusala made in past births. So now, do you see the direction this world is moving towards? It moves in absolute accordance with the nature of the vipakha, as per our kamma, and creates appropriate and suitable surroundings for the vipakha to take full expression.

Each and every human being has the potential to be dragged unaware in the direction of the broiler chicken. The only necessary condition is ignorance, which means the mental accumulation of craving, competitiveness and

holding or ownership. Since ignorance is so compelling, human beings are hungrily preyed upon by birth, decay, disease and death. We become caged and imprisoned behind big gates and walls. Fears magnify: fear of disease and death, fear of floods and war. The time period between birth and death decreases, so in fact the process of birth and death speed up. This quickening rate or cycle is called suffering, and the root cause of it all is the mind which is wet with ignorance, and which drives you to commit *akusala* repeatedly. So birth and death into different realms are but maturing fruits of this entire suffering continuum, and they compete with one other for opportunity to occur. Such is the very nature of worldly things, which *you* have created for yourself.

Think seriously about this state of affairs and notice the fear it evokes! Why are things arranged like this? Are birth, disease, decay and death not there to be experienced or are they there to be comprehended?

Did you take birth as a fortunate human being in this Buddha Dhamma period only to waste this precious opportunity and fall back down into the four great hells? Your father, mother, spouse nor children can save you from this great suffering. Therefore, be wise and skilful. Whilst going about daily affairs (business, conjugal life, parental duties), nourishing and sustaining everything and everyone, put forth effort to escape from this suffering once and for all. It is not necessary that you become a monk and wear the saffron robe. It is not necessary to robe your body at all but to robe your mind. Otherwise, you will be subject to immense suffering in the four hells, along with all those beings that you hold as yours, just like the fate of the broiler chicken...

To avoid a long and arduous journey blighted by gross suffering and destruction, first you must immediately commit effort to calm your scattered and trembling mind. Whilst indulging in your comforts remain mindful and try to comprehend the changing state of your mind. Do not be impatient or hurried, and do not try to hold onto things. Whatever *is* being held can still be used as material for observation, with the knowledge that it is impermanent. When you unwind with your spouse, witness your experience with the knowledge that it is all impermanent. Again and again, again and again, again and again, the *same thing happens*, because what happened yesterday was impermanent, and so on, such is the way you must see and observe.

Whatever is here mentioned is not intended for the monks but for the lay householders. This Dhamma is for the common man. Therefore whilst living the lay life, holding to sons and daughters, business and jobs, maintain continuous trust (Saddha) in the Buddha. At all times guard and protect the Ariya Kantha Sila as your virtue. In practise this means that if you break any of the precepts carelessly or inadvertently, you should immediately make corrections, so that the integrity of the precepts is upheld. All the materials you have collected, all that you own, are also subject to impermanence. Contemplate on all those treasured possessions left behind on the death of your nearest and dearest. Your deceased grandparents could not take anything with them. Similarly nothing *here* belongs to you nor I. On my death it is unavoidable that all will remain. In such manner see the impermanence of life. Compare your life with all the generations of ancestors who have passed on. Reflect regularly on all that's been said about the chicken,

the pig, the goat and the cow. If you were to be born as one of them, reflect on the suffering you would have to endure. Similarly, in past cycles of samsara mentally observe how you would have lived with the constant fear of beheading, and then perished in the pain of execution. By this practise of contemplation, train and habituate your mind month upon month. Then, your mind will be liberated from the complexities of life. *You will realise that there are not so many things to understand, about the nature of life.*

Though you may feel life is cumbersome and filled with burdens, there is actually only one thing to understand. Whether you look at your mind or body, there is only impermanence. To realise this and to penetrate the world through understanding is the hardest task to hand. But if you can reason that whichever way we look the world overflows with suffering, then to comprehend the meaning of suffering (Dukkha), that *everything* is suffering, is not so difficult.

While you live your human lay-life surrounded by all the sense pleasures, ponder and reflect so that you escape a terrifying fate and never end up a broiler chicken or an animal for consumption. Emancipate yourself from any possibility of being born again into the four hells of woe. The noble Bhikkhu brings this to our attention because he has truly seen it as a Dhamma of cause and effect. The most salient point is not that we should identify more and more ills and defects, but that we recognise the dynamic in the world and gain comprehension. To a common man it may appear bizarre that we compare a broiler chicken locked in a cubicle with the freedom of a person ensconced in a luxury flat. But if one contemplates on this comparison, not with a grossly defiled mind, but with a dispassionate, undefiled and subtle mind, then the logic of Kamma is revealed. No

matter how great the merit accrued in our past may be, it is the revelation of vipakha produced by very subtle akusalas, which we are addressing here.

There are those meritorious laymen who spend many thousands of rupees on lavish public gestures of Dana and Sila. Yet those same men restrict the liberty of their own servants and exploit them for example by paying too low wages. So according to their vipakha they create for themselves a life of luxury which is at the same time restricted and oppressive in space and freedom. (Bear in mind that what is stated here by the Bhikkhu may not be hundred percent correct, but were you to take it as hundred percent wrong then it would be your misfortune.)

Then we conclude, that just the same way you offer lavish Danas or the same way you are sincere to your spouse, be truthful and generous to those staff who serve you. Be sure to share your good fortune equally amongst your servants and be genuinely happy for them. Take great care to involve your servants and others in your meritorious acts of goodwill. Cultivate your mind into a fertile ground for the growth of merit by disengaging from evil mind-states of hate and plunder. Having observed that such meritorious activity is 'leading on', through the vehicle of this noble Dhamma of perfection (Parami Dhamma), towards Nibbana, make every effort to reinforce your commitment to the path. In your business affairs, substitute words like 'profit' for words such as 'distribution', 'relinquishment' and 'extinction'. After all the suffering and deprivation you have endured throughout Samsara, now in this present life is a chance to put effort in the right direction and finally profit. This ultimate profit (Nibbana) puts an end to all the endless loss synchronous with birth, decay, disease and death.

The Ocean, Its comforts and its hidden dangers

- Our Delusions about the Ocean

On hearing the words 'four great hells' and all the suffering in those worlds, the human mind is gripped by fear. For some people this fear is so great that their only defence is to erase those treacherous words from their vocabulary. Though humans witness at first-hand all the suffering endured in the animal realm - for example within the kingdom of mammals - they never think for a moment that they themselves will take rebirth in that world. It is a great paradox that the human mind, which is truly our evil companion, very easily conditions us to be in such denial and delusion about the animal kingdom that we ourselves end up taking rebirth in it! This is because the ideal requisite to achieve a barren and cruel animal rebirth is to hold a defiled human mind, and thus to lead a life that is fertile with akusala.

Of the four hells, the animal kingdom is the only one seen by our fleshy eyes. Though we may not see the Pretha, Asura and Niraya, we have a reasonable understanding of

the Pretha and Niraya worlds. However, in this chapter we will address the world of Asuras, which we are generally not well versed in.

We give minimal attention to the Asura world. Yet it is comparatively larger than that of the Prethas. Three quarters of it is covered by great oceans, in fact everything in the Asura world centres on the ocean. This mighty ocean is the motherland of the Asuras. So, why and how does a being take rebirth in this Asura world? The short answer is that, it is due to obsessional love for the ocean, the desire, holding and craving for it, that after death a being is born and submerged into the world of Asuras.

We are all aware that Sri Lanka is an island surrounded by ocean. Cast your mind to any other country, which is similarly bordered by the ocean. All the coastal inhabitants connected to the ocean live in a kind of bondage to it. On leaving their homes and gazing from their windows, they only see ocean. They cherish the sound, the wind and the waves. Their toilet is the sea, their playground is the sea and their pleasure is derived from the sea, so much so that their whole life is defined by this mighty ocean. Their main livelihood is usually the fishing industry, so all around the world from dusk until dawn coastal dwellers are at sea with their nets. Most have never given thought to the 'nature' of their lives. Rather they have 'taken ownership' of the ocean, taken it as 'mine', and seated on their rafts they net fish.

Of these fishermen, there are those who depart with their boats in the evening and return in the early hours. Then there are those with fishing vessels who set long sail and only return after weeks or months. And then there are the trawler

ships, which process the fish on board by canning, and often do not return for months. The latter is to be regarded as the most technologically integrated way to fish.

As mentioned, all these human beings 'hold' steadfastly to the ocean. Their life completely revolves round the great ocean. Wife, children, hope and joy are all implicitly connected to the ocean. One can say the ocean defines their 'personality', in that they consider it part of their 'self' or 'soul'. Through this identification, they claim and seek happiness. Yet, it is driven out of steadfast holding to the ocean, that what is bought back ashore is none other than a harvest from the killing field. This gory harvest indiscriminately massacres all the living sea creatures by the ton. Not only small fish but also turtles, sharks, whales and prawns are all part of the bounty of such people who hold to the ocean.

There is another group of people who hold to a different perception of the ocean. Their preoccupation revolves around sensual pleasures, such as entertainment, relaxation, amusement and study. We know this group as the tourists, both foreign and local. In countries with beautiful beaches, tourism has become a very lucrative and developed industry, for which tourists are ready to travel thousands of miles. Countries such as the Maldives receive hundreds of thousands of visitors yearly. Why you ask, is this so? It is because people seek to 'hold on' to the ocean. In this context Sri Lanka too, is the same. Within the tourism industry, a room with a sea view is regarded as premium over a room, which faces the inland. Again, this is because the tourist wants to 'hold on' to the ocean. They enjoy the sea, swimming, sailing, diving and playing games. Basking

on the sand, they become burned under scorching sun. They behave as if the ocean has become an extension of them, caressing the salty water. All around the coastal belt, tourists can be found engaged in these activities as if the ocean is the source of all life's enrichment. Their eyes long for the visual beauty; their ears scan for the sound of the waves; their nose follows the scent of fish; their tongue craves the taste of sea food; their body longs to be embraced by the salty sea. The mind is never satisfied by all of the above. Its nature is one of insatiable desire and it is always seeking more. Trapped within the cave of a body, your evil friend called mind, has misled you all along. It has deceived you, led you astray, duped and cheated you by claiming that the ocean is 'mine', and that the ocean is a world of comfort and happiness.

Yet another group whose lives revolve around the sea are the people working on tourist and cargo ships and those on the lighthouse signalling the ships. There are even retired professionals who sell up and invest in their dream of a large recreational boat, to sail around the world, from country to country for the rest of their lives. All these people live an ocean life, often away at sea for long periods without setting foot on land for months at a time. They are content in themselves. They eat and drink well. But they fail to understand how they are literally prisoners, confined to a floating luxury hut in the middle of the sea. Their greed for the ocean is such that the restrictive boat is actually considered by them as a castle of dreams. They claim to be living happily in such manner, so much so that even if the boat capsizes their party will go on. Their lives are focused entirely on the inebriation and gratification of their senses, and having claimed the ocean as a part of their identity, they cling steadfastly to it, searching for inner happiness.

There exists yet another group who are divers and explorers of the ocean, and they too are in search of happiness, resources and wealth. Rigged up with heavy oxygen tanks, these divers descend to the scary ocean depths. In that dark, unexplored world they search for all the marine world splendour, which they have identified as a source of true happiness. These people are undeterred by all the potential hazards of the ocean, because their clinging to it over shadows any fear. This group like the others mentioned, take the ocean as theirs and search for happiness. Even the aquatic animals - the millions of fish, mammals and birds - are no different from any being whose life is centred on the ocean. They fulfil their desires for the five sense bases from the food they gain from the ocean. Their life is the great ocean meaning each one looks to the ocean for satisfaction and holds to it as their life.

We have covered above how different groups of human beings live clinging to the ocean. Their interests may be the fishing industry, education, leisure or exploration but they share the same fixation. There is also an enormous animal population who reside in the ocean and who are also attached to it. At the moment of death, for any living thing in this state of greed, passion and lust for the ocean, the chances to be born into the Asura world are high. Descending into their Asura world, the Asuras truly live by 'taking' the ocean as 'theirs'. They can stir up the ocean, swim in it and dive in it. All their desire aspirations have seemingly manifested before them, and so blinded by lust, they do not 'see' their world as one of suffering. Similarly, when they lived as human beings it was impossible for them to 'see' that all the experiences of the ocean, which they idealised - the salty water, the beach

sunsets, and the invigorating breeze – were actually a hidden form of suffering. Even if one were to remind a seaman of his great fortune to be born into a human life, and that his adoring love for the ocean will lead to a birth in the four great hells (such as the Asura World), he will refuse to believe it nor will he take his current experience as suffering. When we appear to be blessed with the great happiness we wished for, then we do not ‘look beyond’ to discover that it is a disguised form of suffering.

In the same way that a baby joyously plays with its own urine and faeces, the Asuras are deluded that every kind of suffering and sadness is their happiness. They extend their dominance over the ocean. They fight and confront one another for ownership of it. Observe how human beings contest “this region of the sea is ours; we have exclusive rights to fish these waters; this beach belongs to our hotel; this is private beach” etc. All these possessive perceptions in the human world are magnified and even *more* widely contested on rebirth into the Asura world.

Reflect for a moment on how a diver behaves in the ocean. He swims on the surface, he dives beneath the surface and he also dives deep down into the depths. Same as a diver enjoys himself, so do the Asuras dive and enjoy the pleasures of the five senses. They are so obsessed that they fight one another for the ocean in pursuit of happiness. Such is the nature of the Asura world...

In the animal kingdom fish also feel the happiness of the ocean, swimming and diving at ease. They accumulate a mass of akusala kamma from devouring thousands of tiny fish, and they meet their demise being caught in an angler’s

net. Meanwhile the Asuras also accumulate a mass of akusala kamma from their clinging, fighting and greed for the ocean, and their fate is similarly an unforgiving path of sorrow, woe and misery.

Now, a Bhikkhu who is in Samadhi can see these hedonistic beings swimming and diving around in the ocean and he identifies them as Asuras. They are of glorious form and mightily strong human figures. They are pure white in colour. Their heads are far bigger than a human head. Joyfully they swim and dive through the ocean. For the Bhikkhu these particular ones appear to be leaders of the Asuras, because although they live in the Asura world they do not seem to suffer nor are their bodies deformed or ugly.

There are times when the Bhikkhu can only presume that things are so in the Asura world, but he is unable to confirm.

Returning to the human beings preoccupied with the ocean, there are many wealthy businessmen and travellers who are recognised for their social work and donations of alms. Through this, they acquire much merit. But when the moment of death arrives, their minds are not filled with the peace of that merit, but instead cling with sensuous love for the ocean. Their fear is "Oh no.... I'll no longer be here to enjoy the bliss of the ocean". Their fear is of loss, that in death they will lose the chance of that happiness forever.

Furthermore, there are businessmen and travellers who hold wrong views, and because of such they do not believe in the vipakha of alms giving. Clearly, good deeds do not appear in their minds at the moment of death. Instead their mind is stuck, clinging to all that was desired

in life. Therefore, the chances of being reborn as an Asura are possible. As the Bhikkhu observed, these beings could belong to those dominant Asuras of mighty form.

It would be wise to ponder on the following illustration. There is a wealthy Christian businessman whose company specialises in the fisheries industry. In fact, he could be Muslim but either way he exercises his religious freedom of choice, and his religion does not condemn his business activity in this field. (Bhikkhu requests the pardon of these religions if the truth is otherwise) However, for those who follow the Buddhas teaching, the fisheries industry is most definitely renounced as unsuitable.

Now, let us imagine this said businessperson owns ten trawlers, and that when weather permits they remit an enormous haul of fish. This fish is consumed by all religious groups including the Buddhists. (When offered to the monks as a meal they too will eat it). So imagine the haul of fish from those same ten trawlers when operating them over a lifetime. How many fish would this businessperson be responsible for killing? Since his personal gain and satisfaction is directly connected to the size of his daily bounty, the bigger it is, the greater his happiness and so is the enthusiasm of all those who serve him.

Of the millions of fish drowned in the nets, many are pregnant or are babies. So the gross akusala that these people thereby accumulate over a lifetime is simply incalculable. This akusala makes rebirth as an ugly deformed and evil Asura, or an undersea Pretha a strong possibility. The Prethas live camouflaged as various forms of coral on the reef and as stones. They descend into deep cavernous homes and

vegetative under water worlds. Here they take abode. It is by living in such manner that they guard the ocean, clinging to their desires with the perception of 'mine'. At least two times per day these stone Prethas ascend to the ocean surface, to look around and survey it with great possessive desire. They check on whether any competition has arrived to stake a claim over what is 'theirs'. Then, they cast their gaze back to the ocean floor, where all its treasures, its sunken ships and fish stocks await them, and longingly they return, sinking back into stone.

Should any human being approach these sea treasures claimed by the Prethas, then the Prethas become highly agitated and terrorises the person with fear. Such Prethas are called apparitions, or ghosts. Because of this extreme holding, the Prethas anger, hate and greed increases, and they go on from suffering to further suffering. From the world of Asuras, they fall to the Pretha world, and from the Pretha world they fall into the great hell Niraya, to suffer for many eons.

It is also wise to contemplate on all livelihoods derived from the ocean, especially those involving the fishing and killing of sea creatures. Ask yourself whether you yourself seek happiness and cling with desire to the ocean. Then, address your attention to the Asuras who belong to one of the four great hells, and to the requisites for rebirth in their world. Remind yourself that should you ever take rebirth there, it will be many aeons before you are able to escape. Release yourself from unnecessary desire for the salty ocean. Otherwise, you will live according to those desires, tasting the salty waters, smelling the fishy odours, swimming the

shallows and depths, and claiming ownership of all the ocean treasures. What does not belong to you, what cannot be kept by you, is the cause of all your suffering. Through ignorance you *still* cling to it, still take it as your source of happiness, even though it leads to greater and greater suffering. Every moment you desire the ocean, you only clear a path to reach the Asura world. But, if you surrender your eagerness and desire for the ocean (through understanding), you will close the doors on the path to that hellish world. Release this human life from the four great hells, and savour the joy of the Supra-mundane Path!

Have fear in the mighty ocean with all its dangers. See how its enormous scale overwhelms you; how the glaring sun reflects and burns you; how it is filled with stinging salt and fishy smells. Do not be lured into taking the ocean as if it belongs to you. It is a fertile field of akusala for all beings. As the domain of the Asuras, it should be thought of as 'Mara's ocean' filled with suffering of enormous magnitude. Thereby, be released from all desire for the ocean, and hence be released from the Asura world.

A bride in the pretha world

Ask any young woman to admit what she longs for in life, and a 'successful marriage' might well be her reply. For a young woman of romantic imaginations, there are certain social traditions that she greatly values. A respectable family background, a compatible groom, and a big wedding celebration are examples of some of these customs. Such aesthetic dreams are woven through her life and they inspire her to live. Marriage, for her, becomes synonymous with life.

Later in life when this marriage (which is taken as her life) begins to crack; when ownership dissolves and she feels oppressed by her other half; this naive girl has to endure the reality of great disappointment and pain. When the beautiful dreams of a once innocent girl are shattered and destroyed, one can imagine what mental condition she will be in! Furthermore, if someone in such a disillusioned state of mind were to die, commit suicide or suddenly be killed, then what would happen to them in the next life? The fairy castle of dreams that the young girl fantasised for herself, the gold she saved, the wedding gown and all the paraphernalia, based on desires and clinging, cannot release her mind. Absolutely impossible! So what would happen to her, may we ask, in the context of rebirth?

A Bhikkhu in a state of Samadhi was able to see the following vision. It is a vision of a Prethi (female Pretha) from the Pretha world and involves her patterns of behaviour. She clearly appears as a 'form' of retribution, and the suffering she endures is definitely connected to the force of her clinging. She is a young woman of around twenty-five years old and is dressed in a white wedding gown. Her complexion is dark. There is something insidious about her appearance, means not pleasant to behold. Though she moves around in bridal attire, she gives an impression of a moving corpse. In fact, her facial expression is that of a corpse. Strange enough, in the human world when a young woman dies, her corpse is laid to rest in the coffin dressed in brides attire, and after two days that body becomes dark and blackened in colour. This Prethi looks exactly the same. She is a bride accessorised with floral bouquet, yet walking around in the Pretha world. But since her body is of subtle form, you are unable to see her. Only a mind in Samadhi is able to see her subtle form.

When the Bhikkhu saw the vision of her she was in the human world standing close to a wedding venue full of festivities, which bore semblance to a top class hotel. It is certainly a wedding of the upper classes. The Bhikkhu had the sense that the Prethi is attracted by this event in the earnest hope that she too will be married. In fact, it was observed that she is desperate to be married. She alternates between being seated amongst guests and wandering in the wedding hall. What is clear is that she is a very unfortunate being. The overpowering desire to be married, which she nurtured in the human world, has only increased in the Pretha world, and she cannot 'let go'. The Bhikkhu further observed that she walks amongst the men in the hope that she will infatuate one of them and offer her his hand in marriage.

What a pitiful state of affairs this is, that her persistent clinging to an innocent dream has bought her to this! Her Kamma and its consequent Vipakha has led her to this state, whereby she is permanently fixated on marrying a human being, and yet can never achieve it. The precise nature of this Vipakha (retribution) could possibly be due to her having once broken up another's marriage by slander, unfaithfulness or dishonesty. Or perhaps her very own dreams of marriage were shattered by another, who then became her enemy. Whichever is the case, the ugly and pathetic inheritance, which she now endures, is clearly due to her mind being consumed in gross hatred, anger and jealousy *at the moment of her death*. Such an ugly Prethi could even be one who committed suicide due to extreme anger and hate for the one who broke apart her marriage dreams.

Whatever is the precise cause of this Prethi's presence, she is in any case *holding* to her dream, roaming around the Pretha world, adorned with a pure white wedding gown and a bouquet of flowers. She has taken refuge in the Pretha world, searching incessantly for a suitable groom. Of dark complexion, her height is around five feet five inches tall. As for her credentials, her religion is 'wrong view'; her breeding is Pretha; and her caste is 'the four great hells'.

If by chance you would like to assist this bride, then it is suggested that you perform the very same akusala kamma as did she, and thereby you can meet her in the Pretha world. There you will not need to further adorn her with a gown nor flowers, since she is ready prepared for a hasty ceremony! There, her beliefs are far more entrenched than they were in the human world. Therefore, the Bhikkhu would be hardly

surprised if a human being, who is blinded by ignorance and drunk from lust, were to end up in a similar state alongside her in the Pretha world. In fact, it would be a surprise if any one were to doubt it!

Now it should be clear that brides do not only exist in the human world. Dressed in her white bridal gown and carrying her flower bouquet, this Prethi bride teaches us a strong lesson, a very rare lesson, which sends chills through our body as we contemplate it.

A female from the human world would expect to wear her wedding dress for only one day of her life. However, in the Pretha world she will wear this dress for many aeons. Furthermore, because of her Kamma and its Vipakha, she is unable to find a husband and is condemned to suffer rejection for this unimaginable length of time.

In the human world, if someone does not marry, for whatever reason, they carry on living their single status and after maybe sixty or seventy years they approach the end of their lives. However, in the Pretha world, time is incalculable, and an unmarried woman or bachelor can be dressed up for their marriage in search of a partner for aeons. For the Prethi, her Kamma and Vipakha block her from ever finding a groom. Thus, she cultivates even more hatred, anger, jealousy, desire and lust. She sinks only deeper. These are severe and intense Akusala Dhammas. It is because of these Akusala Kammas that she falls deeper into an ugly, ill-favoured path, filled with hostility. Ultimately, she enters the burning fires of the hell - Niraya.

Notice how this woman has ended up in the Pretha world. Notice how her decline was instigated by other peoples' deeds towards her, but *caused* by the anger, hate and jealousy she developed for those people. Just because others shatter your hopes and dreams, do not indulge in hatred or harbour negativity towards them. Ask 'why', and the answer is clear that *hopes do not belong to you*. Why do you need to suffer, in the name of hopes which do not belong to you, and which cannot accompany you?

It is said that 'hope makes us live'. When ones' hope collapses and fails, another hope springs up to replace it. Hope is life. We run after hope, carrying our hopes like belongings, and not realising that hopes are only mirage. The Prethi bride too, chased after the mirage called hope, and now you have seen what a mess she ended up in.

Our weekend newspapers are filled with thousands of marriage propositions, in every language, all of them seeking a specific alliance, chasing a particular dream. In fact, humans are so preoccupied with activities in general. Whether it is travelling to destinations by trains and buses, or going on a pilgrimage, or attending a mundane job, they are constantly engaged with commitments and attachments. But these commitments and pursuits are making fools of people by harbouring illusions. Chasing happiness, humans defraud themselves; deceive themselves; and lead themselves astray with boundless holding and clinging, born from their deep desires for this or that. Ironically, all this 'self' deceit is performed willingly, because of a rigid identification with one's own existence.

Remember that external forces of society do not treat one fondly, like a brother or sister. In fact society is filled with hatred and anger, thus we are surrounded. So when the young human bride, filled with despair, sets fire to her own tear-soaked marriage certificate, she is infected by that same anger. That same fire burns her because it has inflamed her anger. It is because of this same hatred and anger, that she finally hangs herself with her own wedding gown.

You should be extremely cautious and mindful (wise), that in pursuit of your own happiness you do not destroy another with your hate and anger. Do not make an innocent person a victim of your inconsiderate behaviour. Do not make others a victim of your fantasised existence. Even if you, as an innocent, fall victim to another's inconsiderate behaviour, then do not harbour hate or anger towards them. Just because of a moments suffering, do not become heir or heiress to an endless cascade of further suffering. It is still not too late to be corrected; not too late to realign with a righteous position. However, for the Prethi bride in the Pretha world it *is* too late. She has no refuge now, no chance to become righteous now. Unwittingly she rolls on from suffering to further suffering...

If only this naïve woman had behaved differently at the moment of her death. If only she had seen the hate and anger which arose in her mind, and taken them as impermanent. If only she had seen 'this' mind as 'not mine'. Even if such knowledge were not there, at the moment of death, at least she could have invoked the mantra "May all beings be well, may all beings be free from suffering, may all beings be free from disease". At the very least, if she had reflected upon

just one virtue of Lord Buddha, or pictured the image of Buddha and held it in the mind or at the absolute minimum brought to mind a saffron robed Bhikkhu! Oh my goodness! She would have been rescued from the Pretha suffering. She would have inherited a divine state...

Is it not then so, that this Prethi entered the Pretha world for the following reasons: she had no sense of mindfulness; she did not associate with true Dhamma; she had no wise friends in Dhamma; she did not cultivate the virtues of the Buddha and not least she had not developed loving kindness (Metta). Is it not so, that instead what came to her aid were hatred and anger, and that her refuge was taken in clinging steadfastly to all her desires.

When goodness or the wholesome action is not mindfully grasped, then by default, what is grasped is the bad and unwholesome.

The Bhikkhu who writes these notes dwells in a jungle hermitage. Inside this hermitage there is a newly built hall reserved for those who cook the alms for the monks. Hermitage benefactors have painted it white and the entire project has taken great effort. The bags of cement had to be physically carried for two kilometres through the jungle. Written on the white painted walls are listed numerous telephone numbers, and below them are written the corresponding names of men and women. Adjacent to these, individuals' addresses are logged with their respective vehicle numbers. Not even in a mental institute would one find such a display!

What exactly is it that we see in the walls of this new alms hall? We see the nature of lust in human beings, the distortion of intentions, and the grand projects that their lust

inspires. We see a mirror reflecting the non-tranquil, unquiet and diffused mind. Meritorious sons and daughters, though you chose this path in your youth believing it was virtuous, it is certainly not benefiting you, but only furthering evil! These charcoaled notes that you write on the white walls are loaded with such anticipation for the future, that when your hopes never materialise, you begin to develop a mind filled with hate and anger. This will only lead you to the same woeful fate as the bride in the Pretha world.

Therefore, you need to be very careful. Lust is accompanied by great danger. The moment lustful longings begin to crack and fail, their empty space fills up with hate and anger. Such is the danger of lust and passion. When you hold to passion-based hopes and dreams, the holding itself will always lead to anger and hatred. Then, when the dreams inevitably begin to crack, same the anger and hate will appear. Therefore, what you must do is practise 'letting go' through understanding. Gradually train yourself to 'let go'. Habituate this practise into your life. Live with the conviction that you will not allow yourself to fall into the four great hells. Bring forth the mind of loving kindness – Metta – instead of the hateful and angry mind. Instead of fixating on the image of your rival, or the persons who made you suffer, focus on the image of Lord Buddha and reflect upon his virtues. Recall the exquisite qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sanga. Reflect and meditate on this!

In order to avoid extreme suffering in the four great hells, and to attain a birth in the heavenly worlds instead, be compassionate towards your own being. After all, who else, aside from yourself, is compassionate towards you?

Burning skin – the path of extinction

Your skin is an attractive and beautiful tissue. It is also very sensitive, and directly reflects your present state with regard to the lust-filled desires which are activated in you. Depending on climate, the colour of the skin changes accordingly. Some people have white skin, while others have shades of red, yellow, pink, brown and black. But all these types of skin share a radiant quality during ones youth.

We see the skin in all its states as nothing more than skin, and have no ability to see 'beyond' it. We lament 'my skin has become red'; 'my skin has got dark'; 'mine has cracked'; and 'my skin has blistered'. Wounds, pimples, rashes and burns also denote problems affecting the skin.

But in every respect, we always take 'our skin' as 'mine'. In fact it is Mara's 'gift box' (the dirt filled body), which is well wrapped in skin and which we take in its totality as 'mine'! The skin is decorated to our personal style, beautified, and softly encases its filthy contents, to delude our minds about what is really happening. The truth is that all our skin afflictions of so-called swelling and rashes etc.

are in fact due to the mind, its irritation and its anger. We should realise that this irritation and anger are always the outcome (fruit) of a cause. Skin reacts against what opposes your nature.

What we name the skin is a fibre, consisting of earth, water, fire and airy elements, all of which clash and irritate against one another. According to the precise character of this interplay - of hardness, wateriness, airiness or fieriness - the skin emits water, heat or air from its bubbles and wounds.

If boiling water falls on your skin it instantly turns red and raw, which is the action of the fire element. When heat radiates out of the skin and blisters bubble up, then that is the action of the air element. If the skin swells up with gaping wounds, then this is the action of the solid matter element. When water and puss develop in the blisters, then this is the action of the water element. The four elements always remain together. We have only highlighted each one individually here depending on which one dominates, for example water dominates with respect to blisters. Observe how a little hot water can cause multiple distortions and injuries to your beautiful skin. Not one of us can suddenly decide 'I don't want this', and thereby stop these injuries from occurring. The reason being the skin does not belong to you!

The four great elements, which form the skin, are in a continuous state of change. The form called skin has a higher proportion of the solid element. On the other hand, regarding hot water, the fire element is dominant. So, when the two elements of solid and fire come together, they are not in equal balance, and a battle for supremacy ensues. The agitation and irritation that we call a burn represents this battle. The

solid element that we call the skin, very quickly transforms to blisters, wounds and puss, so, what we witness is the change of that form called skin into an altered state. Ironically, we never identify the blisters and wounds and puss to still be skin! We use 'conventional names' which denote something 'other', as the world has taught us. Convention blurs our comprehension of the true reality, and does not allow us to think outside of its confines. In fact it does not allow us access to think correctly at all!

Observe the speed from which beautiful skin changes to a different 'nature' or state, of blisters and weeping puss. The human eye is perfectly equipped to recognise this new state, despite our conventional language which prefers to identify something in a fixed state rather than see it as dynamic, changing its balance of elements from beauty to blisters and puss.

What is discussed above must be truly seen as an example of the speed of impermanence. Let it be clear in your mind! Understand that whatever you see is a necessary 'kamathana' (object of meditation). It is an immediate perception which comes to the mind to use, contemplate upon, and thereby finally be released from this world. Understand that what you see is the noble Buddha's sermon.

What we have addressed above is form (Rupa). So let us now investigate feelings.

Returning to the hot water burn, imagine the mental irritation and the burning sensation experienced whilst your skin burns following the spill. You will cry out, scream, lament and run in search of doctors, possibly seeking to be hospitalised. Now, in contrast, remember how happy and

light hearted you had felt in those moments immediately prior to the hot water incident. Full of smiles and at ease, you were proud and familiar with your beautiful skin. Merely seconds later, when the hot water scalded you, the impermanence of the feeling was felt. Sorrow replaced joy, pain replaced lightness, and this pain and fear were felt all within the first second.

Impermanence of the feeling is what you felt and what you witnessed, yet you refuse to experience this incident as a case of impermanence of feelings! Instead you prefer to experience it as your kamma, your bad time, your carelessness, the fault of the kitchen, the fault of the kettle and all the other culprits.

Therefore, you most likely continue life, paying extra attention now when moving around fire and hot water. You do not comprehend that the incident was nothing other than the impermanence of a feeling, nor recollect that it took less than a second for your feeling to change from happiness to sorrow. Neither are you wise to see that these feelings are all inherited from each other, inherited from a root, because you take the body and the skin as belonging to you. You are simply not clever enough to recognise that this impermanence of feeling is a Noble Kamathana. Further you make no effort to penetrate this Kamathana, to observe that all of this has occurred because of contact (*phassa*). If you did make such effort, you would see that this was the coming together of both the internal form called the body (senses) and the external form called the hot water, simultaneously with the consciousness. The meeting of these three factors *is* contact.

The moment at which the hot water fell on your hand recognition arose of this very fact. Within a second it had vanished, changing to recognition of the burning sensation instead. The awareness of burning was then quickly replaced by the recognition of stinging, followed by the recognition of redness. This passed and gave way to the recognition of swelling, and then on to blistering, and quickly on to the cognition that the skin requires ice water or medicine. All these mental states are rapidly impermanent and collapse on to another state of recognition, and so on. Over the course of a few minutes just see how many states are recognised before vanishing, each in succession. They surface and then vanish, each recognition giving way to another. The intense speed of this mental hopping around does not easily offer time for you to comprehend the nature of impermanence because the speed of impermanence in recognition is so great. Within quarter of an hour, all recognitions about the burn have appeared and disappeared.

Now let us investigate into intentions. Born from the process of recognition, intention evolve: - "Oh it's his fault my skin got burnt; He spilled the water on my skin; He misplaced the stones in the fireplace; It's because he wasn't careful with the kettle; He burned me on purpose; It's because I was making tea for him/ a meal for him/ was serving him that my hand got burnt; I will get better then teach him a lesson back etc...."

So, in this manner, following your burn you immediately begin to form intentions. These intentions carry hate, anger, jealousy and revenge.

On the other hand you may be inclined to think like this:- “I was serving others/ preparing tea for them/ serving them a meal, and I innocently burned myself; I seek merit to be reborn a human or a Deva, people praise me for my kindness and I thereby earn respect; When I got burned so many people helped me and had it not been for them I would have sustained greater injuries; People were concerned about my welfare; I was fortunate to have the help of the Gods etc.”

To think with meritorious intentions, as suggested above, is to generate kusala volitions (courses of action). But to think with the unmeritorious intention is to generate akusala volitions. A third choice is to take the stance of equanimity towards ones skin being burned:- “Let whatever can be done be done; Whatever has happened has happened; Now I should simply be more careful around hot water and fire; The wounds must be healed quickly otherwise scars will look ugly etc.”

By choosing a degree of equanimity (instead of blame) in your disposition, you focus on healing your wounds and avoiding a repeat of the burn incident. Yet beneath this veneer of equanimity, remember there still remains an aversion and strong clinging. There is no real understanding or clear comprehension of dhamma and kamma is still being produced. Your intentions are focused on protecting your body and erasing all traces of scars on the skin.

In all these intentions discussed above, what can be seen is their impermanence, their speed of change. All these intentions rise and fall, leaving you their corresponding kusala and akusala accordingly. From the kamma, vipakha follows and consciousness tagged to name and form, thereby giving way to rebirth.

Now may you see that from the very moment hot water fell on your glowing skin, you actually generated the factors for your next rebirth in another body. It is all your own doing, your own incompetence, because if the pain that was caused by 'contact' had been recognised and viewed as impermanent, then you could have escaped from the trap of 'name and form' (Nama and Rupa), and ultimately set yourself straight on the path to Nibbana.

At the time of the burn, you were not astute enough to see the contact as impermanent. First it was the hot water which made 'contact'; then it was the ice water/aloe-vera gel/medicine applied; then it was the doctors' hands etc. Hence due to the diversity in all this 'contact', feelings of happiness, sorrow and equanimity also arose and fell in tandem. The feelings changed between negative, positive and neutral, because of the impermanence in the 'contact'. So it is logical that the feelings themselves are of impermanent nature too. The happiness felt when a nurse's gentle hands sooth your wound, is rapidly replaced by sorrow when she begins to apply medicine. The reason is the impermanence of contact. This is declared as the Bhikkhu's experience.

The same morning that the above text was recorded by the Bhikkhu, a noble Bhikkhu friend had fallen sick, and so a large bowl of water filled to the brim was summoned for his needs. The extremely hot water was carried by two other Bhikkhus to an adjacent place and as they were doing so one of the handles to the vessel broke, causing hot water to spill onto the legs of one of them. He tried to escape the burn from the hot water, but it was impossible since he was surrounded by it, and could not escape, stepping into it over again.

When boiling hot water scalds the skin, one would expect blisters to appear almost immediately. However in his case not a single blister manifested, though the skin was still red and swollen. The following day his skin was completely back to normal!

In truth a real miracle had occurred. Just ten minutes prior to the accident, that same Bhikkhu had seen Deva light appearing and disappearing in that very same place. This perception of Deva light was a sign indicating to him that he should not remain there. Yet due to his obligation to treat a noble Bhikkhu friend, he nevertheless moved to that place, having seen the perception of Deva light as impermanent. The Deva manifested itself as light, because it saw a powerful evil force concentrated in that vicinity. The dark force released its potential by causing the handles of that bowl to break and hence hot water to spill all over the Bhikkhu's legs. Same time, the active force of the Deva power was able to diminish the severity of the spillage. Not only that, but the Bhikkhu's mind attended to the impermanence of the hot water, and was thereby able to 'let go' and neutralise the potential effects of it.

These are not the victories of the Bhikkhu, but the victories of the Dhamma in all its marvels! However it should be known that this Bhikkhu has made a presumption in the above assessment, as it could be otherwise. What *is* certain is that the boiling hot water fell on the Bhikkhu's legs because of his past kamma. It could not be avoided; we receive what we are due.

From such incidents, one more truth comes to light regarding those Bhikkhus who dwell in the jungles and hermitages, striving diligently, and having let go of all things to realise the Path to Nibbana. These Bhikkhus are protected in the jungles whenever forces of right view clash against forces of wrong view. The forces of right view are always observed to guard the Bhikkhus from the vicious powers of wrong view, and also from those who dislike merit. The evil forces lie in waiting, until a Bhikkhu encounters some kind of trouble, distress, misfortune or lapse in concentration, out of which they grab the opportunity to take hold and launch attack. So these dark forces cannot really penetrate a Bhikkhu. Owing to the practise of 'letting go', the Bhikkhus evade them without a second thought. Over and again the malign forces attempt to harass the Bhikkhus, but the constant practise of letting go is accompanied by such strong forces of 'right view', that the Bhikkhus are always protected. Devas too take delight by supporting and partaking in the merit.

The blue-bottle fly is the same as you

The word 'I' is so small. In Sinhalese language it is spoken as 'MaMa' but in written form is denoted by the letters 'MM'. Human beings have inherited so much suffering from this tiny word. So, unless you are very careful, then how much more suffering will it bring in the future?

For how long must we each endure all this suffering? Suffering of death; being reborn; breaking up; cracking open; springing forth; then disappearing. The plentiful harvest of the seed we call 'I', is composed of the very same birth, disease, old age and death. And it is we who nurture and cultivate this seed, whilst continuing to pluck its rotten fruit. But this cultivation process is really a wicked, fake and unprofitable one. Because the harvest we reap is *only* birth, disease, old age and death... in other words suffering!

Whomever you pronounce to yourself as 'I', or the person that you consider to be 'mine', is continually nourished with food, drinks, status, accolades and various honours. Yet it always remains, that the only fruit which you harvest from all this maintenance is dukkha (suffering). The

suffering is like a shadow following you, there is simply no end to it. Suffering even drives you in search of relief: - to hospitals, astrologists, and temples to make offerings for the Buddha. See how the queues in these places become longer by the day! Carrying the heavy weight of 'I' and 'mine' on your shoulders you only become more tired and weary of its struggles, and hence more desperate to be freed from it.

However, is it really possible to remove that weight? The answer is no! Because you are the one who maintains and carries that weight, by your own volition, by your own free will. It is not loaded on your shoulders by others, but willingly loaded upon yourself. Others may indeed load a bull or a donkey, but this load is firmly positioned by you!

Once the eye, ear, tongue, nose, body and mind are taken as 'mine own', then their respective external forms of contact surely become 'mine' too. So, not only do you make the six sensual faculties (which do not belong to you) 'mine own', but you take their corresponding six external forms (which also do not belong to you) as 'mine' also! My father, my mother, my sons, my brothers, my house, my job, my industry, and my cars...what massive loads you have to bear. And still you keep on increasing them!

What exactly is it that we call an eye? We automatically assume it is our delicate body part, which we guard as carefully as we do our life. You regard your eye as a source of great pleasure without considering the reality of what it is. Now imagine pulling your eye out with your fingers and placing it on your hand. Do you still see the beauty and pleasure in that eye? Does all that meat and fluid not remind you of a peeled rambutan fruit? Nerves hang from the red

ball of meat; blood and fluid ooze out; and you develop feelings of repugnance whilst this eye sits on your hand. You realise that your own eye stinks! You feel aversion and disgust towards it. As the moments pass by the eye begins to rot, and then the Bluebottle fly moves in. Now you know for sure that 'this eye does not belong to me'. You know 'I do not exist in this eye', and that there is no 'self' to be found in this eye at all.

This eye is simply rotting meat, with putrefied smell, and filled with blue flies, blood, pus and tears - this you must understand!

Think about all the beautiful actors and actresses who are famous for their seductive eyes. Millions of fans are driven crazy with lust for these celebrities. All the fans who are charmed by the beauty and allure of their hero's eyes flock to cinemas to arouse themselves. But those pretty actor and actresses eyes are in fact just the same in nature as we described above about our own.

Imagine if those glamorous actors inherited good fortune, due to kusala surfacing from their past. Imagine them taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sanga, having realised the Teaching. They might then say to themselves the following:

'Because of me and my appearance, all these fans are intoxicated with carnal passion and blinded by lust. In my position it would be prudent to show them the reality of my beauty. Having gathered all those thousands of fans, I would tell them that they have all been attached and fixated to my beautiful eyes. However they do not even belong to

me. If I were to then pull those eyes out with my own fingers from their sockets, and show the reality of the fleshy ball with nerves, blood and tears, they would not even be able to look. What they were infatuated by was actually in process of rotting.'

In the market, there are meat shops, which sell slaughtered beef. They sometimes display the head of the slaughtered bull. (The Bhikkhu is unable to verify if this practise is still going on). In any case take a close look at the eyes in that dead animal's skull. The eye has become swollen with the eye ball rolled upwards, and the tears have frozen. If you were to take that bull's eyeball in your hands it would be the same as that of the actors, the only difference being the size.

Can you understand this eye with more precision now? It is a formation of hardness, liquidity, airiness and fieriness. The hardness is the form which gives the eye its shape. The wateriness is the form which gives beauty and sparkle. The airiness is that which gives inflation, and then the fieriness maintains its animation. As impermanence strikes the fieriness, the eye distorts and rots and begins to spoil. Further, defects appear and it sickens with sties, swelling, watering and cloudiness.

The eye in itself is a form, subject to repeated death and rebirth. In this discussion we are highlighting the birth, disease, decay and death of that form. When we witness this inevitable change, we tend to be stricken with anxiety, fear and sorrow. We run in search of doctors who can relieve us from the afflictions of the eyes, questioning why this is happening to me. But the truth is, so long as the birth of the eye takes place, its disease, decay and death cannot be

avoided. The ball of meat called 'eye' has tendency to rot and smell because that is its 'nature'. If you appreciate the meat then you should also appreciate the rotting, putrefying smells! Such is the meaning of the thing called eye.

A ball of meat, blood and nerves is all there really is, certainly nothing to adorn, protect and mollycoddle! The earth element is simply of a delicate nature. The air element manifests as fullness in its nature while the water element is shining and watery. Finally, the nature of the fire element is warmth. So in its original nature, the eye is an oblong shaped, spherical, delicately born form.

This rotting eye of yours is responsible for many external forms being taken as 'mine'. If you are married you will be well aware of how you once saw a form and decided he/she is beautiful and handsome. There was, at that time, a sequence of thoughts along the lines of: 'she is beautiful, tall, suiting for me' etc. From those thoughts you became bonded to the form of your spouse, you claimed ownership of that form and from your eyes desire was born. Now, what exactly was it that you took as 'mine'? It was desire born due to your eyes. And what exactly is the eye? It is the meatball gouged out by your fingers and placed in your palm. So, because of that eye, whom exactly are you trying to take as 'mine'? Another form! That means another rotting meat ball no less. Therefore, both the eye, and the form it desires, both have the nature to rot like meat, to be born, to decay and to die.

As referred to above, the process of acquiring your spouse followed a well-trodden path. You checked horoscopes, mounted a wedding pedestal, exchanged rings, recited the 'sermon on blessings' (Jaya Mangala Gatha) and claimed ownership of one another. Yet the power of the

desire for ownership is such that you were not satisfied with these rituals. Fear of loss of the ownership overcame you. Perhaps someone could take your loved one away; perhaps they will run away and leave you etc. Hence you signed at the registrar office before two witnesses, anticipating that, should your spouse ever leave, at least you can legally bring them back. Such is the power and strength of this holding (upadana).

Can you see how binding and steadfast this holding is? It was because of a fleshy eye that you held on to another bundle of meat!

Owing to the eyes' desire, you took another heavy burden on your shoulders. Isn't this weight enough to make you satisfied? No! There is no such satisfaction. If you reflect on this entire cycle of life (samsara); and compare the weights pulled by donkeys, bulls and elephants; then compare the suffering endure by the Prethas, hell beings and animals; and finally compare the suffering of Devas and humans (taking as 'mine the birth, disease, decay and death'); compare all this with the weight carried by a groom for his bride. You will, no doubt, *not* see or comprehend that your spouse's form is an inheritance which will be carried on into the Four Great Hells, in the human world and the Deva world. Yet for you this weight is not enough, so insufficient that you cannot bare its lightness! Compared with the weights young couples have previously carried in samsara they feel that their life is not fulfilled, that it is empty and lonely. They see their elder siblings increasing their pleasure by having more children and so it appears that the heavier the burden the more they believe their lives are becoming fulfilled.

Henceforth you try your best to fill your life. You refer to all your burdens and suffering as 'fulfilment'! Without them, life feels empty and hollow. What an illusion this concoction of words is! Maras's dictionary is certainly pleasing and soothing on the ear. The words are filtered from molten lava, like an extremely hot meal; deliciously tasty but burning on consumption. All is directing towards suffering. Yet such burning is no problem for a human being, because 'mine' is created with a contribution from the fire element. This fire, this burning, is part of a mundane life. But the misinterpretation is that the fire and the heat are taken as 'mine'. You feel yourself an expert, because you feel heat from your relationships with parents, children, spouse and lovers. The fire element, which actually contributed to the structure of the form, is now claimed as 'belonging to me'. It is taken as something which is dearly held close to you. What you fail to see and comprehend, is that when the consciousness leaves this form, this so called 'mine' becomes a corpse. Both this form and the consciousness which are grasped as 'mine', pass away and same time the heat element also comes to an end. Then there is no more warmth. Like a dhal curry becomes cold and stale, so does the form, as the heat element diminishes. The air element, water element and solid element visibly increase their activity. Meaning the air element bloats up, and both the water and solid element rot. What a loathsome, disgusting process it all is.

The grand 'mine' which swells up into a rotting corpse is none other than you. It is your mother, father, wife, son and lover.

But now there is no warmth at all, only a chilling, cold and putrefied smell. In just the same way that you appreciated the warmth of your spouse, there are others who hold to chilled smelling bodies. There are truly those who hold to that nature as 'mine'. They are called the blue bottle flies! Your happiness was the warm body, theirs is for the cold one, and how they are greedy for it. Whilst you were alive, you held to your father, mother, wife and child, lover, eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. But now the body has died all those objects are guzzled by insects, just as wolves gorge on the dead. It is the appetite of the flies which is being fulfilled, no different than yours in principal, wouldn't you agree?

Every piece of meat devoured by these animals; every bone chewed; every moment the hunger is quenched and desire for the putrid smell gratified, it is their eye, ear nose, tongue and touch which is satiated. Similarly, whilst your spouse was alive, you too received the same gratification from him or her. If you think about it carefully, there is not any difference between your own self, who was greedy for the living meat, and the animal that was greedy for the dead meat. We wrongly assume that we are more advanced than the nature of that animal which was gratified by the meat. But in fact we had a taste for the warm meat, heated by the fire element, which we took as 'I' and 'mine'. This form (rupa) was our preference. But the cooling fire element which ended in the corpse was the taste sought by the animal. There is the only difference! See the impermanence of the form (rupa). Observe that there is no 'I' or 'mine' in the form (rupa). Do not suffer because of the eye. Instead, observe the way you suffer with the eye of wisdom. Do not be unskilled and incapable by carrying the burden of the world, due to the

eye or any of the six-sense faculties. For as much as you look at the six sense faculties, beautified by the cloth of ignorance, you should always do the same for the six external forms, stripping them naked with your wisdom. Neither shy away nor be afraid! There is no 'being' there which exists for you to fear or be shy of.

What is the point of light on rent?

There is a common phrase that 'man prefers light over darkness'. But it is not really true. When man goes to bed, he willingly turns out the light. Extinguishing all lights he takes the darkness as 'mine'. In fact, he likes darkness! Just as the impermanent light gives in to darkness, man's preferences too change from light to dark, because his thoughts are also impermanent.

For aeons, this polar dynamic between light and dark has arisen within the human world, the Deva worlds, and in the Four Great Hells. Therefore, this hypocrisy persists in us as well. It is a known fact that man certainly does prefer light to darkness; otherwise, he would not go to such great lengths to develop different sources of power to supply it (water, gas, oil, coal). Man in fact 'rents' and substitutes the light which is generated by these sources, thereby borrowing it.

However, man takes great pride in developing environmentally friendly, energy technologies to create artificial light; he remains *unskilful* in the more important

task of emanating light from his own mind in the form of insight wisdom! Though he may take light as lightness, dark as darkness, electricity as electric power and water as waterpower, he does not strive to see through them to the law of cause and effect.

By taking water (as the watery element), and combining it with the airy element and the solid element, we produce a fire element called electricity. What we see as light, is the resulting impermanence of all these elements and the electric power produced. It means that light represents impermanence of the form (*rupa*). Specifically, by using the solid element of charcoal, in the presence of the airy element and the watery element, we produce electricity. As a result of electricity, we get light. So charcoal, electricity and light are all impermanent states of form, changing at high velocity. The fleshy eye cannot discern the actual change and speed of activity that occurs within the form by the four great elements.

In a similar way, this great activity, this dynamic of change is occurring everywhere around and within you. The form called body, which is activated by the so-called mind, radiating its distinctive energy, must be focused upon to gain the light of wisdom. So long as you are moving towards extinction (*Nibbana*), this light of wisdom is the only thing, which is not subject to impermanence. To acquire the light of wisdom, there is no need to construct thermal or electric power stations; nor is any kind of wealth required; cement, metal, charcoal, water and diesel are further not of use; one does not need a degree in engineering; and there is no need to live in fear of 33000 volts!

What *is* required is to understand that the water, charcoal and cement are nothing but forms, which are subject to the nature of impermanence. All of these forms are merely constituted from the four great elements, varying from one another only in percentage. This is how you should comprehend their nature!

In the same way, all personality perceptions of 'I', 'mine', 'theirs' and 'yours', will be penetrated for what they are, and will slowly fizzle away. When you truly comprehend that, there is no 'being' or 'person' to be found, then in what name can there be lust or hate? For whom can they exist?

In this samsaric journey, the 'great misconception' is caused by illusion. When the illusion ends, then the darkness of ignorance vanishes with it. When the darkness of ignorance vanishes, freedom and lightness results, since the load of lust, hate and delusion, which you previously carried, is removed.

Therefore, along with the cessation of mind, which is filled with lust, hate and delusion, there is a simultaneous cessation of the perception of 'being' and 'personality'. It is complete cessation, without a trace.

When you observe a form, with mindfulness and awareness, then the comprehension gathered is not something, which is subject to impermanence. This is true knowledge in the light of wisdom. Until the point of 'cessation without residue' (i.e. the living Arahat is cessation with residue), then the light of wisdom remains in that mind whose contents rise and fall.

The following information is referred to by the Bhikkhu, to inform you about a certain forest dwelling Bhikkhu who saw a picturesque display of light. It is recounted so that you may develop, strengthen and triple the effort on this Path to Nibbana. The light to which we now refer, does not belong to wisdom, it is a light, which belongs to impermanence. Instead of the light of wisdom, this was an offering of merit made by the Devas out of respect.

The time was a misty morning around quarter past five. The Bhikkhu was facing the north and walking towards the alms hall. Suddenly from the northern sky appeared a huge white milky stream of light. It developed into a light display with balls of light appearing then disappearing for two to three minutes. It was the very first time this Bhikkhu experienced such an event. The sky filled up with lightning balls radiating across it as great speed. This incredible wonder speeded up even more when the Bhikkhu stopped to observe it. On being convinced that this was a display by the Devas, as a mark of respect to them, the Bhikkhu offered a short sermon regarding impermanence.

"This light is impermanent. That Deva beauty too is impermanent. The comfort, which the Deva indulges you with, is also impermanent. Do not be attached to these shows. Know that you should not be making performances with your impermanent light in name of the permanent light of wisdom. Be only an heir, an inheritor, of this permanent light of wisdom."

From there onwards, the experience ceased. It took in all around 3 minutes. The Devas possessed light due to their previously acquired merit. So when the merit exhausted

itself, so did the light. Therefore, do not be greedy for the pleasure of that Deva light, having its higher percentage of fire, because it is nothing but form; nothing but impermanent. Once the merit of the Devas exhausts itself, the light also dims then extinguishes. It is then that the Devas weep, become distressed and suffer. Therefore, through your craving for a sight of this impermanent light, you too will inherit suffering.

Let go of all impermanent form and impermanent light, which is bonded by the four great elements! The impermanence of light is the darkness and the impermanence of darkness is the light. Understanding this, let go of both light and darkness and develop the light of wisdom, which stays permanently until enlightenment.

With the shining light of wisdom, look at the world! Then you will see without a shadow of a doubt, that, other than the forms, which are subject to impermanence, **there is no other 'being' or personality to be seen.** When there is neither a 'being' nor a personality, then in whose name and for what cause can there be lust and hate? They also cease.

The mind that is freed from lust, hate and delusion is similar to a spotlessly pure white cloth. A white cloth without stains is by nature, absolutely pure, bright and shining.

A mind, which is cleansed from lust, hate and delusion, like a white cloth, can never be corrupted. You may ask why? It is because, to be corrupted, there has to be the idea of a permanent, fixed mind that is taken as 'mine'. A cleansed mind, on the other hand, has recognised through comprehension that there is no 'I' in me.

The ultimate technology is this world itself

He who has made his fortune in the field of technology believes technology to be a universe unto its own, by which the world can be controlled. The extent to which the world has been deceived can only fully be revealed by understanding the Dhamma.

Humanity's happiness and so-called technology, is fully dependent on a source of power. But the day this power becomes scarce and vanishes, the world will fall into great crisis.

Technology *means* ignorance (avijja). Technology *means* denatured. The worldly nature is to spiritually degenerate. Development of technology therefore means the development of ignorance. On examination of the current world, we find that it is overflowing with ignorance, yet highly accomplished in its technology. Yet inevitably, one day this technology will stumble on itself, and become obsolete, as the power supplies fail and the climatic environment gets ever more hostile. For the infantile world-ling who worships

at the altar of this so-called technology, and who is immersed in blindness, the Buddha had expounded his Dhamma two thousand six hundred years ago.

Degeneration via technology is actually degeneration into the four great hells. Human beings who have strayed by their ignorance are guarded by the web site of the four great hells.

If you wish to 'see' or perceive the true technology of the world, then you should see the supra-mundane Dhamma. It does not diminish in strength, wear itself out, or abandon you high and dry. There is no manufacturer's defect, which could pose potential danger. It is not a technology, which has negative side effects. Instead, it is very pure.

If you were asked to select the most developed technology in the world, you would undoubtedly name that of NASA. Despite this, you would be wrong. For the most natural and fully developed technology, devoid of all ignorance, is to be found in a Bhikkhu who is on the Path to Nibbana. In such a Venerable, who attains to Arahatship, the ultimate fruit and the ultimate limit are reached during the human life. It is the ultimate direction; a technological paradise. This technology moves by its own momentum and is not a 'puppet technology'. It is activated through the insight of Nibbana. Even if NASA were to develop hundreds of new technologies across many aeons, they would not touch the Arahats' world we now speak of. The mundane world is equivalent to a kindergarten class to which, unawares, world lings become prisoner.

The Bhikkhu striving on the Path to Nibbana in the final phase of extinction, not only comprehends the sun, moon,

stars and planets, but also the 'three worlds', including the Deva and Brahma worlds. A Bhikkhu striving for Nibbana, when in the peak of Samadhi, does not need any external source of power to achieve this, since he could illuminate his own Kuti (hut) in the darkest night. During this final quest, by his own insight, he is able to see far into his past throughout samsara. It is as clear as if he were watching live footage from Rupavahini TV. A series of pictures of his past are observed, one after the other. They are merely reminders of Samsara and all its dangers.

The Bhikkhu sees all the pleasures and luxuries bestowed in the Deva world on those who take rebirth there. When one has taken a rebirth in the Pretha world one sees how one ate one's own phlegm and snot. Or having taken rebirth in the human world one sees how one indulged in the sensual world and the pain and suffering thereby endured: During war you were killed at the hands of your enemy; you suffered in pain; you were a cripple; a blind person; a deaf person; a deformed and handicapped person...

When one takes rebirth in the Animal Kingdom as a cow, chicken, pig or goat, one observes being killed and consumed by others. You see how you howl in the pain of death, and so on, you see the length and breadth of samsara, its fears, its dangers, and its mighty depth, are revealed like a true-life film.

These are the insights, which can also arise in you. It may only be once in a lifetime that such knowledge is comprehended. Therefore, reflect well! If you have understood the very nature of existence, you can recall these insights again and again. See the technology declared by the

supra mundane Samma Sam Buddha. Without an ounce of force, not even the tightening of a single button, and without any camera or studio, you can see far back into many aeons of this samsara.

Now you can begin to understand how weakened we have become, despite the presence of the Noble teaching, we still resort to the pages of a website to learn! We use the very technology (which is our greatest misfortune), in search of the Dhamma, and this reflects the magnitude of our ignorance.

Modern technology may easily appear to have improved your quality of life, health and lifes-span. This Bhikkhu affirms this to be so. However, an extra hour of life prolonged in this technological world only means an extra hour of suffering! An extra hour of technical education means an extra hour of ignorance.

Whatever your religion may be, look with equanimity and you will realise that the person who makes you sick, who gives you medicine to cure, and the murderer who kills you, are all products of modern technology.

So, identify the real, authentic technology and become an heir to its supra-mundane power. Without any physical force, you can then win over the world.

As the world develops and advances in technology, it is on a spiritual decline. Ironically, this deterioration increases the urge to control the laws of nature more and more. Finally, the competition with nature will one day obliterate the world, and it will be a catastrophic destruction. Until that last Armageddon day, there will be earlier interim catastrophes.

Within this entire universe, there has never appeared a person who could change these laws of nature. And in the future too there never will be such a person. The human being, who ignorantly strains and labours to change the nature of the world, thinks that he can control it. But not even the Samma Sam Buddha can change its nature. What the Buddhas *can* do is to understand and fully comprehend the nature of the world, and to thereby escape it.

The nature of the world, which cannot be controlled, must be understood by the mind, which can be controlled.

So what exactly is it that the Venerable Bhikkhu has understood? That by whatever endeavour, there is nothing in this world, which can be changed. The world keeps on changing, regardless. You can conquer the mighty earth, the sky and the space, not by changing them, but through comprehension of their constant change. The one who tries to change the nature of the world is met only with more ignorance. But the one who understands that the world is continuously changing is met with knowledge.

It can be confirmed that the true scientist of the world is the Samma Sam Buddha. Be his disciple! Imagine how evolved his disciples really are. For them the world ceases the moment their eyes close. They see the Universe as nothing but an empty sky captured at great speed; a speed unimaginably fast, which is taken as emptiness. Inside that emptiness, there is nothing to be owned, nothing to be changed, nothing to be developed, nothing new to be sought. Beings who attempt to win over the world with their technology are mere puppets in the wind of that great velocity.

The velocity of this world is nothing else but the impermanence of form. Scientists blinded by ignorance are totally unable to see that. However, it is seen by the disciples of Buddha, who search for wisdom and knowledge.

If those scientists become astute enough to become disciples of the Buddha, they too will be the true inheritors of knowledge. This is no-one's personal legacy, nothing to be owned, it is only the nature of the world. You and I can equally be its inheritors.

The Great Compassionate Lord Buddha, with his Great Kindness, is the Teacher who has showed us the Path. Disciples of the Buddha carry their three robes and alms bowl, dwelling in a hermitage or lonely jungle hut, and are able to see the transparency of the world. They are the scientists who make the whole world tremble. Without even standing up, they are able to travel beyond. They are the venerable ones, who see the world devoid of any power; who with great mindfulness, awareness and the eye of wisdom have seen the nature of things. Guarding both the Dhamma and Vinaya with perfect understanding, they see the Dhamma of cause and effect.

The benefits bestowed are two-fold. From mindfulness and awareness, the fruit of Vinaya is gained, and from realisation of the true impermanent nature of things, the fruit of the Dhamma is gained.

Without mindfulness and awareness, one becomes indiscriminate, and if things are taken to be permanent in their nature, then the fruits are unrighteous. According to your level and penetration of wisdom, you have the freedom to choose the direction in which you wish to go.

If you were a leader such as this...

How much we all like to be a ruler. Whether it's in a class room, a work place, an institution, a temple, a village, a town or a country, there is no one who doesn't want to lead. Ask yourself this same question. In fact, you already may be one. The human being's instinct is to compete. They fight and they slit each other's throats, either in a race for leadership or to maintain their leadership

Anger, hate and doubt are side effects of the drive for leadership. In fact, this urge is not only a human one, but is common to every living animal too. An enormous amount of akusala kamma is generated from this greed to dominate over others.

Whilst amassing this akusala, the question naturally arises, over whom are you planning to govern? Is it for the benefit of others? Did it never occur to you, that in a world where you cannot even govern yourself, how it can be possible to govern others! Precisely what is it that blocks your understanding of this; is it the greed, desire, or maybe the craving?

Akusala is created from a multitude of crooked behaviours. Be it slanderous speech, or a show of 'fake goodness', they are all forms of developing dominance over others.

In the name of power mongering, how much war and death occurs? How much betrayal, deception and insults are made? All this degrading conduct becomes the norm in the greed-induced pursuit of power. It is a process, which relishes such actions with great pleasure.

In order to protect the hard-won victory, to sustain it and enhance it further to obtain still unattained victories, mankind keeps on running after the world. The hunt for this worldly power is very painful. Because the happiness and satisfaction sought is never acquired in the present, it is only a promise of the future. Common man is unaware that the future is myth of the present and the present is result of past. He does not tire from exhaustion, nor feel strain or sleepiness due to the overwhelming power of his greed. Such is his desire for happiness; both protecting his current state and lusting after more.

'Desire' can be likened to a very clever seamstress. She holds the needle and threads, twenty-four hours per day. Every desired 'contact', made by the sense faculties, is well stitched with a strong thread. The tight binding sewn by this wily seamstress lasts for many eons without breaking apart. Any human being caught in worldly bondage, is supported by a long arm of help from this seamstress called desire. The bond is called 'being (Bhava)', and the human grips steadfastly to it.

We presume the finest seamstresses are in the factories of Katunayake, but that is an illusion. Their stitches wear out in a couple of years, maybe five, whilst the stitches of the seamstress called desire, hold fast for many eons. She neither fatigues, nor strains nor rests. Every second she attends you, hyper alert. With every form that you have contact with, she ensures that you delight in its feelings, through attachment, repulsion or indifference.

If one day you were to attain to Nibbana, it would involve recognising this seamstress called desire and then being released from her. In the meantime, you are absorbed in pursuit of a path filled with Kusala and Akusala, trying to fulfil your longing to be ahead; to be leaders and governors carrying the heavy load of akusala on your shoulders.

Observe carefully the world of beasts and birds. They cannot sleep undisturbed even for an hour, be it night or day. They don't have the good fortune, or good merit, for unbroken sleep. If a branch or a leaf falls, or even a sound from another animal is heard, the sleep is broken through fear. This is not by an accident, but by the vipakha of their kamma. In former times, having taken birth as humans, having tried to be dominators, leaders and governors, they have reaped a mass of akusala. By once putting fear into people, oppressing them and cheating them, then passing away from these former existences, it is now payback time for that amassed akusala.

When those leaders die, be they great or insignificant, the monks recite discourses at their burials. There are talks of praise, banners are raised, condolences are paid and the dead are willed on to Nibbana. However, the truth is much bitterer, so investigate well!

Amongst the animal community, individuals fight tirelessly for position and rank. In rage, they kill for leadership. All these tendencies and instincts are residue from past samsara.

On reaching an epoch in which the true Teaching (Dhamma) is in the public domain; having gained a fortunate human life, but wasting it in greed for leadership and dominance; being then reborn as an animal due to the akusala accumulated in that human life; not again for many eons will one get chance to be reborn to a heavenly life. This order is so, because of the nature of the animal kingdom. Within its community, accumulated hate and anger are manifest in a living struggle, from one state of suffering to another, sinking further down to the great hells. Just see how unfortunate you are, taking birth in this valuable human life, and by trying to control others, sentencing yourself to many eons in the hells.

However, there are a few who, in this life, and without any effort, fall into position of leader. It is due to their past merit acquired in earlier lives. They maintain their leadership without holding with vice-like grip, and without any greed. The majority of such people dislike the position of leadership so much that they abort it. These are the clever ones, who accumulate kusala from what they inherited. Reflect on this! If we embrace positions of power, we only inherit the four great hells. If we 'let go' and behave with indifference, then we inherit the heavens.

The noblest ruler in this world is the one who sees that there is nothing worthwhile to rule. He is only to be found amongst the Sasana of the Samma Sam Buddha. He is the great Arahata. He sees his own absence, in him. He

sees 'not him'. He sees no 'being' in him or a personality. Then what is it that is there? He sees nothing but the speed, of a body and mind, rising and falling. The feelings, which are 'born' from contact (phassa) make the being, react. However, he understands that both feelings and contact are impermanent. So, where there is nothing to rule, a ruler is not required. Now it is apparent how people fall into such delusion, by chasing after things to rule when there is actually *nothing* there. Oh my goodness, how inconvenient this ignorance is for the human beings!

By the effort you set forth to become a ruler, leader or a chief, there is an alternate way to become the greatest ruler in the world. If you could win *this* Path, not a single person would be able to take that victory away from you; not a single person in the three worlds. You only need to do one tiny thing!

Be liberated from the mind, which controls you. Let the mind be under your control!

All this time, what has been happening is that the mind (which does not belong to you) was dictating your direction. In this very moment begin to take command of your mind, and do it with great determination.

Over the entire duration of samsara, the mind controls you as it desires. It readily positions you in the four great hells, the Deva worlds and the human world. For eons of samsara you traverse through these worlds.

But, one can realise, that 'because of ignorance, I was tricked, henceforth, I shall no longer listen to this mind. Now, it must do as *I* say!'

If possible, with such mind-set, stay on this new path and make it work. Be the greatest ruler on the earth! That mind which never belonged to you; which was alien and intrusive to you, kept you imprisoned in 'being' (bhava). Now, assume the role of the ultimate ruler, and gain release from the unreasonable mind.

If this mind, which rises and falls, is taken under your control, you will be in control of the entire universe. Not merely control of a country, a town, a village, an industry, a temple, or hermitage, but imagine, control of the entire universe. It means that in your quest for Nibbana, on reaching the peak of Samadhi and with ultimate wisdom, you will be able to grasp the acute speed of impermanence in this universe. You will see all of it, as empty. Through wisdom thus, you comprehend the universe.

Until this point, you were one who succumbed to the rule of the universe. Now perhaps you understand that this entire universe is caught in the speed of impermanence. Its pure nature consists of the four great elements.

Until this point, you comprehended the universe as a feeling, born of contact. But now perhaps you have 'crossed over' from that false-known world. It is only through wisdom, which is gained at the peak of Samadhi, that you gain control of the universe.

Never pause to question at what point in the Jhannas this wisdom will surface. Otherwise they will become defiled Jhannas, and Nibbana grows distant from you.

These are the wonders of this Dhamma, the cause and effect of the Buddha Dhamma. The cause is the discipline of

the Middle Path. It reveals the bare requisites for a monk to let go. The Path to Nibbana becomes a reality (the effect) by 'letting go' at the ultimate level. The wisdom thus established will bring forth all goodness. Only one time in your life, this knowledge and vision will dawn. But through deliberation, one may view it repeatedly.

Anyways, this is not important for you now. All you need to do is establish mindfulness. Whatever has already been done, unmindfully, belongs to impermanence.

Advice is thus: Any attempt to become a ruler over others will lead into the four great hells. Therefore the mind must be controlled to escape this fate. With the tool of wisdom, subtly cup the entire world in your palms. That's to say, be a true ruler! Without ever rising up into the world, be sure to quit the world without a trace and extinguish with ease. Apply mindfulness and awareness to observe the true nature of things. Then both the Dhamma and Vinaya will protect you. Though Dhamma and Vinaya cannot be realised from books, in order to gain knowledge go through the books continuously.

Do you know what the greatest and noblest experience that a human, Deva or a Brahma can have? Well, the sentence which you are about to read, is the most tasteful, graceful and beautiful that you will ever hear in this universe. If you see the attraction of these words, then you are one who develops the path to Nibbana. Now you are curious, aren't you? Here it is then:

'Relinquish everything, and then you will get everything. On getting everything in this world, nothing will be a necessity for you. Why? Because, you will have realised that all of it is impermanent.

Remind yourself of these words as often as possible. It will bring you motivation to travel this Noble Path. Search for where the Truth lies in this world.

Watch humankind walking up and down his blind alley. Notice what attracts him and what his purpose appears to be...to gain and accumulate more and more. On his death he leaves it all behind, having chased after things he is unable to take. He has achieved nothing except descent into the four great hells. Mankind is very good at this, hoarding things for the children and spouse, amassing akusala, and then finishing up in the hells...

Examine how relinquishment and grasping are two polar opposites. Despite their conflicting meaning it seems man is still unable to comprehend the difference.

You are carrying the entire load of the universe instead of releasing yourself from its burden to become the most liberated person in the world. For incalculable aeons you have stitched up and amassed this load as 'I', 'mine', 'we', and 'ours'. But at the moment of awakening when you see that there is no such person as 'I' within you, then this load dissolves away. You will feel it well when this occurs, as an enormous change in your life. As you begin to investigate it, you realise that lust, hate and delusion are devoid in you. Not even traces of those defiled dhammas are left behind. **That is the miracle of this Dhamma.**

Imagine a 1000yr old tree, and you come along with a bulldozer and uproot the entire thing. However much you try, you cannot remove every millimetre of that tree without leaving some tiny fragments of roots in the ground.

Yet, a Bhikkhu who strives for Nibbana , on the final breakthrough, will not leave even a trace of the defilements lust, hate, and delusion. Nothing whatsoever is left behind.

Only then do you understand, that the load you carried all your life does not belong to you, but it belongs to the world. By being released from carrying that deluded puthujjana (commoner) state, it's not happiness that you will feel. What you will feel is that you have 'done what has to be done'. You will not be honoured with state awards and words of praise, because it is not a public victory that is achieved. It is not about challenge and beating others to become the winner.

You will simply and subtly understand and realise the true nature of the world.

This mighty conquest, this un-adorned achievement, unsurpassed across the entire world, is a victory of flowing humility.

In this case of supreme victory, one does not receive a thing, but instead lets go of everything. This is not an example of victory but of absolute liberation. Yet, you can never share this noble freedom with another, or liberate another. Every human, carries his own burden, and is responsible for his own liberation. Though it is the human habit to try and take responsibility for others, such habits unknowingly stack up more and more akusala.

Be released from all this burden of the world! Teach all who are ready to listen, the lightness of the freedom you have gained. Acquire insight into the world and the nature

of the mind as impermanent. First, comprehend the nature of the mind, then, without effort you will come to know the impermanent nature of the world. As the mind is released, the world will simultaneously be released, at the same time.

The Weapon of “Letting Go” that conquers Elephantine power

For a Bikkhu seeking *Nirvana* the location that provides maximum solitude is the wilderness. A hut by a stream about a kilometre, or two or three, away from the closest village is the ideal solitude. Those inside reserves, have paths frequented in the night by elephants. There exists a wonderful relationship between wild elephants and the Bikkhu seeking *Nirvana*, as if they recognise him by scent. Neither causes any harm to the other. Both respect the freedom of the other. However it is the habit of the elephants to show their dominance in the wilderness and in their traditional pathways. In such instances, monks living in the wilderness extend *Meththa* towards them, contemplate on the virtuous merits of the Buddha, chant *Suthras* such as *Angulimala Suthra*, *Nalagiri Suthra* etc. and protect themselves. Bikkhus adopt different methods depending on their observations and beliefs. As we enter the forest what we usually do is, wish fervently, using our own inner strength, that no dangerous animal will confront us. If you are equipped with such inner strength, no dangerous animal will confront you. These are the *Hethu Phala Dharma* effects due to someone’s inner strength; not

miracles. Sometimes there may be freshly broken branches and strewn leaves, elephant dung, on the footpath you tread. You may feel the pungent smell of elephants. But you avoid the elephants. You have to be skilled to avoid vicious wild animals that way. The inner strength you derive from “letting go” is immense. If you determine firmly, adopting that strength, the impact is felt in the entire surroundings, including the ground and the animals on it though you may not be aware of it. That is the power of *Dhamma*. In the animal kingdom, it is the elephants that feel the power of *Dhamma*, the most. They instinctively feel the scent of *Theruwana*. That is the influence of the *Dhamma - abiding* bikkhus who have lived with them from times immemorial. Tens of thousands of bikkhus have been living in the jungle. Elephants too are part of that environment. So they recognise the scent of bikkhus.

The Bikkhu does not know why elephants trumpet. But it is a good signal. The moment an elephant trumpets, he is elated with solemn pride, a feeling of indomitability, and supremacy, leadership and strong personality. Once an elephant, a loner, started trumpeting from one end behind the hut the Bikkhu was in. Next, he repeated it from the other end. Since this was the first time the Bikkhu heard an elephant trumpet, he thought that the elephant was incensed. The trumpeting resembled the sound made by a conch. It started with a shrill note and ended up with a loud echo. It continued for several seconds and the whole environment vibrated. The Bikkhu does not know for sure whether it is the sound of trumpeting but he assumes it is.

While this trumpeting was going on, the Bikkhu was in an open hut with no doors or windows. An old robe was hanging on a string where a front wall should have been. The Bikkhu really thought that the elephant was mad. He clearly heard the rapid movements of the apparently excited elephant. The episode lasted for about half an hour. The Bikkhu could do only one thing. It was a challenge; a challenge that could be made into a triumph using one's skill. He took his mind away from the elephant, placed his head on the pillow and concentrated on the thought that "this mind and this body are not mine". Once the mind was discarded, the body had no function or activity. The whole environment would shiver, the moment the Bikkhu concentrates on the supreme sacrifice of "letting go". It will be felt in the *Divya* and *Brahma* realms and those *Divyas* and *Brahmas* would look to see what had happened.

That is the reason for the assertion "Let go of everything and you will get everything". You can cause tremors on the universe, the moment you let go of everything. That is just another occurrence for you; nothing to pride on. The elephant that caused all that havoc for about half an hour, went silent without trace the moment the Bikkhu let go of his mind. About two hours later he heard the animal calmly walk away along the elephant path towards the jungle. Even the lone elephant felt the force of the Bikkhu's "let go".

At the time of this incident, out of all the *Suthras*, the Bikkhu knew only the *Karaneeya Meththa Suthra* by heart. Nor did he have any book of written *Suthras*. His begging bowl and the three robes, the real symbols of the *Madyama Prathipada* were his sole belongings in the hut. Witness ! a bikkhu

seeking *Nirvana* in this birth itself, relinquishing everything including his life, and going into the forest. " There are elephants and other wild beasts, a threat to life. There are *Yakshas* who will scare you, harass you. Oh ! I must have a book of *Suthras*. I must know the *Kanda Piritha* ". You cannot have such perceptions when you go to the forest. If you have, then do not go to the forest alone. Be patient, and wait until you muster the strength. Be guided by a virtuous associate who has the experience in the path. You must go to the forest "to let go of yourself. Not to guard yourself".

You must have a solid, firm resolve; unshaken self confidence. Such self confidence you would get through accomplishments in *Sila* and *Samadhi*. However, even your *Sila* and *Samadhi*, you have to let go as impermanent entities. It is then that *Pragna* will grow in you. Then the elephants before you, the sounds you hear, the *Yakshas*, the *Divyas* and the *Brahmas*, you will see as mere *Rupas* ; forms. *Rupa* is impermanent by nature. The elephant, the forest, the Bikkhu himself are all constantly changing, transient entities composed of the *Sathara Maha Dhatu*. The forest, the elephant, the Bikkhu are different manifests of the *Sathara Maha Dhatu*. All these are mere puppets of impermanence. You are aware that though there is a conceptual manifestation therein, no individual or animal or entity exists. There is only impermanence. You are now free from that which does not exist; no clinging, no aversion, no equanimity. You know only that you heard what you heard and you saw what you saw; nothing more to think of them. They all belong to impermanence.

Make a Conviction out of a Challenge

The Bikkhu made a firm hopeful resolve, when entering the wilderness to attain *Nirvana* in this life itself, that no harm befalls him. But living in a non-righteous social environment distanced from the *Dhamma*, poses challenges.

Human agricultural activities encroach on lands bordering forests belonging to and inhabited by wild animals. Animals suffer from man's hunting, death traps, and other harmful devices. They live in fear and are agitated all the time. Therefore they behave excitedly and unpredictably sometimes.

The *Dhamma* has no control over such situations. They are part of nature. But, by virtue of the great power of "Letting Go", no harm from wild animals befell the Bikkhu.

Once, the bikkhu happened to be walking through a jungle path while begging for alms. The area was frequented by a loner elephant that had killed two farmers. He was a loner with no other elephants nearby. So he was aggressive.

The Bikkhu, on his way begging for alms, in the morning around 6.30 a.m. saw broken branches and torn off barks, as if done on purpose, filling the path. The loner was clearly furious. The bikkhu knew that he was close by. The elephant odour was also felt. The path was muddied. But the loner was not yet in the scene. The Bikkhu walked forward steadily along the path strewn with branches, leaves and barks. He had a distance of about two kilometres to walk to the village. He paused for a moment. What for? To concentrate on converting the challenge in front of him to a victory. The loner had not yet come into his view. But he visualised in his mind, the loner madly coming at him grabbing him with its trunk and dashing him on the ground, stampeding him, crushing his head under its huge foot. The bikkhu then kept visualising and telling himself with intellect, that the pain he was feeling did not belong to him. The physical body getting destroyed did not belong to him. He felt the last breath leaving him and then focused on whether his final thought was one with a *Prathisandi*. No. There was no craving, no ill will, no clinging, no wish in his final thought. He realised then that, where no craving, no wish exists, there could be no deposition, no *Upadana*. Now witness how a bikkhu ardently seeking *Nirvana*, at the moment when the shadow of a challenge to existence arose, arranged by himself for the cessation of existence, and with that understanding returned to this life. Witness the monumental power of the Universal *Dhamma*, the immensity of the power of "Letting Go".

It was because the Buddha had given advice and guidance on such *Kamatahan*, that tens of thousands of *Arhants* came into being in the past. It was the *Sathara Sati Patthana* that arose in the mind of the bikkhu in this instance.

These are blessings that surface in front of the Bikkhu. You should be skilled in order to adopt them in your search for *Nirvana*.

Not only when confronted with the loner; even when faced with other challenges.....

When owing only to the skill of the Bhikku, his grip on life was loosening on facing a challenge, the loner who was assumed to be in front was not to be seen. He was not able to be where the presence of the Bikkhu was felt. He feels the convulsions of the whole environment that accompanied the Bikkhu's "Letting Go".

Let go of everything. Then you will receive everything. But, by then you will not need any of those things because you are convinced that nothing is permanent.

Never flee when confronted with challenges in your bikkhu life. Fear none. Surrender to none. Never resort to the *Pirith* Book. Do not think of the Buddha. Merely reflect on the reality that neither you, nor the challenge being faced, nor the outcome of it, belong to you. It is then that you see the true quality of the Buddha.

Make yourself sick on your own. Picture yourself as a patient with paralysis, leukemia, cancer or kidney disease. Picture yourself as a victim of a road accident, your body getting crushed under a motor vehicle. Or imagine yourself, a disabled senile, bedridden, wallowing on excreta. Visualise your death.

Study your own mind. Be conscious that through all these exercises of *Kamatahan* what grows inside you is *Sathara Sati*

Patthana. Contemplate on death constantly and train your mind to seek an end devoid of any *Upadana*. Convert the challenge into a conviction. Embark on the *Nirvana* path. Be an heir to the dignified benevolence of the *Dhamma* with miraculous powers to humble majestic elephants without any tranquilizers, guns, mahouts or goads; not to tame or subdue elephants but to tame and discipline your own mind. A wish or a thought is not yours to be owned. It is only an impermanent command given to you by your impermanent mind. Loss of your mind means loss of your wish or thought. Even at this very moment reflect sharply on any wish or a pleasant thought in your mind. Isn't it your impermanent mind, that does not belong to you either, that tempts you towards it? Free yourself from desires by recognising and subduing your own mind's indiscriminate beckoning towards *Bhava*.

Are You a Hand of a Clock, Enslaved by Time, on an Endless Journey, with no Destination?

Think for a moment. In our ignorance, what wrong views do we hold. What dominates your mind is that two thousand five hundred years have elapsed from the Buddhist era. Now is the time the Buddhist era will end. It is not possible to realise the Dhamma during this period. What should be done is to engage in meritorious activities and mature in the qualities of perfection, *Parami*.

These are thoughts and viewpoints arising due to ignorance. In observing society what we discern is a distorted nature. The Buddha clearly referred to such future trends to King Kosol, in explaining the dreams the king had seen. Even now we hear *kavi bana*, *viridu bana*, *kalina bana* and *bana* using *double-edged words*. In future we may witness, "musical sermons". When from the *Dhammasanaya* a monk will be singing a *Dhamma* song, the music band on the side, will be providing the music. Such modes become very popular among the youth in particular. Politicians and the media will encourage them to attract the youth towards the *Dhamma*.

You need not get excited by them. Such is the nature of this world. We should get excited only if they are not there.

What we have to do is to recognize them as natural and strive to escape. We cannot change the world. If we try to counter them we are going against the *Dhamma*, the nature of the world. What we have to do is not to go against them, but to recognise them. You have to let go of both the past and the future and be only in the present. The one treading the path to *Nirvana* lives in the present with no repentance from the past and with no hopes for a future. The present too, he must see as what will be the past in a moment, and that the present is what the future was a moment ago. The present as well, therefore is a deception, a delusion, subject to constant change. The one who understands the reality of time, keeps away from time tables. Time tables could be adopted where the subjects are different. But the universe has only one, single subject; one single lesson, and that is impermanence.

You live within impermanence, but are unaware of it. You struggle to get over the sorrow caused by impermanence. Your competitiveness and your drive are the products of the effort you make to overcome the sorrows arising out of impermanence. That is what you are doing in what is known as living. This applies equally to everyone, even non Buddhists, and every animal as well. You think that you laugh for happiness. No, not so. You laugh only to get over sorrow. You take food to alleviate your sorrow of hunger, not to make your body happy. You take medications not to make your body happy, but to avoid death. You use perfumes to counter the foul smell of your body. You dye your hair to get rid of the sorrow caused by grey hair. Now, see the colossus of the heap of Sorrow you are treasuring as “you”, “yours”.

Ok, now. Let's look at it this way. You go to the temple and pay homage to the Buddha, fearing that you may fall into *Sathara Apaya* or face sorrow, if you don't. Then what do you do there? You wish and hope for life in the spheres of *Divyas* or *Manushyas*. That means while living in misery you wish and hope for the same; living the miserable life of a *Manushya*, you wish and hope for the same; wish and hope for the sorrow of impermanence in *Divya* spheres; perform wholesome deeds and wish and hope for sorrow. That is why the Buddha declared that the ordinary mundane being is like a ball of thread with an entangled beginning and an entangled end. But if you try to disentangle it diligently and mindfully, you could see the beginning, the middle and the end clearly. You remain entangled, while having the ability to disentangle yourself. However, if you manage to disentangle yourself, you will never try to grab it again, because by then you will be convinced that it is knotty by nature. The time factor is not critical for you in this regard, but you have to be simple and free from vanity. In the path to *Nirvana*, the key word is simplicity. No headway could be made in the path to *Nirvana*, without this critical factor. The Bikkhu, in his lay life modestly listened to everyone from whom he could learn something with no heed for nationality, religion, age or status. He accepted what was worth and discarded what was not. Once in a town, while yet a layman he saw a beggar, apparently a haemorrhoids patient, painfully trying to push back his rectum, that had come out of his anus. He was able to derive some material useful in his quest for *Nirvana*, even from that beggar. You should learn even from a little child, if there is anything to be learnt. You have to be simple and modest for that. In the search for *Nirvana*, what has to be

learnt from a foetus in a mother's womb cannot be learnt from a renowned erudite. Why ? Because, in order to learn what has to be learnt from a foetus, you have to go back into the foetus stage of that erudite.

There are lay people who do not pay homage to the *Sangha*, claiming that they themselves are morally virtuous and advanced in *Bhavana*. In order to understand the *Dhamma*, one has to have unwavering devotion towards the *Thrivida Ratna*, at least. Perhaps owing to the pride generated by accomplishments in *Sila*, *Samadhi* and *Bhavana*, certain individuals may fall into the category of *Mitthyadrushtikas*. These are the results of vanity. Their heads are burdened with pride. That is why they do not bow to the *Sangha*. Even during periods with no extant Buddhist Order, *Pasei Budhus* have come into being following the *Dhamma* path, and attained *Nirvana*. They get conceived in their Manushya mother's wombs carrying within them, the *Parami* they have developed. They bring along with them, the instinct of *Anithya sangna*, they had been fostering through their *Sansaric* journey. They live in solitude in the wilderness and realise the *Dhamma* on their own. However, such *Pasei Budu* do not enunciate the *Dhamma* to others. It is not because they cannot. Realisation of the *Dhamma* means seeing the *Dhamma*. Someone who has seen the *Dhamma* should be able to enunciate it. If you have been to Pettah, you know where the Railway Station is ; where the Bus Stand is; where the Bo Tree is; and you are able to talk about it. If you cannot, then you have never been to Pettah. A *Pasei Budu* does not enunciate the *Dhamma* he knows because, in *Abuddhothpada* periods of time the people are *Mithyadrushtikas*, vicious and evil, with no respect for the *Dhamma*. So how could they

ever realise the *Dhamma*? If a *Pasei Budu* tries to enunciate the *Dhamma* to such a society, he will be condemned as a lunatic. He may be attacked. A *Pasei Budu* knows the extent to which such people have gathered demerit (*akusal*). So they live by themselves in the wilderness and pass away to *Nirvana*. They do not attempt to preach the *Dhamma* because, let alone understanding the *Dhamma*, there is no one who, in this vicious, sinful period of non-existence of the *Dhamma* can even respect the *Dhamma*. If a *Pasei Budu* attempts to preach the *Dhamma* in such a period to such people the society will denigrate the *Pasei Budu* as a “mad person”. People will attack him. On account of reasons like these they are well aware of the extent of demerits (*akusal*) gathered by man. Hence the *Pasei Budus* living in isolation in the jungles, attain *parinirvana*. If they do not preach to the people it is through sheer compassion for them. If during such periods too *Pasei Budus* come into being, the particular period is not a limitation for the realisation of the *Dhamma*. The issue is that you have entrusted the task of realisation to time. Time too wears off and is subject to change. The past, the present and the future keep changing constantly and are impermanent. All this time in *Sansara*, time has been cheating you with the help of *Avidya*. The ordinary being runs thirstily towards a mirage like a deer, having entrusted the task of realising the *Dhamma* to the future, a future non-existent in terms of permanence. *Avidya* keeps driving the future further and further at the same speed. You will be left with such running and the exhaustion and the sorrow that will entail, unless you free yourself from such *Avidya*. No future will ever reach you. You keep running in the same manner this moment, having run for aeons and aeons. Even at this moment you

have postponed your quest for *Nirvana*. Some keep looking forward for aeons, awaiting the arrival of *Maithree Buddha*. You are wasting this wonderful opportunity to realise the *Dhamma* targeting a future that will never be.

With respect to understanding, do not overestimate the position you are in. You can never determine where you are because there is no place or location which remains with no change. If you feel that you know where you are, then you are in the last place. If you wish to be the first, you must realise that you remain within impermanence. In a world where no permanent place exists, what you have to do is to try and get released from it, not try to find a permanent place. There is no real past, present or future within time. Let go of time. It is impermanent. Then you will lose your grip on the past, the present and the future. If you are unable to visualise this, think. Consider this the best time in your *Sansaric* journey. You may not get a time like this to realise the *Dhamma* for many more aeons. Think fast. The present will soon be the past and the future will become the present. You go on bearing your sorrows to a non-existent future. *Mara* dangles a carrot in front of us which to us is "future".... And we, who have accepted sorrow as happiness, plod on towards a non-existent future hoping for happiness.

Nalagiri Arrives Even Today

The name *Nalagiri* instils fear in you. You have heard that *Nalagiri*, inebriated and furiously mad, came at the Buddha. You may not believe this, but you can still see, even today, that *Nalagiri* Elephant who stooped before the Buddha. However in order to see *Nalagiri*, you have to become a Bikkhu who has entered the way of "Letting Go"; that means a bikkhu who genuinely pursues the *Madyama Prathipada*.

Once the Bikkhu lived in a hut, about one kilometre and half from the closest village, in the wilderness of a reserve in Badulla District. The access path to the hut was along the elephant path. In fact the elephant path was right in front of the hut. In the very first night around 10.00 p.m. the Bikkhu heard two or three elephants breaking branches behind the hut. In about half an hour they left for the village. The following morning, on his routine *Pindapatha* walk the Bikkhu saw the several paddy plots destroyed bringing pain and misery to the farmers. The Bikkhu knew only the *Karaneeya Meththa Suthra* by heart, at the time. He did not have a *Pirith Potha*. He knew that those were not essentials in the path to *Nirvana*. But, while in another monastery another bikkhu, had asked him to keep the *Nalagiri Gatha, Angulimala Piritha*

and the *Kanda Piritha* written down. So he had the *Nalagiri Gatha* written on a single ruled sheet of paper.

The *Nalagiri Gatha* reads as follows.

‘මා කුඤ්ජර නාග මාසදෝ
උක්ඛං හි කුඤ්ජර නාග මාසදෝ
නහිනාග භතස්ස කුඤ්ජර සුගති හෝති
ඉතෝ පරං ගතෝ’

The Bikkhu still does not know whether the above stanza is correctly stated or not. But he used only the above four lines. He did not expect a miracle. All he wanted was some short lived relief at least, for the innocent villagers who provided meals for him, but nothing for himself. He neither knew nor did he think about the result. Nor did he make a special effort. He only chanted the *Gatha* aloud about twenty five times each day. What a miracle ! On the second day while the Bikkhu was chanting, he, immersed in *Samadhi*, saw a gracefully majestic elephant emerge from the jungle. He was of glowing black hue, resembling a dressed up elephant in a *perahera*, bigger than a normal elephant. He wore elaborate head gear and his long tusks were clipped with golden caps. Two bright streams of light emanated from his eyes. He appeared four or five times before the Bikkhu in *Samadhi*, when the *Gatha* was being chanted each night. If you are clever enough, you too could see the *Nalagiri* elephant who lived 2500 years ago. Witness the marvel of *Dhamma*. It is no triumph of the bikkhu. It is the triumph of the process of “Letting Go”.

From then onwards all through the two months the Bikkhu stayed in that hut, the elephants disappeared, not only from near the hut but from the village as well. What happened since then, the Bikkhu does not know.

That was amazing. The majestic elephant seen by the Bikkhu in *Samadhi* was seen by the other elephants as well. The beams of bright light emanating from his eyes scared the other elephants and they fled. They fled because for them, it was a powerful elephant of the *Saddhantha Kula*, the same *Nalagiri* reborn as a *Divya* elephant, coming to carry out the command of the Buddha, contained in the *Nalagiri Gatha*. *Nalagiri*, who stooped and knelt before the Buddha in the past, comes even now in response to the invitation of the Buddha contained in the *Nalagiri Gatha*, to protect the Buddha disciples seeking Nirvana diligently and meaningfully. He appears on the command of a *Buddha Puthra* (Disciple of Buddha), but merely chanting the *Nalagiri Gatha* will not suffice. The person chanting has to be accomplished in "Letting Go". The Bikkhu had only his three robes and his begging bowl when staying in the above hut. You too may try and experience the effectiveness of the *Nalagiri Gatha* by fulfilling the requirement of "Letting Go".

At this moment of writing, the Bikkhu does not know whether the *Gatha* he wrote is correct or not; simply because he has let go of that as well. The Bikkhu does not feel it necessary even now to find out if it is correct or whether any words are missing. If he tried to find it out, he would not derive that miracle out of it; because then he would see a sense of permanence in it. Perhaps as you read this note you may have some doubt regarding the correctness of the *Gatha*. Then that signifies clinging and not letting go.

If you are searching for something, there has to be some thing permanent to be sought for. It is a weakness to continue to find faults. You should be clever enough to adapt what

you receive. *Pirith* constitutes an impermanent collection of lines. Using it while being conscious of its impermanence can bring results. This is the path of enlightenment known to the Bikkhu. But if you are one who pays homage to the Buddha by way of *Amisa Pooja*, then you have to chant it reflecting on its meaning, if it is to be effective. It is useful to succeed in lay life. But these two paths should not be mixed up.

The Bikkhu sees the above experience as an instance where the *Nalagiri Gatha* the Buddha propounded on the *Nalagiri* elephant some 2500 years ago, showed maximum beneficial results. The purpose for which the Buddha propounded it and the results derived, applied in the same manner to the Bikkhu. This is the wonder, the Buddha word is. This is the truism the Buddha word is. It could be experienced only by "Letting Go". The Bikkhu reiterates for your benefit.....

During the two months, the Bikkhu spent in the above hut, he experienced problems in his urinary tract caused by the lime-mixed water of the stream he used and dizziness caused by sugar deficiency in his blood due to scanty meals. He succeeded in overcoming both and in using the same as a blessing in his quest for *Nirvana*. Seeing the majestic *Nalagiri* too was part of that blessing. So, be convinced that you have only to face reality and that you need not wilfully torment yourself in order to attain *Nirvana*. Wrong conclusions regarding these may make you a mental patient. Seek guidance from a *Kalyana Mithra*, a virtuous friend or a teacher who treads the right path. However much you chant the *Nalagiri Gatha*, in eagerness to see the Majestic *Nalagiri*, you will never succeed. The effects of the *Dhamma* comes to naught where desirous clinging prevails. They surface when

craving is absent. Craving fades away where wisdom reigns. *Sathara Sati Pattahana* is the water and nourishment for the growth of wisdom. Impermanence is the result highlighted by *Sathara Sati Pattana*. Realisation of impermanence will lead you to lose hold on the Buddha, the *Nalagiri*, the *Sathara Sati Pattana*, you, yourself and the entire world.

Meanwhile the villagers got the impression that the Bikkhu was skilled in charms, and that was why the elephants disappeared during his stay there. The Bikkhu never tried to rectify that. The impressions of others are not relevant to him.

But a young man once came to him and asked for a charm for his safety, as he was to join the army. The Bikkhu told him that the only safety measure he knew of, was that of the *Thrivida Ratna*, and nothing else.

“Do you know of the greatest, the supreme safety measure in the world? “

It is “Letting Go”. Then you have nothing to protect, and nothing to be protected from. Where there is no being, what is there to protect, or be protected from? The safest, in this world is the dignified one who has realised the *Dhamma*.

Once a devotee asked the Bikkhu why he had not memorised the *Pirith* and why he did not have a *Pirith Potha*. The Bikkhu’s reply was that, what he is, and what he does by way of body, mind and word be studied. You will see thereby, the *Pirivana Poth Vahanse*. *Pirith* is meant not only to be chanted and listened to, but to be observed meaningfully in day to day life. Be clever, yourself. Make your life a *Pirith Potha*. Then

you will not need charms and other protective rituals.

The Bikkhu also notes that even though the *Nalagiri Gatha* was effective in driving away the wild elephants in the above instance, the same did not happen elsewhere. Wild elephants frequented other forest huts in spite of the *Nalagiri Gatha*. The Bikkhu concludes thus. *Nalagiri*, having respected and obeyed the Buddha, was born a divine (*Divya*) elephant by virtue of that merit. That miracle took place to prove that the journey in *Bhava* of *Nalagiri*, was conditioned by his having obeyed the Buddha, and that such divine (*Divya*) animals do exist in divine spheres. The jungle paths used traditionally by wild elephants, are theirs by right. There are huts among them where bikkhus live. Wild elephants using those paths mostly at night do so without causing any harm or loss to the bikkhus. Nor do they impinge into the freedom of the bikkhus. Thus the *Nalagiri* divine (*Divya*) elephant, though he intervened in that special, required instance, does not normally challenge the rights and the little freedom left for the wild elephants.

Look at Your Face Too, Through this Mirror

Beings commit grossly unwholesome acts so blatantly! Man breaches even the *Pancha Seela* as if licensed to do so. They have absolutely no remorse. Destruction of animal life and wrongful indulgence in sensual pleasure, in particular, are grave unwholesome acts entailing vicious retribution. Often they are the root causes of other unwholesome acts. Those who commit them will certainly be born in *Pretha* and *Bhootha* realms. Furthermore, *Thanha* is a clear qualification for *Pretha* life. The craving you have for your wife and children, your properties, and the inability to overcome such craving are strong forces that thrust you into *Pretha* spheres, despite your having engaged in meritorious activities. The perceptions of *Divya* and *Brahma* realms are identifiable by their bright light. They are lit up. But the perception of the *Pretha* world is a world of eternal darkness, distortion, mysticism and fear. No *Pretha* being appears happy. They look depressed and worried all the time. A bewildered appearance is seen as if they are in the throes of a great problem. Their faces are contorted into various odd shapes different from one another. Some are flat, some elongated, others with multiple abnormalities. *Prethas*

have *olarika* physical bodies. Those practising *Samadhi* can see them as *Rupavachara* bodies. The *Olarika* body of *Prethas* too have the same *Salayathana* (the six senses) as *Manushyas*, *Divyas* and *Brahmas*. Hence a *Pretha* too has thoughts. His *Olarika* body made of the *Sathara Maha Bhoothas* (the four basic elements) and his mind too are subject to the same process of coming into being and vanishing constantly. Both male and female *prethas* exist. Since they live in constant darkness and obscurity, they suffer constant fear and conflict. That is the effect of *Karma*. Living in constant fear and conflict fills their minds with negative thoughts of *dosa* and *Thanha*. They keep accumulating demerits (akusal) every moment of their live in the *Pretha* world. They have no idea as to what is merit (kusal) and demerit (akusal). That is their *Karma*. The *prethas* who descend into the *pretha* world are of different natures on account of the *karma* they acquired when born as human beings

The *Prethas*, the *Bikkhu* has met are remarkable. One female had no mouth; perhaps because she had not been generous and had not encouraged others to be generous in past life. Another had eyes on fire all the time; Perhaps, because in past life he had been jealous of the success, furtherance and victories of others.

Another had two glowing eyes resembling two bulbs. May be because he had guided others in *Dhamma* and in education though he got a *Pretha* birth due to excessive *Thanha*. Yet another in an *Pretha Aranya*, had a round face and shaven head. He was wearing a robe and was not deformed. Perhaps he was a monk in past life, who had been going after *sivu pasaya* excessively though by virtue of his

meritorious acts (kusal) accumulated through other deeds he got a normal appearance. There was also a white *Pretha*, with the appearance of a westerner in the *Aranya*. He may have been a past owner of the *aranya* property or a layman living there. He too had a normal appearance, not deformed. Perhaps he fell into the *Pretha* sphere owing to a negative *Chuti Sitha* dominated by some craving. *Prethas* like to be in a community, like crows. Sometimes hundreds of them appear together as if in a film reel.

The amazing thing about *Pretha* life is that *Pretha* animals too exist. Once the Bikkhu saw three *Pretha* buffalos in an *Aranya* ground. All three were of brown colour and looked normal with no deformity. But their snouts had no mouths. They remained in a row swaying their heads. On inquiry, the Bikkhu came to know that the ground had been a place where cattle and buffalos were slaughtered some fifty years back. It can be surmised that people who slaughtered animals in the past are now facing retribution for those unwholesome acts. See how *Karma* pursues you ! The effects are based on what you liked. They had no mouths, to prevent them from eating. They will starve and undergo misery until their lives last. Similarly, *Pretha* fowl and deer as well have been seen around *aranyas*. All of them had, as *Manushyas* in past births slaughtered and eaten animals happily. They have got their retribution accordingly. What they did happily has come back to them. The flesh that they relished has become their own flesh. No one in the *Pretha* world should complain or be annoyed; what they liked, they have got.

The world of *Prethis* (female *Pretha*) is more nauseating. The Bikkhu has seen a filthy *Prethi* who as a *Manushya*, had

Indulged in wrongful sex. She was half naked, committed for sex. Her face was extremely ugly, and her body was covered with oozing sores. Her body had the same organs as a human body. Having a dirty, filthy body, as retribution for improper sex, she went begging for sex shamelessly. She had to beg for sex, because she was so unpleasant and disgusting. That is what she had got for engaging in improper sex as a *Manushya* shamelessly. These *Prethis*, accumulate heaps of *akusal* just as they did in their lives as *Manushyas*. This *Prethi* begged for sex from the Bikkhu too. As that thought came to her mind she got burnt off instantly. She fell into the inferno of hell. The Bikkhu realised what happened hearing her dying cries as she disappeared. See !. Having engaged in improper sex as a *Manushya*, she committed the same unwholesome act as a *Prethi* and got engulfed in the flames of hell. This could be your story too, not only that of the *Prethi* referred to.

How many brothels are there in this country? How much of improper sex activity takes place? You may not be so. But those who are, will get the results applicable for what they write at their own examination.

Do not hold the hands of the *Pretha* world extended to you by the evil modern technological media. Let go of them mindfully. You and the media personnel be healthily satisfied.

There was another *Prethi* whose face was not ugly. She was short and stout, like a barrel, with a round face. She was not nude. Her hands and legs were fat like those of a filaria patient. When the Bikkhu met her, she was carrying a large suit case in one hand and two bottles of perfume in the other. The suit case was similar to those carried by returnees from

work in the Middle East. She was flashing the two bottles of perfume and begging for sex. She was invariably a woman who returned from Middle East and indulged in wrongful sex excessively, and as a result fell into the *Pretha* sphere carrying the "Middle East" perception. Looking at what is happening in the real world currently, one could conclude that these things are possible. The Bikkhu made these notes on the actual incidents he saw while in *Samadhi*.

The *Pretha* world remains in perpetual darkness where fear and restlessness reign. The Prethas are all the time looking for sensual pleasures. They continue maintaining the same perceptions of sensual pleasures they had while in the *Divya* and the *Manushya* realms. But they experience only sorrow due to their demeritorius acts (akusal). The world has been formed in such a way that demeritorius acts and their results match well. In the *Manushya* realm, a woman may enjoy improper sex and beget a birth in the *Pretha* realm. She will continue to have the same desires but will be starved of sex due to lack of opportunity. That is why that *Prethi* was begging for sex waving the two bottles of perfume and the Dubai Bag. The effect fits well to the cause. It is like a marriage between first cousins. From all these events, what is proven over and over again is the truth of the universal Dhamma.

Correctly identify the universal Dhamma path. "Let Go" of everything. When you get everything you will want nothing; because by then you will have realised that nothing is permanent. Make the sweet experience of letting go, your own experience. Escape the inferno that *Bhava* is.

The Bikkhu is making these notes, not for your pleasure, but for your understanding. This fierce, vicious Sansara is a mirror of your journey seeking more and more sorrow. Please look at your own face in this mirror. Be happy if you see your own face. But beware and spring into action if you see a *Pretha* face. Tardiness leads to sorrow. The Bikkhu has never seen the same *Pretha* or *Prethi* twice. May be that some of them who were able to benefit from transfer of merit, freed themselves thereby. The Bhikkhu does not know.

Within the spiritual bodies of the *Prethas*, there exist some dormant beneficial (*kusal*) energies. Occasionally the *Pretha* himself is able to unleash it. What you are doing as well, accumulating wealth greedily and painstakingly day and night, is to visit that domain of your relatives. You can subject yourself to a self-test. A problem which most people in society have is the lack of time to engage in meritorious activities. Some cannot even find the time to go to the temple on a *Poya Day*. No homage to the Buddha is paid at home.

The elderly, who usually observe *Sil* on *Poya* days, do not do so when a grandchild falls ill, because of duties at home. Then there are those who keep away from religious rituals even in their own homes due to duties and responsibilities in their offices or businesses. There is nothing more here than greed (*tanha*).

They are looking for some happiness they think wholesome deeds are unable to yield. Do you think such people would peacefully breathe their last, if it comes suddenly? No. It will be restlessly; in agitation. The outcome is re-birth in

the *Sathara Apaya*. If you are not able to be away from your office, work, family, properties or any other responsibility, and go on a pilgrimage or engage in some other wholesome activity, for a few days, then you will never be able to leave them with any peace of mind at death. The dying moment is always tense; one with fleeting thoughts of shock and upheaval. If you are not prepared, the *Prathisandhi* will link you invariably to some *Pretha* realm next. Engaging in wholesome work is not enough. You must practise "Letting Go". In order to free oneself from thoughts of craving at death, one should have some understanding. The monk, the Bikkhu saw in the *Pretha* world is one like that. By virtue of his wholesomeness he got a normal, faultless body. But craving gave him a *Pretha* life.

A gentleman whom the Bikkhu had met, told him that he is now free from all his business activities and that he had the leisure to go on pilgrimages weekly; that he had already gone on several pilgrimages to India; that he went to Myanmar and Thailand and that he also intends going to other countries to worship at religious places He requested the Bikkhu to bless him and enable him to proceed. Now, look ! He freed himself from his business work. But what type of work is he doing as wholesome deeds; freed himself from business and became a traveller! A funny choice! That is simply *Moha*. He wanted to know from the Bikkhu what benefit he could derive from such work. The Bikkhu replied thus, " You wish to visit several Buddhist countries to engage in religious work. If that wish flashes into you as a dying thought some day, you will invariably be born as a migrant bird. Your desire is travel and you will get it. If a pleasant thought of having taken part in such wholesome deed, comes to you at the moment

of death, you will be born an endowed *Divya* or a *Manushya* being. If you get as the dying thought, the awareness that every thought is impermanent, that means pure *Dhamma* and you will be born a *Marga Phala Laabhi Divya* or *Brahma*. If instead of such a wholesome deed a thought regarding your business that you have already given up, come to your mind you will definitely be born in a *Pretha* realm. You may use your skill and select." The Bikkhu does not know what he selected. But the Bikkhu knows one thing; that from then onwards he was cross with the Bikkhu. Such is the nature of the world. Everyone likes to be approved, endorsed or agreed with even dishonestly.

Observe the Dhamma, Not the Demon

The resting places along the *Sansaric* journey are varied depending on the wholesomeness and unwholesomeness of the actions of the subject. The world of the demons is also as strange as the worlds of divine, human and Pretha beings

The *Yakshas* too are inhabitants of this same human world. There are references to *yakshanis* (female *Yakshas*), but the Bikkhu has seen only *yakshas*, the males. The realm of *Yakshas* is divided into two, *Samma Drushtika* and *Mithya Drushtika*. The former frequent temples, places of worship, *aranyas*, ancient sacred grounds and near abodes of forest-dwelling monks, while the latter are mostly found in cemeteries, grave yards, caves, dark nooks and corners, bathing spots, along streams and so on.

Yakshas love darkness, due to their *Karma*. They have *Olarika* physical bodies with the six senses (*Salayathana*) composed of *Sathara Maha Boothas*. They are also beings with thoughts arising and decaying continuously.

Once while the Bikkhu was in Samadhi, in a forest hut, around 10 p.m. a gigantic figure in human form, about six

feet in height, appeared suddenly in front of him. He was pitch black, like a Negro boxer. His upper body was bare while his lower body was clad in some dress down to the knee. He wore two bangles and had a head full of hair, but had no tusks. That was the first time the Bikkhu saw a *Yaksha*. Behind him was a retinue in faint silhouette form. The Bikkhu kept looking at the huge figure standing stoically before him for about five minutes. The figure too did not move but kept looking on. He did not pay homage, did not try to frighten the bikkhu either. While gazing at him the Bikkhu silently transferred merit to him. Then the figure faded away. The Bikkhu never saw him again. He was a *Samma Dhrushtika Yaksha*, not confined to darkness, without sorrow. He looked majestic. He got these attributes due to meritorious acts in a previous life. But having been born as a human in a previous life, the thoughts which arose during his dying moment being tinged with hatred, anger, the desire to protect some thing, was born in the *Yaksha* realm. Yet he was not suffering. He was a *Samyakdrushtika* demon majestically guarding something.

Later the Bikkhu came to know that the Chief Monk here, who died about forty years ago, was very much attached to the *Aranya* and had dedicated his life to its protection. But on account of a question affecting his self-respect, he committed suicide by hanging himself in his abode. It was this Chief Monk born as a powerful demon, that the Bhikkus saw in the night in his abode. But on account of the fact that before his demise, he observed his precepts very diligently, he was born as a powerful *Samyakdrushtika* demon. But at the moment of death his desire was to protect the *Aranya*. The next birth was in accordance with that wish. His desire

was fulfilled. Though later the Bikkhu tried to see this *Yaksha* while in *Samadhi* he never succeeded. He knew very confidently with evidence that the *Yaksha* having received the merit transferred to him by the *Bhikku* freed himself from the *Yaksha Bhava* instantly. The Bikkhu does not wish to note herein how he made sure that the *Yaksha* had freed himself in that manner. It is not really correct to use the term "*Yaksha*" on him. He was an imperial *Yaksha* leader, who came to the Bikkhu for two reasons. Firstly to pay homage and secondly to receive merit. During his ascetic life, the being who paid homage to the *Bhikku*, with the greatest affection and veneration, was this imperial *Yaksha* leader. So the Bikkhu wishes to repeat his experience on what happened at the above scene.

Let go of everything. Then you will receive everything. When you receive everything you will not need any of them. This is because you have understood that everything is impermanent.

The above account was regarding a *Samma Dhrushtika Yaksha*. This moment he may have escaped from being a *Yaksha* and may be born a *Divya* or a *Manushya*. Or else, by virtue of the *Pragna* he had developed as a monk in the harsh environment of a forest *Aranya*, he may have entered a *Brahma* realm, having enhanced his *Pragna* by observing the Bikkhu's accomplishment of "Letting Go". The Bikkhu is not certain about this. So, that is only his assumption. However, he is on the correct path.

Mithya Dhrushtika Yakshas are physically different from the above mentioned imperial looking *Yaksha* leader. The Bikkhu has seen one of them, only once, in another *Aranya*.

He was taller and black in complexion. His two eyes were red and large, like two oranges. His hair was long, curly and unkempt. He looked ferocious and frightened at the same time. He too kept gazing at the Bikkhu and disappeared after about five minutes. From his ferocious look the Bikkhu presumed that he was a *Mithya Drushtika Yaksha*. He was bare in upper body and clad in some dress down to the knee in the lower body. These *Yakshas* are black in complexion because they have been harbouring excessive *dosa* in past *Bhava*. What one nurtured, what one liked, one inherits from past *Bhava*. That is nature.

In the same *Aranya*, the Bikkhu encountered a *Yaksha* who was fair in complexion. He was hefty, obese and paunchy. Dressed in some garment from waist down to the knees, his upper body was bare. His hair too was long grown and unkempt. He had a harmless appearance. The Bikkhu does not know how he got a fair complexion in spite of the *Yaksha Bhava*. Sometimes wholesome acts like *Amisa Pooja* yield fair and pleasant complexion though a *dosa* or some other negative dying thought may result in a *Yaksha Bhava*.

Yakshas too like to live in communities. They have their community leaders. *Mithya Drushtika Yakshas* viciously disturb and obstruct bikkhus following the right *Dhamma* path. Such bikkhus have to be skilled to withstand and overcome such unwholesome forces by strengthening their "Let Go " principle. If not, the bikkhu has to leave for another *Aranya*. Sometimes, when the bikkhu is strong and indomitable, these *yakshas* target their attendants and benefactors. They frighten them, cause illnesses to them and so on, as discouragement. The most effective remedy to this,

the Buddha has provided. It is to reflect on the fact that all such thoughts are impermanent. Then what you see is the *Dhamma*, not any *Yaksha*.

The Bikkhu never relished seeing *Brahmas*, *Divyas*, *Yakshas* and *Prethas*. They all were random sightings. But he also neither got attracted nor came into conflict with them. You, reading this note should not develop a liking to see them; for no such beings exist, to be seen. They are all impermanent compositions of *Sathara Maha Bootha*, with *olarika* bodies and thoughts that arise and die off. There was no permanent being; only *Phassa* and *Vedana* caused by it. No animal or individual. Therefore do not seek to see any *Divya*, *Brahma*, *Yaksha* or *Pretha*. Accept the desire, the very thought of wanting to see them as impermanent and let go of it. Then, they themselves will unexpectedly come to see you.

Waste no time or effort to find out who the Bikkhu is, who is writing these notes. Try to find out who you are. The Bikkhu himself is someone who has never gone to find out who anyone else is. Please remember that what the Bikkhu searched for, is himself and that having found out what he was, he found what the world was. Both the world and oneself are creations of thoughts that arise and fade. See, that the moment that you understand that your mind is impermanent and set it free, you know that you are free from this world. Reflect on this. Be the heir to a pleasant *Dhamma*.

I keep reiterating." Let Go" of everything. Then everything will come back to you. But by then you will not want them; for you have realised that they are all impermanent.

Be Good Everywhere, Instead of Searching for Good Places

You who are trying to attain *Nirvana* will not feel fear, loneliness or being scared even though you live in solitude in the thick forest. This is simply because the Bhikkus does not feel himself to be within him. There is no individual, no animal to feel lonely, or to feel scared. He does not try to grab what does not belong to him either. If a human being, a hunter or an animal is met in the forest, he remains insensitive to the behaviour of that man or animal. He does not “take in” such man or animal. Do not look for a second or the help of a second in your search for *Nirvana*. It is futile and unproductive. If you do look for a second, then that is for your own protection, meaning that a being exists to be protected.

Defeat such subtle situations that deceive you! Whatever animal or beast is there, enter the forest alone without thinking of another. Walk alone to your hut. If a fear enters you, then reflect on such thought as impermanent. The fear will vanish. In this journey of yours, having let go of your mind and body, no one can stop you. That is a benefit of “Letting Go”.

Once the Bikkhu had to stay in a hut that had not been occupied for some three months. A dilapidated hut. He stayed there only for seven days as he left to make way for a foreign bikkhu. When he arrived, he found about one-fourth of the floor covered by an ant hill about a foot high. There was a wooden bed. Two of the legs of the wooden bed were also covered by the ant hill. The Bikkhu spent the night there unaffected. The following morning, three children of the village, came and removed the ant hill.

Such challenges are called the “utensils” of the journey towards *Nirvana*. They are of immense value for a bikkhu striving to let go of his body. However, if you were worried seeing the ant hill, you “take in” the cobra and fear both. Since the Bikkhu let go of the thought of the ant hill he lost hold of both fear and the cobra. If you took the thought of the ant hill as permanent, then you would have seen even non-existent cobras.

On your way along the *Nirvana* path, do not plan how you proceed, do not engage in any preparations. That is a *Mara* trick. Plans are to make something. You are on way to see the emptiness of the world. Give up plans. Face whatever confronts you as it comes.

The Bikkhu once met an elderly priest of about eighty, a noble hearted individual in a difficult forest *Aranya*. He had been moving from place to place for forty years of his ascetic life except during *Vas* seasons. The Bikkhu thought from his ways and manners that he must be well experienced in the *Prathipada* and asked why he did so without sticking to one place. The reply was that he wanted to see his land of birth as much as possible. The Bikkhu saw a *Samanera* in that priest the instant those words left him.

See what grave mistake he has committed; being a tourist !

Our thoughts constantly lead us astray, unless we remain in firm resolve. Be in a suitable peaceful place until your objective is realised. Thoughts will tempt you to make a tourist out of you. Thoughts will send you from *Aranya* to *Aranya*. Be careful. Do not try to plan which *Aranya* you are going to, next. Those are immaterial to you. Remain where it is peaceful and conducive to your realisation of the *Nirvana* Path. Let go of everything else. Do not be hasty. If a better place is available for you, you will feel it quite unexpectedly, through your own *Sangna*. Letting go of everything is all that you have to do. Your own *Pragna* will guide you in the *Nirvana* way. If not, *Thrusna* will make a tourist out of you.

Do not go looking for good places. Be good wherever you are. Do not go looking for good people to associate with. Train yourself to be good with everyone. The world consists of both the good and the bad. Be aware that you cannot find only the good. If you keep looking for the good only, you will not be able to do anything else; simply because you are looking for something that does not exist. If you are a full-fledged seeker of the *Nirvana* Path, wherever you are, be it a temple or an *Aranya*, you will find it restless. The forces of *Mara* are afraid of the *Bikkhu* engaged in *Prathipada*. Therefore they resent and create a setting to expel the forces of *Dhamma* that enter their fortress. The *Adharma* forces of the world are more powerful. In the *Dhamma* path, you will get humiliated, queried, ignored and neglected, oppressed and face other obstacles. Make them a blessing for you, because they are all a part of worldly existence. Be skilled to be good wherever you are.

Observe Mindfully; the *Dhamma* is Close at Hand

Where you live is neither a Dhamma resort nor a Dhamma desert. But you keep looking for the Dhamma. What you have to look for, in reality, is something that is hidden, something that is obscure.

Though the Dhamma is on the fringe of your six sense organs you are not aware of it. You are in the light, but continue looking for the light, because your eyes are blinded by ignorance. If you are looking for the *Dhamma*, then go the way the Buddha took. Study the way he took. Until he was twentynine years old, Prince Siddhartha did not come to be aware of the objectives of his *Parami attainment* journey. That *Sansaric* instinct surfaced only after seeing the *Sathara Pera Nimithi*. Till then, he was revelling, indulging in the social setting of sensual pleasures, planned and created for him by his father. The first thing he did, on renunciation in search of the Dhamma was, letting go of everything, Yasodhara, Prince Rahula, all the luxuries and pleasures of royalty. That was the first step. Having let go of all that, he took to the forest. Having gone to the natural environment, what did he do?

There, did he have any books or written material to read and learn from; any *Dhamma* sermons to listen to; any *Dhamma* discussions to participate in; any *Bhavana* sessions to seek guidance? Was the *Thripitaka* there? The *Thrivida Ratna* had not emerged in the world yet. In such a setting what path did the Prince take? Think leisurely. Thus thinking gain an understanding. The Prince went to the forest and observed the environment and nature; the arising and the passing away of thoughts.

The wilderness had nothing else to offer. He observed the sun rising in the morning and setting in the evening, the moon rising in the evening and setting in the morning. Rain comes and goes away. So do the mist, the wind, the cold, rainbows, droughts, floods. It is a repetition of the same set of events; Leaves of trees bud out, grow, wither, and fall off. The same cycle continues. Trees blossom out and bear fruits. Fruits grow, ripen, fall off and geminate again. The cycle goes on and on. Hair grows and gets shaved off, grows again and gets shaved off and the cycle goes on. Hunger is felt, food is taken, then it is felt again and on goes the cycle. Everything in the environment and the physical body arises and dies off. Nothing is permanent. That was perhaps what the *Bosath* Prince saw in the forest, where there was nothing else to see. Then the essence of the *Dhamma* has to be within that range, the nature. The pure, uncorrupted thoughts of the Prince, lightened and calmed, and then reaching a state of *Samadhi*, by letting go of everything, may have enabled him to observe such true nature clearly. It was this true nature and its processes that the *Bosath* Prince, kept observing all through till he reached enlightenment.

He may have realised by seeing the physical body, the thoughts, the environment and all nature in his state of *Samadhi*, that all that remains is only the truism, only the reality of impermanence. That is the path taken by our blessed teacher seeking emancipation. That is the path, taken by the *Pase Budus*, during eras with no extant Buddhist Order. Let go of your impermanent thoughts that tempt you with short lived joy. Tread the true path of the Buddha. Then you will certainly attain enlightenment without any doubt. Because this was the path taken by the Buddha. It was this path that the Buddha expounded, the *Dhamma* and the *Vinaya*. *Dhamma* means nature and *Vinaya* means mindfulness. The implication is that nature be viewed and observed mindfully. During the first two decades of the Buddhist Order, the *Sangha* maintained perfect discipline even without a specified code because they observed nature mindfully. Understanding of the *Dhamma* was the result. Later as the *Sangha* began to observe nature non-mindfully, the Buddha had to impose strict codes of discipline to ensure mindfulness.

You should be skillful enough to observe nature mindfully. Then what you observe is the *Dhamma*, the true nature of the *Dhamma*. The true nature of the *Dhamma* is none other than impermanence; and only impermanence. You are also part of nature and not separate from it. Both are made of of the *Sathara Maha Bootha*, the four basic elements of solid, liquid, wind and energy,. They are impermanent by nature. Both nature and your physical body are made of these four basic elements. These elements invisible to the corporeal eye and visible to the eye of Pragna alone and moving with immense speed towards their own annihilation create an element of

space each time they annihilate themselves. This element of space too is impermanent as well. All these are phenomena which can be understood by someone with Pragna, having risen above Sila and Samadhi levels. What we see as nature and physical bodies in different shapes and colours are the same thing, the four basic elements.

Owing to the *Avidya* of the eye, such phenomena or objects are recognised by some conventional, conceptual name. Therefore you may group nature and physical bodies into one. Then look at the mind that activates them. In such a mind as well, what you observe is impermanence.

The *Phassa* brought about by external *Rupas*, internal senses and the consequent *Sangna* (perceptions) coming into contact with one another, leads to a mental impression which too is impermanent.

What you could do is to observe all these mindfully. Then what will grow and develop effortlessly within you is *Sathara Sati Patthana*. *Sathara Sati Patthana* is the crucial force that propels you in the *Nirvana* way. *Chittha*, *Dhamma* and *Vedana* means the world. Observance of the *Sathara Sati Patthana* means the observance of the *Dhamma*; observance of the world.

Let go of everything. Observe the impermanent *Rupa* with your impermanent mind. Then you will receive everything. When you receive everything you will want nothing, because by then you have realised that nothing is permanent.

A Birth in Hell

Below, is a note on a butcher who had been slaughtering cattle and what he is suffering after death.

This is scene from *Niraya* (hell). But there were no flames. What was there was a log about ten feet high. A cow was tethered loosely to it. All of a sudden a *Niri Satha* (hell being) appeared on top of the log. The Bikkhu in *Samadhi* saw the hell being as one in human form. The *olarika* body of the hell being was visible to the Bhikku in its dense form.

It remained clinging on to the log looking at the tethered cow, smiling happily. The cow was a pleasing sight to it. Because at that moment, the hell being perceived the cow with pleasure. But the cow instantly turned into a huge, ferocious *yama palla* (tormentor) with two sharp pointed three-pronged weapons in the two hands. When the cow raised its front legs and transformed itself into a *yama palla* (tormentor), the hell being screamed with a death-cry. The hell being clinging to the log received heavy blows from the two sharp weapons. Though the hell being tried to drop to the ground the effort was not successful. Because, the Bhikku saw that it was as if the hell being was glued

to the post. While this creature was being subjected to what could have been the fiercest, most painful physical suffering in this world, two other hell beings, acting as guards, were watching from a distance. The *yama palla* was pitch black in complexion, with thick lips and red eyes like a negro, about seven feet in height, with upper body bare but clad in some dress, down to knee-level. The scene ended there, but the Bikkhu is of view that the *Nira satha* suffered in the same manner for aeons and aeons coming into being, suffering and dying off an infinite number of times.

As that *Niri Satha* came into being on the log, it saw the cow and felt happy. At that moment itself, the *kamma vipaka* begins to take effect. How a cow is slaughtered in the human world, how using weapons the cow is killed by stabbing, piercing and cutting its body; in the same way the hell being comes to its death under the attacks of the Yama Pallas with their weapons. While the Yamapalla holds aloft the two tridents with sharp pointed ends, the log to which the *Niri Satha* is clinging bends towards the tridents and again straightens. This occurs at a normal speed. The bending of the log towards the tridents in the hands of the Yamapalla occurs on account of the intensity of the *akusal* (demerits) of the *Niri Satha*. We humans cannot fathom this action. While the Yamapalla stands still, the *Niri Satha* on account of his karma gets entangled in the pointed ends of the trident and its body is torn to shreds. The *Niri Satha* gets destroyed on the trident automatically. This automatic nature is the power of the *akusal* (demerits). If you kill a cow, who has caused you no harm, by hitting it with an axe, a hammer and cutting its throat with a sharp instrument; the question which arises in the mind of the cow at the moment it is killed

will arise in the *Niri Satha* also. Because all this happens automatically. On account of the power of the *akusala karma*, the speed and the intensity with which they fruition is too complex a process for the human mind to fathom. The cow tied to the log becoming a *yamapalla*, the log on which the *Niri Satha* emerged being bent towards the tridents are all due to the intensity of the *karma*. In cruelly killing the cow, the intense *akusal* thoughts which arise in the mind of the person killing the cow will themselves ensure that the person suffers automatically, as mentioned above. The cow suffered death on account of the effects of *akusal*. The *Niri Satha* (hell being) also suffered on account of the effects of *akusal*. The *Niri Satha* will suffer being born again and dying again and again, for aeons. The suffering is intense until the *karma* effects are fully paid off. Here the suffering of the *Niri Satha* is founded on the anger, hatred and conflicts arising in its mind. Hence the suffering in hell increases more and more.

You who kill animals, you who make animals sorrowful, think for a moment before you engage in them. The pain and cruelty you inflict on others, you will get back with interest. Nature is so just. What you wanted, what you liked, it will give you. In the human world, what you liked was to kill cows either for oneself or for others. There is no doubt that you got pleasure and enjoyment. When as a *Niri Satha* he emerges on the pillar to which the cow is tied he is pleased because he remembers what pleased him in his earlier birth. The pleasure the *Niri Satha* gains at that moment, is like reviving the memory prior to the karma-giving effect.

Consider any thought to kill, as an impermanent entity, the moment it arises. Accept the reality that such thoughts have brought you immeasurable pain and suffering in *Sansara*. Develop fear and shame in you to go to *Sathara Apaya*, having been born a human. Constantly reflect on *karmic* effect. Overcome lethargy.

The Madness of Lust, the Death Cry of Desire

Described below, is a meeting in the *pretha* world, to be noted in particular, by those greedily yearning for titles and positions, for opportunities to deliver lectures and so on.

More than a hundred *prethas*, a few *pretha* bikkhus, with heads shaven, wearing robes were at the meeting. They were mostly young and middle aged. The front seats were not reserved for the *pretha* bikkhus as in the *Manushya* world. They mingled with the others with some seated in the back row. There is no difference between *pretha* bikkhus and the others because of the absence of any concept of *Thrivida Ratna*.

These get together and conduct the meeting. The meeting was in complete chaos with each trying to shout down the others and put forward his own idea. No one is allowed to talk freely. No one is satisfied. No one is pleased. The meeting breaks up with everyone being heir to sorrow and disappointment. They disperse blaming each other.

See the ridiculously shameful manner in which these power hungry, both lay and ascetic, who jealously and unfairly

secured titles and positions without giving others a chance in the human world, behave in the *pretha* world. They hold meetings, yell at one another creating pandemonium and disperse in sorrow and bitterness. They go on and on like this all through their *pretha* lives without a single successful meeting. Past *karmic* effect is clearly visible. They accuse, yell and swear at one another bitterly and everyone suffers. That is not all. They fiercely fight for leadership and commit more and more *akusal*; they do something unwholesome every moment, thereby perpetuating their woeful state. They will take aeons and aeons to return to a blissful state.

If, owing to your own weaknesses, you waste the valuable *Manushya Bhava* you have secured and fall into the *Sathara Apaya* your future would be very bleak. Enjoy; enjoy whatever you like, but without any *thrushna* (greed) for it; without developing any craving for it. Enjoy without hurting or causing any harm to anyone else. Do not try to acquire anything for which other more suitable contenders are available, by deceit, by force, or by false pretences. If you try to acquire such, driven by excessive *thrushna*, then you will be born in the *Pretha Meeting Realm* and you will undergo the same suffering as the *prethas* referred to above. When *Pretha Meetings* break up, the participant *prethas* behave as if their heads are on fire. They panic hysterically. That is the nature of their manic passion, the death cry of their desire.

Witness, how clearly all this has been explained in the Buddha *Dhamma*. When through your own experience you get to know all these, and wisdom dawns on you about the nature of the world, you will realise that you yourself are a true follower of the Buddha.

The *Prethi* in Bed

The world of non-humans is varied and diverse. What we see as diverse is the impermanence which is of a constantly changing nature

Once the Bikkhu in *Samadhi*, saw a *prethi*, living in a home. The Bhikku felt that she was a young woman of about twenty five. She appeared unmarried. It was her bed room that came to his view first. It was well arranged but looked somewhat mystic. No one was in the room. Everything was quiet. The Bikkhu surmised that it may have been her bedroom in her past life as a *Manushya*. The bed had a black bed sheet and a pillow in place. No one was in the room. It was extremely quiet.

All of a sudden the bed sheet parted and a *prethi* emerged. Then turning into material form she walked out of the room, returned immediately, got back into bed, covered herself with the bed sheet and slept again. Now there is no one in the bed. The well-arranged bed sheet is there as earlier. That means the *prethi* is under the bed sheet. No one can see. No one would think that there is a *prethi* under the bed sheet. See the place she got attached to.

Can you imagine a *prethi* or a *pretha*, resting under your own bed sheet ? Since she appeared in material form to the Bhikku, he was able to see the *prethi*. She was wearing a frock. She appeared frightened, pale and sickly though young. The Bhikku had seen her like a pale, walking corpse. Her face had a look of fear. With a feeling that this is my spot, my place she came back to the room as soon as she left it, crept under the sheet on the bed and gave up her material form. In her human life she had lived as a young woman in that room. We can surmise that at the instant she was dying through an illness, she was re-born as a *prethiya* in the very place that she was attached to. See what suffering is this unfortunate rebirth for a for a fortunate human female . When will she gain freedom from this? She gets on to the bed and gets under the bedsheet in a manner similar to that of a buffalo, who, on seeing a water hole, during a period of great drought, gets into the water with greed. Similarly she creeps under the bedsheet and sleeps. That is the intensity of her *upadana*. You also must learn from this. Whether you are male or female, engage in meritorious activities; nurture "Letting Go"; and incorporate into your life those requisites needed to avoid falling into the *Sathara Apaya*, which gives such sorrow.

The Buddha declared that, if you are to free yourself from this *Sansara*, you must first be convinced that this *Sansara* is sorrowful, fearful and diverse. Recognise this by your own realisation and try to escape. Whatever wholesome deeds you are engaged in, whatever *Sila*, you adhere to, you must practise "Letting Go" all the time. Avoid making your family, wife, children, properties, home, vehicles, bed room and so on, "yours". Use them. Enjoy them. Make use of them for the

furtherance of yourself, the others and the Buddhist Order, etc. But never treat or accept them as yours. Your grandfather, grandmother, father or mother departed leaving all those behind; and so will you, someday. Constantly practise using them for your benefit without considering them as yours. Cravingly, clinging on to them as yours, inability to let go of them, means that you are “earning” an unfortunate birth to be “yours”.

The Mistake Made all Through Sansara

Sila, Samadhi, Pragna constitute the path you have to take to attain *Nibbana*. There is no other way to *Nibbana*. This is not a *phala*. It is only a way. You have to follow this path and attain *phala*. If not, you will get reduced to being, yet another traveller.

Dioya, Manushya and *Sathara Apaya* are only resting places in your path. Since we have been only travelling as tourists, through tens of thousands of extant Buddha Orders on the *Sila, Samadhi* and *Pragna* path, at present, we have found only a temporary resting place in the *manushya* world. The fact that no effort has been made to follow the *Sila, Samadhi, Pragna path* and gain an understanding of its fruition, is the reason why we continue to tour in this world of sorrow.

We have failed to achieve any *phala*, in spite of our going on the path in this manner, due to our own fault; nobody else's. Hundreds of thousands of Buddhists, observing *Sila* on a daily basis and observing *Adhi Sila* (Advanced *Sila*) on a monthly basis, practising *Sila* and *Samadhi*, while making great sacrifices to escape from the *sansaric* journey, yet fail to achieve the desired results.

Some proceeding on the path with no proper guidance from virtuous friends and associates, get inadvertently obsessed with “my *Sila*, my *Samadhi*” notion. It is a “*Dhrushti*”. Others get obsessed with the notion that they are advanced in *Sila* and *Samadhi*; yet another “*Dhrushti*”. They are led astray by the clinging effect towards the respect and the material gifts they receive because of their reputation as adherents of *Sila* and *Samadhi*. That is *Manna* (pride) which leads one astray. They feel that their wives, husbands, relatives and others around should pay homage to them. *Sila* and *Samadhi* are not meant to be clung to, or to be owned as one’s belongings, but to be experienced and utilised to facilitate the practice of letting go. Getting attached to a “*Dhrushti*” too is a form of clinging. The one following the *Dhamma* should realise that nothing exists to be clung to, in this world where nothing remains permanent. The amount of clothing worn to observe *Sila*, and the amounts of thoughts we subdued and suppressed to achieve *Samadhi* in our past *Sansara* is infinitely large. It is a tremendous misfortune if we, with such a past, are to add the clothing we wear to observe *Sila* and the thoughts we manage to subdue to achieve *Samadhi* in this life too, to past history and get yet another birth, as a result.

If your objective is to secure a birth in a *Divya* or a *Manushya* realm, and then to enter the *Dhamma* path to *Nirvana*, such thought is certainly a beautiful gold and silver carpet laid before you by *Mara*. You will be charmed by those. True, there is no living Buddha currently. But we constantly see that great being with the great thirty two Masculine characteristics in every temple, *Aranya* and even in homes and hearts. The flawless *Dhamma* is available to us. The *Sangha* is there to preach it. Therefore we should not be

just travellers on the path of *Sila, Samadhi, Pragna*. We have to achieve the desired fruition, *Phala*. If instead, we waste this opportunity of having the Buddha *Sasana* intact with its pristine *Dhamma*, the dignified *Manushya* birth, and the association of *Kalyana Mithra* (virtuous friends), waiting for a better opportunity in future, what we are doing is simply looking for more sorrow while already wallowing in sorrow, not trying to free ourselves from it. We clearly see how fast the Buddha *sasana* and concepts of the real path are getting misconceived and distorted. If you are on the *Dhamma* path, you can guess where you stand in relation to *Sila, Samadhi* and *Pragna*. It is a strength you gain while treading this path. *Sila* and *Samadhi* are two confusing crossroads on the way to *Nirvana*. In order to overcome them, you have to be conscious of the impermanence of *Sila* and *Samadhi* as well, and constantly bear in mind that you engage in them to build up your *Pragna* that will show you the way to free yourself. As long as you hold on to *Sila* and *Pragna* as permanent entities, no *Pragna* will grow in you. That is because you get deceived and cling on to them as permanent sources of enjoyment. *Sila* is meant to discipline you to develop your *Sati* and thereby achieve *Samadhi*. Having achieved *Samadhi*, what you have to be doing is not trying to ascertain whether you are in the first *Dyana*, second *Dyana*, third *Dyana* or the fourth. If you do, then you are searching for something that is impermanent. *Dyana* is also subject to constant change causing sorrow and disappointment, and thereby leading to mental ailments. If we go on searching for something impermanent, we miss our chances of realising the *Dhamma* path in this Buddha Order as well; we will lose our opportunity to escape *Sathara Apaya*, repeating the same mistake we made in past Buddha *Sasanas*.

At the three-way crossroads of *Sila*, you will see three ways ahead. The straight road leads to *Samadhi*. The one to the right leads to *Divya* and *Manushya* realms and the one to the left leads to *Sathara Apaya*. Here you have to be skilled. If, may be owing to lack of proper guidance by virtuous friends, instead of nurturing and developing your *Sati* through *Sila*, you either grasp and cling on to *Sila*, or come into conflict with it, you will certainly take the path either to *Divya* or *Manushya* realms or to *Sathara Apaya*, instead of proceeding towards *Samadhi*. If you skilfully select the straight road towards *Samadhi*, then you will certainly come to the *Samadhi* crossroads.

That too is a three-way crossroad. The straight road leads to *Pragna*, the village. The one to the right leads to the realms of *Brahma*, *Divya* and *Manushya* and the one to the left leads to *Sathara Apaya*. Here too you have to be skilled to select the path towards *Pragna*. A feeling of exultation that you have developed *Samadhi*, and that *Samadhi* is well intact within you, is detrimental. That means you develop either clinging or aversion as a result considering it permanent. You will then go the wrong way. There are many who get misled by the calm, peace and equanimity latent in *Samadhi*. *Samadhi* in one's mind may create attachment or aversion to natural entities. Similarly equanimity too infuses a sense of emptiness regarding impermanence. Here, you may perhaps unknowingly collect a lot of *akusal* due to your adherence to your *Sila* and *Samadhi*; the harvest of self perception; a feeling that one is above the others in *Sila* and *Samadhi*; that one's own *Sila* and *Samadhi* are ranking higher and so on. Such *manna* (pride) is the cause for the attachment or aversion referred to, above. Furthermore, *Sila* and *Samadhi* are a good hiding place for anyone who is not honest, either

consciously or otherwise. They cause self-deceit. If you are well disciplined within your *Sila* and *Samadhi*, *Manna* will not arise in you. You will then avoid conflict. You can do a self test to ascertain the nature of your own *Sila* and *Samadhi*. The result you get from your own self test as well, may change the next moment either towards positive or negative. Both *Sila* and *Samadhi* are themselves impermanent and subject to change. No one could say that this is where he stands, because there is no such permanent place anywhere in the world.

Samadhi has a remarkable ability to hide your responses of attachment or aversion to worldly entities. *Samadhi* is the main culprit in creating a mania for *Marga Phala*. *Samadhi* establishes a sense of calm and peace that could easily be mistaken to be a *Marga Phala* like *Anagami* or *Arhant*. Many have been mistaken. Many do not pay homage to the Buddha. So are those having the notion that they are superior to others. They are the victims of *Samadhi*. They could easily proceed towards *Pragna*, accepting and acknowledging *Samadhi* as impermanent, but fail to do so enjoying and clinging to the calm and tranquility of *Samadhi* and unwittingly accepting *Samadhi* as a permanent phenomenon. So they stop there. Certain bikkhus take meals in the dining hall of the temple peacefully with half closed eyes, but react angrily at some trivial mistake of a *Samanera*. These are the agents of *Mara* hidden in *Samadhi*. These are the results of failing to self test; failing to realise that *Sila* and *Samadhi* you have developed are themselves impermanent; failing to realise that all worldly phenomena are impermanent. Such seekers of *Nirovana* are bound to miss the straight road to *Pragna* at the *Samadhi* crossroads. The root cause is *Manna*. Would you, who will see and readily react to somebody else's fault, accept your

own fault ever? Well, that is the reason. You did not see your own fault because of the *Manna* in you; and that *Manna* was hidden within your *Samadhi*.

Always go to, and confront what you like most and what you dislike most. Experience that. Train yourself to neither get attached to, nor develop any hate or aversion towards them, and self test your *Sila* and *Samadhi* constantly. Then you will easily fall into the *Pragna* path.

Sila and *Samadhi* are virtues you have to shelter and protect. The more *Sila* you develop the more virtuous you will be. The more *Samadhi* you develop, the more the *Samadhi* in your thoughts will be. However, at the crossroads of *Samadhi*, when you are heading towards *Pragna*, what you have to do is not to shelter and protect *Sila* or *Samdhi*, but to let go of both; adopt and use the *ekagrathavaya* (tranquility of mind) you got by adhering to *Sila* and by developing *Samadhi*, to understand the nature of your thoughts; the coming into being and fading away of the *Pancha Upadanakkandha*; the nature of thoughts that flow on, successively arising and fading away; and let go of the mind that is not yours, but something alien. At the stage of *Sila* what you were doing was adherence and protecting, and at the stage of *Samadhi* what you were doing was nurturing and developing. You earned *Chitta Samadhi* in such a process. But, once you safely proceed past the *Samadhi* crossroads towards *Pragna*, you have nothing more to protect, nothing more to develop. Then what you have to do is to observe your own thoughts through the tranquil mind. Observing your own mind, see the nature of your thoughts that motivate and activate “your” dormant, impermanent, physical body, that does not really belong to you. Having observed it, let go of your “own” mind that does

not belong to you. Each moment a thought is made subject to “let go”, a physical activity by word or deed is made subject to “let go”. For every instance of a thought being “let go”, what you abandon is the world which produces sorrow, birth, decay, disease and death. Self-test yourself constantly. Defeat the “I”, “mine” concept at every moment. Rid yourself of the thoughts of “my *Sila*”, “my *Samadhi*” “my *Shraddha*”, and so on. Talk less of what you are and what you can do. Consider this physical body, “I”, just a corpse, if thoughts do not arise and fall away. Develop *Anithya Sangna*. Proceed towards *Pragna*, shunning both attachment and conflict that belong to this impermanent world.

I will give you a good clear example. Imagine that you get into bus from Pettah and are going to Kataragama. Kataragama is your destination. But on the way you see the Kalutara Bodhi, the impressive Stupa, the Kalu ganga, etc. You then get carried away by the charm of all that and stop there and remain, in Kalutara. Could you then reach Kataragama? No. Since you got attached to Kalutara, you stayed there. When you stay like this in Kalutara, enjoying its attractions, you remember your final destination. Then you get rid of your interest in Kalutara, get into a Kataragama bus and go forward along Galle Road. On the way you see Tissamaharama, the Wewa and the great Stupa there, get fascinated by them and get down from bus again and remain there. Are you in Kataragama, where you wished to be? No; because you got enticed by something on the way and remain there, attached to it, forgetting your mission. Yet the way is clear; no obstacles. Conveyances are available as well. But you are not bright enough to realise the impermanence of what keeps you on the way, and then let it go. It is natural. In both Kalutara and Tissamaharama you are with the Buddha. Such thoughts of devotion are

wholesome. But those belong to the mundane world. What we are talking about is a programme to transcend it. OK, if at Tissamaharama, you get reminded of your journey's end and get into a Kataragama bus again, you have only a short distance left to go. But the stupid and greedy, get attracted to trivial things and without going to the journey's end, settle down on the way. That is the nature of the mundane. In order to free yourself from such a situation, you have to constantly reflect on the impermanent nature of *Sila* and *Samadhi*, experience them, understand them and abandon them. It is not a wonder that the one who misses this, will be a mere vagrant wandering away from the *Nirvana* path. Go ahead, without stopping. Do not consider or accept anyone or anything on the way as permanent or as "yours". You will certainly reach your destination.

The concept and practice of "letting go", for the genuine who wish to discipline themselves in "letting go", is not limited to the abandoning of material resources such as the *Aranya*, temple, hut or the four requisites, nor is it a barrier or boundary to measure it. Remember the limit, that this life may be gone by the time this breath being taken in at this moment, is exhaled. Be constantly reminded of the reality that this life may be no more by the time this breath being taken in, gets exhaled. Be aware by conviction, that this imposing entity called "I", does not permanently own even the minuscule of the time taken for a breath to be exhaled. Do not consider as "mine" such entity called "I", that cannot last such minuscule of time as taken by a single cycle of breath. We constantly keep seeing the impermanence of anarchical entities of nature, such as "my Sila", "my Samadhi", "my discipline", "my principles", "my seniority" that do not

survive even such a minuscule of time like a single breathing cycle. Seeing thus, completing the Sila Samadhi path safely without going astray; abandoning the world of suffering without making it yours; seeing with understanding the arising and decaying of the alien mind bathed in ignorance, which makes yours, the world that does not belong to you; abandon it. With every such thought you let go, you will steadily and progressively gain on *Pragna*, essential for you to let go of the world.

To whatever thing you become attached, embedded in that attachment is conflict. Think thus. Someone is attached to *Sila*; “There is *Sila* within me. I am in *Sila*.” Thinking thus one conceives of one’s self as being superior to others. Conceives of others as being without *Sila*. He may feel hostile towards those who eat fish, catch fish, sell fish, cook fish, only because he doesn’t. He may develop aversion towards even fishing gear, fishing boats. Why this conflict? Such conflict is due to his extremist clinging attachment to *Sila*. Within his zealously guarded *Sila*, extreme clinging and aversion are overflowing. He is not moving towards Nirvana. He will be reduced to a collector of more and more *Sanskaras* instrumental in perpetuating *Bhava*. Owing to our clinging attachment to our *Samadhi*, we get annoyed at, and turn hostile, when others laugh, cry, make loud noises, recite a *Dhamma* text or *Pirith*. Why this conflict? It is the clinging attachment to *Samadhi* that causes such conflict. Delve deeper, and you will observe that it is *Mara* in the guise of *Sila* and *Samadhi* who thwarts our way to *Nirovana* and misdirects us back to *Bhava*. Understand well, the philosophy of *Mara*, and in association with *Kalyana Mithra* attain the supreme bliss of Nirvana

The Harvest of *Kroda* (Wrath); How is it?

Kroda as an animal trait abounds in the world much more than *Meththa*. The comparison is like a handful of earth and the rest of the earth in the entire world. On account of the fact that people in the world, whether Buddhists or Non-Buddhists are disciplined in some manner with some form of codes of conduct; have a potential for development; have well-developed group feelings; and feelings of hatred are not very evidently perceived; what the beings living in the animal and pretha worlds always show are anger and hatred. Anger and hatred are their *kammic* effects. They get this effect on account of their anger and hatred. Nature bestows us with what we like most and have been practising. These beings who suffer in the animal and pretha hells and who suffer aeons of misery there, do so, not due to their own faults but on account of the *akusal* committed for others. Look at it this way. Now somebody frowned at you, scolded you, hit you, robbed you, disparaged you, criticised you or saw you progressing; when this happens you take over as yours, what is his, and generate anger and hatred in you. See! On account of what happened in some one else and what some one else did, not only have you generated anger and hatred

in you but as a result you get an unfortunate life as a being in the animal or *pretha* hells. If you favoured anger and hatred, getting them is a certainty in your *samsaric* journey. Because that is what you favoured.

It follows then, that all beings suffering in *Sathara apaya* are those who have grabbed what belonged to others, as theirs.

Such misfortune is the product of seeing a “me”, “myself” in somebody else, when no such “me”, “myself” exists even within me.

All those languishing in *Sathara Apaya* are human beings, who have lived valuable human lives, like you and me. The unfortunate ones, who have tried to protect or safeguard an “I”, or “me” or “myself”, or “my self respect” when even I never owned any such entity. Following is the story of two suffering *prethas*, who in their lives as human beings, exercised anger and hatred, experiencing intensely harsh and painful conditions in the *Pretha* world after their death.

Two *prethas* came into view when the Bikkhu was in *Samadhi*. They appeared in normal human form, clad in the usual dress of shirts and pants. One of them appeared wild and disturbed while the other looked innocuous. The former got hold of the latter’s neck with both hands as if in a frenzy, and began bashing his own head against the other’s. It was viciously ferocious and consequently both heads got pulverised. The innocent looking *pretha* who remained passive yelled “Oh ! my daughter” as it died. They faced their *Karmic* effect and died. They get born again, instantly, in the same manner, in the same hell. As earlier their Karma takes effect, and they experience this suffering of being born and dying in hell, continuing infinitely, for aeons and aeons.

Even in the *pretha* realm, while dying with a smashed head, owing to a hatred generated in a past human life, what came into the mind of one of the persons, at the moment of death, was the idea of “My daughter”, an attachment developed in his human life.

They get born in a *pretha* realm and meet again to face this cruel fate due to their *Karma*. The great misfortune is that they continue, dying and getting born again and again to suffer the same fate an infinite number of times without knowing that they had faced it so many times previously. Yet when they meet each other the perception of hate surfaces and their *karma* takes effect.

Such is the story of two *prethas*, who had harboured hatred and enmity towards each other as human beings in past lives.

In every birth when they meet, the two of them develop hate and enmity towards each other. There is only the thought to kill. Hence what they acquire in every moment in hell is only *akusal*. The *akusal* they constantly acquire on account of the destruction of somebody’s life would invariably lead to their descending into hell again suffering even more pain. They will suffer infinitely for millions of aeons. Would you like to inherit such misery by trying, to safeguard your personality perception of “I”, “myself”, having been born an exalted human being?

If you do not like it, resolve firmly, this very moment never to harbour hatred or enmity. Never try to make yours, what belongs to others. Never try to make yours, a thought arising in somebody else’s mind, a thought that does not belong to him either. Consider all thoughts of hatred and enmity as

being impermanent and not belonging to you. Have nothing to do with an alien stranger, an evil associate, who will bring you the infinite sorrows of hell.

In the same way that you avoid a poisonous snake when you see one, when cruel vicious thoughts arise in your mind, let them leave in the same way that they came. Disown such thoughts. See the cruelty and the viciousness which arose in the mind. Try mindfully to make a virtuous friend out of your mind which arises and fades.

Now let's revert to the two *prethas* and try to find out what they had done as human beings, to face such torture as *prethas*. This is only a presumption. The Bikkhu surmises that the innocent looking *pretha* was, in the human world, a married man with a wife and child, leading a happy life. The only child was a lovable daughter. The husband was one who loved his wife and daughter very much. Unfortunately, it may be that an illicit lover crosses the path of this beautiful, innocent family. This illicit lover on account of the great attraction to the wife, may have decided to kill the husband and keep the wife as his. The dying thought of the victim centred on the daughter perhaps, which explains his death cry of "Oh, my daughter". He may have thought that his daughter would be helpless and abandoned: hatred arose on account of that. All this arose solely due to greed (*tanha*). It is natural for any father, to think of his pretty innocent daughter, at the moment of his death, particularly when he was being murdered on account of illicit affair his wife has had. Ultimately the illicit lover too may have got murdered by someone else. If not, having being brought before the law, and found to be guilty, he may have been executed. On account of the mutual hatred between them, they were

born in the *pretha* world, and due to the intensity of the hatred between them, continue to suffer, smashing their heads together. Here the innocent *pretha* - dying due to the enraged *pretha* getting hold of him and hitting the head of the innocent *pretha* with his own- crying out at the moment of death, "Oh, my daughter" was due to the great attachment (Upadana) he had to his daughter. (A very painful and very helpless cry.)

Now think mindfully using your Sati. If that man who got infatuated by somebody else's wife had thought for a moment that, the very *thrushna* based thought of infatuation was impermanent, and disowned it instead of grabbing it, would he not have been able to avoid this present sorrow?

Because he failed to realise that a single momentary thought that vanished instantly was in fact impermanent, meant to be disowned; but instead soaking that thought in greed he made it active, did he not inherit an endless cycle of suffering for aeons?

Although a thought arises and vanishes instantly, and is impermanent, that thought can create in you, mental formations (*sanskara*) which can make you a being who will suffer aeons of misery. That is why thoughts are equated to sorrow. That is why thoughts are equated to the world. Every time you fail to realise that a thought arising and vanishing instantly, is in fact impermanent, you accept the world as well as sorrow as your own. On the contrary, every time you disown such a fleeting thought realising its impermanence, you let go of the world as well as sorrow.

Are You Genuinely Devoted to your Dead Relative?

Performing wholesome deeds such as the seventh day, the three-month, and the yearly *Dhamma* sermons, offer of alms to the *Sangha*, to transfer merit to a dead family member is a custom. The current qualitative deterioration of this custom is a misfortune for all in this and other worlds. Supposing a husband dies and becomes a *pretha*. Why did he become a *pretha*? It is because, at the moment of death, he developed attachment (*tanha*) to his wife, children, and his properties. So he came back as a *pretha* to the same household on account of the liking and attraction for it. But he was one who when he was alive engaged in meritorious deeds. Had he been able to die thinking of a wholesome deed he had done, he would, most certainly, have got a more blissful life after death.

He was reborn as a *pretha* in the same household because his dying thoughts were dominated by *thrushna-based* clinging attachments to his wife, children and the household, suppressing other thoughts on the wholesome deeds he had performed. He got what he liked. Do you think he is suffering as a *pretha*? No. He doesn't. He lives with the

conviction that this is enjoyment. He got what he liked and prayed for. Had he wanted, had he acquired the skills, he could have recollected the meritorious activities he had done earlier and obtained a pleasant birth. But he got the place he liked.

Now 7th day and 3 month alms givings are being given to confer merit on the husband who is now a *prethaya* in the house. But none of the relatives know where the one who died was re-born. But he is there in the same house. Now the household is ready for the sermon. A large number of people have been invited for this merit-making act (*pinkama*). There are friends and relatives all over the place. Food and drinks are being made in the kitchen to serve them. Cutlets are being fried. Fish and meat are being cooked. The tables are being laid. Some are playing cards, some others are gossiping, cell-phones of some are ringing, little children are crying. Now the monk has arrived and is preaching. The kitchen, the rooms, the garden are all noisy. Please think well now. The *pretha* who is expecting merit to be conferred is in the house itself. If you conduct the merit-making activity (*pinkama*) in the afore-mentioned manner, the *prethaya* will be in a very disturbed, agitated state from the evening itself.

“People are all over my house. They smile and talk to my wife. Will I lose her? What is she doing now? She is feeding others using the money I toiled hard to earn.” His mind gets affected by such anxiety-driven thoughts. He runs all over the house watching and guarding the almirah where valuables are kept. He is scared that some outsider will pilfer things in the household. In such agitated mind could he ever listen to a sermon and receive merit? He is overwhelmed by

anxiety and *thrushna*. He is deaf and blind to what happens around him. Eventually, blinded by *thrushna*, he has now committed more *akusal*.

Think of a situation like this. You are having a party at home. The dining table is overflowing with food and sweetmeats. What will your little child do on an occasion like this? She will play with other children. Everyone cuddles and fondles her. She does not think of any food. Finally, she falls asleep without eating anything. Now, there was an abundance of food, but the child went to bed on an empty stomach. If you are not clever enough, even a being able to receive merit, you will lose the opportunity to do so. So you have to be clever enough ensure a calm environment for the occasion without causing any agitation, excitement or anxiety in the *pretha*. A party or a social function is different from a religious, ritualistic event. Their objectives are different too. A party generates passion and lust. A religious event generates *kusal* (merit). Nowadays, a *Dhamma* sermon and a party are taken together. Those who listen to the *Dhamma* also get a perception of the food to be eaten simultaneously. If you want to conduct a *pinkama* invite only those with due respect and devotion to the *Dhamma* to the function; not to fill the entire garden; just to fill the hall. Serve only the essential food for the visitors. Finish its preparation by 6.00 p.m. Do not engage in any activities that generate a perception of *kama* (lust). Restrict thoughts to those that generate the perception of impermanence. Clean the home and garden well, and light the lamp for the Buddha, burn incense and make the home an abode for the Buddha. Get a coconut frond weaved to make a mat for washing the feet of the monks.

Use coconut fronds and get a structure made to hold a lamp and light a new one. Burn incense. Wish that just as this lamp dispels the darkness and spreads the light, if any of my relatives are in the 'dark' (hell), due to lack of merit, may they be suffused with merit in the same way that the lamp spreads light. Develop the perception of *Anithya* (impermanence) focusing on the light, which will fade away being impermanent, and wish that the same perception dawns in the thoughts of the departed ones as well. Do not think that cutting off a coconut frond is the destruction of a bunch of coconuts. Some think like that and abandon these valuable social practices. We can value a bunch of coconuts (say) at Rs.500/= . But we cannot put a value on the social practices accruing to society. We have been stupid enough to put at Rs.500/= the value of our good spiritual qualities. Embedded in the coconut frond are concepts of purity, freshness, prosperity and it gives the signal that there is a *pinkama* in our house. On account of these our minds as well as those of our relatives become tranquil and concentrated. If you get the perception of a coconut frond, a bunch of coconuts and develop a mind of greed, can you with such a mind-set, acquire merit to confer it on others? It is difficult to think so. If one makes, not only, a coconut frond, a bunch of coconuts, but the entire coconut property one's own; and conceives of a permanent value in them, it is the nature of the world that it will be born as a *prethaya* on it.

You should be clever enough to make your home, your garden and your property, an environment conducive to the development of *Samadhi*, and then confer merit on your relatives. To the extent that the extraneous activities lessen, to that extent can the mind of the relative be kept focused on

the *pinkama*. If that does not happen, like the child who slept with hunger while there was food on the table, the *pinkama* will be over without the relative gaining any merit. Hence you, from this world, help your *pretha* relative, by creating the environment necessary for it to obtain merit by freeing its mind from greed and attachment.

Nowadays, our way of life is not to engage in wholesome acts to escape the *Sathara Apaya*; nor to seek a blissful *Bhava* where we need not depend on transferred merit from others, but on dying, to live as unfortunate ones depending on the merits of others. Some, save and set aside money for their own three months' *Dana* (alms giving). That means that you, while living, have already got the perception that your relatives will let you down. If you have any perceptions of your relatives transferring merit to you after your death or if you have any perceptions hoping for, or expecting such, then discard them immediately. Then you have reduced your chances of getting a *pretha* bhava. Have faith in yourself always; the wholesome deeds you have performed. Have faith in the *Sila* you adhere to. Have faith in the *Thrividha Ratna*. Then go beyond, and develop *Anithya Sangna* on all these. Come to a firm resolve to be an heir to the light of the *Dhamma*, escaping the *Sathara Apaya* without depending on the merit of others.

The Final Operation

The Bikkhu, seeking *Nirvana*, strictly following the *Madyama Prathipada* possessing only his threefold robe and his begging bowl, does not find such aspiration, an instant happening. It is the culmination, the end product of a progression in a certain direction.

The time span for it is decided by your skill and the quality and extent of your "Letting Go". You embark on your final phase of it, with the firm resolve of "either *Nirvana* or death". You have to come to this resolution with perfect honesty. The Bikkhu has no other alternative. He has to keep his objective and his battle hidden from the society. There is nothing other than his threefold robe and his begging bowl in his hut; not even a tablet of paracetamol. The final resolve is clear. Either *Nirvana* or death. The Bikkhu is like an army commander in battle, leading from the front.

You remember the war operations in the North and East. Don't you?. What a commander does before starting on the various operations, is to collect all weaponry and other items: aeroplanes, bombs, canons, soldiers, missiles, war ships, etc.

What was done as soon as the war started, was to use these at the right place in the right manner and destroy the enemy forces. Where attacks had to be made with aircraft, it was done so. Where places had to be attacked with missiles, that was done. Where bombing was needed, bombs were dropped.

The operation to attain *Nirvana* too is similar. When you have reached the final operation you are like an army commander. The focus is on the main enemy, your own consciousness, that binds you to this *Sansara*. Every single thought that arises, you see as impermanent. You attack every thought. The weapon you use for it is "*Anithya*". When you attack with the weapon "*Anithya*" what grows in you and what you understand are *Sathara Sati Patthana*, *Paticca Samuppada*, *Chaturarya Satya*, *Pancha Upadanakkanda* and *Saptha Bojjanga*. There is no need to collect these weapons afresh. With the wisdom that grows within you, these weapons will accumulate within you. See intelligently, the *gnana dharshana* which wisdom brings you when you are at the highest *Samadhi* level and gain understanding. You perceive every thought as *Anithya*: analyse every thought and gain understanding: go forward with a sharpened *Pragna*. By this stage your sensitivity to hunger, food, sleep and other physical comforts is gone. Only the resolve "either *Nirvana* or death" prevails. The intensity of the operation to achieve *Nirvana* gets heightened in the nights and in the mornings; no falling asleep but remaining between sleep and non-sleep: walking, sitting, lying down. In all these states, the mind is not allowed to be out of one's control.

At this stage *Mara* will resort to various methods to thwart you. Certain *rupas*, or other sensual attractions that you had relished, will be waved in front of you as distractions; enticing physical bodies, *Brahma* perceptions..... feature the nights. But you are skilled by this time. You recognise him and his tricks now. So you simply pulverise them using your weapon designating them as *Asubha* (evil).

Now imagine, *Mara* bringing before you, as the last resort, a ravishing female form you had been obsessed with; presume it is that of a charming movie star.

Then you do the following to that vision. Undress the form in your own mind. Open the form mentally; pierce and cut through its body to find flesh, blood, intestines, urine, faeces, mucus, vomit: fill a polythene bag with all that stuff and hang it on its skeleton. Then in your thoughts, you make the skeleton walk; make it walk, to reveal the reality of an outwardly charming physical body, to an ordinary mundane mind. You make *Mara* panic, for by this stage you understand well, the *Atthika Sangna*. With *Atthika Sangna*, you can see penetratingly through any physical body. Therefore, you will see even the most attractive and charming body in the world in the same manner and reject it; let go of it. *Mara* will then be convinced that he is losing his hold on you.

Rupas, you were very fond of as a layman, start streaming before you now. You simply open them up, scrutinise and then discard them as impermanent. A thought like this may emerge in you. "If I could be the ruler of this country..... It would be a great pleasure.." But you know that it is not so; and that it is impermanent. Then how past rulers suffered, getting sick, dying, losing power and influence, getting caught in bomb blasts etc. flash through your mind.

Pragna will show that future rulers too may be affected by such determinations of nature. Seeing the most powerful ruler, the wealthiest, the prettiest, the most handsome man or woman in the world, in the time scale of the past, the present and the future, gain understanding. The *pragna* that will develop, will keep alive the impermanence percept in the *Niroana* seeker and motivate and guide him on the way to *Niroana*. When you gain understanding in this manner, the perceptions (*Sangna*) of the desire for the human world will gradually fade away. What has grown in you, with understanding, is *Dhammanupassana*. His *Pragna* will get honed by contemplation on *Sathara Sati Patthana*, and then he will see the *Divya* and *Brahma* realms as impermanent too. At this stage he will observe through *Samadhi* , that even *Divyas* and *Brahmas* are paying homage to him. He knows that the reason that the *Devas* and the *Brahmas* pay homage to him, is that he is now one, who has risen above them. He is now mentally searching the *Divya* and *Brahma* worlds to see whether there is any permanent happiness there. He sees very clearly that the happiness of the *Devas* and *Brahmas* is also impermanent. He examines very carefully the *Divya* worlds. He sees through his mind, *Devas* who enjoy sensuous pleasures; *Devas* who are hell-bound having having exhausted their pleasures and merit; the class hierarchy in the *Divya* world depending on the nature of the merit; the way that the *Devas*, who were greedy for pleasures, cry and weep when they have to quit the heavenly world. He may even see, through his wisdom, the *Sakdevi* (the *Supreme Divine*) finishing his term and perhaps falling into *Sathara Apaya*. Then the *Bhikku*'s liking and desire for the heavenly abodes, if any, will fade away. Next he focuses on the *Brahma* world,

and sees the way the *Brahmas*, clad in radiant white attire, developing Samadhi, while sitting or strolling. They too are looking for happiness from within sorrow. The Bhikku sees with wisdom, that what those *Brahmas* are considering as happiness is the *Samadhi* that is impermanent in itself. At the highest echelon of the *Brahma* world, *Brahmas* engage in *Samadhi* for aeons, remaining stoically in the same position like stone statues. Having examined every nook and corner of the *Brahma* world for anything that is not impermanent, he gets convinced that no such thing exists and lets go of his perception on desire, if he had any, to the *Brahma* world as well.

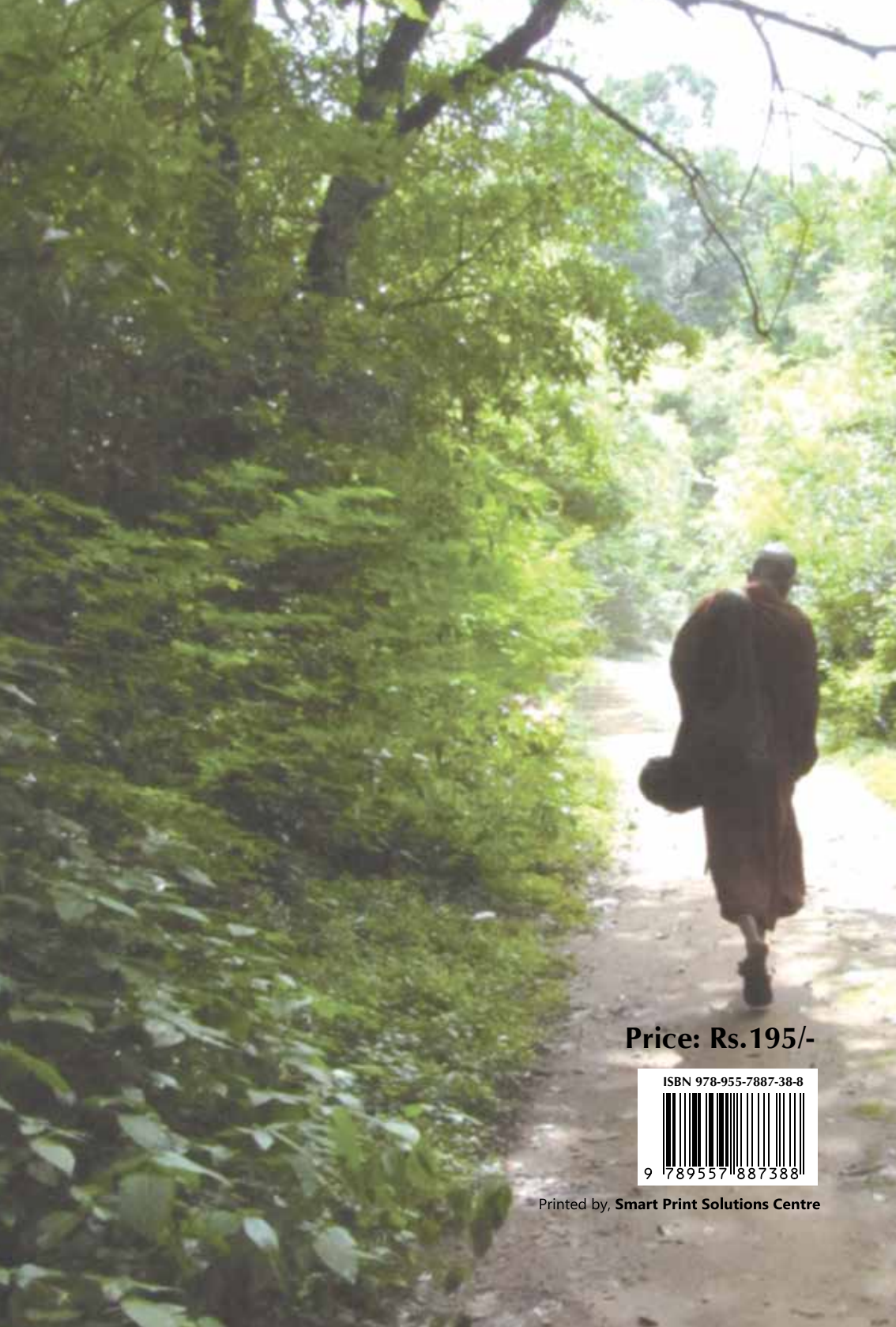
All these scenes pass following each other as if on a television screen sharpening his realisation. Now he need not make a special effort (to observe them). Now it happens automatically, driven by the strength of *Pragna*. Experiencing this in person is miraculous. All this should be knowledge dawning in you. This knowledge will give you an understanding of the nature of the human, *Divya* and *Brahma* worlds. In the operation towards *Nirvana*, you are now at the stage which signifies the complete absence of *thrushna* to any *Sangna* (perception) of *Manushya*, *Divya* or *Brahma* worlds. At this stage, the details of one's past woeful lives in *Sathara Apaya*, and those in blissful surroundings such as those of kings, rulers, and the extremely wealthy will flash across the seeker of *Nirvana* as if on a television screen. Now he is in the final phase.

Now the seeker will feel something never felt before in his life. The scent of a great change is felt. In all these stages, the *Saptha Bojjanga Dharma* will develop in you. The more these *Dhammas* develop, the stronger you become. You

go forward courageously. The final phase of the pursuit of Nirvana is the fastest and the most invigorated ever, by any live animal in any pursuit. Even death cannot stop it; because by now, the seeker is well aware that even if he were to die in the effort, it will be after having realised the *Dhamma* and attained the dignified, exalted state of *Aranthood*. Such *Sangna* (perception) would have dawned on him the moment he entered the final phase of the Nirvana operation. That is why he made that firm resolve, "either *Nirvana* or death". He knew very well from the intensity of his *Pragna*, that both amount to freedom from *Bhava*. No outsider, however, could have realised it by looking at him. So if the Bhikku died in the lonely hut, he will be condemned as a lunatic, vagrant, mentally imbalanced and so on. Such is the mundane world. Even if people said so, he did not die. He attained *Nirvana*. That is for sure. Only he knows it, not the outside world. So what the outside world says or feels is immaterial to him. It is the nature of people to express views. By the time he "passed away", he had conquered *Thrushna* and had "let go" of all *Sangna* (perceptions) of *Manushya*, *Divya* and *Brahma* worlds as impermanent and was devoid of any *upadana* for any continuation of "being". If the final dying thought has nothing to cling on to, nowhere to "land" or "settle on", then the consequence is nothing else but *Nirvana*. The ultimate result of a dignified *Dhamma* is "letting go"; freedom from the mundane world; transcendence from the worldly life. In the fiercest battlefield in the world, gain victory over the world as an unarmed general. Cast away the world you conquered, like the carcass of a snake coiled around your throat. Be a worthy example to the others who have grabbed, and are clinging to the world. Where such grabbing, such clinging,

such amassing prevails; it is not pleasure but sorrow which prevails. Perceive that the creator of sorrow is none other than one's own mind.

If you are the creator, then the exhibitor and the recipient of the response and benefits as well, has to be none other than you. Recognise and identify the mind that creates all sorrow, extinguish your *thrushna*, and free yourself. In the final phase of the *Nirvana* operation, you will feel sick and debilitated, due to your "letting go"; scanty meals, anaemia, dizziness, poor eyesight, eroded gums, kidney and urinary infections due to chalky drinking water, aching joints etc. Let go of every thought regarding them. You can never gain *Nirvana* devoid of these. Leave behind the decaying, dying, nauseating physical body and attain *Nirvana*. The dying physical body belongs to the *Sathara Maha Dhatu*. So it will get devoured by carnivores, rot and decay, and then return to the same source.



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