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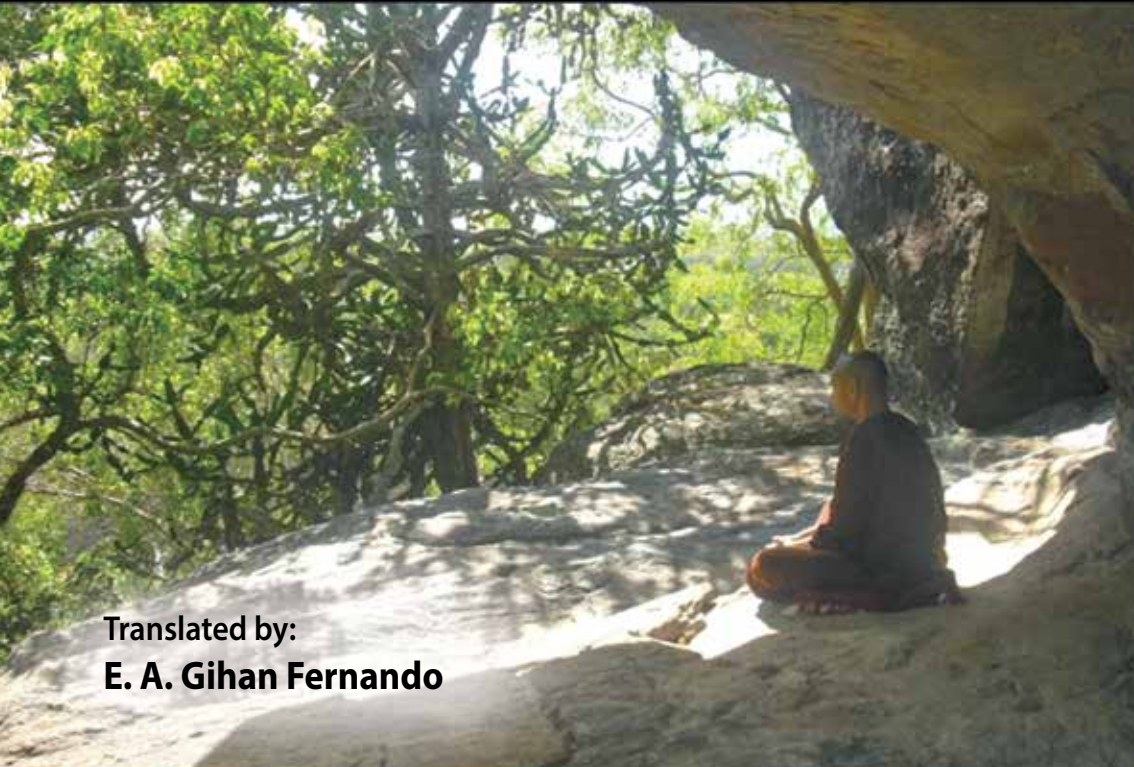
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A Collection of Articles

GIVING UP 3

Maharahatun Wedimaga Osse

(On the trail of Arahat)



Translated by:
E. A. Gihan Fernando



Giving up

Part 3

Maharahatun Wedimaga 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:

E. A. Gihan Fernando

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Giving up

Part 3

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A note written for you by the Venerable Thera

May this humble effort
be a help... a strength... and a path...
only for those 'skillful' laity and clergy,
who having witnessed the
frightfulness of this dreadful,
cruel and dangerous journey of *saṃsāra*,
tread the path to *Nibbāna*
with much determination and energy
to transcend the suffering of *saṃsāra*
in this lifetime itself.

May one apply this
to their own lives
to the extent that one comprehends.
If there are mistakes
in meanings or grammar,
may you not be angered
for what is not your fault.
May you have sympathy towards others.
If there are no mistakes,
may you see that which is right as right.
Through all the meanings set out in this,
may there be virtue and good
on all of you.
May one be a help
unto one's own self.

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Translation Notes

This book is the English translation of the original Sinhala book consisting of a compilation of a series of articles authored by a Most Venerable Thera, who is a highly venerated Sri Lankan wandering Buddhist monk residing in remote monasteries and forest hermitages.

‘Revered–’

In the original Sinhala text, the Venerable Thera compassionately refers to people/readers as “pinvath–”, which means meritorious, blessed, fortunate ones. Translation uses the term ‘revered’ to depict this meaning (e.g. revered-you, revered-youth, revered-people).

Footnotes

The translation uses footnotes from time to time to shed some light on certain terms and proper names included in the translation.

***Pāli* terms**

In the translation, many terms in the *Pāli* language are included in order to preserve the original meaning of the term. Except for a few proper names, *Pāli* words are italicized. *Pāli* is an ancient Indian language that existed at the time of the *Buddha*. The underpinning principle in including *Pāli* terms is that it is better for the reader to not understand (- inaccurately) rather than misunderstand a forced translation. In any case, the Glossary at the back explains some important terms more comprehensively. Though in some cases a commonly used English meaning is provided in brackets () following the *Pāli* term, or vice versa, in order to maintain flow of reading. This in no way means the reader need not refer to the Glossary for a more comprehensive understanding of the term as some *Pāli* terms can have broader meanings. *Pāli* pronunciation key is set out in the table below:

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Should be sounded:</u>	<u>Examples</u>
<i>a</i>	as 'u' in the word 'cut' (but never as in 'bat', and never as in 'bake'). However, when words end with <i>a</i> , it has a short sound as 'or' in 'doctor'.	<i>anicca, kamma</i>
<i>ā</i>	long as in 'father' (but never as in 'bake').	<i>dāna</i>
<i>e</i>	long, as 'a' in 'bake'.	<i>deva</i>
<i>i</i>	as in 'pin'.	<i>viriya</i>
<i>ī</i>	as in 'machine' (never as in 'fine').	<i>sīla</i>
<i>o</i>	long as in 'hope'.	<i>dosa</i>
<i>u</i>	as in 'put' or 'oo' in 'foot'.	<i>upekkhā</i>
<i>ū</i>	as 'oo' in 'boot' (but never as in 'refuse').	<i>rūpa</i>
<i>c</i>	as 'ch' in 'chair' (never as in 'cat', nor as in 'centre').	<i>cāga</i>
<i>g</i>	as in 'get' (never as in 'general').	<i>rāga</i>
<i>h</i>	always, even in positions immediately following consonants or doubled consonants; e.g. <i>bh</i> as in 'cab-horse', <i>ch</i> as 'chh' in 'ranch-house', <i>dh</i> as in 'handhold', <i>gh</i> as in 'bag-handle', <i>jh</i> as 'dgh' in 'sledgehammer' etc.	<i>Buddha, sankhāra</i>
<i>j</i>	as in 'joy'.	<i>avijjā, jāti</i>
<i>ṃ</i>	as the nazalizer pronounced as 'ng' in 'sung' or 'sing'.	<i>saṃsāra</i>
<i>s</i>	always as in 'this' (never as in 'these').	<i>samādhi</i>
<i>t</i>	as 'th' in 'death' or 'thin'	<i>anattā</i>
<i>ṭ</i>	as 't' in 'tea' or 'get'.	<i>kuṭī, diṭṭhi</i>
<i>ñ</i>	as 'ny' in 'canyon' or as 'gn' in Mignon.	<i>paññā</i>
<i>ph</i>	as in 'haphazard' (never as in 'photograph').	<i>magga phala</i>
<i>ṭh</i>	as in 'hot-house' (never as in 'thin' nor as in 'than').	<i>sakkāya-diṭṭhi</i>
<i>y</i>	as in 'yes'.	<i>vyādhi</i>
<i>t, th, d, dh, l</i> are lingual sounds. In pronouncing, the tongue is to be pressed against the palate.		<i>Dhamma, anattā</i>
When there are double consonants, each of them must be pronounced – e.g. 'bb' as in 'scrub-board': 'tt' as in 'cat-tail'.		<i>anicca, anattā, dukkha</i>

‘Suffering’

The translation uses the term ‘suffering’ to denote a much broader meaning consisting of the suffering of birth, decay and death, the suffering of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; and in general, the unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned phenomena (including pleasurable experiences) which, due to their impermanence, are all liable to suffering. Hence ‘unsatisfactoriness’ or ‘liability to suffering’ are more adequate renderings. ‘The noble truth of suffering’ does not deny the existence of pleasurable experience, as is sometimes wrongly assumed. (see. *dukkha*).

‘Mind’

The word ‘mind’ is used in the translation to denote both (a) the mind - as in the faculty (mental faculty) in which thoughts arise and (b) the thoughts that rises in the mental faculty (i.e. the mind-objects). Readers should understand the respective meaning in context. Simile: if mind (as in faculty) is the road, minds (as in thoughts) that arise in it are vehicles that commute on the road. *Pāli* terms *mano* (mind), *citta* (state of consciousness, mind) and *viññāna* (consciousness) are described as synonyms.

‘Thick of conceit’

The translation uses the term ‘thick of conceit’ to loosely translate the references made by the Venerable Thera to the intensity (thickness) of ‘self-view’, ‘personality-view’ (see. *sakkāya-ditṭhi*) that has got solidified (grown thick) throughout *saṃsāra*.

Dedication of Merits

I pay my unreserved gratitude and profound reverence to Venerable Rammuthugala Buddhawansa Thera for the opportunity, the direction and the invaluable inspiration provided in making this translation.



May the merit and virtue accrued from this ardent effort be vested in my beloved mother, Jacintha, and my beloved father, Douglas, and repay as far as possible the loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karunā*), altruistic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) they have shown me since first seeing the light of day.

I extend my deep gratitude to Chaturika Gunatunga, who by generously investing her time and effort, made a remarkable contribution to make this translation work a success. I also humbly thank Jagath Perera, Pushpa Mallawaarachchi, Aruni De Silva, Saroja Tirimanne, Waruna Peiris, Charmaine Fernando, and many others who, by investing their time, effort and resources in many ways, assisted to make this translation work a success. May the enormous merit and virtue accrued to you from this effort be a light that illuminates your journey on the singular path.

May those aforementioned and those others who see or hear of this, form confidence in the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*, tread the one and only path and make this translation a help to relieve themselves from the 'suffering' of this dreadful journey of *samsāra* in this lifetime itself.



I most gratefully acknowledge the insightful guidance on *Pāli* terms gained from the texts composed in 1940s by Most Venerable Nyanatiloka

Mahāthera and revised in 1970s by Most Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera. May the merit and virtue accrued from this be vested in those Venerable Thera and be a cause for the enlightenment they wish for, unless already attained.

Translator
August 2017
Melbourne, Australia

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā
sambuddhassa*

Dedication of merits by the Venerable Thera

To my revered mentor

Most Venerable

Dodampahala Chandrasiri

Mahānayaka Thera

and to all the Venerable *Bhikkhu*

who helped me by being noble friends (*kalyāna-mitta*)

may the wholesome-karma of

this meritorious act of *Dhamma dāna*

be a cause for good health,

longevity and solace to all of them

and may it also be a cause for them to realise

the Four Noble Truths

within this life itself

If the story elongates....

There are two natures that prevail in this world, known as 'small stories' and 'big stories'. Whether it be big or small, the story forms as a result of a 'mind' (a thought) that arises and passes away. Depending on the extent of attachment or aversion towards that mind, the story turns out to be small or big. Because of a single mind (thought) a human being would laugh, or cry, or build expectations. At times, because the mind that arose has been dampened with craving, more and more new sequences of minds would proliferate even to the extent of sometimes leading oneself to commit suicide. Laughing is a small story. Committing suicide is a big story. For both, the point of origin was a single mind that arose and passed away; a sequence of minds that arose as a result of being attached to that single mind. The story was either big or small depending on the extent of attachment or aversion towards the mind that arose. It is because of a mind soaked with craving that a human being, for eons, suffers in the fourfold-hells or enjoys comforts in the heavens.

Look how a single mind dampened with ignorance lures you away to tell a big story, a long story... that will cause you to

inherit suffering¹ for eons. Those beings living in the fourfold-hells who encounter endless suffering have wound-up in such suffering simply because of a single mind that arose within themselves at some point in time, which was soaked in *rāga* (greed), *dosa* (hatred) or *moha* (delusion). If that is so, then it's a grave misfortune that one has to encounter such horrendous suffering over an elongated period of eons just because of a mind that doesn't belong to you; ...that is alien to you; ...that arises momentarily and passes away; ...that is soaked with greed, hatred and delusion. An elongated story it is, caused by a brief mind.

However, if you had made a habit of letting go and seeing the impermanence of the mind; if you had developed an insightful perception that a mind of attachment or aversion will simply make you a wanderer who produces long stories; or if you had entered the path of *Nibbāna*² with a sincere belief that you will somehow free yourself from the world, from the suffering; then at some decisive moment a single mind that arises and passes away will achieve visions of insight and provide you the wonderful freedom and lightness of being devoid of all suffering.

Your mind is so alien to you like an unknown visitor. It's this same alien mind that either liberates you from the

1 Although the translation uses the term 'suffering', it must be noted that the *Pāli* term *dukkha* has a broader meaning consisting of the suffering of birth, decay and death, the suffering of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; and in general, the unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned phenomena (including pleasurable experiences) which, due to their impermanence, are all liable to suffering. Hence 'unsatisfactoriness' or 'liability to suffering' are more adequate renderings. 'The noble truth of suffering' does not deny the existence of pleasurable experience, as is sometimes wrongly assumed. (see. *dukkha*).

2 The state of liberation from all suffering and defilements; the state of absolute extinction of suffering. (see. *Nibbāna*).

world by putting an end to the story, or produces bigger stories by opening you up to the world. Strive to attain solace by identifying this unknown visitor by cultivating mindfulness and clear comprehension and by living mindfully within the remit of *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*.

Looking at the society, all that we see are long stories. The reason for every story to elongate as such, is the solidification of ignorance. If a young boy looks at a young girl it will end in marriage; with children and grandchildren; with a bond called family; and upon passing away having clung to those things, they end up either in fourfold-hells or in heaven. If a person stares at another, or accidentally collides with another, or makes a simple mistake, the story ends in years of imprisonment for murder; eons of suffering in the hell. If a revered-person of the Sinhala nationality accidentally collides with a revered-person of the Tamil nationality, or vice versa, it ends in a major war between two nations; in a disaster; in an extreme hatred that arises from clinging to notions such as “my country”, “my nation”.

Even concerning ones country or nation, if it's hatred that has arisen then the result is undoubtedly suffering. If one were to die with a mind of hatred, then the inheritance is undoubtedly the fourfold-hells.

If any revered-person ordains as a monk in the order of *bhikkhu*, that monkhood ultimately ends up claiming ownership to things such as the knowledge, the reputation, the gain and hospitality, the temple, the forest, the *kuṭī* (abode), the *sīla* (morality), the *samādhi* (concentration), the *magga phala* (fruits of the path), the radio, the television, and the promoting of the *Dhamma*. That monkhood ends up making all these things “mine”. In short he even makes the *Buddha's* teaching

that was proclaimed to the world by realising, and based on, the fundamental nature of nature, his own. Not a single thing noted down in this book belongs to the *Bhikkhu* who authors it. Instead, what's happening at the hands of this *Bhikkhu* is merely noting down the nature of the world and the experiences gained in the course of realising the nature of the world.

None of these things belong to the *Bhikkhu*. They belong to the world. The world belongs to suffering, to impermanence. If one make these matters "mine", what he is owning is the world, the suffering, the impermanence.

Look at the nature of long stories stemming from the sequences of minds that proliferated from a single mind that arose and passed away. Despite having the ability to turn all these long stories into much shorter and peaceful ones, because you attach to, or have aversion for, that mind; because you dampen that mind with craving; because you make the mind "mine", rather than moving towards eradicating suffering through letting go, you turn them into long stories by attaching to them. You too must develop energy (*virīya*) to escape the ignorance (*avijjā*) and thereby to free yourself from the world.

Either death, or freedom from the fourfold-hells (the strongest resolve made in the journey of *saṃsāra*)

Revered-you would have witnessed that, of late, through meritorious religious activities such as *dhamma*-talks and *bodhi*-obeisance conducted by venerable monks of the past and the present, a massive amount of youth were coming forth along the path of *Dhamma*. When one notices this assembly of youth and when one sees the young monks who have ordained at present and living noble ascetic lives, one would think what great things the noble *Dhamma* can do to the revered-youth in the society. However, this type of awakening that crops up from time to time, dies-down after a while. Even this monk who writes this note is someone who strengthened the path of *Dhamma* during his lay life with the help of meritorious activities conducted by such venerable clergy. What I'm trying to say is that we need to be skillful enough to improve on, and make a part of our lives, this *Dhamma*-awakening that is gained through the venerable clergy. When a wave arises people go with the trend with a lot of enthusiasm. When the wave ceases they get back to square one. Out of the four roads to success (*iddhi-pāda*) — *chanda* (intention), *virīya* (energy), *citta* (resolve) and *vimamsa* (investigation) — the quality called *citta* will

be most important to you here. In this instance *citta* denotes resolve, determination. The *bodhisatta* (*Buddha*-aspirant) sat at the feet of the *bodhi*-tree and makes a determination that “may the skin, flesh, bones and veins of my body be parched... but until I discern the supreme wisdom of enlightenment and transcendence from all suffering, I will not get up from here”. Look! “Either attain the objective... or else death” is the meaning of that *citta*. Revered-you too should make this factor called *citta* a part of your life, so that it becomes a source of strength for your practice of the *Dhamma*. It is only because you have not yet made a *citta* – a resolve – that after going forth with the wave, you get back to square one in the practice of the *Dhamma* when the wave stops.

Take this series of articles for example. At least a tinge of enthusiasm about these articles may have developed within those who are inclined towards the *Dhamma*. But revered-you must understand that this brief enthusiasm is a thing of impermanence. By the time that this series of articles comes to an end this enthusiasm that has arisen will also come to an end. But revered-you don't have to stop. You must make ‘a determination’ – ‘a resolve’, rather than a mere hope. You have thus far had only ‘hopes’. Hope is a thing that changes... a thing of impermanence.

It is the time of youth that is the most suitable age for the *Dhamma* to develop well. It is the age where life gets energised with long life, good appearance, happiness and strength. It's during this time of life that the ability to contemplate with wisdom referred to as ‘analytical knowledge of ready wit’ (*paṭibhāna-patisambhidā*) surfaces from within your life. This time of life is a period in which one sees the world objectively without attaching to views and opinions. So revered-you must be skillful to tactfully harvest the crop at the time the crop has arisen. Once there is no longer any crop, however much

you shake the tree only boughs, leaves and branches will fall. Boughs, leaves and branches resemble greed, hatred and delusion.

At present, the age of youth is mostly dedicated to subjects such as education, employment and love. The result of these is that the life gets filled with defilements – greed, hatred and delusion. Have education. Make employment. Be in love. Whilst doing those things, also proceed continuously on the path of the *Dhamma*. Make an unwavering resolve – *citta* – surpassing the changing ‘hopes’. Don’t give any value for hopes. In the path of the *Dhamma*, hopes can never bring you any victory. Hopes deceive you all the time. In the face of the powerfulness of the craving for sensuous delight, hopes recede. On the very first instance of it receding you develop more fresh hopes. That too is a mere hope. Empty out all the hopes from your life. Then life will come to a stop at a particular point. From that point where it stopped, make a determination – a resolve – that it will be **“either death... or else, freedom from the fourfold-hells”**. That is a very strong place. When you have such a strong resolve, even when the wave stops or when you fall sick or when the business collapses or upon losing your job, you won’t turn back. Why? because now you are heading towards freeing yourself from suffering with the understanding of what suffering is. At this juncture it is necessary that *saddhā* (confidence, faith) should have formed in you. By that, you should have strength to accept the *Dhamma* without doubt and to make it a part of your life.

One very pious young gentleman once told the *Bhikkhu* “Venerable Sir! From a very young age I had hope that I won’t get married. However, due to some reason or another I met a girlfriend. Then we both made a hope that we won’t get married but instead we will walk the path of the *Dhamma*.”

But Venerable Sir, due to some reason or another we ended up getting married. Subsequently we hoped that we won't have children. But for some reason we had a child. Now the child is small. Now we are hoping to ordain the child as a monk once the child is old enough and for both of us to also ordain into monkhood. Oh, Venerable Sir, will we be able to realise this hope?"—that gentleman is asking. Certainly it would not be realised. Why? because it's only a mere hope. What you should do is to get out of the ever changing hopes and to make an unwavering, unchanging, resolve – a determination.

Revered-you need not necessarily become clergy (i.e. leave lay life) as you are bound by lay-bonds. Whilst still being in the lay-life, develop the resolve that **"either death... or freedom from the fourfold-hells"**. Set in motion the qualities that are relevant to it from within your life.

Like that, if you develop *saddhā* towards the triple-gem³, then you are one of the world's wealthiest. The wealthy person, the rich person, that the *Buddha* admired is the revered-person who has developed confidence in the triple-gem. If you wish to become a descendant of the *Buddha*, this is the wealth that you must amass. Put aside the fictitious criterion known as 'the rich' and 'the wealthy' in the present society. If you recognise this true wealthiness, you won't take part in the human struggle of competitiveness that prevails in the society for acquiring comforts. You will understand that your richness is not something that is measured in numerals, but a thing that is measured through the essence of *Dhamma*; you will see that the value of the numeral is worthless. The direction that the world is moving is unimportant to you; the direction that allows the

3 The Triple-Gem or the Three Jewels – the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*, which are revered by all Buddhists as the most venerable things. (see. *tiratana*).

essence of the *Dhamma* to develop is what is important to you. That direction points towards the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya atṭhangika magga*); whereby one causes no harm to oneself, nor to anyone. Now you can make a strong resolve – *citta*, but not a mere hope. Within hope there is doubt and suspicion hidden. At this point, revered-you have now developed the Right View (*sammā-ditṭhi*) and are in the path. There is no going backwards. The *citta* that you made at this moment that **“either death... or freedom from the fourfold-hells”** will be the strongest *citta* made in the entire journey of *saṃsāra* (cycle of rebirth) you have passed. If you don’t have the strength to do this at least this time, you will be defeated this time too. Therefore, in order to attain the truest happiness, make the truest richness of the *Dhamma* a part of your life.

When a monk proceeded to his seat to participate in a *dhamma*-discussion, the revered-devotees who had been present clad in white paid respects to the venerable clergy by uttering “*sādhu... sādhu... sādhu...*” in a single melodious tone. It was a very tuneful sound; one that was filled with much devotion. A much tranquil sound. When it is heard in both male and female voices, one wonders whether it is a sound of deities in heaven. In short, at that moment each and every such devotee is in a state of mind devoid of human perceptions. Only heavenly perceptions arise in them. One particular night when a monk was with a mind of *samādhi* (deeply concentrated mind), through his celestial faculty of hearing⁴ (*dibba-sota*) the monk has heard the sound “*sādhu... sādhu... sādhu*” from a heavenly realm. That celestial sound and this human sound were of similar nature. However, on another particular night the monk heard another remarkable celestial sound; from

4 Refers to one of the supernatural abilities or knowledges or powers attainable through the utmost perfection in *samādhi* – concentration of the mind.

the voice of a single deity in a heavenly realm. The sound uttered by that deity was “impermanent... impermanent... impermanent”. Unlike the deity mentioned first, see what an advanced view that this second deity has. Perhaps this second deity may have been a deity who has attained fruits of the path (*magga phala*). That may well have been the reason for reciting “impermanent... impermanent... impermanent” in a deep dispassionate psyche, going beyond the meaning of the sound “*sādhu... sādhu... sādhu*”. What the *Bhikkhu* reminds you is that you too should take a step forward in the path of the *Dhamma*. Take a step beyond the meaning of the recitation “*sādhu... sādhu... sādhu*” that many youth and lay-devotees recite now a days at meritorious religious ceremonies, and get into the habit of reciting the meaningful recitation “impermanent... impermanent... impermanent”. It’s not enough to pay homage to the Lord *Buddha* by just reciting “*sādhu... sādhu*”. Through the *Buddha* you must see the essence of the *Dhamma* known as “the impermanence”. It is only then that you will have truly paid homage to the *Buddha*.

The society is so scared to use or to recite the word “impermanence”. Being scared to contemplate and to recite the word “impermanence” means that you are scared of the *Dhamma*. Distance yourself from these weaknesses and bring your life to a meaningful place. If the monk that you see is impermanent... if the meritorious religious activity you perform too is impermanent... if the feelings, perceptions, volitions and consciousness that arise as a result of that meritorious activity are all impermanent... that, is the essence that should arise in our mind. If thoughts like this can be developed from within you, it will also help immensely in freeing yourself from the liability to fall into the fourfold-hells.

Many fear to speak of impermanence. Some revered-devotees have got a notion that thinking of “impermanence”

will cause them to 'lose' things. Indeed, if one thinks of impermanence something will be lost; and that which will be lost is the suffering, the cause for suffering, and the ignorance that causes all of this. It is within this thinking that you will surface the Noble Eightfold Path. Hidden within the meaning of "impermanence" are the Four Noble Truths (*ariya-sacca*). As long as you don't surface the phenomenon of "impermanence" from your life, the phenomena of the Four Noble Truths will remain concealed. The way in which you are to see the essence of impermanence, is through impermanence itself. While remaining within a thing that is changing, you need to observe the fact that it is changing. Faster a thinking process gets, faster the nature of impermanence will be. That fastness is what has made you complicated. It is at this point that *samādhi* will come to your help. It's only through *samādhi* that you will recognise the true velocity of impermanence. It is for this reason alone that I write so much about *saddhā* and *sīla* (morality), which are the factors that cause *samādhi* to arise in you.

If you have drawn a certain sketch in your mind about the *Bhikkhu* who writes these notes, it is the *sīla* that has helped the *Bhikkhu* to reach that place. It is a *sīla* that was observed with utmost pre-eminence. Not even a paracetamol pill was kept in possession for an illness. It was a dose of own urine that was consumed instead. However, at present, the required medicines are kept in possession and is used as needed. During the relevant period of developing the path of *Nibbāna*, on certain days there wasn't even a cake of soap to wash the face. The soap had finished; but didn't request for one until a cake of soap was offered by a benefactor. Instead, went on without using soap. Yet, don't know for whatever reason, at present, in every *kuṭī* in which the *Bhikkhu* resides there are five or six pieces of soap in a container. Now looking back the *Bhikkhu* thinks that the *Bhikkhu* would have received such *kuṭī* with shortcomings in the

past so that the *Bhikkhu* could complete the relevant matters; so that even the non-receipt could be turned into a victory. During this period of engaging in the operation of *Nibbāna*, the *Bhikkhu* clearly felt that the body was very weak, has become slender and that the death is very near; but the *Bhikkhu* had no value in food or medicines. When you have let go of [the craving for] life, food and medicines are only a mere hindrance.

Is life a heap of numbers?

The *Bhikkhu* got to know from a devotee about a revered-young man who happened to have applied the 'perception of repulsiveness' to contemplate upon a wound that had appeared on his fiancée's leg, then perceived her entire body as a wound, then developed disenchantment about her, and recently entered into monkhood with her blessing.

The essence of stories like this is not running away from life, but going in search of the true meaning of life. Revered-you, don't be afraid that you will lose your fiancé or your fiancée. The fiancée should make her fiancé's life an object for contemplation for herself; and the fiancé should do vice-versa. Both should be open to each other. View this stinking life not as something delightful, but as a wound, an abscess. While living a lay life, you can still add to your life the essence of the *Dhamma*. If one is able to ordain as a monk that would be much better. However, at no instance will the *Bhikkhu* approve of someone entering monkhood in haste (to be in a hurry to become a monk). A skillful one need not become unskillful. One who has correctly developed the perception of impermanence will never be in a hurry. Nobody should be scared for him. Because he is within the protection of the *Dhamma*. For a monkhood of greater quality, we should have patience in us.

During the time of the *Buddha* there was quite an exemplary couple. They were Pippalī and Bhaddā Kapilānī; who were young children of two extremely wealthy Brahmin⁵ families. Although the parents brought forth many proposals of marriage for Pippalī, he refused to give his consent. His desire was to get ordained. The parents take a firm decision that they would commit suicide if Pippalī refuses to get married. Pippalī had to obey the parents. The bride of Pippalī is a young lady called Bhaddā Kapilānī. She too was a young lady who had evaded marriage with the intention of getting ordained. They come to an agreement; they make a resolve that: they will get married and eventually, after the demise of the parents, to get ordained. They get married in a big ceremony. The world is under the impression that they are leading a sensual life. However, this young couple did not allow their resolve to be broken. Until the demise of their parents they led a celibate life. Neither one of them even touched each other. This Pippalī is [who later became] the great arahat Mahā Kāshyapa Thera. This Bhaddā Kapilānī is [who later became] the arahat-*bhikkhuni* Bhaddā Kapilānī Therī. Revered-you should emulate these characters in order to tactfully free yourself from the desire for sensual pleasures. Make a strong resolve through your life that: “This week I shall lead a celibate life; this week I am going to lead a generous life by offering *dāna* (almsgiving); this week I will abide by the higher-*sīla* (higher morality); this week I am going to strengthen myself by reflecting on the noble qualities of the triple-gem”. By all such conduct, what occurs from within you is ‘renunciation’. This mind (thought) of renunciation itself is what helps you notice the impermanence of the *pañca-upādānakkhandha* (fivefold existence that are objects of clinging — i.e. corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness).

5 ‘Brahmin’ an uppermost noble caste.

The *Buddha* says to Venerable Nanda: “Nanda, it is not only in this life that I saved you from Janapada Kalyāni⁶. In a previous birth when you were a mule and I was your master, you were serving me, pulling my cart; and Janapada Kalyāni who was born as a female mule tried to lure you away to the forest by lying to you and enticing you. Then too it was I who saved you. In another birth you were born as a pig at Janapada Kalyāni’s household; she fed you well and fattened you, and this very same Janapada Kalyāni on the day of her wedding killed you for meat. Such is the bond, the clinging, in a journey of *samsāra*”.

Bhava (‘becoming’, process of ‘existence’) is the milk that oozes from the udder of the cow known as *upādāna* (clinging). The milk known as ‘becoming’ creates as it pleases various fivefold tastes⁷ on birth (*jāthi*). It doesn’t end. It doesn’t stop. The past is mute. The present speaks. In this life we all are marvellous human beings. We give ourselves higher marks and prepare a progress report by ourselves. In it, there are no marks given for Buddhism. It is Economics that has earned more marks. Now life is a heap of numbers. From this point onwards think of Venerable Nanda Thera and about Janapada Kalyāni. That sweetheart who is right next to you in your wedding photo that glitters inside a glass cabinet in your living room... although she remains so close to you smiling right

6 Janapada Kalyāni was a young lady belonging to a noble family who was said to be the prettiest maiden of that kingdom (the name 'Janapada Kalyāni' loosely translates as the “Grace of the Kingdom”). She was engaged in marriage to Prince Nanda, the half-brother of Gautama *Buddha*. Just before the marriage whilst preparations for the ceremony were underway, Prince Nanda, the groom, had followed the *Buddha*, become a disciple and ordained as a monk.

7 Used here as a simile, fivefold tastes refer to the five types of traditional rich dairy products derived from cow’s milk, which are milk, cream, whey, curd, and butter.

now, how much suffering would you have had to put up with because of her in this journey of *samsāra*... how much suffering would she have had to endure because of you? Know from the above facts that, she who is your companion in this life wasn't your companion just in this life. If what lay before your life is such 'worthless' value, don't let numbers be the measure of the meaning of your life. Make confidence in the triple-gem, morality and generosity the values of life. If your preference is to add numbers to the end of your life, what you add to your life is nothing but suffering. If you, for the sake of *dāna* (generosity, almsgiving), let go of what you receive and what you collect, then what you let go of is also suffering.

Yesterday a revered-youth came to meet the *Bhikkhu*. He is married. He tells the *Bhikkhu*, "Venerable Sir, I have with me two hundred thousand rupees which I have earned and saved with the greatest difficulty. With that I want to buy an almirah for the house. The remainder I will spend entirely for next month's meritorious religious ceremony". Look! He gave a true value to what was hard-earned and saved. You should be skillful... to give the world's truest worth to the money that was hard-earned. Don't squander that money by spending on things that give rise to suffering. To safely deposit the money that you possess means, to bank that money into *dāna* and into meritorious activities. The above young gentleman too spent what he needed for the household goods and safely deposited the rest. Deposit, without having doubt or fear in the banking system known as 'generosity'. It is for revered-laity that this note is written. If revered-you are lax (*pamāda*) towards *dāna* or too stingy to offer *dāna*, you should definitely expect illnesses for yourself and for your family members quite often. Because it's only through *dāna* that a human being gets long life, good appearance, happiness and strength. If you are hesitant to offer *dāna* in this life, or if the act of offering *dāna*

was feeble in the previous birth, it is only then that revered-you catch diseases and illnesses often. If someone is not generous to charitably give as alms devoid of greed and with belief in karma and *vipāka* (karma-result) a certain amount of what he earns, then undoubtedly he would have to spend on medicines and hospital charges an amount much in excess of what was saved by not spending on giving alms. For a person who is averse to charitable-giving, having to spend on medicine and doctors' fees much more than what he would have spent on charitable giving, is merely a phenomenon of 'causality'. The secret to worldly happiness is *dāna*. This happiness should be used by you, to become complete in *saddhā* towards the triple-gem and *sīla*; and to develop the fivefold spiritual-faculties (namely, *saddhā*, *virīya* (energy), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom)), solely for the purpose of attaining freedom from the liability to fall into the fourfold-hells. Otherwise the happiness that revered-you tactfully surfaced in your life, will end up being just another *sankhāra* (karma-formation) that will be subject to impermanence after fruition. You will get good health as a result of *dāna*. And you will get the ability to comfortably practice the path of the *Dhamma* solely as a result of that good health. Similarly, you will get ill-health as a result of not offering *dāna*. And you will become distant from the path of the *Dhamma* solely as a result of that ill-health.

The two male and female lay adherents called Ugga Gahapati and Vēlukantakī Nandamātā⁸ respectively, who were *Anāgāmī* (non-returners) and lived in the time of the *Buddha*, frequently offered *dāna* to the venerable *Sangha*. There was something wonderful about the *dāna* that Vēlukantakī

8 Ugga, the Gahapati (householder), among householders was declared by the *Buddha* to be the best of those who waited on the Order. Nandamātā (mother of Nanda), who was also known as lady of Vēlukanta, was an exemplary lay-woman disciples who waited on the *Buddha* and the *Sangha*.

Nandamātā offered. That is, she would be happy reflecting about impending *dāna* before the *dāna*, she would be happy reflecting about *dāna* after the *dāna*, and she was happy thinking about *dāna* while offering the *dāna*. This was a marvellous quality she had. [It is therefore clear that] even the male and female lay adherents who were *Anāgāmi* (non-returners) also consider *dāna* as an extremely noble thing. Without discriminating between the temple and the forest monastery, and instead, always making the Venerable *mahā-Sangha* in its entirety the sole object of your *dāna* offering would confer the highest consequential meritorious results.

You must wisely notice the danger that lies before you. If you don't cultivate *saddhā* in the triple-gem, you will end up in 'wrong view' (*micchā-ditṭhi*). If you don't live by the precepts of *sīla*, you won't get a life again as a divine deity or a human being. If you don't offer *dāna*, you will acquire life forms lacking in long life, good appearance, happiness and strength. If you don't cultivate loving-kindness, you won't get a beautiful, good-looking, or a pleasing appearance again. Even when a shadow of such a dreadful challenge is cast upon our lives, we still think of and give priority to things such as: if we don't attend to our job or business there won't be any income; if we don't have money we won't have any social status; if we don't get married our lineage won't continue. We give priority to such simplistic, puerile, naive and brief expectations. How big of a gap between 'the danger' and 'the way of deliverance from danger' do we live with? If you, revered-laity, are to make this life and the life after this both into goodness, you have to give priority to the above two things that occur due to the phenomenon of 'causality'. That is, reflect wisely on the danger that lies before you, and enter the path for escaping the suffering known as birth. If you start to think of the above matters that are hidden from us, it would be a good entryway into forming a strong resolve.

Are you selling the *Buddha's* refuge to *Māra*?

One beneficent gentleman asked the *Bhikkhu*: “Venerable Sir, I am a person who regularly offer alms. Am I also within ‘ignorance’?” Just because revered-you offer alms doesn’t mean that you will be free of ignorance. Ignorance (*avijjā*) means not knowing the Four Noble Truths (*ariya-sacca*). That is, ignorance about the suffering, ignorance about the cause for suffering, the extinction of suffering and the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhangika magga*) leading to the extinction of suffering. It is due to your ignorance about the fact that the world is suffering (*dukkha*) that you search for happiness through the eye and the corporeal form that is seen through the eye; or search for happiness through the ear and the sounds that are heard through the ear. The other faculties are the same. You see these things not as a suffering, but as a happiness. If so, what revered-you offer as alms will be an alms offered to attain a happiness that turns out to be a suffering. Alms given in expectation of happiness will be in the remit of ignorance. Having noticed that the world is suffering, if you offer alms to lessen the craving that keeps you bound to suffering, then it’s those almsgivings that will push you out of the remit of ignorance. It’s not just money, food, beverages that you should offer as alms. Instead,

it's your *thanhā* (craving) that generates suffering through those aforementioned things that you should give away as alms.

It is he who offers the 'craving' as alms who adds to his life the real meaning of almsgiving. Therefore, when offering alms, revered-laity must have a strong *citta* (resolve) that you will offer alms only for the cause of freeing yourself from craving.

A gentleman who came to the *kuṭī* (abode) of the *Bhikkhu* asked from the *Bhikkhu*: "Venerable Sir, what are you doing in this *kuṭī* all alone?" The *Bhikkhu* replied: "Just staying leisurely in this *kuṭī*". Then he says: "Venerable Sir, when staying like this there is no meaning to life". Then the *Bhikkhu* replied: "It's because that life anyway has no meaning whatsoever that I stay here leisurely". For this gentleman, leisure is a concern. He likes to see through the *Bhikkhu* a character that is active, is busy and has no leisure. By seeing the leisure of others, he loses the leisure of his own mind. By giving rise to a gamut of unnecessary thoughts, he is also stacking up demerits. If the eye doesn't belong to me, if the external objects that come in contact with the eye don't belong to me, and if the tongue, ear, nose, mind, or the body doesn't belong to me, then what is there to be busy for? What is there to own by being busy? If "I", the product of mind-matter phenomena, is nothing but the six faculties... if in that too there is no being or person but only a phenomenon of cause and effect, then whom should one seek busyness for? If someone searches for busyness like that, then what he searches for is merely deceit. If there is no meaning in the eye, if there is no meaning in the ear, then life can't bear a meaning can it? It's the *Dhamma* that will clarify to you the meaning of the meaningless life. Leisurely contemplate the mind-matter phenomena. Then you will realise that there is nothing here for you to gain by being busy. Therefore, revered-

you must make a determination that whenever you meet a Venerable Monk, to always discuss only a matter related to the *Dhamma* and nothing else.

When the mind becomes restful you begin to realise the causes that give rise to busyness. The mind becomes busy only because corporeality, feeling, perception, volitional-mental-formation and consciousness are perceived as permanent. When what is impermanent is cognised as permanent, it confuses you. You perceive something that is non-existent as existent. Now you are busy. Now you have many a thing to do, to search, to see, and to say. The world has come to a standstill. Yet, revered-you are running. Within the remit of ignorance, speed has a good value attached to it. "*Avijjā-paccayā sankhāra*" — It is owing to 'ignorance' that 'karma-formations' arise. You being rapid or quick means that you are rapidly accumulating *sankhāra* (karma-formations). However, if you start contemplating leisurely the impermanence of corporeality, feeling, perception, volitional-mental-formation and consciousness, then you are heading towards extinction of *sankhāra*. Look at the gap between being busy and leisure. By taking corporeality as permanent, and as a result, because of searching for a thing that is non-existent, busyness would arise. By perceiving corporeality, feeling, perception, volitional-mental-formation and consciousness as impermanent, and as a result, because there is nothing to search for, leisure would arise. Leisure becomes distant from you when you become distant from the *saddhā* (confidence, faith) in the triple-gem. One who arrives at *saddhā* towards the triple-gem examines the reason for the busyness of life. It is only through 'associating a *kalyāna-mitta*' (noble friend), 'listening to the *Dhamma*' and 'wise reflection' that *saddhā* will form. When writing this note on the noble *saddhā*, a stream of past incidents come to mind. The *Bhikkhu*'s father was a person much devoted to deities. The

Bhikkhu remembers that when I was a child every year my father organises a ritual where a hut is prepared, which is dedicated to worshipping deities by way of a ceremonial dance, and offerings are made to deities. Likewise, every month an offering to the deity named Kadawara was performed in the backyard. During those days as a child, I had not recognised what *saddhā* meant. My father hadn't recognised it either. So, I remember that with these same hands on numerous occasions I have burnt sprats and burnt cowhide for offerings. However, at this moment when the *Bhikkhu* recollects the past, the *Bhikkhu* clearly knows that in those days in myself as a laity and in my father there was only rootless-*saddhā* (unreasoned-faith mixed with delusion). It was because there was only rootless-*saddhā* that we diverted from the faith in the triple-gem and got into having faith in deities. It was because of rootless-*saddhā* alone that we burnt sprats, burnt pieces of cowhide, laid betel leaves on stools and placed a counted number of flowers for offering. This was stated for revered-you to recognise the difference between *saddhā* and rootless-*saddhā*. Revered-you might be a person who worship the triple-gem, offer *dāna* and observe *sīla*... but, when your life is faced with challenges in your occupation, your business or in the form of illnesses, while diverting from having faith in the triple-gem if you expect to find solutions to those challenges through burning sprats, burning cowhide, offering fruit trays and through rituals associated with worshipping deities or evil nonhumans, revered-you should know with certainty that you still have rootless-*saddhā*. However, during the young-age itself due to some reason the *Bhikkhu* was able to identify through himself this rootless-*saddhā*, purely owing to association of *kalyāna-mitta*, listening to the *Dhamma*, and owing to wisely reflecting the *Dhamma* that was listened to.

Revered-you listening to the *Dhamma* alone would not be enough. You must also wisely reflect upon that *Dhamma*. Our

lifespan is perishing very rapidly. Death might arrive very soon. Therefore, rather than an occupation, a business or a marriage, be an owner of a 'death' that can be venerated. Even by way of a single word, a feeling or a thought, don't get attached to deceit... don't have any affection for it... have fear of it. It is the rootless-*saddhā* that causes formation of 'wrong view' (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) in you in the journey of *saṃsāra*. This is a dangerous, capricious, murderous world. The *pañca-upādānakkhandha* (the fivefold existence that are objects of clinging — i.e. corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness) that forms within human beings is that much gruesome, disparate. An exorcist the *Bhikkhu* once met mentioned that by the art of charms and spells he knows, he could even kill or destroy a person. He affirmed that he has performed such exorcism before. He bragged about it. For the ignorant world that does not know the meaning of the *Dhamma*, killing a human being is such a simple task as killing a mosquito. To a mind that has moved away from the *Dhamma* even the value of his own life can't be comprehended, let alone the value of another's life. He will place on others' lives the same worthless bid that he places on his own life. Revered-you, as those who listen to the *Dhamma*, always recognise the dangerous phenomena that prevail in society. The one who has formed *saddhā* in the *Dhamma* will be skillful to recognise that even the loss of his job, the failure of his business or the illness that he has developed, all that happened for his own good. While considering that "through such falls what I experience is the nature of the world, the essence of the phenomenon of impermanence" he moves closer and closer towards realisation of the *Dhamma* by escaping the attachment to such impermanent and collapsible things. Such person will attempt to rebuild that which has collapsed with even more effort and endeavour. Likewise, such person searches for contentment only through the *Dhamma*. A field that is fast

becoming popular in the present society is the field of exorcism. The more the application and advancement of this field, less the application of the *Dhamma*. It is a law of nature. It is a warning sign which signifies that the real lifespan of the *Dhamma* (the length of time the *Dhamma* remains alive before it gets concealed from human knowledge) is much shorter. When the world goes on without having belief in *kamma* (karma, karmic volitions) and *vipāka* (karma-result), you become a victim of ‘wrong view’. Yet the extent of the misfortune is so much so that, owing to his delusion man gets into ‘wrong view’ by spending money. Rejects the noble *Dhamma* and buys ‘wrong view’ for money. Look how subtle the ways of the *Māra*⁹ are... It blindfolds you and sells you ‘wrong view’ by taking your money. The realm of preta-ghosts, the realm of devils, and the realm of evil-ghosts are extremely gruesome, vast and so complex. Their way is the opposite of the *Dhamma*. Their way is destruction and hatred. Relinquishing the refuge of a noble supreme teacher such as the *Buddha* and seeking the refuge of nonhumans while dreaming of a temporary affluence, revered-people, would be selling your own life to the *Māra*.

The delusion of this world; the truth concealed in the world; the world that cannot be seen through the flesh-eye; the truthfulness of the *Dhamma* that the *Buddha* proclaimed; can only be seen through experience only through the eye of *samādhi* (state of deep concentration of the mind). Unlike the portrait of the world seen through the flesh-eye (naked eye of humans), when some monk experiences through the eye of *samādhi* the wonderful as well as pitiful resting places of the journey of *saṃsāra* in the world of meritorious and demeritorious beings, it becomes much clear how incorrectly as human beings we

9 The term “*Māra*” denotes several meanings. (see. *Māra*). It is understood that in the above occurrence, *Māra* denotes both the defilements and *Māra*-the deity, who uses shrewd ways to drive people away from the *Dhamma*.

have misapprehended the world perceiving it through so much lame misconceptions. When making offerings to deities, the priests of places of worship dedicated to particular deities invoke prayers. You may have heard them chant prayers like this: "Oh, dear God... who looks over and has eyes for the herd of bulls, the flock of peacocks and the Menik river". So we tend to think that this deity only casts his divine eyes on the herd of bulls. Revered-you just think for yourself, will a deity, born in that prosperous form purely as a result of his past meritorious deeds, have eyes for a heard of bulls that lay in a heap of dung and urine and indulge in mud? Nevertheless, there is also a hidden truth in this story. Revered-you can see that truth only through the eye of *samādhi*. One day when a monk was in a state of *samādhi* he envisioned a herd of about a dozen divine buffaloes. There was half-a-dozen adult female-buffaloes and the rest were calves. This heard of divine female-buffaloes was a divine heard of buffaloes living in this human-realm itself. These female-buffaloes are brimming with long life, good appearance, and much prosperity. These animals are very clean, well-built, glittering in an oily colour and their body is full of fur. The udders are very hefty, the nipples are as large as the biggest type of plantains and the udders are filled with milk. When seeing those divine buffaloes it is like a symbol of prosperity. When the monk had envisioned this herd of divine buffaloes they had appeared as if they were walking along a road. Here there is a truth that cannot be seen through your flesh-eye. There is a deity who casts his eye on this herd of bulls. But it's not on those bulls that live in the village dwelling in a heap of dung and a pile of urine. Instead, it's on the herd of bulls mentioned above who, although are full of merits, have been born as divine bulls. Just see what a difference there is between blind faith and the truth. The above herd of divine buffaloes is also just another resting place in the journey of

‘existence’. Faced with such a dangerous journey of ‘existence’, revered-you should look towards the supreme qualities of the triple-gem, rather than towards the face of deities.

Revered-you must always make your life a research laboratory. What kind of a research laboratory? One that researches the *Dhamma*. Revered-you must research, through wisdom, all what you hear, see, and think. Discern the *Dhamma* from that which is the opposite of *Dhamma*. Always be alert against the risks of the *saṃsāra*.

You need to first accept the fact that these dangerous phenomena that obstructs happiness exist in you, before trying to escape those dangerous phenomena. This is where we often go wrong. All the unwholesome-roots (i.e. *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (hate) and *moha* (delusion)) are growing within us, yet we are not skillful enough to recognise that. Even those who recognise them try to continue the practice of *Dhamma* while concealing them. This happens because you don’t research the *Dhamma* from within yourself. During the lay life this *Bhikkhu* recognised very well the *akusala* (the unwholesome) – *rāga* (lust), *dosa* and *moha* – that is there in him. The *Bhikkhu* is not ashamed to say that. Because it is that very recognition that paved the way for the *Bhikkhu* to reach this place. It was through the lust that was there in him during the days of his lay life that he recognised the vileness of lust. It was through the wretched of hatred that was there in him that he recognised hatred. It was through delusion that was there in him that he recognised the darkness of delusion. There was nothing for him to learn by looking at the rest of the world. All of the dangerous phenomena were present in him to a greater or lesser extent. He was able to recognise the unwholesome-roots only because he had made his life into a research laboratory. Not to perform any research for others, but to genuinely correct himself. He

came to do such research because he first identified that the above unwholesome-roots were in him. At that point in time the *Bhikkhu*, rather than going to show his truthfulness to the world, was being truthful to himself. It was when reflecting upon himself through wisdom whilst remaining in that truthfulness that he identified the unwholesome-roots that existed in his life. This identification was of significant value to the *Bhikkhu* at that time. It is solely because of this that he got to know that there were unwholesome-roots in him... secondly, saw their dangerousness... and thirdly, entered the path of tactfully eradicating them. The *Bhikkhu*, during the time of his lay life, was not ashamed to reveal to the outside world that lust, hatred and delusion existed in him. He opened himself up to the rest of the world. Through that openness he humiliated [and thereby humbled] himself. Revered-you should also open your life to the outside world as much as possible. Recognise that by concealing from the outside world what develops is only 'self-view' (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*). It's this 'self-view' that helps you conceal from the outside world the unwholesome phenomena known as lust, hatred and delusion that is there in you. Claiming that it's for "my" safety... for "my" sustenance... to show to the world who "I" am... who is it that's being inflated here?

For those helpless ones who are caught in the clutches of ‘planets’

The *kuṭī* in which the *Bhikkhu* resides these days is surrounded by a Palu¹⁰ forest, where the trees are bearing fruit and thus making the whole range appear yellow. With the placid climate in the month of ‘Vesak’ plenty of food is available for all creatures and animals. The sand compound that surrounds the *Bhikkhu’s* *kuṭī* is constantly messy. Often bulls come to the sand compound to eat the Palu-fruits that fall on the ground. The sand looks unkempt with their hoof prints. Now the time would be around 6 o’clock in the morning. As the *Bhikkhu* sweeps the floor of the *kuṭī*, a few of the bulls continued to eat Palu-fruits off the sandy ground. The sand compound has got extremely messy. Instantaneously upon seeing the bulls the words that escaped the *Bhikkhu* were: “Son, eat quickly and be on your way without troubling”. Who was it that the *Bhikkhu* unintentionally addressed as ‘Son’? It was those bulls that were in the compound. How many times in the *saṃsāra* (cycle of rebirth) would these bulls have been children of the same mother and father as mine? Been born in *saṃsāra* due to causality, how many times would we have eaten rice off the same plate? How many times would we have cuddled together

10 A type of fruit bearing tree.

embracing each other and wept in sorrow? Or laughed in glee? The only difference between you and me, my son, is the disparity between the *sankhāra*! It is by being in this perception that the compassion and the loving-kindness of the *mahā-Sangha* is being dispensed to the world. It's based on sympathy arising from the perception "I have identified the world... but you are yet to identify it" applied towards each being, that the great-*Sangha* views the world. This sympathy arises through the realisation of the length, the depth and the suffering of the *samsāra*. At the time of writing this note, the *Bhikkhu* recollects that in one particular hermitage, an incident where the *Bhikkhu* was admonished by one pious elder monk for addressing a young novice monk as 'Son'. In all this what we see is the world... what we see is the diverseness that is suffused throughout the world. Even the *Bhikkhu* accepts that, for the sake of the continuous existence of the *Sangha*-community, addressing a junior monk as '*āyusmant*'¹¹ is the utmost correct practice. Later, the *Bhikkhu* corrected that mistake. Yet, for some reason, a compassion... a loving-kindness that goes beyond that, exists in the life of great-*Sangha*. There comes a day when we will have to see even the cow that messes up the sand compound in one's *kuṭī*, as a child. This is the station you are trying to reach by progressing in this path of the *Dhamma*. Yet, revered-you just think for yourself, can you honestly see your neighbour who lives next door as a friend? If you are unable to see it that way, first you must start from there. Make your neighbour a friend. However much your neighbour is disobedient, to the extent of that disobedience, you must be that much equanimous. Here revered-you are exerting effort not for others' benefit, but for your own benefit. You must use the disobedience of others to your own success.

11 A term used by a senior *bhikkhu*, to address a junior *bhikkhu* – younger in ordination age.

Today is an auspicious day. That means it's considered a day of good fortune. When the *Bhikkhu* was on his way on the alms round this morning, a motor car slowed down as it passed by the *Bhikkhu*. It was a wedding car. Decorated with flowers. There was a bridegroom inside. Having observed an auspicious time, that means having waited for a day of good fortune, he is now on his way to bring home a 'suffering'. Even though the *Bhikkhu* sees this as suffering, that bridegroom sees this day as the most beautiful, most important day of his life.

In the *Buddha's* teaching, the subject of auspicious times is rejected. The *Buddha* proclaims that, if one lives with *saddhā* (confidence) in the triple-gem... lives by giving an importance to the *sīla* (moral virtues) from within his life, then for that revered-person every day is a day of good fortune... every moment is a blessed moment. Therefore, revered-you need not spend money to look for blessed moments by going in search of auspicious times through horoscopes. If you are pure in *saddhā* towards the triple-gem and pure in the *sīla*, then your entire life becomes an auspicious moment... a day of good fortune for you. During the time of the *Buddha*, Rāahu, the ill-willed asura¹², completely concealed the sun by using his power [causing eclipses]. The entire world went into darkness. At that point, one deity affiliated with the sun recollected on the supreme qualities of the *Buddha*... sought refuge of the *Buddha*. The *Buddha* heard through the faculty of divine-hearing that this deity is seeking refuge and sanctuary from the *Buddha*. At that moment, the *Buddha* proclaimed to Rāahu, "relieve my virtuous son who has sought refuge from me". At once Rāahu, shivering in fear, releases the deity affiliated with the sun

12 Asura are the lowest groups of the deities or demigods (a group of power-seeking deities). Rāahu and Kētu are two of the nine planets in Vedic astrology (An Asura is presumed to be ruling over each planet). The time of day (mythically) believed to be under the influence of these two planets in Vedic astrology is considered inauspicious.

from his clasp and runs away to the presence of Vēpa-chitthi, another ill-willed asura. Vēpa-chitti asks Rāahu: "Why did you release the sun from your grasp and come running to me?" Then Rāahu replies: "Had I not released the sun and run away, my head would have split into seven pieces for not following the *Buddha's* order". Just see how Rāahu ran away in the face of the *Buddha's* refuge. Yet, due to the weakness in our *saddhā* towards the *Buddha*, how much worship, offerings, exorcism, sorcery, charms and incantations do we engage in, in fear of Rāahu, Saturn or Kētu?

For the *Bhikkhu* who writes this, every moment in life is an auspicious moment, every day is a blessed day. Not because of horoscopes or auspicious times, but because of letting go of those things and placing the mind in the true refuge of the triple-gem.

Whichever matter comes forth in life, the *Bhikkhu* sees it merely as a result of *sankhāra*. That is, as results of wholesome actions and unwholesome actions committed, due to causality, by myself. There is no Rāahu or Saturn here. Simply due to the might of our unwholesome-karma, purely because of moving away from the *saddhā* towards the triple-gem, we ourselves deliberately place Rāahu, Saturn, or Kētu on our heads. So now the entire life becomes a time of misfortune, a hoodoo, or a curse. At the point where one loses the refuge of the triple-gem... yes, the entire life *is* a heap of problems.

When the *Bhikkhu* thinks of the bridegroom who, in spite of the heap of problems he already has, gone to shoulder more problems, the *Bhikkhu* is reminded of a past incident. The *Bhikkhu* was a lay person of about 30 years old at the time of this incident. I placed a marriage proposal advertisement in a weekend newspaper. The intention was to get married. At one

point in that ad I mentioned like this: "For a quiet wedding, seek a young woman who is religiously-inclined and pious". In about two weeks a plethora of reply letters were received. From those, out of a selected few I replied to one. What I mentioned in it was that: I won't have any wedding ceremony whatsoever. Instead, after the registration of the marriage, let's go to either Anuradhapura or Kataragama, make religious observances and start our life. After about a week of posting the letter to this particular person, I received a reply from her. It was a very long letter. It read like this: "You are such a capricious man. You don't recognise the aspirations of a young woman. The day that a girl child comes of age she creates an ambition. That will be her most precious aspiration. The only dream in her life. That dream is to, someday, surrounded by relatives, clad in a wedding saree, step on to a decorated wedding dais, exchange rings... A young woman lives each day bearing this beautiful dream. You are a human being who fail to recognise this dream of a young woman. What you attempted to do was to kill that dream". She had also stated that she didn't even expect a reply for her letter. By the time I had finished reading this letter I was flabbergasted. In truth, I understood that I had tried to destroy that beautiful dream a young woman has of a ceremonious wedding. What I saw was that, the distance between her and I was as vast as that between the sky and earth. The sky and the earth will never come together. That is why she had stated not to even write a reply for her letter. Upon wise reflection of the facts after having read this letter, honestly I felt happy... about how distant my thinking was from the rest of the world. It is because of the dexterity I had in me to think miles apart from the rest of the world that at this moment I live in a place so distant from the world. Yet, I am pretty sure that at this moment if she is alive she would be leading her life as a mother of several children and bearing much suffering. That day, that first meeting through

that letter turned into a parting not because of Rāahu or Saturn or Kētu, but because of the *sankhāra*. The wholesome-*sankhāra* that I had in me prevented those unwholesome-*sankhāra* from coming into fruition. For me to reach the place where I am now, it is merely the *saddhā* I had towards the *Buddha* that saved me from those dangers on that day. In the past during my life, the refuge of the *Buddha* has saved me on several occasions from dangers like this for me to reach this place where I am... That means, all this isn't a coincidence (isn't a chance-event). They are purely the results of the *sankhāra*. Now, again I recollect the bridegroom who went in that wedding car when I was on the alms round early this morning. 'Oh, dear bridegroom... if your bride too turns out to be a bride whose clinging is so intense like the above, then... may god bless you!'

Here what I referred to as 'may god bless you', my child, was to say that 'Oh, when will you ever be able to free yourself'. If the revered-laity breakaway from conventions of 'wrong view' (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) and start life with *saddhā* towards the triple-gem, what a strong and content place will they be able to steer that life to. Revered-you inherit a noble *Dhamma* that teaches the right way and the wrong way to people who live totally unmindfully by piling a mountain of hopes and getting buried under that same mountain of hopes. Search for nothing else but the association of *kalyāna-mitta* (noble friend). Listen to the *Dhamma*. Reflect wisely on the *Dhamma* that has been listened to. That, for you, will be the beginning of a fruitful journey.

Kill the suffering! If not, even if you die the suffering won't die

The *Bhikkhu* can hear a rustling sound. That sound often comes from the iguana hovering alongside the *kuṭī*. This creature is often searching for food by sniffing at the ground covered with dried foliage. Wherever it digs up the earth, it's sure to capture an earthworm, a centipede or a scorpion. The iguana kills and eats each of those creatures always with a volition of killing. Just like in human beings, in this creature too the *pañca-upādānakkhandha* (fivefold existence that are objects of clinging — i.e. corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness) forms. However, this creature is unaware of these phenomena. He has become lax¹³ (*pamāda*). Due to what reason has this laxity arisen? The reason entirely is the weakness in *sīla* in its previous life. This creature has no sense of belief in *kamma* (karma, karmic volitions) and *vipāka* (karma-result). Yet, the volition of killing forms in its mind. For every creature the iguana preys on, an *akusala*-karma (unwholesome-karma) of killing would be committed. Similarly, for every creature that gets killed by falling prey to the iguana, it is the

13 *Pamāda* refers to the laxity or belatedness (overdue) to strive to do the needful to attain freedom from suffering (i.e. opposite of 'zeal'. Zeal is considered as the foundation of all progress in the path). (see. *appamāda*).

vipāka of an unwholesome-karma that that particular creature has committed in the past. When one generates *akusala-sankhāra* (unwholesome-karma-formations), another bears the results of past *akusala-sankhāra* of its own. This is what is called the 'world'. One generates and another bears results of its own. In a world where the tear and the smile oscillate between each other, we seek only happiness.

How can it understand in this life as an iguana what it couldn't understand when it was born as a human being in a previous life? This iguana will traverse the journey of 'existence' (*bhava*) for several more eons committing unwholesome-karma and bearing results of unwholesome-karma it has committed. If you are skillful to wisely reflect upon the dangerousness of the journey of 'existence' that is hidden in this iguana's life, it will impart you the required insight to free yourself from the liability to fall into the fourfold-hells.

What revered-you tend to do first, is meditate. This is where we get it wrong. First and foremost cultivate *saddhā* in the triple-gem. Secondly, guard your *sīla*. Without completing these two factors, neither insight-meditation (*vipassanā*) nor tranquillity-meditation (*samatha*) will develop. Only after you become upright in *saddhā* in the triple-gem and in *sīla* should you turn towards meditation. If that purity in *saddhā* and *sīla* has not formed in you yet, meditation will not develop. Instead, in the name of meditation, only self-view (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*) and conceit would develop.

The problem here is, revered-you have not understood the correct meaning of the concept of establishing oneself in the *saddhā* towards triple-gem. There was a meditation instructor known to the *Bhikkhu*. He was a meditation teacher who conducts meditation classes for large gatherings. This meditation teacher wears, in a manner that is invisible from the outside, a charmed

white thread (a protection) across his abdomen. The *Bhikkhu* asked him why he was wearing this white thread on his body. This meditation teacher replies: “I have many enemy-related troubles. Why I got this thread charmed is as a protection from those”. Look, this meditation teacher doesn’t even have mere *saddhā* towards triple-gem. He lives in deception. Genuinely he doesn’t even know the fact that *saddhā* hasn’t established in him. Which is a grave misfortune. He has gotten deceived himself and deceives his followers too. All this time throughout the journey of *saṃsāra*, the biggest mistake we always did was that we didn’t recognise the true meaning of *saddhā* in the triple-gem. If one follows other rites and rituals outside of the *Dhamma*; expects protection through heretic ways associated with ‘wrong-view’; has formed doubt on the supreme qualities of the triple-gem, whether they be clergy or laity, they themselves must admit with self-sympathy that they have not yet reached *saddhā* in the triple-gem. What you have within you is a rootless-*saddhā*; a *saddhā* mixed with delusion; a *saddhā* that constantly wavers when confronted with challenges. How many hundreds of thousands of people are there throughout the society that live by making a business out of sorcery, spells, hoodoo, horoscopes and incantations; and benefit from those things? It has to be stated in the name of the *Dhamma* that all those people are living within the aforementioned challenge.

One may obtain correct understanding on the above matters by reading the *sutta*¹⁴-discourses proclaimed by the *Buddha*. However, thus becoming corrected would be one of the rarest things in the world. At the present time where you have come to encounter such a noble dispensation of the *Buddha* (the *sāsana*), revered-you must make effort to become such a rare person. In order to reach *saddhā* in the triple-gem, revered-you

14 The ‘*Sutta Pitaka*’ is the first of the three divisions of the *Tipitaka* (Pali Canon), the Pali collection of Buddhist scriptures. ‘*Sutta*’ may closely translate as ‘teachings’ of the *Buddha*.

should immediately shed all ties with rites and rituals outside of the *Dhamma* and heretic ways of seeking relief. Avoid your enemy-related troubles by having confidence in the triple-gem, by moral conduct, by loving-kindness or by generosity but nothing else. Make an effort to view the problems and obstacles life is confronted by, as merely a manifestation of *sankhāra* (karma-formations), and by using those very things as objects for wise contemplation try to develop insightful-disenchantment towards the world. I would remind you that, of all the problems, shattered hopes, grief and sorrow that the *Bhikkhu* who writes this had to face during lay life, this monkhood was its triumphant result. Problems arise in our life solely so that we can make them a blessing. Therefore, see the reality of the *Dhamma* through problems. Life is a problem to which the answer is not yet found. If that is so, you can't free yourself from problems. You are on the path heading towards curtailing birth (*jāti*). Due to problems that were confronted in life, how much would this *Bhikkhu* have cried alone during his lay life, concealed from the world? For hours, for days, how much would this *Bhikkhu* have pondered until his head hurt? How much the *Bhikkhu* would have gone to places of worship for different deities? The *Bhikkhu* isn't ashamed to mention these things. Yet, when none of these things were able to provide an answer to the problem, in the end I went forth to the Supramundane *Buddha*... to the gem-of-*Dhamma* that was proclaimed and discoursed by the utmost Venerable *Buddha*. It was only there that I realised that neither suffering nor happiness is a thing that belongs to me. That it is not something that I can have control over. That it is something that arises due to a cause. It was solely *tanhā* (craving) that caused the suffering. Be free from craving towards corporeality (*rūpa*). Then suffering would die. If craving doesn't die, even if you die, suffering would follow. Where there is suffering, it's the craving that you need to insightfully-realise. Suffering is something that can only be eradicated through insightful-realisation.

If you don't view life according to *Sankhāra*...?

Revered-all of you work with much dedication to perform meritorious deeds. Nonetheless, there is another group of people living in society, and they don't make much effort to perform meritorious activities. These revered-people think that: "We don't do anyone any wrong. We don't engage in sinful acts. Therefore, there is no need for us to perform any meritorious acts". Whilst saying this, they claim that it is only people who sin that should perform meritorious deeds. On the surface, these ideas seem to align very well with each other. However, the enemy that is hidden in these types of views and speculative opinions is 'wrong view' (*micchā-ditṭhi*). Turn around and look conscientiously at your own revered life. After being born to righteous mothers and fathers, and in a Buddhist environment, if you succumb to such views that inflict harm on you, what an enormous enmity you yourself will be inflicting upon this human life.

The *Buddha* preaches that all *sankhāra*¹⁵ (karma-formations) are 'impermanent'. *Sankhāra* means bodily-, verbal- and mental-karma-formations that form owing to 'ignorance'

15 *Sankhāra* denotes 'karma-formations' — i.e. wholesome or unwholesome volitional activity of body, speech or mind. (see. *sankhāra*).

(*avijjā*). In other words, wholesome- and unwholesome-karma committed by body, speech and mind. This means, all wholesome- and unwholesome-*sankhāra* (*kusala-* and *akusala-sankhāra*) that revered-you have committed and are yet to commit will come to fruition and expire. In a world where a vast majority of people live in 'wrong view', revered-you have received this meaningful life as a Buddhist as a result of wholesome-*sankhāra*. In a world filled with people who are blind, deaf, unable to speak or deformed, you have got a perfectly formed human body as a result of wholesome-*sankhāra*. In a world where disfigured people live, revered-you have received visually appealing looks that captivate others... in a world where many a people are stricken with illness, revered-you have got a healthy life... all this as a result of past wholesome-*sankhāra*. Revered-you have received a good social status, good parents, relatives, wife, husband and child, all this as a result of past wholesome-*sankhāra*. All things that revered-you enjoy claiming as 'mine' are simply fruits of *sankhāra* you have accumulated in the past. This eye that you have, you received as a result of a wholesome-*sankhāra*. Now this eye is gradually deteriorating. This is the nature of this entire body. This perfectly complete body you have received, is as a result of wholesome-*sankhāra*. The nature of *sankhāra* is, that they are transient (impermanent). Therefore, revered-laity, you should accumulate again and again. Revered-you have got a good wife... she is very obedient to you... she lives sharing sorrow and joy alike with you. You have got this wife owing to a wholesome-*sankhāra*. Well, had you got a nagging, tormenting wife that annoys you constantly, would you get the happiness that comes from having a wife? No. If that was the case, you may have to quarrel, go to the police, divorce... you will have to face many problems. This would be a thing that happens due to unwholesome-*sankhāra*. The cause for both this suffering and pleasure, is the past wholesome or unwholesome-

sankhāra... not a defect in the horoscope or a blunder by the matchmaker. Purely fruits of wholesome and unwholesome-karma committed and accumulated by yourself in the past.

Like with wholesome-*sankhāra* that give you pleasures, unwholesome-*sankhāra* that give you suffering too will cease after bearing fruit. For you to have pleasures in this life means the fact that you are using up what you yourself have accumulated. To have those pleasures, the stock of wholesome-*sankhāra* is getting depleted. What is being used up, you have to accumulate again and again. Otherwise in the next birth you will become poor and menial. Therefore, revered-you must beware of the utter lie, the 'wrong view', that says "because we don't commit sin, we needn't commit merits". By engaging in meritorious activities again and again, replenish more and more of wholesome-*sankhāra* that have been used up. Rise up by suppressing the results of unwholesome-*sankhāra* and the suffering that revered-you encounter, with the power of wholesome-*sankhāra* amassed by engaging in meritorious activities continuously.

The *Buddha* proclaims that, if a tear drop falls from your eyes at this present moment, it is purely because you were the reason for someone else's tears in a previous birth; if you are laughing with joy at this moment, it is only because you have given others joy in a previous birth. If that is so, then the cause for both your laughter and tears is your past *sankhāra*. Like this, leisurely, observe life according to the doctrine of cause and effect. Observing thus is essential for you, to develop unshakable-*saddhā* towards the *Dhamma*. One who lacks belief in these phenomena, even if he gets a human life again, would become subject to 'wrong view'. In addition to that, he will be born into an impoverished state as a result of his indifference to offer *dāna* (almsgiving) caused by his lack of belief in karma

and *vipāka* (karma-result). The following note is about a person who got himself a birth like this.

He was a gentleman who led a middle class life. He was married, had children and grandchildren. He never observed the precepts of *sīla*. Never went to offer alms. His philosophy was “I don't commit any wrong. Therefore, there is no need for me to perform meritorious activities”. This person did help other people... but it was done without the belief of karma and karma-results. Therefore, those righteous things he did became things done just to yield a mere momentary joy. This person dies after living for about 65 years. After his death, a monk, through the noble *samādhi* (state of deep concentration of the mind), aims to sight what kind of place in which he has caused himself to be reborn. Thereby what the monk envisions is a dark-complexioned child born in a poverty-stricken hut. From appearance, the monk assumed that that child was of Tamil nationality. Which means, as a result of defiant opinions he himself formed with disobedience, this person forfeited the *Buddha's* great *sāsana* (the *Buddha's* dispensation of the way things truly are). Now he has already fallen to ‘wrong view’. When can he ever recover from this tragedy? It's only a dream now. Having born an heir to such a meaningful valuable *Dhamma*, as a consequence of trying to interpret the *Dhamma* according to one's own wishes, he completely forfeited the *Buddha's* great *sāsana*. Revered-you must avoid interpreting according to your own ideologies the *Dhamma* that had been proclaimed by the Supramundane *Buddha* through perfect enlightenment. If that happens, the consequence of it is that you will lose the *sāsana* and become of the ‘wrong view’.

Revered-you can see the manner in which the essence of the *sāsana* is fast disappearing. For instance, it is very seldom in the present-day that the quality of the *Dhamma* that ‘*Dhamma*

is directly visible' (*sandiṭṭhika* – real, actual, visible by self) is spoken of. Furthermore, instead of seeing the *dukkha* (suffering), which is the first of the Four Noble Truths – that is the essence of the *Dhamma*, there is a tendency in society of having a preference to see 'pleasures'. As this tendency grows more and more, what do we notice in the world? We notice an increase in that 'wrong view'. We notice an increase in Buddhists who, devoid of *saddhā* towards the triple-gem, bear views and speculative opinions. These are not things to get upset about. These are causalities. Any person, may it be clergy or laity, who defies the true essence of the *Dhamma* or misinterprets the dispensation of the *Buddha* will not inherit the protection from the *sāsana* after this life. They will inherit the fires of 'existence' (*bhava*) that encompasses the darkness of 'wrong view'. The more you distance yourself from the essence of the *Dhamma*, more the 'wrong view' will increase in the world and less the Buddhists with *saddhā* in the triple-gem will be. Some revered-people regretfully complain that "Sinhala-Buddhist mothers limit the number of children they will have to only two children. Whereas, Muslim and Tamil mothers will have many children and as a result of this, the population of Buddhists decreases gradually". Revered-you shouldn't panic. These are results of cause and effect. Those who are born to Tamil and Muslim mothers are simply those who were previously born as Buddhists and forfeited their inheritance to the *sāsana* as a consequence of holding on to views and speculative opinions that defy the essence of this noble *Dhamma*. Rather than thinking of the above developments in accordance with the *Dhamma*, if revered-you try to think of them based on views and opinions and as a result develop hatred, then *your* next inheritance too could be such a womb.

The world will remain in the nature that the world remains in. But revered-you come to the *Dhamma's* nature. Be

a male or a female lay-adherent who has sought the refuge of the triple-gem. View life with the belief in karma and karma-results. Then, you will be able to see that all Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, Buddhist and Christian wombs are 'suffering'. The world is hazardous. Handle it with extreme care. Notice the fact that the world is one and the same as the *pañca-upādānakkhandha* (fivefold existence that are objects of clinging — i.e. corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness). If you, who at this moment have a birth certificate with 'Sinhala' as nationality and 'Buddhism' as religion, get into views and opinions that are inappropriate to the essence of the *Dhamma*, exactly nine months after your death you can be an owner of a birth certificate with nationality and religion as Hindu, Muslim or Christian. All of these are the phenomena of causality of the *sankhāra*. There isn't any error anywhere. Although you may make mistakes, the *Dhamma* will not make mistakes. The *Dhamma* doesn't recognise a difference between Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, or Muslim. To deliver the verdict based on the nature of the *sankhāra*, is the essence of the *Dhamma*. Although, at this great moment revered-you Buddhists have a wonderful privilege more than anyone else. That is, having the inheritance to a great *Dhamma* of a great master who was perfectly enlightened about the entire trifold-world through his *Buddha*-omniscience.

Dump the entire world into one lot and you view the world by coming to the Venerable Lord *Buddha*'s lot.

The world which is seen by the world is very complicated. In that world, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Muslim, merits, demerits, good, bad, peace, war... all these things exist. The world that is discoursed by the *Buddha* is very much simpler than this. Even if we take the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths (*ariya-sacca*) or the doctrine of *paticca-samuppāda* (dependent-origination), these doctrines make simple the world which has

been made complicated by 'ignorance' (*avijjā*). How one clings to the world owing to the singular cause known as 'craving' and how one completely liberates oneself from the world by overcoming that singular cause known as 'craving', has been very meaningfully explained. Although revered-you remain bound to the entire world by the cause known as 'craving', the *Buddha* brings that complex thing known as the 'world' into the five things – known as corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness – that forms from within your own self. The *Buddha* brings the mechanism of the entire world into the fivefold existence that are objects of clinging (*pañca-upādānakkhandha*).

Start from the point where you left off in the previous life

The *Buddha* who preached the *Dhamma* to you in such a simple manner, was once in a forest comprising of Atteriya¹⁶ trees. The *Buddha* took a handful of leaves that had fallen on the ground and said: “If the extent of the *Dhamma* I have realised is equivalent to the amount of leaves in this entire forest, o monks, the extent of the *Dhamma* I have preached to you is equivalent only to the amount of leaves that I hold in my hand”. If that is the case, out of the entire *Dhamma* the *Buddha* had realised, what a tiny amount had the *Buddha* discoursed to the world. When such a little *Dhamma* that is precisely relevant for the path for your attainment of *Nibbāna* has been discoursed in such a simple manner, still our people ignore it and get entangled in so much views, opinions and rites and rituals. Then just imagine, if the *Buddha* had discoursed to us at least half of what the *Buddha* had realised, how much harm would we have inflicted upon ourselves? It is solely due to a *Buddha*’s faculty of great-compassion that the *Buddha* discourses only those facts that are absolutely necessary for ceasing the process of ‘becoming’

16 ‘Atteriya’ is the Sinhala name of a tropical evergreen tree commonly found in Sri Lanka, presumed to be the same verity as that referred to as Orange jessamine, Chinese box.

(*bhava*) and nothing else. As a consequence of holding on to the ideology “if one doesn’t commit any wrong, then there is no need for him to perform meritorious activities” as was mentioned in the previous article, at this very moment that person lives as a human with ‘wrong view’ (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). In this life he has no clue as to the fact that in his previous life he used to be a Buddhist (one with ‘right view’ – one who has come in contact with the truth of the way things really are). Is there any more destruction than this that someone could inflict upon himself? One inflicts this much harm upon oneself simply due to the *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (self-view) that he develops as ‘I’, ‘me’. Revered-people! You, who have performed countless meritorious deeds in the previous life to gain this worthy human life by rising beyond the fourfold-hells filled with endless suffering and countless inhabitants, must think leisurely for a moment!! There is a particular point at which you have left off in the previous life. That point where you left off is a very pure place. Pure in the sense, it’s pure in *dāna* (generosity), *sīla* (morality) and *saddhā* (confidence, faith). Now you reflect according to the law of causality. Revered-you must assume that you were a human being in the previous life... that you were none other than a Sinhala-Buddhist. You must recollect in your mind how you guarded vehemently the precepts of *sīla* you observed, clad in white, right until the ripe old age of 85 or 90.

Revered-you must reflect how you heeded to the advice and instructions of the great-*Sangha*... how you offered alms to the *Sangha*. While performing these *kusala-sankhāra* (wholesome-karma-formations) what would you have wished for? You would have wished to be reborn only in this land of the *Dhamma*... to again become a male or female lay-adherent of the *Buddha* in this land of the *Dhamma*. Revered-you, both young and old, must be skillful to resurface that memory that

has subsided. Then you will be able to start again from where you left off. If not, what you tend to do is to start afresh from the beginning. If it's a young man or a young woman, he or she tends to think that they should wait until old age to offer *dāna*, to observe precepts of *sīla* and to practice the path of the *Dhamma*. Do not allow any room for that wrongful idea. Even at your young age, become a male or female lay-adherent clad in white. It's only then that in this life you will not have been lax (*pamāda*). Revered-you must firmly believe that in the previous life you weren't a Buddhist who were caught in the clutches of views and ideologies. Had that been the case, due to causality, you would have been born as a person with 'wrong view'. Therefore, revered-you, be assured through your own self that in the previous life you certainly were a Buddhist who had sought refuge in the triple-gem. Make sure that, either due to your association with unworthy men or due to your disobedience, you don't confine in views or ideologies or wrong rites and rituals the inheritance of the *Dhamma* that came along protecting your refuge. That would be equivalent to you destroying what you yourself built thus far.

The following note will help you make more meaning out of the aforementioned.

There is a particular lady living in this country who belongs to the elite class. She is extremely wealthy and powerful. She is a woman of superior status, like royalty. A monk through the noble *samādhi* (state of deep concentration of the mind) aims to see her previous birth. The monk envisions that in her previous life too she has been a human woman. The monk had envisioned that in her previous life she was a woman clad in white, both at a young age and also at a ripe old age. What this indicates is that from the time she was young right up to the time of her death she had been a person who

had made 'morality' (i.e. abiding by the precepts of *sīla*) her life. Now revered-you must see the present life of hers according to the law of causality. In this life she received this grandeur not because someone else has given it to her, but because of good returns of the morality and virtues she practiced in her previous life. This is not grandeur that was given to her either by a deity, a *brahma* (a superior celestial) or else by her husband. Instead, it's the power of morality and virtues that she herself guarded with belief in karma and *vipāka* (karma-result). This woman of grandeur who happily experiences in this life the wholesome-*sankhāra* that she herself accumulated in the previous life, although has now already spent about half of her life, so far, it does not seem that she has started her life from the point where she left off in the previous life. Because of her grandeur, she simply stops at experiencing the returns of wholesome-*sankhāra* she gained in the previous life with the help of morality. By guarding morality with her life, she had not made volitions for renouncing sensual desire (*nekkhamma*). Instead, she had made volitions of gaining future comforts in the realm of 'existence' (*bhava*). Having received the fruits of such volitions, and as a result, having become lax to strive to do the needful to attain *Nibbāna*, she now experiences the dangerousness of the process of 'existence'. That is, she now experiences the precariousness (insecureness) of wholesome-*sankhāra*. I state this yet again. *Sankhāra* (karma-formations) are extremely dangerous. Handle with extreme care. Recognise correctly the right and the wrong path. If revered-you make use of wholesome-*sankhāra* without being mindful of the phenomena of causality, those very same wholesome-*sankhāra* will pave the way for you to fall into the fourfold-hells. By reflecting wisely on the aforementioned, revered-you must interrelate and see according to the phenomena of causality the wealth, the power and the appearance that is present in your

fortunate life. Identify in accordance with the *Dhamma* what has caused them to form. Start this life from the point where revered-you left off in the previous life. For sure, revered-you would have left off in previous life clad in white attire. If that is so, in this life at least at a young age become a male or female lay-adherent clad in white. Respect the *Dhamma* which helped you get this utmost valuable human life. Revered-you tend to think that you have gained this prosperity due to the education, the high positions, the properties, or from family inheritance, from your parents or from your ancestors. You may have heard some people say that I came to this position not with the help of anyone else, but from my own hard work and education gained in spite of so many difficulties. It is indeed true that revered-you have reached this position having overcome so many difficulties. It's an absolute truth. Yet, there is a hidden phenomenon conditioning all these things ... a phenomenon of causality... and that is the strength of the wholesome-*sankhāra* that you have originated in the previous life. Therefore, revered-you must show your gratitude towards the triple-gem. Show your gratitude towards *sīla* and *dāna*. Be a grateful human being. Do not betray your own life by providing any room in your life for 'wrong-view', immorality and stinginess... do not be ungrateful. By meaningfully developing the path of the *Dhamma*, be a wise esteemed person who have reaped the maximum benefit of the wholesome-*sankhāra* that you have accrued in the past. In this journey of 'becoming' don't ever get lost in the fourfold-hells. It is simply for this supreme objective that revered-you have received this life. Therefore, while recollecting that past memory (i.e. where you left off), without being lax to strive, have the zeal to strive to practice the *Dhamma*. Think that all *sankhāra*, whether it's wholesome or unwholesome, are impermanent. The *Buddha* has discoursed that, in order to attain the bliss of the realisation of *Nibbāna* in

this life itself, in order to be free from the liability to fall into the fourfold-hells, revered-you should be complete in three things. These three things are *saddhā*, *virīya* (energy) and *hiri-ottappa* (moral-shame and moral-dread). *Hiri-ottappa* also means *sīla*. Revered-you must cultivate ‘shame’ and ‘dread’ so as to not fall into the fourfold-hells ever again. This is where you need to cultivate *virīya* that is resolute like iron. If not, being overpowered by sensuous desire if you provide excuses such as “I don’t have enough perfections (*paramī*)” or “Still there is a long way to go in *samsāra* for me to get a birth that is rich of the 3 wholesome root-conditions¹⁷ and less in greed, hatred and delusion”... then, these are just things said as a result of lacking in *saddhā* and *virīya*, as opposed to the elucidation the *Buddha* has given. Nevertheless, there are certain incidents that occurred during the time of the *Buddha* that confirms the above thinking. However, here we should be humble enough to notice that why we seek excuses such as these is merely because we are weak in *saddhā*, *virīya* and *hiri-ottappa*. The above reasons we line up as excuses simply denote the length and the breadth of our defilements, rather than a fault in the quality of the *Dhamma* of being ‘directly visible’ (*sandiṭṭhika*). Why the *Buddha* has discoursed that, “just as how a person whose head has caught fire tirelessly fights to douse it, so must you strive to free yourself from the fires of this process of existence”, is to teach us that it is that much dangerous to wander in the process of ‘existence’ any further. Fear the suffering and agony that is embedded in that thought. Have belief in the *Dhamma*. Then, the courage that you so far lacked will suddenly arise, for you to piercingly see through the *Māra*-phenomenon called ‘the mind’.

17 The 3 wholesome-roots are, [1] *alobha* – ‘greedless’ (or having generosity); [2] *adosa* – ‘devoid of hate’ (or having loving-kindness); [3] *amoha* – ‘undeluded’ (or having wisdom (*paññā*)).

Merits and Demerits follow us – (I) **(May every driver read this)**

There was a family that the *Bhikkhu* got to know about two years before writing this article. The members of this family were people who had much respect for the *Sangha* and inclined towards meritorious deeds and the *Dhamma*. The only son in this family, when he was around 15 years old and still schooling, died in a motor accident. The accident occurred when he was on his way to visit relatives on a luxury inter-city coach (bus) travelling on Galle Road (a main highway in the country). This child died with severe injuries while he was still inside the bus. After exactly one year and eight months since this accident occurred, one day when in a *samādhī* the *Bhikkhu* aims to sight this child. What the *Bhikkhu* envisioned is stated below.

What the *Bhikkhu* envisioned at first is how this child lived in his previous life. This child's previous life was envisioned as a man who was about 70 years old. He is wearing a sarong and what appears to be a collarless shirt, like a singlet. This shirt is not one that had buttonholes stitched on it. You might have seen this type of shirt worn by men long years ago that has an opening on either side and with cords attached so as to tie two knots on the sides. This type of clothing was not worn

by the elite or upper class. It was only their servants or menials who wore this type of clothing. That is, people who do menial work for the upper class. The boy who died in a motor accident too was a person who worked for an upper class family in his previous life. This child was his reincarnation after passing away having lived well over the age of 70 years.

Now you might have got an idea as to who this boy was in his previous life. Thereafter what the *Bhikkhu* aimed to envision was where the child had been reborn after dying in an accident. He gained rebirth as a deity of a primary state lingering around the humans. The reason why he was referred to as a primary deity was because these were not imperial deities who live in higher celestial realms. It was a type of celestial existence that lived among human beings due to having clung to certain attachments in the human-realm. Having seen the attire of this deity, the *Bhikkhu* thought of calling him 'Baby deity'.

He had the appearance of a 15 year old average plump young boy, wore a pair of white trousers up to his knees and a wide-necked collarless white shirt. He also wore a white hat.

When the *Bhikkhu* saw the above appearance of his attire, the image that came to mind was that of someone being graduated at a graduation ceremony. The only difference was the short length of his trousers. The dead child's mother too was a teacher in a prominent school in the capital. This child too was a student studying in a prominent school in the capital. When correlating all this, it can be assumed that perhaps at the moment of his death the clinging that 'I will study well and become a graduate in the future' may have surfaced, and perhaps this deity-form might have arisen according to that clinging. When the *Bhikkhu* aimed to sight both this child's previous life and the life that followed, the *Bhikkhu* was able to envision the karma

that caused this child to die of such cruel death in a sudden accident at such a young age. What the *Bhikkhu* envisioned was a very sharp machete-type knife. It was a machete with extreme sharpness that was usually used by those villagers to clear bushland. An orange coloured snake was being cut into pieces with this sharp machete. It was the *vipāka* (karma-result) of the karma of cutting this snake into pieces and killing it that caused this child to die in a motor accident in this life.

Now you must wisely interrelate the aforementioned 'directly-visible' (*sandiṭṭhika*) *Dhamma*, which the *Bhikkhu* experienced in a noble *samādhi*. Why? because this is not just a story. If you genuinely want to end the suffering of this journey of *saṃsāra* (cycle of rebirth), then this story consists of an object for contemplation necessary for it. Not only that, if you need to transcend this journey of *saṃsāra* filled with suffering, then what you should first cultivate in you is the fear about *saṃsāra*. The one who does not see the frightfulness of *saṃsāra* tends to make the *saṃsāra* 'mine'... he makes the *saṃsāra* his wife, son and daughter. He can only perceive pleasures in it. Therefore, the above story will help you immensely to develop fear about *saṃsāra*.

Look now! This 15 year old child, who died in a sudden accident, who studied in a prominent school, in his previous life, was living as a menial worker working for an upper class family. Once this servant died after having lived for about 70 years, he gets reborn as a son in another mother's womb. Look! Whom did these parents love this much, calling him 'my son'? Whom had he been in his previous life? Wasn't it an old man of about 70 years who died and got reincarnated thus? Oh, God! Then whom have you been nourishing and appeasing thus? Don't you get the thought that 'Oh, it's that old man that I have thus nourished and appeased... it's that man who worked as a

servant for that upper class family'? Likewise, revered-people, whom would the infant that is getting petted on your lap have been in the previous life? Perhaps it could have been an old grandpa or grandma who lived somewhere else, or perhaps a deity, an animal or even a preta-ghost. If that is so, whom are you appeasing and petting thus, calling him 'my child, my child...'? What you are petting thus is delusion, deception and misunderstanding. Now, after reading this revered-you must not think that there is a continuing 'self' (i.e. the opposite of *anattā* – non-self) thinking that it was the same person who existed in the previous life that was reborn in this life. Instead, try to see it according to the doctrine of causality... that it is a phenomenon arisen due to *sankhāra* (karma-formation) which in turn has arisen due to *avijjā* (ignorance).

There was a gentleman of the elite class who lived in this country. He had died and been reincarnated as a pig. So who is it that drinks milk from that sow's breasts? It's true that it is a piglet. But that piglet in his previous life was that gentlemen of the elite. Revered-people! The more and more man moves away from *sīla*, the percentage of them being reincarnated in the next life as animals of animal mothers is extremely high. The more and more the killing of other men or killing of animals or abetting such killings occur at the hands of man, in order to endure the appropriate karma-result for such karma, those committing such *akusala*-karma (unwholesome-karma) are reborn as types of animals killed for meat by slitting their throats — such as cattle, pigs, goats and chickens. Now let's go back to that child's story...

It was mentioned earlier in this note about the karma that was committed in the previous life that caused this child to die of a sudden accident in such a cruel manner at such a young age. This particular reason will be very important to you.

In his previous life that servant who worked for the upper class family kills an orange coloured snake by cutting it into pieces with a sharp machete. Just as how he kills that snake by cutting it into pieces, in the same way, in this life the boy is killed in a motor accident with his body fractured into pieces. Look how powerful the unwholesome-karma of killing a snake turned out to be.

Here what becomes more dominant is the volition (*cetanā*). Because when considering the colour of this snake, it doesn't seem like it was a brutal, venomous snake. It was more like a harmless Rat Snake or a Python (Pimbura). If he so desired, he could have picked it up with a stick and thrown it far away without killing it. But due to the volition of ill-will, hatred, malice that arose in him, that harmless snake was cut into pieces and killed. He may have had much enjoyment seeing the snake struggling in excruciating pain when being cut into pieces with the sharp machete. What a lot of men and children are there in today's society who get an enjoyment out of inflicting cruelty on animals? Even breaking off the tail of a gecko and getting an enjoyment out of watching that piece of tail jump around...

It is true that we get an unfortunate enjoyment out of it. But someday we are bound to have to bear the karma-result of those karma in the form of results where our body gets broken into pieces. Like this, if we consider by interrelating the karma and the karma-result, consider how many men or children there are in the present society that die or lose limbs or get injured due to exceeding number of vehicular accidents or due to violence inflicted with sharp weapons? What is it that these thousands of patients treated in hospitals or emergency wards are experiencing? What they are experiencing is a karma-result of an unwholesome-karma of killing animals or cruelty

inflicted on animals that they themselves committed previously in *samsāra*.

We blame drivers saying that the speed at which they drive is excessive. We blame them for driving under the influence of alcohol. We blame them saying they disobey the road rules. These are causes too. But such causes or volitions arise in man, solely to create the environment necessary for karma-results of another's unwholesome-karma to come to fruition. When one drives fast due to his desire to make money... when another drives while being intoxicated with alcohol... and by doing so when they both create new karma, break their precepts of *sīla*, become lax (*pamāda*) in *sīla*... due to his act, someone else experiences the unwholesome karma-result of an identical karma that the latter had committed previously in *samsāra*. For karma-result of one's unwholesome-karma to give effect, although unknowingly, those who commit unwholesome-karma help each other. It is this reciprocity of helping each other that we see in the present society. As the karma-result of one person's past unwholesome-karma give effect, another person creates new unwholesome-karma. Why is it so? — it is to repeatedly create suffering for the man who has not yet come to *sammā-diṭṭhi* (Right View).

Who was it that helped the karma-result of this 15 year old child's unwholesome-karma of killing animals in the previous life to come to fruition? It was the driver of the luxury bus that the child was travelling in. As the driver became lax in *sīla*, he became absent in mindfulness and as a result drove the bus at a dangerous speed, and that's what caused the child's death. If that driver was someone who was established in *sīla*, then mindfulness would prevail in him... moral-shame and moral-dread (*hiri-ottappa*) would be present in him. If that was the case, he would know what the speed is... what the limit is. Then he wouldn't have driven the bus at a dangerous speed

with a greed (*tanhā*) to earn money. If as a result of you being absent in mindfulness someone collides with, or gets run over by, the vehicle you drive and gets killed or become disabled for life or a family of children become destitute, then will you be able to forget this tragedy that occurred because of you? However much you try to forget, such memory comes to haunt you. And because of it, there is a chance that one may tend to become an alcoholic... and thereby amplify the unwholesome-karma more and more. Someday, at the moment of death this incident will spring to mind. The mind soaked in ignorance is proficient in reminding you of such serious unwholesome-karma at the moment of death. Then you die with a hateful mind. The *Buddha* discourses that one who dies with a hateful mind is bound to be reborn in hell-realms. Look! If you get 10 more passengers on your bus by driving really fast, you might be able to earn a mere one thousand Rupees more. But the unwholesome-karma you accumulate as a result of your greed for that thousand Rupees will make you inherit a suffering that is eons long. By driving the vehicle fast if you reach your destination an hour early, you might have a rest for that extra hour. Yet, if an accident occurs at your hands as a result of that high speed, due to the karma-result of that unwholesome-karma you will have to linger in laxity in the fourfold-hells without rest for many eons. Even if you get a human life, it will be a life with a short life span and with an abundance of sickness. If with wise reflection (or, wise attention – *yoniso-manasikāra*) you open your eyes and look, focus your ears and observe, you will be able to see and hear these experiences throughout the society. How many are the men and children who die at such an early age? How many are the people who suffer with sicknesses? At the same time let's see the other side of this. How many are the men who kill animals? How many are the men who inflict cruelty upon animals? Look how both sides have reconciled. These are exactly the phenomena of cause and effect that the Supramundane Lord *Buddha* has discoursed.

Merits and Demerits follow us – (II)

At the time of writing this article the *Bhikkhu* resides in a forest monastery in the Rajarata¹⁸ region in the North-Central Province. To the *kuṭī* in which the *Bhikkhu* currently resides, which is situated on higher grounds of a rock mountain, the lake at the foot of the rock mountain is clearly visible. The lake is somewhat dried-up as it is the drought season. Around 8 o'clock last night, the sound of a gunshot was heard echoing through the entire mountain range. This was an ordinary thing in this area. Hunters shoot the animals that come in search of water to quench their thirst. They cast fishnets in the lake throughout the night and stir the lake to agitate the fish to get them entangled in the net. About three weeks ago, one day when a monk who resides in a *kuṭī* further away in the monastery was coming on the alms round to the meals-hall at 8 o'clock in the morning, by the footpath in the forest along which the monk came, two men had been slaughtering and skinning a shot wild boar. As the monk was passing by they had kept butchering the animal without even taking notice of the monk. The monk had silently kept walking to the meals-hall. Having slaughtered this wild boar, they might consume the meat for about a week. Or, having

18 'Rajarata', which loosely translates as 'the country (area) under the direct administration of the King', is one of the historical regions of Sri Lanka consisting of several ancient cities and historical ruins.

sold the meat they will earn two or three thousand Rupees at best. A single brutal killing of an animal committed in this manner just to eat tastefully for a mere week, or to earn a mere two or three thousand Rupees, will accrue a massive amount of *akusala*-karma (unwholesome-karma). And that unwholesome-karma will cause the next rebirth to be somewhere in hell where the suffering is endless. And that suffering will last not just for a mere week or two, but for eons. In case they are reborn to an animal mother, they are bound to get killed by a human. When the *Bhikkhu* was staying in this same monastery about two years ago, a female elephant had been shot dead in a nearby paddy field. The reason as to why it got shot was that it had come to destroy a banana plantation. It had been pregnant. Amidst the pain caused by the shooting she had even delivered the premature elephant calf that was in her womb. Both the mother and the elephant calf had died. Just see what a horrible *vipāka* (karma-result) of a karma committed in *saṃsāra* that these two animals are enduring? At an instance like this, we only consider the unwholesome-karma committed by the man who shot these animals. If we only see thus, then we are incomplete in our consideration. Here there are two phenomena taking place — a past unwholesome-karma bearing fruit and a new unwholesome-karma being committed. The cause for suffering of both parties, is that they have become lax (*pamāda*) in *sīla* (morality). The helpless man who shot the elephant is a person lax in *sīla*. For that reason he had no clear comprehension of what to do and what not to do. For a banana plantation that isn't even worth five thousand Rupees at best, he committed two brutal animal-killings that will make him liable to endure suffering in hell for numerous eons. At his dying moment, this helpless man may forget his own son born of his blood, but *Māra* will definitely remind him of this brutal animal-killing. The unwholesome volition associated with such karma, is that powerful.

There is one particular instance where the unwholesome-karma of killing an animal is not so powerful. Last week, wanting to sweep the veranda in the row of *kuṭī* situated in the lower section of the monastery, the *Bhikkhu* picked up the broom that was lying around in the veranda. As the *Bhikkhu* picked it up he saw a snake coiled under the broom. It was nicely coiled amidst the warmth of the coir and the coolness of the floor. The *Bhikkhu* called one of the lay-caretakers that was there and said “Sir, there is a snake here, please throw him into the forest”. Upon seeing the snake the caretaker says: “Venerable Sir, this snake is of one of the most venomous kinds living in this area”. He told the *Bhikkhu* to stay at a distance from this snake because it jumps forward and bites. Then he picked the snake up with a long stick and threw it into the forest. Each time he picked the snake up with the stick, it jumped forward to bite. That was the hatred, anger and ill-will that snake has practiced throughout *samsāra*. This creature didn’t get that quality from its mother or father. It was something he himself has cultivated throughout *samsāra*. While throwing this snake away the caretaker, who was also attached to the security forces, told the *Bhikkhu* that previously there had been four venomous snakes of the same kind within close proximity to this place and he had killed all four of them.

As far as the *Bhikkhu* knew, this caretaker was not someone who kills animals. So the *Bhikkhu* asked him why he killed those snakes. He said he killed those snakes because they might bite and cause harm to monks residing in the monastery or to lay devotees present. The caretaker who killed these snakes was not someone residing in this monastery. In doing so, an animal-killing might occur at his hands... breaking of a precept of *sīla* might be committed by him... a mind (thought) of anger, hatred or ill-will might form in him. But immediately after or immediately before that mind arose and passed away,

a mind of loving-kindness too arises in him thinking that: “Oh! this snake might bite the venerable monks... the venerable monks might fall ill... the venerable monks might perish... the snake might bite lay devotees”.

Look! Right next to that unwholesome (*akusala*) mind of animal-killing, a powerful wholesome (*kusala*) mind of loving-kindness too formed in him. In an instance like this, the karma-result of that unwholesome-karma of killing an animal may not be so powerful. Now let's go back right to the beginning of the story [refers to the preceding article]. It was a harmless looking snake that the 15 year old boy in his previous birth, when he was a menial worker doing stoop labour for an upper class family, kills with a sharp machete. He may have had enough opportunity to stay clear of this creature, or to pick it up using a stick and throw it away. But due to the intensity of the volition of killing an animal that formed in him, he ended up committing a massive unwholesome-karma. Regardless of whether the animal that is being killed is big or small, if the volition of killing is powerful, then the strength at which the unwholesome-karma comes to fruition is greater. And that is the very reason why this child, as the karma-result of cutting that harmless snake into pieces and killing it in his previous life, in this life, meets with an accident while travelling in a bus, has his body fractured into pieces and dies an untimely death. If the unwholesome-karma of killing a snake in a previous life can come to fruition in such a dangerous manner, then you must remain with a good understanding of this fact when carrying out your activities. Because among some revered-people in society there is a myth that when a small creature like an ant or a mosquito is killed or when pain is inflicted upon such small creatures, those actions would not bear karma-results for the doer.

In areas of the dry zone, cattle is found in large herds. For the purpose of verification of ownership of the cattle, the owner's name is tattooed on their skin. Such tattooing is performed by burning the name in large letters into the hide, starting from the neck right up to the tail. Men who do this kind of things don't even consider how much pain that animal endures due to their actions. If people who do this kind of unwholesome-karma get reborn as human beings by any chance, they tend to get their entire body burnt either by way of spilling the kettle of boiling water, or an explosion of a gas tank, or a bomb explosion. They will die with that agony itself and end up in hell. Why some people set fire to their own body and die, is due to such cruelty inflicted upon beings.

If revered-you suppose that an animal-killing or an animal cruelty may occur at your hands, or because of you, then steer clear of such place or instance. It doesn't matter whether it's even a mosquito. When it's getting dark in the evening you might be sitting in the outdoors. If at such place you will have to kill mosquitos as you get bitten by them, then light a mosquito-deterrent incense-coil, or use a mosquito-protection net. If you are unable to do either of those things, then stay away from such place. See that the momentary pleasure you get from smacking a mosquito entails a long-lasting harsh adversity. Whatever big or small animal you meet that could harm you, know that that animal is *Māra*. The *Buddha* taught that wherever there is *rūpa* (corporeality), there is *Māra*. That means, because of this animal you may even have to endure a suffering that lasts for eons in the fourfold-hells. Aren't you doing all these meritorious activities to escape, or to liberate from, *Māra*? So, escape the trap of *Māra* that confronts you in the guise of an animal. Steer clear of that trap of *Māra*. Then what you are steering clear of is 'suffering' (*dukkha*). It is he who is skillful to avoid 'suffering', who will someday attain realisation of the 'suffering'. It is

the *sīla* that provides you the vigour and energy to do this. Therefore, guard your precepts of *sīla* more than your life. Your life that you pledge against the *sīla*, belongs to ‘impermanence’ and ‘suffering’. The *sīla* that you are guarding by pledging your life that is vested in impermanence and suffering, belongs to the practice of escaping the suffering. That means, the singular path leading to the freedom from the fourfold-hells.

Look at the animal world abundant in diversity that is remarkably beautiful yet exceedingly harsh. The animal world, both in water and on land, is the world of those who failed to abide by the precepts of *sīla* in their previous lives. Although it’s the world of those who didn’t honour the precepts of *sīla*, its beauty and colourfulness represents the karma-result of the wholesome-karma of *dāna* (generosity, almsgivings) those beings had performed in their previous lives. The extent of its harshness denotes the intensity of their braking of the precepts of *sīla*. Its diversity denotes the complexity of their unwholesome volitions.

Look! Life, an animal life, is such an illusion, a deception. It’s as though an acute unwholesome karma-result is wrapped in a picturesque wrapping paper. It’s just like that mind of yours that encourages taking the life of another... that abets breaking the precepts of *sīla*. In fact there is a ‘pleasure’ in breaking the precepts of *sīla*. Yet, you never see the unwholesome karma-result that is wrapped using that wrapper called ‘pleasure’. Because the wrapper is that much colourful.

As and when a mind (thought) that doesn’t honour the *sīla* arises, or a mind that encourages the killing of another or inflicting cruelty upon beings arises, revered-you must see that a mind means a suffering... that a suffering means a mind. Then that mind will become impermanent (the mind will pass away). If that doesn’t happen, leisurely reflect again and again

the same object of contemplation. When you contemplate thus, a state of *samādhi* will arise in your mind. That *samādhi* is the reward of the *sīla*. It is the eye through which you see that the world is suffering. This *samādhi* arose in you not by sitting cross-legged meditating for hours, but by observing the mind. It arose by seeing that the mind that forms to abet killings, is a cause for suffering. The *samādhi* arose due to the *sīla* that gains strength both when the mind that inherits suffering is being let go of, and when you repeatedly contemplate that mind is suffering. Revered-you needn't go in search of *samādhi*. Instead, be absolutely complete in *sīla* and become absolutely truthful. It is within that completeness that *samādhi* forms.

It may not have happened as fast as writing this note. But if you have the genuine want and the energy (*virīya*) to fully liberate from all suffering of *samsāra*, then it will be an easy task for you.

Now let's go back to the beginning of the story [refers to the preceding article]. The life as a deity with an appearance of a child, is the lifeform that 15 year old boy received after he died in a motor accident. The appearance of this 'Baby deity' was described at the beginning of the article. This celestial form was something that had arisen due to attachment (clinging) to certain things in this human realm itself. When a boy as young as 15 years gets killed in such an unsympathetic way, a powerful unwholesome volition won't arise in him as his last mind (death-consciousness) at his dying moment. The following example may make it easier for you to understand this.

Let's say an adult attacks another adult. As the attack takes place, so many unwholesome minds (thoughts) – such as ill will, hatred, anger or revenge – will arise in the mind of the

one being attacked. But if someone hits a small child, that child will either start crying or scream in fear saying that it hurts. At that point, it's a very helpless and innocent volition that arises in the child. In this child who got killed in the motor accident, it may have been a very innocent and equanimous mind that arose as his last mind (death-consciousness) at his dying moment. That may have been why he got that deity-form that had the appearance of a child. While remaining in that deity-form, maybe he is happy by making sense-contact through his celestial mind with the parents, home, school, relatives and friends he desired in his previous life. He may be getting pleased by those things. He may be deriving joy out of seeing the meritorious deeds his former parents perform. Or perhaps he may be conflicting with these phenomena. Anyhow, this child who died in the motor accident was a fortunate child. Because, at this moment, gaining a celestial-form like this without falling into the fourfold-hells, is a privilege. Yet, it's not a privilege that is praise worthy.

This note will end here. There is a story of three lives here. You must interrelate and apply this story of three lives for the betterment of your own life.

No point letting flowers remain on plants. Pick the flowers and make an offering to the *Buddha*. But just by offering flowers, its real meaning does not occur. Observe the fact that those flowers perish, and interrelate that quality of impermanence to your own life as well. Read the above note as well, interrelate it to your own life and pass-on those merits to the 'Baby deity' too.

Although you wear the mask privately...

At the time of writing this article the *Bhikkhu* resides in a forest hermitage in the Anuradhapura District. It's a beautiful plain surrounded by a few large mountain ranges. The *kuṭī* in which the *Bhikkhu* resides is situated facing the east on the higher rock mountain. When looking from the mountain top, at the foot of the mountain is the spectacular lake, the sub-range of mountains, paddy fields, forest extending into tens of thousands of acres, birds, wild animals... This hermitage has all the characteristics of a real forest monastery. While the *Bhikkhu* was seated here looking at these surroundings, a thought arose thus: 'Although at this moment there lies a marvellous environment in these surroundings, in the past this place would have been a harsh desert; it would have been an ocean or a river filled with water; it would have been a flourishing city; a land devastated by earthquakes and cyclones; a cemetery; and a place where *Buddha*-s and *Arahat*-s have resided'. Look how diverse the past *rūpa* (corporeal forms) have been. What this means is the 'impermanence'. The future *rūpa* will be just the same. As we say the word 'present' that present has already turned into the 'past'. The world is passing at such velocity. At the same velocity of passing, the world regrows. Our lives too are just like that. The one who is a human being today, falls into a hell-realm tomorrow... becomes a deity... becomes a higher

celestial... becomes an animal. When one place passes, another place regrows. Like this, the *Bhikkhu* is about to note below a story about an unfortunate being who fell into hell after the passing of his human life. This story too will be a story that teaches you the value of the worthy *sīla* (morality, virtue).

Today the world seeks simplified things, convenient things and instantaneous things. The world seeks such things to create leisure by escaping the restlessness of the competitive world. However, they employ this leisure to simply reacquire restlessness in life.

There are revered-devotees who come to offer almsgivings once a year at the monastery. Some of them leave the monastery after the almsgiving saying with relief: "Oh, thank god this year's almsgiving is over!" Or else saying: "Thankfully, the almsgiving at the 7-day, 3-month or annual death commemoration, is now over. Now we need not worry about offering alms [for a while]". When revered-devotees who observe the 8 precepts of *sīla* on full-moon 'Poya' days, some of them leave the temple in the evening after surrendering the precepts while thinking with relief: "Oh, thankfully that burden is over!" Certain revered-devotees who participate in meditation programs go home saying: "Oh, this is more than enough for this week... or, for this month". It's as if these revered-devotees engage in *dāna* (almsgiving), *sīla* and *bhāvanā* (meditation) activities with the notion that 'someone might get crossed with them if they don't do these things'. They engage in these activities as though 'they are trying to deceive that person for a short while in order to befriend with him again'. Who is it that they try to deceive like this? Who is it that gets deceived? Who befriends you each time those who get deceived gets deceived? It is 'suffering' that befriends you. It's the *Māra* that causes suffering that befriends you.

By trying to make the *Dhamma* simplified and instantaneous, you befriend suffering. The *Dhamma* is not something that you can simplify. The *Dhamma* is the ‘impermanence’. The impermanence of what? The impermanence of *rūpa*. What is the real nature in which the *rūpa* becomes impermanent? The nature of *rūpa* becoming impermanent, is sheer velocity — that which cannot be seen by the flesh-eye and can only be seen by the eye of insight, wisdom (*paññā*). The path for seeing that velocity has been proclaimed to you by the *Buddha* by having realised it through the omniscient insightful-wisdom. There is only one path, a singular path. In it, there are no short cuts, simplified ways or instantaneous methods. Whoever who realises through insight the velocity at which *rūpa* becomes impermanent, and thereby get detached from sensual desire (*chanda-rāga*) you have towards *rūpa*, that is the point at which you realise the reality of the entire *pañca upādānakkhandha* (i.e. corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness) that arises conditioned by *rūpa*.

The revered-person, whom the below story is about, too was someone who applied the *Dhamma* to his life in simplified ways and means. It is how, due to such application, ‘suffering’ befriended him that is illustrated throughout the meaning of this story. For him, who has befriended suffering and now enduring suffering, this story is no longer of any use. But you on the other hand, can apply this story to your own life if you so desire... if you are happy to do so. Notice that the sworn enemy called ‘suffering’ remains in your company, remains hidden in you. Identify from within yourself that enemy (i.e. the defiled mind) who simplifies the precepts of *sīla* you observe, makes the precepts quick and instant, and discounts their seriousness and strictness. Discard him like a sinful friend who drags you into suffering. In the same velocity at which the *rūpa* (matter) becomes impermanent, the mind that arises conditioned by the

rūpa too becomes impermanent. Here what you're observing is the phenomenon of arising and passing-away of the *rūpa*. If we attempt to simplify and make instant such an extremely subtle phenomenon that can only be seen through the eye of insight, then we must realise that our delusion is as big as that attempt. There is nothing in this world that can be shortened by us. The world is that short, that instant. That is the very reason why a person who lives a human life at this moment dies and, as a result of *sankhāra*, gets reborn as a demonic-creature in hell at the next moment. It is why a person who lives a human life at this moment dies and gets reborn in higher celestial realms at the next moment...

From this you must understand the velocity of the *rūpa* and the velocity of the mind that arises conditioned by the *rūpa*. Due to the extent of our ignorance, we try to simplify these phenomena. We try to shorten the homage paid to the *Buddha*. We try to discount the meanings of the precepts of *sīla* to make them easy to follow. We try to make the almsgiving instant. You try to derive leisure, comfort and profit by doing so. Stated below is a story about an unfortunate man who endures to his heart's content the leisure, the comfort, the profit derive by doing so.

The gentleman linked with this story was at the ripe old age of about 80 years when he passed away. He was someone considered to have led a respectable life in the area he lived in and was a father of married children. For about 5 years before passing away, he was ill. During the period immediately before death he was bedridden. As usual, the children and relatives got together and performed the funeral-related activities in a grand-scale... decorations, banners, eulogies, laudatory funeral speeches, and much were the expenses. During the 7 days after death, every evening there was festivity...

Why I stated that the funeral was performed in a grand-scale, was because there was no shortage of the aforementioned things. Not just one, but a few senior monks of the area made exemplary eulogies and laudatory funeral speeches during the Buddhist-last rites. In truth, anyone looking at the life of this gentleman will not see that he was someone who committed sins. Even the *Bhikkhu* who writes this note didn't know that the gentleman who died was a person who committed wrong. Being within the littlest understanding we had at the time, we all sincerely thought that this person who died would have been reborn in a heavenly realm. In the present all of us, both clergy and laity, tend to look at everyone's life while being in this same minimalist understanding. It is with that perception that we tend to evaluate something. Once you read the second part of this story you will understand how wide of a gap there is between righteousness and unrighteousness ... how wide of a gap there is between our littlest understanding and the true realisation.

This is neither your fault nor mine. It's the difference between understanding and misunderstanding. It was while being in this minimalist understanding that we explained his death at that time... that we presumed he would have got a heavenly rebirth. However, about 6 years after his death, the *Bhikkhu* through the noble *samādhi* (state of deep concentration of the mind) aims to sight what kind of place he has got reborn in. This was something seen through the noble *samādhi*. The *Bhikkhu* envisions a place filled with water, like a massive tank. This water was pitch black. Black in the sense, it's not a pleasant looking black. You might have seen rotten sewers. It was the repulsive black produced when garbage rots and water collects for a long time. It was the thick black produced when water rots in a small lake in a populated city. Now you imagine someone heating up this tank full of rotten black water. What

will happen then? That rotting water heats up. When turning up the fire and increasing the temperature more and more, at first the water begins to simmer and emit steam. Then when the water begins to boil, bubbles the size of peas will start to appear. When continuing to heat up the water even more, it bubbles-up with bubbles the size of olives. When more and more fire is added, the water bubbles-over producing bubbles the size of limes. As the rotting water boils-over even further, bubbles become the size of bael fruits. Now you imagine, there is a tank full of rotten black water, which appears like a massive pot of lava bubbling-over with bubbles the size of bael fruits. This was the vision seen by the *Bhikkhu* when aiming to sight where this dead gentleman was reborn in. What this means is that he boils in a particular hell-realm. Look at the gap between our minimalist understanding and the full understanding of the world. The person we projected into a heavenly realm, is in fact enduring an enormous suffering in a hell-realm.

Having seen this incident, the *Bhikkhu* is absolutely certain that this situation is real. Because, this is a phenomenon envisioned through the utmost noble *samādhi*... a phenomenon that the *Buddha* has proclaimed having perfectly realised with insight. The *Bhikkhu* wanted to find out the manner in which this layman led his life. So the *Bhikkhu* investigated into his life style that was public and apparent to the society and also about the life he led very privately and hidden from society. The *Bhikkhu* got to know from very reliable sources that he had the following behaviours that he concealed from society, among which were quite a few misdeeds that were the cause for his acute unwholesome karma-result. Sexual misconduct or committing unlawful sexual acts was one of them. At one point he has had a very twisted, abnormal, sexual desire. Privately, he has fostered strong jealousy and resentment about others' success. And because of that he had performed sorcery, hoodoo

and incantations on others. When it was revealed through very reliable sources that these factors were definitely there in him, it was no wonder why he is boiling-over in lava in a hell-realm. There are a few aspects in this that revered-you should interrelate to your own lives. The most important is the fact about ‘public vs. private’. Most people in today’s society publicly do good things in front of the society and do bad things very privately. Associating with the wife publicly, associating with women who are not his wife privately. In the wedding reception the banquet is in the main guest area, but the serving of alcoholic beverages is done privately in another area. In a household where there is a *Dhamma*-talk, *paritta*-chanting¹⁹ or an almsgiving, that meritorious activity is taking place publicly in the main hall, but the serving of alcoholic beverages takes place secretly inside of a room or another area. Getting paid wages from the occupation is done openly, accepting bribes is done secretly. Laughing is done publicly, inflicting hatred upon others is done privately. We are very happy thinking that the misdeed was done concealed from the world... that no one saw it so there is nothing to be afraid of. This gentleman who is now dead, was also a person who thought like that. Laity doing such things is not so surprising when even certain venerable monks who publicly eat the alms food served before noon, privately eat something little at night — because someone might see. Who might see? The world might see. We need not be afraid of the world. What we should be afraid of instead, is the jury...

Who is this jury?

19 A chanting of *Buddha*’s discourses for protection

Look at the work of jealousy and hatred

There are five members of jury that arise as a result of your desire for the relish of sensuality. They arise in accordance with the law of causality. These members of jury won't sit together all at once at a given moment. One member of jury causes the next member to arise. When the effect forms, the cause disappears. This phenomenon occurs repeatedly. These five members of jury are none other than: sense-contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional-mental-formation (*sankhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). These five are born out of your sensual desire (*chanda-rāga*) towards *rūpa* (corporeal form). When you explicitly or inexplicitly originate some feeling caused by the sensory-contact of some *rūpa*, the perception, volition and consciousness that arise in turn due to that feeling are not things belonging to someone else, but are phenomena that arise from within that very cause itself. Things cannot be performed privately or in a concealed manner. Why? because the more you try to hide them and more you try to privately do wrong, the nature of the volition that forms in you becomes even stronger. It is due to the nature of the 'volition' that the result called 'consciousness' arises. In that story of the gentleman [refers to the previous article], it is the strong *akusala*-karma (unwholesome-karma) he committed privately

and secretly that caused such powerful unwholesome volitions to arise in him. And it is due to those powerful unwholesome volitions that the resulting consciousness enters into such an utmost terrifying birth in a hell-realm. And from the moment the consciousness entered into that birth in hell, sense-contact — which means coming together of the internal corporeal form (i.e. internal faculty), the external corporeal form (i.e. external physical objects) and the consciousness (*viññāna*) — causes new minds to continuously and repeatedly arise in that demonic creature. Now you understand well that although things may be performed concealed from the world, nothing can ever be performed concealed from the *Dhamma*. Irrespective of whether the *Buddha's sāsana*²⁰ remains intact or disappears from the world, the phenomenon called *pañca-upādānakkhandha* (fivefold existence that are objects of clinging — i.e. corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness) continues to form in beings. However, it is only during a *Buddha's sāsana* that the *pañca-upādānakkhandha* can be realised. This demonic creature who is now in hell enduring a cruel agony that you resist to even think about, became subject to that suffering purely because he failed to guard his *sīla* (morality, virtue). Do you understand the importance of the great *sīla*? Tears denote the breakdown of a precept of *sīla*. There is no point grieving over tears. Instead, it's the *sīla* that broke that you should remedy. Then, tears would retreat.

When seeing, when recalling, the boiling water bubbles erupting in the blistering hot water as noted earlier, what the *Bhikkhu* visualizes is the gruesome, dreadful and explosive nature that manifests in humans and other beings due to jealousy, hatred and anger. It is due to these unwholesome-roots

20 *Sāsana* means dispensation of the *Buddha*. As commonly used, it also refers to the time span throughout which a *Buddha's* teaching (of the way things truly are) remains alive, before it gets concealed from human knowledge.

that man turn towards vile sciences such as spells, incantation, sorcery and hoodoo. These are like chemical fertiliser that make the unwholesome-roots grow faster. The one who hates to see others' success, eventually averts his own success and happiness for a number of eons. Let others freely develop and grow in success. Watch them grow in success and have altruistic joy. That joy will help only towards your own happiness.

One particular man lived in a very far away remote village. He had children and grandchildren who led comfortable lives in society. When he died, he was at the ripe old age of about 90 years. He was someone who led a decent life in his village. He always helped the Buddhist temple of the village. But due to his misfortune, about three years prior to his death, for whatever reason he gets into a conflict with the Buddhist temple of the village. The *Bhikkhu* doesn't know what the reason for the conflict was. Since that day, he speaks badly of the monks; he speaks badly of the temple; makes false complains to the police against the monks of the temple. He had developed an unbelievable hatred. Owing to this jealousy and hatred he deteriorated in his *sīla*. When one precept of *sīla* was forsaken, gradually the other precepts of *sīla* also began to get abandoned. Due to this very reason, although he was 90 years old, lustful thoughts arose in him. Precepts of *sīla* had weakened in him so much that he even tried to grab the hand of a woman who bent before him to pay him respects considering his elderly age. While living like this burning in jealousy, he passed away. A monk, through the noble *samādhi*, aims to sight what kind of a place he was reborn in. What the monk envisions through the noble *samādhi*, is a stomach of a crocodile. That means he has got conceived in a crocodile womb, in a crocodile egg. Look how dangerous *samsāra* is. One who is a human at this second, gets into the womb of a crocodile at the next moment. Can we say this universal law is unjust? No, we cannot say it's unjust.

The equitable place he deserved was given to him. Crocodile is a brutal creature that lives in nothing but anger and hatred. Anyone who sees this creature gets a feeling of repugnance, fear and horror. This creature always eats by preying on other animals. Sometimes it even preys on its own offsprings. Everything about this creature including its colour, shape and behaviour is so repulsive.

Once when the *Bhikkhu* was residing in an ancient monastery in the southern region, there was a severe drought in that area. When the lakes dry up, the crocodiles in the lakes creep into rock caves in the forest during day time. During the night, through the forest and on lake beds they walk searching for food. The *kuṭī* in which the *Bhikkhu* was staying had a veranda at the front enclosed with half-walls (walls that are usually 3 or 4 feet tall). One day around midnight, from the forest area in front of the *kuṭī* the *Bhikkhu* heard a loud sound of some animal blowing out (exhaling) rapidly. The *Bhikkhu* first thought it was an elephant. The sound of that rapid fierce blowing was heard repeatedly. But the animal wasn't to be seen. Then to see, it was a fully grown crocodile that was about 7 feet long, which had gotten into the enclosed front veranda and fiercely blowing out in anger as it couldn't get out. Then when the *Bhikkhu* made the sound of clearing his throat, the crocodile placed its body vertically against the half-wall and jumped over the half-wall into the forest. This crocodile violently swung its tail with the same speed it blew out through its mouth. It was at that time the *Bhikkhu* saw the most vicious nature of a crocodile. It's an unbelievably hateful and angry nature that this creature inherits. We sometimes say that some people bursts in jealousy. It is the ultimate level of bursting (with anger, hatred) that we see in these creatures.

Revered-you must think carefully that... you forming a

jealous mind or an angry mind, means that you are wishing for a birth where you boil in blistering-hot water in hell or a birth in the crocodile clan. Now look! That 90-year old man hated the temple, hated the monks and became jealous. But just because he became hateful and jealous, did the monks suffer any loss or damage? No, the monks didn't incur even the slightest of losses. Then whom had this person inflicted hatred and jealousy upon? He had inflicted hatred and jealousy upon himself.

If that is so, you must consider that if an anger or a jealousy forms in your mind, such formation is simply a saving you deposit in your own account of 'existence' (*bhava*). These things don't get credited into others' accounts. Yet, if you are unskillful, there is a chance that *you* might get into trouble because of others. Inflicting hatred upon the Buddhist temple and the monks is equivalent to inflicting hatred upon the triple-gem. It is due to the sheer powerfulness of that unwholesome-karma that his previous *kusala*-karma (wholesome-karma) committed throughout his life subsided. It was just a single mind that formed in him that proliferated into a sequence of disastrous minds. Therefore, as soon as a hateful mind, a jealous or angry mind forms in you, kill it immediately with right understanding. Don't let it grow any further as unwholesome 'thought-conceptions' (*vitakka*).

Throughout this note [refers to both this and the preceding article], you would have understood how two human beings who had a long life in the human-realm fell into realms below the human world upon their deaths. It is due to their misfortune that people who have deteriorated in *sīla*, get long life. Because each additional moment they live, they accumulate unwholesome-karma. Therefore, in a world where the number of humans with shorter life expectancy is gradually increasing, you must reap maximum benefits from long life.

How you can do that is by adding the strength of *sīla* to your life during each additional moment you live. Reflect often that the death of a person devoid of *sīla*, is a suffering. Pay homage to the mind that respects precepts of *sīla*. Because that is the mind that liberates you from that suffering. What you must protect by pledging your life against, is not your country of birth, nor the nationality, nor your religion, but the mind that provides you encouragement to abide by the precepts of *sīla*, which liberates you from the suffering of *saṃsāra*, which opens up the path for that liberation. That is the very thing that becomes the cause for your happiness. Both of the above revered-laymen who passed away, used to be ones who participated in protest marches in their respective areas for the sake of the country, nationality, religion and the protection of those things. But now what country, nationality or religion for them? One is of the nationality of demonic-beings and the other of the crocodile clan. Neither of them have a country or a religion now. Look at the magnitude of the delusion they clung to as happiness. Revered-devotees who come to the monastery to offer alms food ask us: “Venerable Sir, what are you doing by being in this forest?” What they are implying is ‘What is there to protect in this forest? Go to the village or the city and do things in order to protect the country, nationality and religion.’ When devotees say such things, only a slight smile arises. Revered-people! It is indeed protecting the country, nationality and religion that we do by being in this forest. We do that by pledging our lives for it. The country is the *sīla*, the nationality is the *samādhi* and the religion is the wisdom (*paññā*). Anyone who protects these three things transcends the world never to return again. Is there a better protection than this?

Think leisurely! Don’t make haste! Aren’t the suffering, the cause for suffering and the liberation from suffering, all three things exist simply in you? Don’t let your mind get much

farther! Close your eyes and focus your attention on the edge of your nostrils. Now you will feel what life is. You will feel what life is vested in. Now you might want to breathe rapidly. Do not be rapid. Breathe in naturally. Breathe out naturally. Observe it well. If circumstances are such that revered-you are forced to break a precept of *sīla* you have taken, or if you notice that a mind of jealousy or hatred has arisen in you, then turn your bare attention towards inhalation and exhalation for a moment. Your mind will become still. Now you'd be able to see right from wrong... wholesome from unwholesome... now you can recognise them. Be tactful to protect your *sīla*, having seen the adverse results of lacking in *sīla*. Some revered-devotees, when they meet us, say: "Oh, Venerable Sir, it is so difficult to abide by all five precepts of *sīla*. One or two precepts of *sīla* always tend to get broken". This is a problem common to most people. If there is a tendency that a precept of *sīla* always gets forsaken no matter how hard you try, then that's a phenomenon that occurs due to a karma-result (*vipāka*). Here you must strive with energy to protect the precepts of *sīla* by seeing the adversities of lacking in *sīla*. Similarly, if you are weak in *sīla* or if you find it difficult to keep the precepts of *sīla*, you must learn to respect those who respect *sīla* and those who properly abide by the precepts of *sīla*. There are certain revered-devotees who themselves don't abide by the precepts, yet they disrespect or laugh at those who live according to the precepts of *sīla*. It is due to vile acts such as these that were committed in the past that some folks find it difficult to abide by the precepts of *sīla*. If you find it difficult to abide by the precepts of *sīla*, then at least you must learn to respect those who abide by the precepts. That alone will be a blessing for you to establish yourself in *sīla*. When you forsake the precepts of *sīla*, in effect what you are forsaking is a heavenly rebirth. Those two unfortunate men mentioned in this story fell into a rebirth in hell-realms solely

because they abandoned the *sīla*. Be skillful to wisely interrelate this sorrowful story for your own happiness. Take forward that skillfulness you yielded, solely for escaping the fourfold-hells. Repeatedly pay close attention... one of the causes for both men in the above story to fall into hell-realms upon their death, was that volitions of wrongful sexual conduct got stronger. Remain very attentive of crimes like these where you wave at a suffering of many eons in return for a mere second's delight. If a mind of wrongful sexual conduct arise that could accrue you an unwholesome-karma, extinguish it. In order to help you extinguish it, you could perceive the recollection of the supreme qualities of the *Buddha*, or the perception of loving-kindness, or the perception of repulsiveness of the body, or a fear of the fourfold-hells. If your mind can't focus on a wholesome reflection like that, then turn your mind towards some other external activity. Then you'd feel that lustful mind passing away. What lies there is insight (*vipassanā*), the Four Noble Truths. Look! A single mind that arose could lead you to the fourfold-hells if you are unskillful, or to realisation of the *Dhamma* if you are skillful.

Never again will you have failures, I promise

The mind has come to a standstill. Sight comes in contact with the eye. Sounds come in contact with the ear. But 'thought-conceptions' (*vitakka*) that fixes the consciousness on the object, don't arise as a result. Eyes remain open. The environment appears as though it has come to a complete standstill. When closing the eyes, the environment disappears. At that point only an emptiness is seen. The time flows. The *sankhāra* (karma-formations) expend. The intense quietness of the forest, further quietens the quiet mind more and more. There is no objective. But there is a hope. And that is death. It won't happen according to anyone's wishes. What holds authority over death, is the strength of past *sankhāra*. It can be a natural death. Or it can be a forced death (murder). Anyhow, whatever happens is that which is bound to happen. The more the death becomes unnatural, the beauty of death increases. Because it's the diverseness and the crudeness of *sankhāra* that manifests in such death. *Sankhāra* is a very just phenomenon. He [*sankhāra*] won't do anyone any wrong. He is good for good, bad for bad. He will bring forth the strongest most wholesome-karma or the strongest most unwholesome-karma.

Revered-you now imagine there is a person who engages in wrong livelihood in this life. His business is selling alcoholic beverages. He leads a very luxurious life. Day by day his income goes up. This gentleman performs almsgiving as well. If this gentleman dies and gets reborn as a human, from the very young age he gets addicted to alcoholic beverages. He becomes a drunkard his entire life. For the misdeed of intoxicating others in the previous life, *sankhāra* will, very equitably and in accordance with the correct causality, give the result. For the almsgivings he performed in his previous life and the remaining precepts of *sīla* he conformed to in his previous life, he was given a life as a human. For intoxicating others by selling them alcoholic beverages, he became an alcohol-addict.

Revered-you, think leisurely! If your mind runs away, are you able to stop it? Cultivate fear about the *saṃsāra*. In the face of fear, the mind will settle down. Otherwise this mind cannot be quietened. It splashes like ocean waves... then forms again. There is nothing impossible if there is a 'want'. It is he who has felt the fear of *saṃsāra* who will cultivate that 'want'. Dive into your life using your mind. If you die at this moment, what kind of a rebirth will you get? According to the 'clinging', what will the 'becoming' be? Think! Do the precepts of *sīla* you broke come to mind? Do the precepts of *sīla* you conformed to with much respect come to mind? How is the state of the *akusala* — greed, hate and delusion? Which one of the two, heaven or hell, have you got more credits for? In a split-second, can you let go of the heap of things that you are holding on to so closely as 'mine'? Dying is not an easy task like laughing, talking, or joking. Attachments, aversions, equanimities all are about to be lost. You are about to leave the clutches of these things. You are about to lose them. At this moment the *Bhikkhu* recalls an incident where tears appeared in the eyes of a politician when he lost office. Those tears gained warmth from 'greed'. Even

the tears of joy he shed when he was in a higher state while holding office also gained warmth from 'greed'. The same tear is categorised as suffering and happiness with an enormous gap between them. We, who always considered suffering and happiness as two different things, always get defeated by 'time'. 'Now we are old'. 'Now old age has caught up'. Time is moving forward rapidly. You too are running. However, at every instance time is faster than you. That's due to the intensity of our greed. We are never contented by a specific target. As a result, time always defeats us. That means, there is never enough time. If we consider something that doesn't exist as existing, then we'd have to search for it. Yet, only exhaustion will result. We are bound to be defeated. Why? because we are searching for something that doesn't exist. Do not let the thoughts that arise due to 'sense-contact' (*phassa*) go astray. Get them under the control of the *Dhamma*. If we want to think, we can think of so many things. But those thoughts don't belong to me. If my own thoughts don't belong to me, then how can others' thoughts belong to me? When we think like that, we feel a great freedom. You stop before that freedom! Then you will feel that time is flowing rapidly, yet you have come to a standstill. When you have come to a standstill, time is powerless. The world would be running, but you will have stopped. When thoughts come to a standstill, you will come to a standstill. That means, you are able to stop this rapidity.

What many things do we do to create freedom and leisure? What a lot of expenditure do we incur to spend time leisurely? Yet, in having stopped just a single thought, see how much freedom could be gained? We have been eating, drinking, sleeping and rejoicing well thinking that it is leisure, and as a result the five-hindrances (*pañca-nīvarana*) that obscure and blind our mind have heightened. By doing this we are just imprisoning ourselves more and more in defilements (*kilesa*).

We search for happiness because of suffering. But happiness once again drags us back into suffering. That is exactly why we search for happiness again and again... why we will have to search for happiness repeatedly.

Whatever we do, we do in expectation of a happiness. We don't do anything expecting a suffering. We don't put our hand in a fire, because of the suffering of getting burnt. Yet, although we do everything in expectation of happiness, its result is nothing but suffering.

There is a particular monk known to the *Bhikkhu*. This monk has completely eradicated 'greed'. Not a single thought that that Venerable thinks gives rise to suffering. That Venerable receives only a solace and nothing else. Life is such a contradiction. Whatever we touch or get attached to thinking it's a happiness, what we find is a heap of suffering. So our specialty has become to refrain from revealing the suffering to the outside. We conceal the suffering very well with laughter or speech. In doing so, what originates is 'greed'. Thereby, suffering gives rise to more suffering. If one asks for a synonym for 'suffering', the *Bhikkhu* will say 'happiness'. Because 'happiness' is that closer to 'suffering'. The only difference between the two is a short span of delight. That short time span could even be as short as a single thought. Here we speak of 'suffering' relative to the human-realm. The delight of the happiness in celestial-realms relative to the human-realm is much greater due to the greater merit of those celestial beings. 'Suffering' and 'happiness' is not an equation of which an end can ever be seen, but a complex equation in which you get entangled.

If both suffering and happiness is a mirage, then revered-you must avoid being the helpless character of a deer. Become a revered-person who has a refuge. The one who has a refuge

lives only in a *Buddha's sāsana* (dispensation of the *Buddha*). He views life while bearing in his life the *Dhamma* he has sought refuge in. He wisely recognises both the mirage and the reality. He doesn't run after lie or deception. He stops where there is truth. Instead of reacting to the phenomenon known as 'suffering', he searches for the cause for that suffering. He sees that it's only due to greed that unwholesome-karma accrues. He stops thinking of suffering and starts to think of the 10 wholesome courses of action²¹. None of us like suffering. That's why we try to at least run away from suffering. But the one who runs away from suffering, creates additional suffering... only because he fails to understand that suffering is simply a result of unwholesome-karma.

In this world element there are beings who endure the cruellest forms of suffering. They are in the most frightful hell called *Avīci*. At some point in the past both you and I too have endured this suffering. Human being commits wrongful acts purely because they don't see the punishment due for that misdeed according to the *Dhamma*. This blindness is created by delusion (*moha*). Revered-laity who correctly practice generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*) and mental development (*bhāvanā*) in the practice of the *Dhamma* tend to encounter relatively more problems in things such as their occupation or business. One should understand that this is a wonder of the *Dhamma* and an assurance that one receives confirming that he is within the path of the *Dhamma*. The reason why problems confront you when you act within the *Dhamma*, is for you to take at least one more step forward towards the *Dhamma*. However, those who fail to correctly recognise this phenomenon and who are

21 Comprises of 10 kinds of wholesome courses of action viz. 3 bodily actions (avoidance of killing, stealing and unlawful sexual intercourse); 4 verbal actions (avoidance of lying, slandering, rude speech, foolish babble); and 3 mental actions (unselfishness, good-will, right views). The opposites are 10 unwholesome courses of action.

weak in *saddhā* (confidence, faith) become disappointed about the *Dhamma*... become averse to the *Dhamma*. The *Dhamma* is always of the quality of being 'directly visible' (*sandiṭṭhika* – real, actual, visible by self). It gives results in direct correlation to the extent of effort and commitment. Therefore, revered – you who practice the path of *Dhamma* must always consider that whatever way it turns out to be, is acceptable. It's only while considering thus that you should turn it again into the correct way it ought to be. The effort you make in between the way it turns out to be and turning it into the correct way it ought to be, simply sharpens and heightens the faculties of powers in you — which are, confidence in triple-gem (*saddhā*), energy (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Have a preference to fall than to rise up. It is only then that you will wisely reflect and notice that, what rises up is liable to fall. Seeing thus is what *Dhamma* is. In those who wisely reflect and notice something, wisdom slowly ripens. It is only through practicing 'insight contemplation' (*vipassanā*) that you can develop that quality. The *Bhikkhu* who writes this is someone who saw life, saw the *Dhamma*, simply through problems and troubles. In the past when the *Bhikkhu* was still a layman, once when problems arose so intensely the *Bhikkhu* had even thought 'why was I ever born'. Why such thought arose at that time was purely due to not knowing the *Dhamma*. The inheritance of such a beautiful life in the present, was hidden in that unpleasant life of the past. Each of those problems in that unpleasant life story of the past, in the end became a blessing for the *Bhikkhu*'s life. Had it not been for the problems the *Bhikkhu* faced during the lay-life, the *Bhikkhu* could have ended up in a different place. Yet, that could not have been. Because *sankhāra* brings you to the correct place, amidst problems and while creating insightful-realisation. If that's the case, then problems arose during the *Bhikkhu*'s lay-life purely due to a reason. It

was purely for the purpose of paving the way for the *Bhikkhu* to reach the place where the *Bhikkhu* is right now. Now the answer you are looking for, is clear. The point that the *Bhikkhu* makes by saying to willingly accept the problems that confront you, is now clear to you. Do not have aversion towards problems. Amiably welcome them. Cordially greet the by-products that arise as a result of problems. Why they find their way to you, is simply due to a reason. Therefore, do not refuse anything that finds its way to you. Even though they come in the guise of enemies, think that they are your friends. 'Suffering' and 'happiness' are twins born to *sankhāra* that you yourself have committed in the past.

Amidst problems, suffering, distress, humiliation and insults that confront you, and while facing them, be skillful to take a step forward towards the *Dhamma*. Then, even if revered-you die as a beggar, you won't die empty handed. Instead, you will die and be on your way towards a heavenly course of existence while having developed the faculties of powers in you — that are, confidence in triple-gem (*saddhā*), energy (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). It is simply those faculties of powers that will, in a future birth, rise up to be a formidable strength for your realisation of the *Dhamma* (i.e. enlightenment). Before the fluctuating world, you become a static. A static person is the person who, devoid of attachments or aversions, lives within equanimity. Now you won't be running after a mirage anymore. Because now you are no longer a helpless person. Now you are a revered-person with a refuge.

The time is 5:30 in the afternoon. The surroundings are very cold. No sound of any other animal, except the sound of birds. From the forest, the shadows of hunters appear and disappear. That's why animals are not to be seen. Humans

who crave the taste of blood and flesh, see flying squirrels and weasels as a happiness (a pleasure), simply due to their craving for the flesh. The taste of flesh felt by the human tongue, pose restrictions for the animals in the forest. A junglefowl separated from the flock constantly squawks. His junglefowl family too has become victims of the tragedy. The world arises... passes away. The ones who kill, gets killed. There is nothing to be surprised of, amazed by. This is the world. The world flows on in its own nature. The *sankhāra*, in its own nature, dishes out suffering, happiness, life, and death. The *Bhikkhu* writes... Revered-you read... The *Bhikkhu* writes with a realisation. Revered-you read to attain the realisation. Interrelate well the facts that you read with the *Dhamma* of the Supramundane Lord *Buddha*. It's the fruit of the Noble Eightfold Path that writes these notes for you. Revered-people, awaken the wisdom!

For children, on behalf of parents – For parents, on behalf of children

At one point in this note [refers to the preceding article], I referred to beings who endure the cruellest forms of suffering in this world element. The severity of the suffering endured by demonic-beings of the great hell – *Avīci* is this acute as a result of the grievous *akusala*-karma (unwholesome-karma) known as the *ānantarika-kamma*²² they have committed. There is one particular demonic-being in the great hell *Avīci*. He is Devadatta²³. A being who has made unwholesome-karma his life. He was someone who led his life solely for revenge and hatred. Someone who only saw a short distance... who failed to look farther. A pure source of *akusala-sankhāra* (unwholesome-karma-formations). From that source, suffering constantly oozes. What oozes is not water or tears, but fire. It is an utmost agonising form of suffering in this world element. A suffering,

22 Refers to the 5 heinous misdeeds with the incurable and irremediable result of being destined to be born in a lowest hell in the immediate next birth. (see. *ānantarika-kamma*).

23 Devadatta was a cousin of Gautama Siddhārtha, the *Buddha*. Although he became a monk and entered the Order of *Sangha*, eager for gain and favour, and jealous of the *Buddha*, he was opposed to the *Buddha* and made many failed attempts to kill the *Buddha*. In one such attempt, it is said that, a splinter of a rock struck the *Buddha*'s foot causing blood to be moved. Also, he created schism in the Order of *Sangha* in an attempt to win over monks.

both you and I should reflect upon day and night. A suffering that we too are bound to inherit in the future if we fail to free ourselves from the liability to fall into the fourfold-hells at this noble moment (i.e. at this last chance).

A monk aims to sight Devadatta through the noble *samādhi* (state of deep concentration of the mind) and as a result, envisions him in the great hell *Avīci*. The monk can only see the part of the body above his neck. This demonic-being has a face of a man with a bald head. He has the mouth of a crocodile. That means, a face that looks like a human, but with a crocodile-like mouth. He appears just like a human. The crocodile-mouth is about a foot in length and about 8 inches wide. At every instance this demonic-being discharges through its crocodile-mouth a flame of fire the size of a large clay-pot. This fire originates from within its body. Just like we humans exhale through the nose the air that we inhale into our body, this demonic-being, at every passing second, releases to the atmosphere through its crocodile-mouth a blaze the size of a large clay-pot. When we take a breath of air into our body, the whole body feels it and is elated by it. Yet, for this demonic-being Devadatta, the blaze born of unwholesome-karma is discharged through its mouth while burning the inside of the body and the interior of the mouth. This happens repeatedly. In short, his exhalation occurs in the form of a blaze. The moment the flame comes out of his mouth, he suffers an intense and lethal pain. That is apparent from the sharp expressions on his face. He has got a crocodile-like mouth so that a larger blaze can be discharged and a greater pain can be inflicted by burning a bigger area of the mouth. If he had a smaller mouth like that of a human, only a smaller flame would have been discharged and a smaller area would have got burnt. Due to the intensity of the unwholesome-karma, and perhaps because he had committed more unwholesome-karma through speech, the

mouth has formed a shape required to inflict a greater suffering. He painfully opens wide his crocodile-mouth as though he is about to yawn. As he does that, the flame of fire is emitted. Both at this very moment and for many more eons Devadatta will endure this cruellest form of suffering. An unfortunate man Devadatta was, born amongst a group of fortunate ones.

Revered-you too don't be an unfortunate one born at this worthy moment when the quality of the *Dhamma* of being 'directly visible' (*sanditṭhika*) is still alive. The killing of one's own parents (i.e. patricide or matricide) is a grievous unwholesome-karma whereby the sinner is bound to be born in this great hell *Avīci* in the immediate next rebirth (see. *ānantarika-kamma*). Although not killing them per se, in the present society parents are subjected to lethal pain mentally. Things such as putting them in elderly-homes, not caring for parents, getting parents to work as servants, often take place in society. Although such unwholesome-karma may not take one to *Avīci*, their karma-results (*vipāka*) are as intense. If you fail to be grateful to your mother in return for the mother's milk you drank, then you are bound to have to drink fire in lieu of milk. It is purely due to compassion that a mother's blood turns into milk. Such 'compassion', if you put in an elderly-home or don't care for anymore or see as a servant, then someday you too will definitely burn from the same flames of misery that the mother-father burns from. Let me remind you again that *sankhāra* (karma-formations) are extremely frightening. Do not think what place you should give the mother and the father since you now lead your own family life with a spouse and children. Instead, be skillful to think that you reached this place because of the mother and the father. A mother or a father is a goldmine you are sitting on. A goldmine that provides the requisite ingredients for your happiness. By freely mining that goldmine, be skillful to collect the requisite ingredients

for worldly-happiness of the realm of 'existence' (*bhava*). That goldmine won't last that long. It'll pass away soon. So you must hurry. That's where the gems and diamonds that produce true happiness lie. Otherwise if we mine the earth for gems literally, at each passing moment only suffering will arise. The more gems we get out of the mine dug in earth, only craving and fear will arise... and the path leading to the fourfold-hells will come forth. However, the more we mine the goldmine known as 'mother and father', what arises is simply merit (*puñña*) and *kusala*-karma (wholesome-karma). The *Buddha* discourses that if you 'attend to parents', such deed contains the prospect of becoming Sakra²⁴, which is considered the highest form of mundane comfort in this world element.

If a time comes that your mother and father are not so able and at such time, if your hands don't come in contact with their faeces and urine, then you can't be considered a child who is not indebted to them. Instead, you'll be considered a blind who failed to recognise the goldmine known as 'mother and father'. It's the parents of such blind children that live in elderly-homes. A mother's faeces, urine, is a very beautiful thing. Hidden in that faeces, urine, is the wholesome-karma required to make you Sakra. He who seeks the gems known as comforts of the realm of 'existence', mines the goldmine known as 'mother and father' to his heart's content. During his lay life, this *Bhikkhu* was a child who mined as much gems as he liked from the mine known as 'mother'. It's the strength of that wholesome-karma unearthed from the mine known as 'mother' that was a formidable strength to pave the way to raise the *Bhikkhu* to the place where he is right now. And that is why the *Bhikkhu* said by experience that a mother's faeces, urine, is so beautiful, pleasing. It was that beauty that helped ripen

²⁴ 'Sakra' (*Pāli: Sakka*), known as the 'king of gods', is chief or king of the deities (the lord over the celestial beings) in the heavenly realm *tāvātimsa*.

the *kusala-sankhāra* (wholesome-karma-formations) needed to attain the true beauty of the *Dhamma*. These hands would have touched so much of mother's urine enough to fill numerous barrels. These hands would have washed countless clothes stained with her faeces and urine. It's with those same hands that this note is being written for you. If revered-you felt these notes were meaningful to you, or were beautiful, it was solely because of that reason.

These are all phenomena of causality. What the *Bhikkhu* experiences right now, is the marvellous wonder of the life gained by sustaining the mother's life while lessening her misery. In the past the *Bhikkhu* freely unearthed the mine of wholesome-karma called the 'mother' neither hoping for comforts of *Sakra* nor of *Cakka-vatti*²⁵ king, but purely hoping never to be conceived in a mother's womb ever again in this realm of 'existence'... and hoping that, if a 'mother' means this much suffering then let there be no more mothers for me. It was through the 'mother' that it was possible to gain insight in accordance with the *Dhamma* as to who a mother actually was. It is while seeing with my own eyes and feeling with my own hands the adverse consequences that occur due to having a relish for the *rūpa* and quality known as the 'mother' that I cultivated thoughts of disenchantment about the 'mother'. I made my mother's life an object for contemplation and at the same time, reminded her that: "Mother, that eye of yours is impermanent. The beautiful physical form you had in the past has now decayed, become sick and become helpless". Everything that was said to her was said so as to help the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) grow in her. She

25 *Cakka-vatti* is the special name given to a most accomplished and prosperous World ruler (emperor), whose dominions extend throughout the earth to its ocean bounds, and is established neither by scourge nor by sword, but by righteousness. It is said that the birth of a *Cakka-vatti* king is attended by the same miracles as that of the birth of a *Buddha* and so is his youth.

listened very attentively. As a child, while my mother was still alive, I settled in full the worth of the debt of a mother's milk. As I became free of the indebtedness to my mother, as a formidable force the *Dhamma* began to rise up from within my life. What great things the phenomenon known as 'mother' is able to do? Sacrifice your happiness in this life for the sake of your parents. Live while watching them be happy. When my mother was sad and in pain due to illness, what I did was to (pretend to) drink milk from her breasts like a little child. You may not be able to believe or comprehend this at once. But I will explain the reason for doing so.

The breasts had no milk. They were worn, decayed, gotten old and feeble. Still, I didn't feel any repulsiveness. She was paralysed for a full seven years. She couldn't speak or walk. Yet, silently, by demonstrating to me the impermanence of her life, she taught me the meaning of 'impermanence' simply by means of her own life. I didn't like to see the quality that taught me such a noble lesson to be crying or having tears in her eyes. I wanted to make her laugh instead. That is why I made her laugh by sipping milk from her breasts even as a 40 year-old adult. I made her feel happy by turning myself into a child and making her feel that it was still her little son, who used to linger around her for the smell of milk, that was with her at this moment too. That's how I made her feel that, just as how I lingered around her when I was little, I am right beside her and I haven't discarded her even now. I had the sense as to how a mother takes delight in a child's behaviour. It is the result of that wholesome-karma of making my mother happy and giving her laughter, instead of letting a thought of sadness arise in her, that I am joyfully experiencing at this moment.

A mother's tear consists of an immense value. Just as how humanity is constituted in a sip of milk that one has from

his mother, her tears too are born of humanity. If a mother is crying, that is equivalent to the entire humanity crying. So, as far as I know I didn't let a tear arise in her eyes. I recall that on one night 7 years before she passed away, doctors at the intensive care unit of the hospital stated that: "Patient's heartbeat is very weak. Your mother will pass away in a moment. So tell the other children to see her one last time if they want to". I remember sitting on a chair in the corridor of the intensive care unit that entire night and performing a wilful recollection of truthfulness saying that: "By the power of the wholesome-karma committed by me thus far throughout the journey of *samsāra*, by the power of wholesome-karma I still commit in this life, and by the power of wholesome-karma I hope to commit in the future, let my mother have life. I do not want any of those wholesome-karma. May they belong to my mother". There was nothing else I could do, nothing else I could say. The heartbeat monitor that was attached to her in the intensive care unit beeped with high irregularity. Yet, in sight of death, she received life. But she was paralysed. It was not because of the wilful recollection of truthfulness I performed as her child that she received life, but because it was the nature of her *sankhāra* (karma-formations). It was meant to happen that way, because of the strength of the wholesome-*sankhāra* of mine. From that day, for about 7 years she became an object for contemplation for the *Bhikkhu* to reach the place where the *Bhikkhu* is right now. I had the skillfulness to always see that she fell ill purely for my benefit. Because for the entire 64 years my mother lived in good health, the only thing I learnt from her was about the world, about life. But in the 7 years that she remained sick, things I learnt from her were about the *Dhamma*, about impermanence. By noting the above, what the *Bhikkhu* is trying to tell you is that, while accepting with an even-mind both the good and the bad that confronts you in life, be skillful to use the challenges they pose solely for the purpose of your victory.

By keeping her happy, when she smiled I perceived that smile as a pleasant sprinkle of a drizzle. When that drizzle was pouring upon my thoughts, my life filled with an incredible humanity. When I looked at the world through that mind filled with that humanity, I saw the rest of the world as being in a grave helplessness. This helplessness gave rise to a great fear in me. That fear is what caused to distance me from lay life... made me aloof from the world. What prompted me to go in search of a refuge, what became a blessing upon my journey of *Dhamma*, was that pleasant drizzle that stemmed from my mother's smile.

I showed love and compassion to my mother, not with attachment or clinging towards the phenomenon of 'mother'. Instead, without expecting any gain or hospitality, I mined that mine simply to diminish the craving that was in me towards the phenomenon of 'mother'. I viewed her body by applying the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). Her body didn't decay that quickly or become sick that quickly to reach an end so as to allow time for her unwholesome-*sankhāra* to come to fruition. The insight that, both the phenomenon of 'mother' and the phenomenon of 'child' are great sensuous objects that tie us down to the world, was hidden in the 'mother'. Similarly, the way to be disenchanted about such phenomena through insight, was also concealed in the 'mother'. It was through my mother that I saw that, what the phenomenon of 'mother' means to the child and what the phenomenon of 'child' means to the mother, is nothing but a suffering. Through her, what I perceived was not the desire to live but the desire to attain freedom from life. I discovered it while it was hidden in the sick mother, purely as a consequence of attending to her. It's the ultimate result one can gain by attending to parents. Both the arising of the mother [in connection to myself]... and the passing of the mother [in connection to myself]..., which were

caused by the craving (*tanhā*) [in my mind], was seen through the Noble Eightfold Path of diminishing the craving. The way to free myself from the craving towards the ‘mother’, was seen through the object of ‘mother’ itself.

We have noticed in society so many children who attend to their parents as though they are superior celestial beings. Likewise, rather than just hoping for mere merits from attending to parents, take a step further and contemplate insightfully the sick, aged and feeble lives of your parents, and through that insight cultivate the requisite wisdom necessary for the supermundane bliss of *Dhamma*.

The life of elderly parents is a fertile nursery where the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipatthāna*) grows very well. Just as you teach your parents the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), you too must gradually obtain the same insightful-realisation. The *Buddha* proclaims a statement of fact that the tears you have shed on behalf of mothers throughout this journey of ‘becoming’ (*bhava*), is greater than the amount of water in the entire ocean. This is a factual statement made through the *Buddha*-omniscience. You would have attended to hundreds of thousands of mothers in past lives, yet they are just transient *sankhāra* that elapse. Therefore, while you accumulate *sankhāra* that are transient, see the impermanent nature of *sankhāra* and enter the path leading to freeing yourself from suffering.

Similarly, parents too need to be extremely careful when dealing with children. The mother and the father should always consider the fact that unwholesome-karma will accrue to children, because of parents. Not just any unwholesome-karma, but *ānantarika-kamma* may be committed. Today there are parents who take legal action against their children or

invoke curses on their children by going to places of worship dedicated to certain deities, claiming that the children stopped caring for them anymore after their properties have been transferred onto the children's names. Parents should not fall to the level of those children. If children commit a wrong towards parents and if it cannot be corrected, then while thinking that it's simply a fruition of your own unwholesome-*sankhāra*, try to cordially point it out to the children. Don't let your own child who was born from your own blood and who sustained on the milk produced from your own blood, generate more and more hatred towards you. Revered-parents generating hatred towards their children is equivalent to paving the way to lead those children into hell-realms. Even though the child commits a wrong towards you, for the sake of the child's happiness you must look away. If it cannot be corrected by pointing it out, then live aloof from the child.

A virtuous mother or a father is a fire. Children who don't know the *Dhamma*, not knowing that it's a fire, burn their life through every thought they think against such parents. The grievousness of those karma will come into fruition in future rebirths. Without leading your child, who is misled by this diverse immoral social surroundings, in the direction of generating hatred towards you, parents must act with pity towards children. There are certain children whose mother dies as the child is born. Or the mother or father dies a year or two after the child is born. They don't have the merits to receive the warmth of their mother or father. They live in an orphanage without receiving any love. Certain children are left on the street by their parents on the day they are born. If we look at animals, in a farm, a chick comes out of the egg without the presence of the mother-hen and instead with the help of artificial warmth of an electrical light. Therefore, even when being born in the animal realm, they lack the merits to receive a mother's love and

protection. These are children who have not attended to, not cared for, their parents in previous lives... children who have hurt their parents' feelings in previous lives. How reasonable is the justice of the karma-formations (*sankhāra*)? By noticing this sensuous unsavoury nature of the world, cultivate in your life the *saddhā* towards the triple-gem. Think of the 5 precepts of *sīla* as your child and guard them. The child known as *sīla* will never put you into suffering... will never fail to attend to you at a time you are not able... will always only be a cause for your wellbeing while you are alive, at the moment of your death and even after your death. That worthy child known as *sīla* will make you the mind of *samādhi* you need in order to see the savageness of the world. The insight that arises in that mind of *samādhi* will cause a realisation to form in you that mother, father, daughter and son, all are vested in suffering. The solace is gained solely through not seeking refuge in them. Concealed in the factor known as 'mother' or 'father' are: the path to attain supermundane happiness; the path to be born as Sakra; and the path to fall into the great hell *Avīci*. Revered-children should be skillful to wisely surface through their parents solely the path leading the heavenly realms. If children surface through their parents the path leading to heavenly realms, that will be a path that takes the parents to heavenly realms too. In contrast, if one party moves in the direction of originating hatred, or in the direction of making demands, that will bring destruction upon both parties. Only a *Buddha* teaches the way to escape this risk. The *Buddha* taught that you cannot escape this risk either by loving or hating. The moment you escape both love and hatred, that is the moment you stop seeking refuge in them. It is through the extinction of sense-contact (*phassa*) that feeling is extinguished. Revered-you might understand that it is neither building nor dismantling, but solely freeing yourself (relinquishing) is what causes solace. When a teardrop drips down from the edge of the eye, it is so warm. What warms the

teardrop is the craving (*tanhā*). The faster the mind becomes, the warmer the tears get. When a teardrop drips down from one's eye, a clue about a sorrow or a happiness he is feeling becomes visible to the outside. But a mother can wait without shedding tears whether it's a sorrow or a happiness. That much is the quality of endurance of a mother. Therefore, a mother is hard to understand. The harder it becomes to understand a mother, greater is the chance for unwholesome-karma to occur at our hands. What flows from a mother's eyes is not tears, but love... the love that makes the world stronger, the love that conceals the reality of the world. A mother's love, is the fare (passage money) in the endless journey of 'existence'.

A mountain of unwholesome-karma seen through the *Samādhi*

Around 2 o'clock in the afternoon when a monk residing in a forest monastery was in a state of *samādhi* (state of deep concentration of the mind), a giant nonhuman was envisioned. The monk could see only the lower part of his body, from waist down – that is, only the two legs. The two legs were about 20 feet tall. They were like those of a strong human being and covered with long thick black hair similar to that of an Alsatian dog. It was an extremely frightful appearance. The monk doesn't know why the upper part of his body was not visible. Such extremely gruesome nonhumans are like mountains of unwholesome-karma (*akusala-karma*). He has received such dreadful appearance, such colossal size, as a result of the severity of the unwholesome-karma committed in the past. The monk presumes that the gruesomeness and the enormity of this nonhuman will increase even further, due to the unwholesome-karma he commits again and again.

By frequenting the forest monasteries, these nonhumans desire to put the monasteries and its monks into distress; meddle with the sanity of the monks; and take under their clutches both monks and lay benefactors who are still weak in

the power of the *Dhamma* and through them, create a state of disarray and impurity in the monastery. When looking at the physical attributes of this nonhuman, except a monk who is self-restraint with a strong *sīla*, no other person below that level would be able to escape his clutches. As a result of the influence of vicious forces such as this, it is no wonder if things like sicknesses, mental weaknesses, frustrations, clashes resulting from volatile mental states, or uncleanness occur. What would be surprising is if these things didn't occur, for this nonhuman was that vile and frightening. These forces of 'wrong view' (*micchā-ditṭhi*) are against the preservation of the dispensation of the *Buddha* — the teaching of the way things truly are. At present, because of the scarcity in the *Sangha*, both suitable as well as unsuitable groups of people enter into monkhood. After entering into monkhood, even the revered-ones who are suitable for monkhood tend to leave aside the principle of 'letting go' and start 'accumulating'. They sow upon themselves the conceit of *sīla*, of *samādhi*, and of *Bhikkhu*'s knowledge. Such things are a great impetus for these vile forces. These vicious forces target only monasteries as such, to wipe out the real path of practice of the *Buddha*.

The above note was made to let you know the nature of a horrifying life form in the world that is invisible to you... so that you could learn a lesson from it. This colossal nonhuman is a being who once lived as a human being in this human-realm just like you are now. As a result of unwholesome-karma he accrued in that life, he has ended up in the current predicament. In this life he still accumulates only dreadful unwholesome-karma. He doesn't recognise what wholesome-karma is. In this manner, by putting monks into distress and setting up the environment that might lead to creating schism in the *Sangha*, it

is possible that even an *ānantarika-kamma*²⁶ could be committed at the hands of this nonhuman. Now think how scathing, how much farther, will the journey of *samsāra* be for this nonhuman. Likewise, taking pity on helpless beings such as these and having read this, the revered-monks too must realise that they too should be self-restrained in a *bhikkhu*'s-practice of true renunciation within the monkhood devoid of conceit of the *sīla*, the *samādhi* or the knowledge. Otherwise, you need to bear in mind that on one hand whilst providing the opportunity for those frightening nonhuman forces to accumulate more and more unwholesome-karma, on the other hand it is not entirely improbable that someday as a weak revered-monk you too may become a member of this frightening nonhuman's entourage.

Always keep clean the areas surrounding your *kuṭī*, environment of your forest monastery, your robe, your under-robe, your body, your toilet and even your nails. Don't let them become disorderly. Don't accumulate old things, stale things and unwanted things. Destroy them. Refrain from fostering unclean animals. Don't let the shrine-room, the oil-lamp, get dirty. Don't let them become dark. These items being unclean, means that it's because your mind is impure. Without getting into an extreme, just as you find your solace by genuinely cultivating the good qualities necessary to become a comely monk as preached by the *Buddha*, also help the vicious nonhuman forces by being skillful not to worsen the state of their unwholesome-karma. In this journey, to obstruct the path of *Nibbāna*, forces of *Māra*²⁷ or forces of gruesome nonhumans will come before you disguised as the virtuous, as the helpless,

26 Refers to the 5 heinous misdeeds with the incurable and irremediable result of being destined to be born in a lowest hell in the immediate next birth. Killing an *Arahat* and creating schism in the Order of monks are two of them. (see. *ānantarika-kamma*).

27 The term "*Māra*" denotes several meanings. (see. *Māra*).

as student or teacher, or as his saviour. Such forces will come before you disguised as knowledge or eruditeness, or as gain and hospitality. These are subtle phenomena that slows down the path to *Nibbāna*. To proceed along the path without getting attached to these forces is complicated. Because, as mentioned before, behind the above forces a strong influence of colossal nonhuman forces that are both vile and immersed in 'wrong-view', is present. The forces of *Māra* have cast the net for us from every single direction. The reason why you get caught to forces of *Māra* in this way, is because you are not skillful to view the defiled minds as impermanent and let go of them. The *Bhikkhu* who writes this note relinquished that mind the very moment the partial figure of this enormous nonhuman was sighted. It was a *rūpa* (corporeal form) that was sighted... Its basic nature is that it's impermanent... And that's the end of it. The incident was noted only for you to learn a lesson. By having seen the wild frantic nature of the unseen world full of vicious, dreadful, colossal nonhuman beings such as this, before you show loving-kindness and compassion towards others, first extend compassion towards your own self. In the interest of true selflessness, be self-interested (selfish) right now. Here you ought to be self-interested not irrationally, but only on the instructions of a *kalyāna-mitta* (noble friend, a teacher). Because, the forces of *Māra* are bound to make yet another attachment or aversion using your self-interestedness and put you in a helpless state. If you fail to understand the above phenomena when developing the path of *Nibbāna*, both you and he are bound to get born and die again and again.

What's the point in becoming a tree-climbing celestial being?

In more than one occasion in the recent past, revered-devotees told the *Bhikkhu* that there were celestial lights (lights emitting from deities) captured in photographs taken during meritorious-religious activities held at their residences or at the temple. They even brought those photographs and showed. The *Bhikkhu* doesn't know whether they are really celestial lights or not. If some revered-devotee becomes happy thinking that it definitely is a celestial light, or tends to perform more and more meritorious-activities thinking that, or develops more and more *saddhā* (confidence) in the triple-gem, then it's okay to believe that they indeed are celestial lights.

In one of the past years, at the residence of one of the benefactors there was a meritorious-religious ceremony of offering robes to monks after the rains-retreat (*kaṭhina* offering²⁸). On that day that house was like a shrine to Lord *Buddha*. The robe that was to be offered (*kaṭhina*-robe) together with the other offering-materials were placed very nicely and the ceremony was organised with much devotion. On that night, before the procession that gracefully takes the *kaṭhina*-

28 *Kaṭhina* is the cotton cloth that is annually offered by the laity to the monks for the purpose of making robes.

robe to the temple began from the house, the monks had visited that house and held a *paritta*-chanting²⁹. This group of devotees stated that in every photograph taken of that occasion there were celestial lights appearing. Looking at these celestial lights, there is a very important lesson that revered-you could learn. Because that lesson is extremely valuable for you, it will be noted below. If we take a Buddhist temple for example, the temple consists of four sets of regular devotees belonging to each of the four directions – north, south, east, and west of the temple. It is on the fourfold requisites (alms-food, medicine, robes and dwelling) offered by these benefactors of the four groups that the temple sustains. The elderly male and female lay-adherents of these four groups often live clinging to the temple. Their whole life is the temple. They go to observe eight-precepts of *sīla* on full moon days. They perform meritorious activities regularly. Every afternoon they go to the temple for the *bodhi*-obeisance. The temple has become an integral part of their life. Such revered-devotees form an intense clinging towards the temple in ways mentioned above. Because of having, at their dying moment, a sensual desire (*chanda-rāga*) towards the temple they made a part of their life, such devotees get reborn as inferior forms of celestial beings in the temple premises itself and live clinging to a milk-sap tree in the temple grounds. In a banyan tree, a bael tree, a golden trumpet-vine tree or inside a *Buddha*-shrine, they live as an illuminated male or female deity.

Look! Throughout their entire life they performed meritorious activities by making the temple 'mine'. And from that merit, they eventually get a rebirth as primary forms of deities living in a tree. After having performed so much meritorious deeds, in the end if we have to climb on to a tree and

29 A chanting of *Buddha*'s discourses for protection.

live as a primary deity that produces a light, then that is a grave misfortune. Just as how they enjoyed performing meritorious activities at the temple in their previous life as humans, now as an illuminated deity they get a joy out of watching others perform meritorious activities. When the procession for gracefully taking the *kathina*-robe for offering takes place, these beings too will attend that occasion. When a *paritta*-chanting ceremony takes place at some residence, these beings too will attend that occasion. When a *paritta*-chanting or an almsgiving ceremony is being held at some residence, provided the residence is clean, these celestial forms attend those meritorious occasions and get a joy out of it. Once the meritorious event is over, they return to the milk-sap tree at the temple premises. So whom is it that you see as celestial lights at these meritorious religious events? Not a stranger. It's those same lay-adherents who worked with much dedication at each and every event of your own temple and are now dead. It's those same elderly relatives of yours who passed away. However much joy they get out of watching meritorious activities taking place, the prospect of them going beyond this celestial form or improving their state is very slim. This is because they have clung to the temple. They have taken that 'clinging' to be a permanent happiness. As a result they remain seeing and practicing the materialistic side of meritorious activities. Why? because in the previous human life they failed to go beyond the materialistic side of meritorious activities simply because they had made the temple 'mine'.

While being in such celestial forms, just as how they rejoice upon seeing meritorious activities, when they see something they dislike taking place at the temple they are angered. If someone removes or changes something they liked or something they built at the temple during their previous life, or if someone, be it clergy or laity, does something that is against the *Dhamma* or *Vinaya*, then having seen those

things these celestial forms are angered, generate ill-will and form hateful minds. Due to this reason there is a risk of them having to depart from those inferior deity-forms and falling to such states as devil- or preta-ghost-forms. When things they dislike take place at the temple they live clinging to, ill-will and hatred form within them. Look what a crime it is... squandering the merits they accumulated through meritorious activities they performed. This happens due to unskillfulness. Just as performing meritorious activities, you should also be skillful to channel the wholesome-karma (merits) gathered through such activities towards the correct target. Otherwise, even after having performed meritorious activities, in the end we will have to climb on to a milk-sap tree at the temple. Just like people who climb coconut trees. Although, you will have an illumination like a battery operated torch with the power of about three batteries. It could well be these lights that appear in those photographs you take at meritorious religious activities. Revered-you mustn't be attached to those lights for any reason whatsoever. Do not have a 'sensual desire' for such celestial forms. If you develop that kind of desire towards such primary celestial forms, it would mean that you yourself have squandered the merits you have gathered.

The *Buddha*, having understood this very fact, proclaims a very valuable teaching to Mahānāma, the Sākya-prince³⁰. This teaching is a very tactful piece of *Dhamma*. The prince Mahānāma approaches the *Buddha* and asks a question "Venerable Sir, o Blessed One! Those of us living a lay life, by means of which state of mind should we live?"

Then the Blessed One preaches: "Mahānāma, you must be restrained thus; develop the recollection of the qualities of

30 Shākya is a clan or a dynasty of the caste known as the warrior caste, to which the Gautama *Buddha* belongs.

the *Buddha*; the recollection of the qualities of the *Dhamma*; the recollection of the qualities of the *Sangha*; Mahānāma, you must develop the recollection of *sīla* (morality, virtue); and the recollection of *cāga* (generosity, liberality);” and at the end, the *Buddha* further states: “Mahānāma, you must develop the recollection of *deva* (deities, celestials of superior state)”. What the Venerable *Buddha* discourses is that: “You must have a desire to become a *deva*. Get to know the prerequisite qualities needed to become a *deva*. Constantly form a desire towards the six *deva*-worlds³¹ of the sensuous sphere that have endless pleasures in them. Have a desire to be born in those realms. Mentally visualise the endless pleasures enjoyed by the male and female deities living in those worlds. Yearn for those pleasures. Develop a clinging towards these heavenly realms”.

When you hear this teaching, you might think that the *Buddha* has commended the heavenly realms. What's being said here is not a commendation of heavenly realms. What the *Buddha* is discoursing is a very tactful teaching that would free you from the fourfold-hells. First, this teaching makes you desire and crave for those celestial realms and celestial pleasures. Once desire for celestial realms forms in you in this way, what would you do? — you would cling to that desire and develop more and more *saddhā* (confidence) in the triple-gem – *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*; you would abide by the precepts of *sīla* more and more; you would offer more and more *dāna* (almsgiving); and you would notice the rewards of those wholesome-karma. Why would you tend to develop these qualities more and more? — so that you can enjoy pleasures in one of the above prosperous heavenly realms. However, revered-devotees, when you cultivate from your life more and

31 The six heavenly realms of the sensuous sphere are, namely: (1) *Cātumahārājika*, (2) *Tāvātimsa*, (3) *Yāma*, (4) *Tusita*, (5) *Nimmāna-rati* and (6) *Paranimmita-vasavatti*.

more confidence in the triple-gem, more and more morality, and more and more generosity, without you even knowing you would attain the fruit of *sotāpanna* (stream-entry). That means, you'd become a person freed from the fourfold-hells and be reborn in those heavenly realms as a deity who is a recipients of *magga phala* (fruits of the path). Now you understand that the *Buddha* told you to cultivate the recollection of *deva* so as to elevate you to this triumphant position. Therefore, the reason why you are told to cultivate this recollection of *deva*, is not to wish to become a primary and inferior celestial being living at the temple or the monastery, but to aspire to become a more imperial deity in these prosperous heavenly realms. Don't even think of becoming a deity attached to a tree at the temple or a guardian-deity at the temple. Those are basic states. By associating the temple, cultivate the requisite qualities and wholesome-karma. The temple is the centre for developing wholesome-karmic qualities. Do not distance yourself from the temple for any reason whatsoever. If you stay away from the temple, that means you are moving away from the pathway to freedom from the fourfold-hells. It's the association with the temple that cultivates in you the essential requisite factors for escaping the fourfold-hells – that are, *saddhā* in the triple-gem, *sīla* and *dāna*.

These points were noted here for revered-ones who live lay lives, who are attached to family attachments.

Some revered-laity have a view that: “now we practice meditation and cultivate *samādhi* and therefore, now there is no need to go to the temple”. By such overestimation, you are inflicting harm upon yourself. If it's a mind of 'aversion' that arises in you about whatever mistake that exists in the temple, that just means that you are not yet complete in *sīla*; you are weak in *sīla*. If you are complete in *sīla*, you won't have aversion about another's *sīla*, and it's not right to be so.

Recently the *Bhikkhu* met a revered-lay-person. He is a person who doesn't associate the temple. He is of the view that he is a person who has attained the 'fruits of the path'. However, absolutely no such characteristics manifest in him. He has an opinion on the temple as thus.

'All that is done at the temple is constructing buildings; conducting meritorious religious activities; and charitable donation fund raising'. Now look, will anyone who has formed *saddhā* towards the triple-gem object to the temple achieving a development as such at least from a physical aspect at a moment where 2600 years have passed since the *sāsana* (dispensation of the *Buddha*) came in to existence? This is not the path directly leading to attaining *Nibbāna* in this life. This is the path leading to attaining freedom from the fourfold-hells. For each part of the temple that is constructed, for each meritorious religious activity that is organised, how many revered-people develop the strength of generosity by contributing to them monetarily or in physical labour. It is through generous-offering (almsgiving) that greed reduces in you. What are we practicing through almsgiving? — letting go (renunciation). Either in this life or someday in the cycle of rebirth, you must let go of this eye with the insight-realisation, considering it as 'not mine'. Must let go of this ear, nose, tongue, mind, body with the insight-realisation, considering them as 'not mine'. The feeling, perception, volition and consciousness that are conditioned by the eye must be let go of with the insight-realisation, considering them as 'impermanent'. Must realise through insight the impermanence of the entire *pañca-upādānakkhandha* (five aggregates that are objects of clinging — i.e. corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness) that arise due to each of the other organs (ear, nose, tongue, mind, body) coming into contact with external form (sound, smell, taste, thoughts, touch), and must escape from the clinging towards

them. It is this renunciation that you train for by almsgiving. Now you see how valuable almsgiving is for revered-laity to escape the suffering of the *samsāra*. Therefore, can anyone who has *saddhā* in the triple-gem say that even one rupee that is donated towards preserving the *sāsana* is an unnecessary thing; that even one building that is being built is an unnecessary construction?

Don't go to think of the others. You donate what you donate. You don't need to try to find out what the recipient does with the donation. If you truly donate something, you won't try to find out about that which was donated. Because it doesn't belong to you anymore. Because you completely let go of that which was donated. Because your remit is now limited to donating only rather than following up. Without enjoying the joy and relief of letting go, while dismissing the happiness that was received and by trying to enquire about what happened to that which was donated, you accumulate unwholesome-karma.

Giving alms should be done not only by the affluent in society. Anyone who lives with prosperity today, lives so as a consequence of the wholesome-karma of giving alms they themselves performed previously in *samsāra*. Just as the affluent in society, the less affluent too must intensely practice almsgiving. What we see in society is that poor people, rather than they themselves giving alms, are inclined to be the recipient of alms that are given by others. This is an injustice you are doing to yourself. Doesn't matter whether it is something you received from others; you must give as alms at least a small part of what you received whilst believing in karma and karma-results. If a revered-person who earns Rupees 1,000 a day sets-aside Rupees 100 each day for almsgiving; then the revered-person who earns Rupees 100 a day must set-aside Rupees 10 each day for almsgiving. The meritorious result (wholesome-karma-result) you get from this is not dependent on the amount

of money donated. Instead, it is dependent on the volition and the *saddhā* that has formed in you.

Once a revered-gentleman told the *Bhikkhu* thus: “One day, a monk came to our house to sell some charity fundraising tickets. A ticket was priced at Rupees 25 each and said to be for the cause of caring for sick monks”.

Having heard this, that revered-gentleman had denounced that monk and chased him away. That gentleman is now bragging about his actions.

It's true that the relevant monk did something that is against the *Vinaya* (rules of conduct for monks); but because of that, the revered-gentleman too ended up committing an unwholesome-karma. Don't always try to correct the society. The dispensation of the *Buddha* is about to get concealed from human knowledge very soon. In this short period... in this short life span... you be established. In front of an immoral world made up of people lacking moral restraint... you be virtuous; you be a person who abides by moral conduct. In a dishonest world that swindles money... you be a true philanthropist. Why should you become lax (*pamāda*), just because the rest of the world defrauds? Without thinking of the recipient, think of the way to meaningfully multiply your stock of merits. If you have the capacity, spend Rupees 25 and buy a ticket; be happy thinking that it is an offering made towards the *Sangha*. If that is not possible, speak very cordially, inform that monk that you haven't got the money and send him on his way. The person who is not yet freed from the fourfold-hells would always do things that tend to causing others to fall into the fourfold-hells. Those are the ones who live under the control of *Māra*. It's the *Māra*'s desire that is carried out by them. Let them go to the clutches of the *Māra*, but revered-you should act by understanding this reality.

For almsgiving to bear great fruits, yield great consequences...

If there is someone who obstructs you from giving alms, whether they be your parents, wife, children, relatives or a friend, firmly keep in mind that he or she is not your relative. Elude such people. Be aloof from such people. If there is someone who encourages you to perform actions that cause to develop your *saddhā* (confidence, faith) in the triple-gem, to make you abide by the precepts of *sīla* (morality), or to motivate you to give alms, make him your closest relative. Even the mundane actions you perform, perform them devoid of *moha* (delusion) and with *sammā-ditṭhi* (Right View) in a mundane sense. You must always reflect on that which is donated, rather than on that which is deposited. Once the female lay-disciple Visākhā³² requests from the *Buddha* for 8 boons. Those 8 boons were that, as long as she lived she be allowed to give robes to the *Saṅgha* for the rainy season; to give food for monks coming into Sāvatti; to give food for those going out; to give food for the sick monks; to give food for those who wait on the sick monks; to give medicine for the sick monks; to give a constant supply of rice gruel for any monks needing it; and

³² Visākhā was the chief among the female lay disciples of the *Buddha*. She became a stream-enterer at the age of 7 and died at the ripe age of 120.

to give bathing robes for the nuns. The Supramundane Lord *Buddha* very respectfully grants Visākhā these 8 boons. Look! The female lay-disciple Visākhā is one who attained stream-entry. If revered-you are to come to that realisation, whom should you follow..., whose example should you follow? Always think of Visākhā, Anāthapindika, Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā³³. Envisage the extent of the importance such noble people placed on almsgiving. Just think for a moment of the 8 boons received by Visākhā. Of these 8 boons, how many do you perform through your life? Let alone 'constantly', but are you a person who at least once a month or once a year offer alms to the *Sangha*? Or a person who offers robes for the rainy season? Or a person who waits on the *Sangha* in other ways? Ask from your conscience. If the answer is 'yes', still don't be content. Don't go to give yourself credit. Continue to think that 'I am lax and overdue (*pamāda*)' and thereby, make effort to strive zealously (*appamāda*). Understand the fact that the money you collect in the bank would be for someone else's brief juvenile pleasures, and that the money you don't accumulate but give as alms would be solely for a wonderful happiness for yourself. Develop the recollection of *deva* (imperial deities, celestials of superior state). Try to perform the above meritorious activities regularly, weekly, or monthly as it suits your income. Don't squander any opportunity you get. Don't consider the *sīla* or the *samādhi* of the recipient. Rather than viewing them as individuals, always see them as the fourfold assembly — i.e. monks, nuns, male lay-disciples and female lay-disciples of the

33 Anāthapindika was the chief among the lay disciples of the *Buddha*. He was an extremely wealthy businessman. Yet, he became a stream-enterer at his first sighting of the *Buddha*. He became famous for his devotion towards the *Buddha* and his unparalleled generosity. His given name was Sudatta, but he was always called Anāthapindika because of his munificence. Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā were a man and his wife, householders, who were among eminent disciples of the *Buddha*. They too were stream-enterers. As man and wife, they were praised by the *Buddha* for their devotion to each other.

Buddha. View them as natural springs that give rise to merits. Without concerning about the depth, or the lack of depth, the highness, or the lowness of that spring, focus only on the water that is required to quench your thirst of suffering of the *samsāra*. When you are given water to quench your thirst of suffering, looking into the details of the spring is something you'd do solely due to delusion (*moha*). Do away with views and opinions and open yourself to 'causality'. Rather than thinking of the individuals, always think collectively of the assembly of monks, nuns, male lay-disciples and female lay-disciples of the past who lived with infinite qualities and infinite faculties of wisdom.

Make the full-moon 'Poya' day that comes once a month into your and your family's day of meritorious activities. Whether it be at the temple or at your home, on that day, perform activities of generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*) and mental development (*bhāvanā*) with the sole objective of freeing yourself from the fourfold-hells. Get the wife, the children, and the servants also involved in this. If they don't like to, then you carry out this exercise on your own. What is the 'fourfold-hells'; what suffering do the beings in it endure; how long is the life span in those realms; how difficult is it to escape the fourfold-hells for he who has fallen into it...; discuss these things. Don't be ashamed. Don't get conceited thinking that 'now that we are human we will never again fall into the fourfold-hells'. The mind that says that is the same mind that will pave the way for you to fall into the fourfold-hells. Be humble enough to think that "Oh, I'm not yet free from (I'm still liable to fall into) the fourfold-hells". If you aren't really free from the fourfold-hells yet, then mindfully identify and avoid those methods that are overwhelmed by 'self-view' (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*) and falsely claim to make you recipients of the fruits of the path (*magga phala*) in a matter of weeks or months. Examine yourself by constantly

checking against the phenomenon of causality. Be free from delusion. Keep in mind well that 'realisation' is not something that is bestowed upon you by someone else, but something that you yourself attain through the knowingness that arises from within yourself. If on the full moon Poya day members of your family or those who observed the precepts of *sīla* at the temple focused their attention towards, and had discussions about, the dreadfulness of the fourfold-hells and the path for escaping the fourfold-hells, then for the remaining 29 days of the month you will be able to live within that energy, within that path. What is stated throughout this note is how you could develop the recollection of *cāga* (generosity) for the purpose of escaping the fourfold-hells. Almsgiving towards monks, nuns, male lay-disciples and female lay-disciples, or towards the poor, the beggars, dogs and crows, or towards celestial beings or nonhumans, for whoever it may be, give alms solely for the purpose of renouncing the greed in you. Give alms purely to diminish the craving. Don't create timetables for giving alms. While you are on your way somewhere, if you see a monk who is going on his alms round, offer something with devotion. While you are travelling a long distance, make a determination to always inquire from a monk you meet on the road or in a bus, about a requisite biscuit or a beverage. Do not worry about whether another person does or doesn't. Be skillful to make it a point to develop to the fullest the recollection of *cāga* from even the smallest opportunity you get. Think that giving alms is not for the benefit of someone else, not to satisfy someone else's hunger, but for the purpose of your own happiness. You must wish to actively create more opportunity of give alms. You must give repeatedly and recollect again and again the meritorious deeds you performed and the alms you have given. Wish that I may come in contact with more and more monks and lay-disciples in order for me to give alms. Wish that more and more temples and monasteries may be built, more and more religious

meritorious activities may be performed. For what purpose? For the purpose of developing the recollection of *cāga* in me by making donations towards them. Make all of these your happiness. If all of this isn't recollection of *deva*, then what is it? If the force of letting-go you cultivate by giving alms isn't the path to diminishing 'self-view', then what is it? Observe that the attachment you derive out of the wife, the husband, children, property and wealth only contributes towards solidifying the 'self-view' more and more.

The intention of this note was to state the importance of almsgiving for the revered-laity bound by attachments of lay life, for the purpose of freeing themselves from the fourfold-hells. Stated below is a story about an eminent gentleman who, although performed much almsgiving, due to not being skillful to interrelate those meritorious almsgivings in accordance with the *Buddha's* teaching, ended up in a state of suffering in his rebirth. This story will be very important for you. What this story tells you is that if you are not skillful, regardless of you having given alms or having performed meritorious deeds, there will be no guarantee that your next rebirth will definitely be in a human- or heavenly-realm.

There was this gentleman who was a smart businessman. Started at a very small place and eventually became a millionaire. He owned properties and business ventures. Had a very good wife, children and grandchildren. Never went to a temple to observe the precepts of *sīla*. Yet, lived well in accordance with the precepts of *sīla*. Spent lavishly and offered alms to monks and male and female lay-disciples according to a rostered schedule prepared by himself. Never tried to offer alms outside of that roster. His 'listening to the *Dhamma*' and 'associating a *kalyāna-mitta* (noble friend)' were very seldom. Although they were seldom, still he offered alms a lot. Donated money for

temples and monasteries; built necessary parts of temples. He had a lot of attachment towards his businesses and properties; because this was all earned solely through his hard work and sweat rather than by any unfair means. This revered-gentleman was much loved by everyone, lived a reclusive respectful life without harm to anyone and passed away before turning the age of seventy. He didn't die suffering or tormented by illnesses. It was a sudden death. Not his wife, children, relatives nor his friends had any fear about his death [about his rebirth] in any way. The venerable *Sangha* who attended the death ceremony advocated that none other than the doors of higher and prosperous realms would have opened for him... for he who didn't even harm an ant. Everyone mentioned above, whilst interrelating the causality according to their own respective knowledge of the *Dhamma*, claimed that this revered-gentleman who passed away will have been reborn only in higher and prosperous realms. The religious almsgiving ceremonies in his name were carried out in a grand scale at the seven-day, three-month and one-year death commemorations. More and more meritorious activities were performed. Everyone was with the sole perception that our relative who passed away would have been reborn as a celestial being of superior state. After some time had passed, on one night when a monk was in a state of *samādhi* this revered-gentleman who died was sighted. The monk sighted him in a lower preta-ghost realm³⁴; with a physical size the same as that he had when he was a human. He had a favourite set of clothes that he wore when attending a special occasion when he used to be a human. This preta-ghost was in a similar set of clothes. This gentleman who died had a property worth around 50 million. This preta-ghost was walking back and forth in this property. As he was walking

34 This is a lower realm where unhappy ghost wander in vain, hopelessly in search of sensual fulfilment. (*Pali: peta*)

back and forth he looked very distressed. A little bit hunched, with the head down and hands hanging down, he walked with an expression, a gesture, as though he was saying “oh, what happened to these things!”

The body was not weak. Clothes were neat and clean. Yet the mind is in distress. Only because of craving. From his gesture it appears that he was in fear that these properties will be lost, destroyed or someone else will claim ownership to them. Look, a person who gave so much alms, amassed so much merits and lived so much in accordance with the virtues, in the previous life. But did he make use of those wholesome-karma?

At the moment of death, if this revered-person recollected or envisioned an almsgiving he performed, or the moral and virtuous life he lived, or the meritorious deeds performed in that life, or if he had recollected the supreme qualities of the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and the *Sangha* who taught the path to performing such meritorious deeds, if he had the skillfulness to recollect in such manner, he would definitely have been reborn either as a celestial being of superior state in a prosperous celestial realm, or as a fabulous human being in the human-realm, according to his liking. However, for this unfortunate man, because ‘listening to the *Dhamma*’ was limited and ‘associating a *kalyāna-mitta*’ was seldom, the recollections of meritorious deeds he performed and the virtuous life he had were subdued and what came to mind was land and properties. Due to the powerfulness of the craving towards property, what surfaced was not phenomena that cause comfort and solace, but phenomena that cause destruction. As a result of just that, he fell into a lower preta-ghost realm. But look, although he fell into a preta-ghost form due to the powerful sensuous greed towards property; the consequences of almsgivings he performed during his human

life yielded him pleasurable results even in that preta-ghost form. Even in the preta-ghost form he has received neat, clean clothes; a body with a good healthy appearance. However, due to the greed he has developed his mind is of course enduring distress and suffering. As a result, his body language indicates a strong discontentment. When this revered-gentleman was a human being the society identified him as a moral and virtuous man; as a benevolent donor; as a businessman who rightfully earned wealth through hard work. However, even though the rest of the world identified him in that way based on his outer appearance and way of life, his mind had grown in a direction beyond that. That is, the endless sensuous desire towards property. The rebirth was formed according to that mental formation. Although he had cultivated through his life the environment required to gain pleasures in a higher realm after death, purely due to the lack of listening to the *Dhamma*, association with a *kalyāna-mitta* and the resulting erudition, he had simply grasped a suffering mistaking it for a happiness. Now living in this nonhuman realm as a preta-ghost, he belongs to the superior group of preta-ghosts — the ones who can receive merits passed on by others. If he wants to he can receive merits by altruistically enjoying meritorious deeds performed by others in his name. But he will not obtain merits from others; because of the severe craving towards the things he has clung to. With someone like this in mind, however much prosperously you perform meritorious offerings of alms-food and other requisites to the *Sangha* in his name, this preta-being would not obtain merits. If another eligible nonhuman being exists, such being will obtain the merits you pass on. If not, in any case, those merits will accumulate to your own selves to yield you comforts. At no point has Lord *Buddha* discoursed that such merits will not accrue to your own selves.

Even to preta-ghost who have strong clinging, provided they belong to this superior group, there is a way for you to break that clinging and pass on merits if you too are skillful. Because these beings have subdued good qualities in them that they had practiced and developed in their past human lives. You must be skillful to perform meritorious activities in such a way so as to surface those qualities. Perform the meritorious activities in such a way that such beings are awakened to the perception of impermanence (*anicca*). The *Bhikkhu* noted this bit neither for us to hold on to ourselves those forms of the dead, nor for us to live our life thinking about those who are dead. You should not consider such subjects as relevant for you. Instead, these facts were noted so as to give you an understanding of the dangers you will face if you fail to correctly practice this path of the *Dhamma*. Also, the Lord *Buddha* has discoursed that it is your duty to pass on merits in the name of those dead relatives of yours. When you read this story, you might have understood that how you should give alms is in a manner that *tanhā* (craving, greed), *māna* (conceit, pride) and *ditṭhi* (views, opinions) are not developed, but are diminished. If almsgiving contributes to developing these unwholesome qualities, such almsgiving would not be meaningful. But, from the above story, you must clearly understand that they would never go waste.

As revered-laity what you give priority to is your business, home, properties, children and wife. Give priority to them. Yet, you must give the highest priority to the objective of “freeing myself from the liability to fall into the fourfold-hells”. Even if you get an animal birth or preta-ghost birth, you will still get a wife and a child. But in those realms you won’t have the ability to realise the *Dhamma*. You will have the ability to realise the *Dhamma* only in this life. Realising the *Dhamma* means to transcend the fourfold-hells.

Don't allow unwholesome-karma to proliferate...

The Supramundane Lord *Buddha* discoursed a beautiful *Dhamma* to a young man called 'Subha' in the 'Cūla-kammavibhanga Sutta' stating that: "Subha, beings in this world inherit *kamma* from the past... they make *kamma* their own possession". One of the questions Subha asks of the *Buddha* is: Some people living in this world have long life, but others die after a mere shorter life. Venerable Blessed One, what is the reason for such occurrence? It is in response to this question that the *Buddha* replied that beings born in this world inherit their *kamma* (karma, karmic volitions) from the past and that they make *kamma* their own possession. Having said this, the *Buddha* goes on to preach: "Subha, if one performs in his previous life the *akusala*-karma (unwholesome-karma) of inflicting cruelty upon beings, after death he will come to endure suffering in the hell-realm. In case he happens to be reborn in the human-realm, he will be born inheriting sicknesses. In the same way, as a result of him extending loving-kindness to beings, after death if he is reborn as a human being he will inherit good health".

Look then, in this society why one person lives with good health whilst another lives with sicknesses, is due to a

causality. The cause that is primary amongst other things is either performing cruelty towards beings or extending loving-kindness and compassion towards beings. When looking at the present society not only the humans but the environment you live in too has become sick. Of these, let's leave aside the environment and look at only the humans. Some get sick while they are still in the mother's womb. In a month or two after conceiving the foetus becomes sick. While still being in the womb, the previously performed unwholesome-karma of inflicting cruelty upon beings gives effect. Some infants are born into this world prematurely, hence not fully developed. Some others are born either with various disabilities or organ deficiencies. Since these babies first see the light of day, they spend weeks, months or years in intensive care units or prematurely born infant units of the hospital and endure suffering. Visit a leading children's hospital or a children's ward in the country. What a lot of children of various age limits suffer from unthinkable ailments? Some children have terminal illnesses, others are almost-terminally ill. Tubes attached to the nose or the mouth, tubes inserted into the stomach... When you see these things, when you experience them, you cannot bear the suffering these little children endure. Not only the little children, because of these children, their parents, brothers, sisters and relatives, all have become shareholders of the suffering. Although born into a human realm, how many parents are there in this society who endure suffering of a hell due to their sick children? This suffering is certainly not something you have received by coincidence. It is not something received because of a bad spell, or wrath of gods, or due to a weakness in the country's medical system. The *Buddha* proclaims that beings inherit their *kamma* from the past. If due to the sick children their parents endure suffering, then that too is simply the inheritance of karma of those parents from past lives in *samsāra*. This is not a responsibility, a suffering, received by those parents by coincidence. If a human being who

has committed the unwholesome-karma of inflicting cruelty upon other beings in a previous life gets a human rebirth again, the suitable womb in which he conceives will be the womb of a mother who herself has committed related unwholesome-karma in her previous lives. These are phenomena of this world that no one could change. It is not mothers and fathers suffering because of their child nor the child suffering because of its mother and father. Instead, due to unwholesome-karma that each one has respectively committed, simply everyone is jointly enduring the effects of their unwholesome-karma.

Think thus. A dog comes to your doorstep. The mother and the father advise the son to hit the dog with something and chase it away. So the child picks up a rock or a club and strikes the dog. That innocent dog runs away dangling its paw and bleeding. Now see, how many people were involved in causing cruelty to this animal? Yes, it was the child who hit the dog, but it was the parents who instructed the child to do so. It was the child who accumulated more unwholesome-karma. Children who carry unwholesome-karma such as these, upon their death, ought to be born to corresponding parents with similar unwholesome-karma, then become sick and consequently create the opportunity for the parent's unwholesome-karma to bear fruit. Now all three of them are enduring solely the results of their own respective unwholesome-karma. The *Bhikkhu* has sometimes heard some mothers with sick children say "It's due to my karma that I had this child" — and that thinking of such mothers is very reasonable.

This ignorant world is formed in such way that beings are pushed simply towards suffering. The nature of the world is such that when your own unwholesome-karma are bearing results (*vipāka*), due to the unpleasant feeling of that *vipāka*, beings are pushed in the direction of committing more and

more unwholesome-karma. You need to be very careful here. If not, what happens is, both you and the others will inherit more and more unwholesome-karma. If you are caring for an elderly person or a child who is sick, due to the actions of such sick people you are caring for, volitions such as anger, revenge, repulsiveness or indifference might constantly arise in you. That is the nature of it. At an instance like this, you need to be skillful to relate and apply the Supramundane *Dhamma* to your life. Otherwise, if you make 'anger' your own, in effect what you are owning is a blazing inferno. The consequence is that, for an infinite time in *samsāra* you will have to burn from this conflagration that you yourself blazed up.

It was sicknesses of children that was mentioned above. When considering the sicknesses of the youth, if you visit a large hospital or a small hospital, you will find that hundreds of thousands of people are sick. Healthiness is becoming very rare. Sicknesses that are inappropriate for the age, deadly diseases, sicknesses that make others feel disgusted, sicknesses that one is unable to tell others... according to the deeds of physical cruelty towards beings committed throughout *samsāra*, in ways appropriate for such karma to bear fruit, various sicknesses befall. Sicknesses also arise due to environmental causes or seasonal influences. However, you must understand that the probability of such illnesses being prolonged or becoming chronic is less. The sick who are enduring results of unwholesome-karma can be clearly identified. Imagine a patient who is constantly moaning in pain on a hospital bed; a patient suffering in pain with tubes inserted into the nose, mouth and abdomen; a patient with arms and legs tied to the four corners of the bed; a patient who endures suffering unconsciously for days; a patient who is unfortunate not to be able to taste water or food; a patient with disable arms or legs, or with deformed organs or who is paralysed. For the

Bhikkhu however, when seeing a patient like this, a deep sense of reverence for the *Dhamma* arises. How clearly has the Lord *Buddha* discoursed the natures of the phenomena of the world? Previously in *saṃsāra* you have made beings suffer, inflicted harm on them. It is that very same suffering and harm that you are experiencing thus.

In the present, how much of animal cruelty is being inflicted by humans? Some inflict animal cruelty as a fashion. Others do it as a business. Whilst another group engages in animal cruelty merely as a hobby.

Most people engage in these things because they are ignorant of the consequences. One day when the *Bhikkhu* was residing in a forest *kuṭī*, the *Bhikkhu* saw some kids going by the *kuṭī* towards the forest. They went towards the forest while carrying something in a polythene-bag. The *Bhikkhu* couldn't know what was inside the bag. The next day when the *Bhikkhu* was walking along the path where those kids went, near an average granite rock there were about 20 snails that had been killed by smashing their shell against the rock. It was snails that were hanging on tree-trunks that had been carried in the polythene-bag. Those kids enjoyed seeing the shell of those snails getting smashed when it hits the rock. In this instance, it goes beyond just animal cruelty and ventures into 'killing'. Throwing stones at birds; throwing stones at fish and wounding them; snapping wings off butterflies... there are many kids like this in society. So much more animal cruelty occurs in areas in the dry zone of the country. With the intention of protecting the harvest from the elephants that come to destroy the crop, from on top of the treehouse built for the purpose of guarding the grain-field, boiling water is poured like molten rock on the elephants' back. Gunny bags are set on fire and thrown on the elephants' back from on top of the treehouse. Large nails are

fixed on timber planks and left on elephant trails so that the elephants' feet get punctured. These are unwholesome-karma that will bear results for a very long period of time. Therefore, prior to committing such unwholesome-karma in terms of grave animal cruelties, you must be skillful to correlate them according to the *Dhamma*.

Think thus. A farmer in the Gampaha District (a district in the wet zone of the country and closer to urban areas) cultivates his paddy field. He never goes to guard the field by staying up all night on a treehouse to protect the harvest. He remains very relaxed whilst simply adding oils, chemical substances and fertilizer. He only has to perform tasks such as changing the direction of the waterways. In contrast, a farmer in the dry zone has to undergo immense hardship suffering in the rain and dew while breaking rest in order to protect the crop, right from the time of sowing the seeds up until the time of reaping the harvest. He has to stay up all night right throughout until harvesting. You must see this clearly. Both the farmer from the Gampaha District and the farmer from the dry zone undertake the same farming activity. However, the nature of the suffering each farmer has to endure are completely different. This is something that takes place due to a karma-result (*vipāka*). Why the revered-farmer from the dry zone has to strive selflessly with much difficulty to protect his crop without even much concern for his own life is because, in his previous lives, he might have committed the unwholesome-karma of destroying vegetation belonging to others. It is the *vipāka* of that karma that he experiences in this life even after being born as a human being. He was born in an area full of hardship, he got a life with much hardship — these are *vipāka* of past karma. The one who recognises these phenomena will tend to never repeat the unwholesome-karma committed in the past. You must be skillful to interpret your life by comparing with the law of cause and effect. Although in this life revered-you live as a farmer

in the difficult dry zone, at countless times in previous lives you too would have destroyed the crops belonging to others when you were an animal such an elephant, a bull, a wild boar, or a bird. At present you are enduring the *vipāka* of those unwholesome-karma that you yourself committed previously in *samsāra*. If you don't interrelate these things in accordance with the *Dhamma*, what you will do is commit more and more unwholesome-karma. Therefore, without going to the extent of committing animal cruelty, tactfully protect your vegetation from wild animals.

Let me remind you once again, the world is always of the nature of constantly forcing you towards unwholesome deeds. It is only with your skillfulness that you can proceed towards wholesome deeds. Perhaps when you are reading this note you might wonder how an elephant can become a human being. That too is a result of wholesome-karma. The following is an example...

There is a very prominent businessman living in this country. He is a gentleman who is very humble, simple, and leads a virtues life. When a monk, through the noble *samādhī*, aimed to sight this revered-gentleman's previous birth, what was sighted was an elephant. That means this gentleman had been an elephant in his previous life. However, it's the sight of a tamed elephant that was seen rather than a wild elephant. There is a much greater probability of those elephants that are raised at religious sights, at Royal Buddhist Temples, at places of worship dedicated to particular deities, or those that reside under the custodianship of respectable gentlemen who privately raise elephants, or those that regularly take part in religious processions and live in a religious environment, being born into respectable and cultured Buddhist families as human beings after their death. When born as humans, such beings

tend to be much inclined towards the *Dhamma*, very docile to the rest of the world, and much disciplined. However much higher his status becomes, he thinks in an extremely humble way. These qualities and characteristics are very much closer to those of a tamed elephant, which he was in the preceding life. Now you also think about the current life you have got by interrelating it according to the possible characteristics of your previous births. Based on the above story, the farmer from the dry zone should think that it is solely due to my behaviour in a previous life that these things happen to me in this life; and that animals come to destroy my vegetation simply because as an animal in previous lives I too would have destroyed people's vegetation and possessions. Then it's very easy for you to, whilst enduring the results of past unwholesome deeds committed in *samsāra*, avoid making new unwholesome-karma when you go about your things.

Like the plough trailing behind the bull...

This note is written in relation to animal cruelty. In the present day there is a large group of people who commit animal cruelty even as a fashion, an occupation or a business. Some gentlemen of the affluent class who own dogs, once the bitch gives birth and the litter is about a week old, bring the puppies to the veterinarian and have their tails cut off. It's done as a fashion. In chicken farms, when the chicks are still small, their beaks are shortened by clipping them off. In pig farms, once the sow gives birth, the piglets' teeth are pulled out because the sow's teats get infected. These are instances where animal cruelty takes place in a large-scale. Here, it is the animals of a tender age that face cruelty. The reason as to why these animals face cruelty at such a small age is because of a *vipāka* (karma-result) of an unwholesome-karma of theirs. When one suffers the *vipāka* of unwholesome-karma, another is accumulating unwholesome-karma. This is the economic science of *Māra*. Demand and supply occur at a good equilibrium. If those who perform cruelties on animals of such small age were to get a human life in their next birth, they become sick simply at their early childhood. At birth itself, their baby bodies will be incomplete in body parts and organs or be deformed. Just

like the wholesome deeds, the unwholesome deeds too work in a very fair and just manner when giving results. There is no need to appeal against such results claiming this is unfair — because the law of nature that governs the world is that fair. However, because you don't know the *Dhamma* you always see these verdicts as unfair. You see it as: the gods aren't looking at us; or there is no protection for us from the *Dhamma*. What is the *Dhamma*? — the characteristic of *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering) and *anattā* (not-self). Can these phenomena provide you protection? Is there a 'permanence', a 'happiness' or a 'self' here? The *Dhamma* cannot provide you protection. Instead, you must take refuge in the *Dhamma*. How do you take refuge in the *Dhamma*? — by entering the path of *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration) and *paññā* (wisdom) in order to realise the nature of the *Dhamma* that is *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. It is at this juncture that beings notice through wisdom the entire Four Noble Truths of escaping the birth, decay, sickness and death. He who notices thus through wisdom, doesn't curse the suffering; doesn't place blame on gods; doesn't disrespect the *Dhamma*. Instead, while making the suffering, the cause for suffering and the extinction of suffering his sole objective, he will make the Noble Eightfold Path³⁵ his only path. He will realise that the sole reason for the suffering is not the elephant, nor the puppy, nor the sick child, but the 'craving' (*tanhā*).

When speaking of animal cruelty, both domesticated animals such as cattle, dogs, cats or birds that dwell around the household as well as animals that live inside the household such as insects, endlessly face harm at the hands of humans. An animal is a member of the fourfold-hells. Which means, it is one who lives under the control of *Māra*. It is these animals that *Māra* uses to plant the unwholesome-roots – greed, hatred and

35 (See. *ariya aṭṭhangika magga*)

delusion, in revered-you. Animal means, *Māra's* pet. In order to lure you into the fourfold-hells, the bait placed on *Māra's* fish-hook, is the 'animal'. Therefore, just as how you are wary of fire, so you must be even more wary of animals.

Even if you get burnt from fire, the suffering is limited to the pain from that burn. Yet if you inflict cruelties upon animals, you are bound to inherit the suffering of the entire fourfold-hells. Even if you get a human life in the next birth, you are bound to have to live as a sickly person. However, if you practice the path of the *Dhamma* that was discoursed by the *Buddha*... if you become a human being complete of *saddhā* (confidence), *sīla* (morality) and *mettā* (loving-kindness), then, by using that same 'animal', you will be able to steer your life to a positoin where wholesome-roots³⁶ develop in you. A dog comes to your doorstep. Parents tell a child thus, "Son, chase that dog away without causing it any harm". At that moment a mind of loving-kindness has also arisen in you. Or you say, "Son, give that dog some food and once it finishes eating, chase it away without causing it any harm". In that instance, just as a mind of loving-kindness, a mind of generosity too arose. Before you act on anything to do with animals, you must be patient and cultivate moral-shame and moral-dread (*hiri-ottappa*) towards animal cruelty.

Animal cruelty is a thing that is much subtler than you think. It is simply because this subtleness is not understood by man that it is difficult to find a person without illness in the present world. There are revered-people in society who are healthy. What those people experience are karma-results of wholesome-karma that they themselves have committed in

36 The 3 wholesome-roots are, [1] *alobha* – 'greedless' (or having generosity); [2] *adosa* – 'devoid of hate' (or having loving-kindness); [3] *amoha* – 'undeluded' (or having wisdom (*paññā*)).

the journey of *samsāra*. For the benefit of your understanding the *Bhikkhu* will now note down a story that illustrates explicitly the subtleness of the karma-results that man has to endure due to animal cruelty. Once you read this story, you decide for yourself how subtly the act of animal cruelty could occur at your hands; and in what subtle and obscure ways their unwholesome-karma-results line-up for you to endure. By reading this story and thereby recognising clearly the consequences of unwholesome-karma that you will have to experience if you commit animal cruelties, from now onwards if you must have animals, you must do so without bringing them any harm or torment. Make a living using animals; earn income from animals; but do it only while nurturing them well and having loving-kindness, compassion towards them.

There was a very religious middle-aged couple. This couple didn't have children. As a result, they live a life of much freedom. They make a living by having a place of business in a main city. This place of business is run by the wife. The husband gets involved in the business activities only when it is really necessary. Which means she is someone with an inherent flair for business.

However, there is a particular problem that affects this revered-woman's life. It's a problem of a mysterious nature. Sometimes she looks as though she is frightened. Sometimes she says that she is being followed by a nonhuman force. She is tormented because of this. She who performs very well during when conducting business activities, becomes very agitated from the time she comes home. She opposes, gets frightened, when the husband tries to go to a temple or go to see a monk. The husband who knows very well this nature of his wife, deals with her with much understanding. She thinks that her dead father, due to his love for her, is still following her. Because

of this reason she is distressed. In appearance, she sometimes displays a frightened enigmatic nature. Yet she has confidence in the triple-gem and tries to abide by the precepts of *sīla*. She has a good knowledge of the *Dhamma* by reading books. Although these qualities are present, she is tormented by the above problem. This couple also has the hope of selling their household and businesses in the future and entering a life of renunciation — to lead the life of a person who has given up all of his or her worldly possessions and responsibilities to commit full-time to the practice. When interrelating these background incidents well, they seem to be a couple with much *saddhā*.

However, there is a distress in her that she cannot understand with certainty. She sometimes mentally suffers due to that distress. She suffers such distress not because of being followed by a nonhuman force nor because there is a nonhuman force residing in her body, but because of her weak mental state. She is not skillful enough to perceive herself as a person who, has sought refuge in the triple-gem, is restrained in the precepts of *sīla*, and regularly offers alms; nor to turn such perception into a confidence. As soon as she develops a strong mental state through such confidence, she will have the ability to overcome this weakness. It's a result of an unwholesome-karma she had committed in a previous life that prevents her from developing this right mental state.

A certain monk, through the *samādhi*, sights the past life of this particular woman. When in noble *samādhi* the monk envisions both her previous life as well as the karma committed in the past life pertinent to the present karma-result. What the monk envisions is some buffaloes and a woman. The woman is heard saying: "Give me the money for the work performed" – and the vision ends at this point.

Now the *Bhikkhu* relates this vision to this woman's previous life, to understand – who she was in her previous life? what was the unwholesome-karma that was committed by her? This analysis is of much value to you, for you to recollect, again and again with *saddhā*, the principle – “you are heir to *kamma*” that was discoursed with great-compassion by the *Buddha*.

In the previous life too she was a woman. She made a living by giving buffaloes for hire for farming. It's the fee for the buffaloes that were put to work that she asks from the farm-owner. Now let's consider this incident from several angles.

The first point is, in her previous life too she was a businesswoman. The previous life means about 50 years ago. About half a century ago there weren't many businesses like the present day. The complexities that are present in the current society were absent then. The main business, source of income, was agriculture. It was a very honourable occupation in the past. In her previous life this woman made a living by lending buffaloes for agricultural activities. In this life too, simply due to habit (from the past life), she had the strength to manage a business that sells latest technological equipment, by herself. In society you may have seen certain women who work very competently in the field of business. These, revered-people, are habits of past lives in *samsāra*. Those without such past habits are shy to even go to a shop and purchase something. You need to relate these things yourself with your own life-activities.

The second point is, the nature of the unwholesome-karma she acquired as a result of the business she conducted in her previous life. Although she made a living by putting buffaloes to paddy-cultivation, she had not engaged in slaughtering animals. That is the compassion for animals that was there in humans of the past. In the present day, buffaloes

being used for paddy-cultivation is very rare. However, in the society that existed about 50 years ago, the buffalo was the main force in agriculture. From the point of ploughing the earth until the point of threshing the harvest in the threshing-field, it's the buffalo that assists in farming activities. It is in a very unkind manner that people get these animals to work. How much work is being taken out of two buffaloes tied to the yoke of the plough from morning till evening? — like a machine. The only time the buffalo gets a rest is when the farmer sits down to have his meals. Yet that animal won't be unfastened from the yoke. The buffalo rests while shouldering the yoke. How much vigour would the buffalo need to pull the plough to break the earth and turn the soil? For the slightest mistake, stricken with a stick... the sound of such strike... the *Bhikkhu* can feel it even at this moment whilst writing this note. However much it wants to, can the buffalo tell excuses such as "Oh, I am sick. My knees hurt. My head hurts. The heat of the Sun is too much right now. I am hungry... thirsty..."? Throughout the day having pulled the yoke and ploughed using its physical strength to turn the earth, in the evening goes to sleep after grazing on the grass in the meadow. The next morning again the usual duty...

The buffalo-owner receives the income.

We think this is a wholesome vocation. Think for yourself, if two humans are tied to a plough and put in a paddy-field to turn the soil, can the physical and mental cruelty that those two undergo be measured? Based on this, you decide for yourself the extent of the cruelty experienced by the buffalo. Because of this animal cruelty, just as how much the plough tied to the buffalo's neck trails behind the buffalo... just as how much it inflicts cruelty upon that animal physically and mentally... the woman who owned the bulls received that much income. She was happy with the income earned through such animal

cruelty. As a karma-result of it, in the current life as a woman, her mental state, which she thinks is a nonhuman, trails behind her and makes her endure the result of the unwholesome-karma. Look how fair the world-phenomena is. Just as how the plough tied to the buffalo's neck trailed behind it and caused so much physical and mental cruelty to those animals; as the result of that karma, in this human life the relevant woman herself perceives a nonhuman feeling that trails behind her and causes her physical and mental distress. Now you would have understood in what subtle ways the unwholesome-karma known as 'animal cruelty' could occur at your hands. You would have also understood the fact that the nature of such unwholesome-karma of animal cruelty is that they bear karma-results that directly correlate to the nature of the cruelty that took place.

More about adversities of cruelty

The grounds of the reservoir can be seen clearly from the *kuṭī*, which is situated atop a mountain, in which the *Bhikkhu* resides at the time of writing this article. At this very moment, there is a herd of about 75 buffaloes grazing in the meadow. Because the crocodile in the lake suddenly pops up and dives back into the water, scared to get into the lake some of these buffaloes are resting in small puddles of water. The *Bhikkhu* sees this herd of animals as one of *Māra's* troops. However, to the owner of this herd of buffaloes, they are a source of prosperity. These buffaloes are not milked. Instead, the calves are allowed to drink that milk with the intention of getting them to grow faster. They grow up simply to be slaughtered for meat. How many people fall into hell-realms because of this herd of buffaloes? How many generations in the past would have so far fallen into the hell-realms because of them? How many more generations might fall into hell-realms because of them in the future? Beware! The animal world denotes agents of *Māra* who will undoubtedly drag you into the fourfold-hells. Similarly, you might have seen in society certain human beings with much compassion for animals... who love animals a great deal. For instance, say, they make a living using a bullock-cart. The bull pulls the cart. There are people who rub oil on the

bull's legs once they return home in the evening. There are people who push the cart with their own hands as a help to the animal when it pulls the cart up on a slope with a heavy load. There are people who share some food with the animal from their own plate. Animal cruelty apply to such people as well. But due to the actions they perform with compassion and loving-kindness, the intensity of the karma-results (*vipāka*) of the cruelty is much less. Anyhow, distancing yourself from animals would be better for you.

It's not only at the hands of humans that animal cruelty takes place. An animal inflicts cruelty upon another animal. A preta-ghost³⁷ causes cruelty to another preta-ghost. Non-humans inflict cruelty upon other non-humans. Even deities cause mental agony to other deities. Beings who have not tamed their greed (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) inflicting cruelty on other beings is not something to be surprised of. Mentioned below for your understanding, is an instance where non-humans cause cruelty. When a monk residing in a forest monastery in the North-Central Province, was in a state of *samādhi* at about 10 o'clock in the night, in the far corner of the *kuṭī* the monk sees a deity of a primary state clad in a white skirt and blouse. She had the appearance of a 45 year old woman. Perhaps she might have been a preta-ghost belonging to the superior group of preta-ghosts — the ones who can receive merits passed on by others. Anyhow, she was a being who had merits. But her skin was of a darkish colour, from which it can be presumed that anger was a trait in her character. She remained very calmly at the far end of the *kuṭī* while staring at the monk. She gains some relish by watching the monk. You might have seen young, middle-aged or elderly male and female lay-devotees who like to watch the gestures

37 They are unhappy ghosts of a lower realm who wander in vain, hopelessly in search of sensual fulfilment. (*Pāli: peta*)

and behaviours of Buddhist monks, and who derive some sort of innocent relish and pleasure by doing so. In her previous life, she may have been a middled-aged female lay-devotee who died while fostering a clinging of that sort. In this life having got a primary deity form or a superior preta-ghosts form, whichever it may be, she continues to live in a monastery while still clinging to monks. This being who was clad in white and watching the monk from the far end of the *kuṭī*, seemed much restrained. Greed or hatred was not visible in her appearance. As she was calmly staring at the monk in this manner, another preta-ghost walked across very closely in front of her. He was a male preta-ghost and was thin and skinny. As this second preta-ghost walked in front of that female preta-ghost clad in white, it interrupted her attention. She swiftly went into action. Have you seen in households when the husband commits a serious wrong, the wife getting angry? When she gets angry, she clenches both her fists and beats rapidly into his chest area? Most of the time, in a sudden burst of anger, women hit another person in that fashion. In that same manner, that female preta-ghost thumped that other preta-ghost who walked in front of her and disrupted her attention. As soon as the relish she desired was disturbed, suddenly anger arose in her. With that same force, she bashed that other preta-ghost quite a lot. At this point, they both disappeared from sight. But that male preta-ghost got a good bashing from the female preta-ghost clad in white.

Even though they were referred to as preta-ghosts, in previous lives they may have been male and female lay-devotees who associated monasteries and Buddhist-temples. Due to their strong sensual desire (*chanda-rāga*) for other things more than the meritorious activities they performed, they may have got a rebirth as preta-ghosts of a superior state lingering in the vicinity of monasteries and Buddhist-temples.

Revered-you must carefully examine these characters residing in fourfold-hells. If you thus focus your attention towards such non-human characters and interrelate the cause and effect phenomena, it will enable you to rectify whatever weaknesses that exist in you. Venerable monks who practice this path of the *Dhamma*, regardless of whether they are from the temple or the monastery, are very likable purely due to the practice of *Dhamma* they have set in motion through their lives. Any venerable *bhikkhu* who practice the path of *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration) and *paññā* (wisdom) with boundless *saddhā* towards the Supramundane Lord *Buddha*, is extremely pleasing to the eye. Their gestures and movements are very restrained. There are venerable monks living in the present society who are extremely pleasant and radiant like celestial beings. Such nature is something that arises due to a karma-result of wholesome-karma (*kusala*-karma). Therefore, just like those monks, revered-lay-devotees must always try to respect the qualities – *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* and to recollect those qualities constantly. Instead of doing that, if you form sensual desire towards the physical appearance, the voice or the pleasantness of those venerable monks, that will only be a cause for suffering. You should go to meet the venerable monks for the purpose of listening to the *Dhamma* they preach and become happy. You should go to the temple for the purpose of practicing generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*) and mental development (*bhāvanā*) and become happy. Rather than doing that, don't let your mind simply form a sensual desire towards other sights, sounds, smells and touches. If that happens, it would be like going to the hospital to get treated for some illness and returning home with a more dangerous illness than the one you already had. The above two preta-ghosts in their previous life were ones who had gone to the temple or monastery and, instead of turning their attention towards that

which is necessary, formed sensual desire towards unnecessary dangerous things. Due to that same desire, in this life they keep staring at venerable monks and gain a relish from it. Why the *Bhikkhu* mentioned this story is to make you aware of cruelties inflicted upon fellow beings in the nonhuman world too. You must keep in mind that because ‘greed’, ‘hatred’ and ‘delusion’ is extremely high in lifeforms in the preta-ghost realm, the occurrences of cruelties too are high. Even though she was clad in white, imagine the degree of ‘hatred’ that was hidden in her mind. That ‘hatred’ becomes rapid due to the ‘greed’. Both these things form as a result of ‘delusion’. It’s the acuteness of her ‘hatred’ and ‘greed’ that was apparent in her rapid bashing. Have fear in you about the fate that follows if you fail to rightly apply the right thing. The above phenomenon is what the *Buddha* discoursed as rootless-*saddhā* (unreasoned-faith mixed with delusion). This phenomenon might be present in today’s society very often. It is purely due to not having perceptions of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) that such sensual desire for physical matter (*rūpa* – corporeal form) arises. If revered-clergy and laity both make this an issue that one should think twice about, it will only be for the betterment. In a complicated society like that of the present day, if the perception of impermanence develops, that itself is a rare phenomenon. The world advances while increasing the value attached to *rūpa*. Should one ask for another name for ‘comfort’ or ‘happiness’, the answer the world provides is surely some sort of *rūpa* (physical matter, corporeal form). The answer that is given thus “Happiness lies in the extinction (*nirodha*) of *rūpa*” is of course, a rare answer.

Now let’s turn our attention towards the topic of animal cruelty again. When talking about animal cruelty, the intensity of the unwholesome-karma (*akusala-karma*) is greater in cruelties that humans inflict upon fellow humans. One receives a human life, regardless of whatever shortages

or deficiencies it may entail, purely owing to the wholesome-karma one has committed in a previous life. Especially in a time like today where the dispensation of the *Buddha* is still alive before it gets concealed from human knowledge, [the extremely rare] human life one gets as a Buddhist (one who has come in contact with 'right view') is an absolute wonder. One receives this human life by having risen beyond the vastly populated fourfold-hells. He avoided falling into the fourfold-hells simply because he has lessened to some extent the greed, hatred and delusion that causes one to inherit a birth in the fourfold-hells. Therefore, a cruelty inflicted upon a human attracts a more powerful unwholesome-karma than a cruelty caused to an animal. Because it's a human with past merits that you are inflicting cruelty upon, who even had the strength to rise above the fourfold-hells. Whichever aspect you look at in society, all that can be seen is the growth in cruelty that humans cause upon fellow humans. The reason why cruelties on other humans occur at your hands, is solely due to striving to make the world 'mine'... with the belief that 'the world, which forms as a result of ignorance, is in fact the happiness'. 'Cruelty' is a source of income, an occupation, a promotion, a saving, an inferiority complex, a protection. In short, you inflict cruelty on others simply for your own existence. Perhaps because the degree of unwholesome-karma is high in humans born in the present, both inflicting cruelty and being the subject of cruelty have become part and parcel of their life. Here what is considered 'cruelty' is not just the physical forms of cruelty caused by physically attacking or wounding or injuring. Inflicting mental or psychological cruelty too is a cause for powerful unwholesome-karma to accrue to you. Take the public transport system of this country for example. In a given day, how many people are subjected to cruelty at the hands of the bus-conductor and the bus-driver? Either due to overloading

passengers; due to excessive speed; due to excessive slowness (– for wanting to load more passengers); due to scolding or verbally abusing the passengers, why does this happen? It happens because of wanting to earn more income... wanting to make the bus-owner happy at the end of a day... wanting to take home a few extra bucks for the wellbeing of oneself and one's children. For one's own happiness, others are being subjected to distress. These things are interlinked with each other by way of the bond of *Māra*. It is when you produce income for the bus-owner that your job is secure. Thus is the nature of every field of work. A prison, a school, a university, a hospital, security forces, administrative departments, household workers, in all these fields the above nature is present. These aren't things that can be corrected or mitigated. You will only see a continuous growth in these things each day. Here revered-you should observe the phenomenon that as one experiences the karma-result (*vipāka*) of his own unwholesome-karma, another accumulates new unwholesome-karma. Those who are subjected to cruelty in the present, are those who had inflicted cruelty upon others in their previous lives. Therefore, don't go to correct these things! That would be a futile act. Earlier [in a previous article], it was mentioned that the *Buddha* explained to the young man 'Subha' that, if one is born in this human realm inheriting sicknesses or live while constantly becoming sick, the cause for that is that he has performed the unwholesome-karma of cruelty towards beings in his previous life. Look! Today, every human is suffering from sicknesses. The hospital is filled with the sick. Epidemics are spreading all over. What we see thus, is both the result and the cause of cruelties inflicted upon beings in past lives. When cruelties towards beings committed by humans become more and more, diseases and sick people in the future world will be greater. These are world phenomena. They cannot be prevented. Hence, what the skillful must do is to strive to free himself from the world through realisation.

If you are a person who leads a healthy life devoid of sicknesses, solely due to the habit of doing so throughout *sarṃsāra*, in this life too you would be a person averse to inflicting cruelties upon beings. You would be a person who won't have a tendency to cause cruelty even upon animals, let alone human beings. There are so many such people in society. Regardless of what nationality or religion you belong to, interrelate well with the phenomena of causality the mental and physical fulfilment you gain from your good health. Having interrelated thus, while further strengthening those worthy qualities of mental and physical fulfilment, you too must constantly try to become a revered-human being who never inflict any harm on others and thus perfect in *sīla*. As you become complete in *sīla*, a *samādhi* that is able to discern and identify the aforementioned world phenomena will form within you. You needn't make haste to reach that place, because as you become complete in *sīla*, the self-restraint in your faculties will automatically establish gradually and thereby, you will begin to contemplate about the world without the world even being aware of it. However, when you contemplate thus, you must be careful to ensure your thinking is not influenced by views and ideologies that exist in society. Likewise, the issue of practicing strict 'vegetarianism' (or, being an absolute vegan) that prevails in society is a similar issue that comes forth in the guise of compassion for animals (or, animal welfare). In this issue, those revered-people who have failed to correctly interrelate the phenomena of causality, by trying to show compassion for animals, generate ill-will towards humans. Even when revered-devotees offer in a manner fittingly for *Sangha* some type of meat that is permitted by *Vinaya*, and even when monks consume that food given as alms while duly reflecting on its repulsive and impermanent qualities, we hear of certain revered-people criticising the monks who eat such food. Therefore, do not have the tendency

to perform acts that are against the *Dhamma* discoursed by the Supramundane *Buddha*. If you do so, you might become someone who sets in motion, under the guise of *Dhamma*, actions that are contradictory to the *Dhamma* (false- or unrighteous-*Dhamma*). Which is a grave misfortune. In this minuscule life time, we must all think that 'what we know is very little'. Then we will be able to correctly and humbly apply to our life the *Dhamma* that was dispensed by the utmost Venerable *Buddha* who transcended through insight everything that is there in the world. Then, each of you must individually (as opposed to collectively) abstain from inflicting any cruelty upon beings. It's no one else but you who will be experiencing the result of it that is good health. The nature of the world is 'impermanence'. The nature of impermanence is 'velocity'. For you to realise this world that rapidly becomes impermanent, you must be devoid of rapidity. For if you too become rapid, the world becomes complex for you. Think thus! If you want to observe how an extremely fast machine functions, you should quietly observe it while remaining still. Then you will be able to know how the machine functions and its faults. But if you hustle, you won't be able to perform that task. Perhaps due to your haste you might even get injured. Like that, you too must leisurely keep observing this mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) known as 'the world'... keep observing the rapidity at which these things become impermanent. In the same way you kept observing yourself, observe others too... In the same way, observe animals too. See the corporeal form (*rūpa*) that is born out of the four great elements³⁸ and mind-phenomena that arises conditioned by that *rūpa*. Do you see a difference? There is a small difference when you consider as 'yourself', 'others' and 'animals'? That difference is the difference in consciousness (*viññāna*) that is born as a result of volition (*cetanā*). This difference arises

38 The four great elements are earth, water, fire and air.

simply due to the failure to be skillful to interrelate using the *Dhamma* a single mind (thought) that arises in you. It is this tiny difference that categorises beings into heavenly- and hell-realms. The cause that gave rise to this difference is solely the morality and the immorality. By wisely comprehending this phenomenon, guard the precepts of *sīla*. If you are to become a revered-person who has escaped the fourfold-hells, fulfil those requisite qualities. Good health is an essential requisite. If you get sick, how will you guard the *sīla* even in this life? Therefore, revered-you must individually, without thinking of others, whilst seeing the suffering in the fourfold-hells, whilst aiming to free yourself from the fourfold-hells and whilst being appeased with a healthy life until such time you are free from fourfold-hells, abstain from inflicting cruelty upon beings. Even though the physical or mental comfort that a flourishing, prosperous and healthy human or deity gets is impermanent, whilst recollecting that that comfort was something hidden in a precept of *sīla*, be complete in *sīla*. Penetrating the darkness of suffering of the hell-realms that are hidden in immorality, revered-you must be skillful to gain the light of *sīla* (morality).

Loving-kindness, but cautiously!

Although revered-you view the world as beautiful and wonderful, anger, hatred and ill-will is abundant in the world. 'Anger, hatred and ill-will being abundant in the world' would mean that the ignorant mind that forms in man is polluted with anger, hatred and ill-will. The 'world' is the mind (thought). The mind means suffering. The thing that brings you this suffering more than anything else, is your mind that is polluted with anger. Therefore, when anger, hatred and ill-will are on the uprise in the world, it denotes the growing tendency of those unwholesome-roots originating in man. The fault is within us. Yet, we keep blaming others. Because of others you too are generating hatred.

The primary cause for the exceedingly painful suffering experienced by the beings in fourfold-hells as well as in human world, is anger, hatred and ill-will. The karma-result (*vipāka*) received for anger, hatred and ill-will, is extremely painful, acute and fierce. How serene, delectable and pleasing 'loving-kindness' is, 'hatred' is its exact opposite to that same extent. Imagine how water rapidly and violently explodes when splashed on a red-hot iron, similarly, the nature of hatred too is to keep rapidly exploding in this way. The thing that rapidly explodes thus, is none other than your own mind damped with

anger and hatred. Why is this rapidity? Why explode this way? The reason is, due to the inferiority complex that the 'thick of conceit' you have built up in you will get scarred, you put in a frantic effort to stop your 'thick of conceit' from getting scarred. And that effort is what this rapidity, this explosion, is. The extent to which this effort intensifies, you should be aware that the 'thick of conceit' in you is that intense. The 'thick of conceit' being stronger means your sensual desire (*chanda-rāga*) for all things you have clung to as 'I', 'me' and 'mine', is that much more powerful. Revered-people living in present society allow a hateful mind (thought) that has arisen, to get developed in an acute manner. The fertiliser called 'I', 'me', makes the thornbush called 'hatred' grow bountifully with branches and offshoots springing. The more this thornbush grows, the more it pleases you. Because you ostensibly think that the poisonous thorns of it stings outwardly, stings other people who are the subjects (recipients) of your hatred. That is where we go wrong. We must know that both the thornbush as well as its poisonous thorns develop entirely within ourselves, and it is I myself that suffers from those poisonous thorns. As hatred arises or as anger or ill-will forms in you, you will notice your organs functioning with extreme rapidity. It's the poison of that thornbush within you that manifests as the rapidity of their functioning. Sometimes you say things such as: "I am shivering in anger; I became red; I became dark; It was as if I was burning in a fire; I couldn't see anyone". These are its consequences. The poison goes into effect, beyond one's self-control. In truth, when hatred arises, good, bad, shame, moral dread, wholesome, unwholesome, none of these things are perceptible to you. Why? because hatred arose in you due to the inferiority complex that formed in you to protect the 'thick of conceit'. Because of hatred, you are prepared to get into violent conflicts... commit murder... go to prison. At

that instant those things appear to you as a happiness. You fail to comprehend the mere fact that due to the sense-contact of some corporeal form (*rūpa*), a mind of ‘hatred’ has arisen in you. Recognise that, that hateful mind too is a suffering. See the impermanence of that mind. Then that hateful mind will get away from you. Although the Supramundane Lord *Buddha* has discoursed to you such a simple *Dhamma*, it can be seen that those who reap its results are very few. Hatred, anger and ill-will are phenomena within this world that belong to *Māra*. You won’t be able to reduce them or eradicate them. In fact, hatred should prevail in the world. You should be skillful to make it a blessing for your own life. It is when hatred prevails in the world that you are able to notice the loving-kindness (*mettā*) in you... and to develop that loving-kindness. It is when anger and ill-will prevail in the world that you are able to notice the compassion (*karunā*) and altruistic joy (*muditā*) in you... and to develop them more and more. The reason as to why we are thus born into a world filled with hatred, anger and ill-will is simply because, throughout *samsāra*, we have already completed the wholesome-karma (*kusala-karma*) necessary for the purpose of proceeding towards the extinction of these unwholesome-roots... and simply because we have the necessary strength to comprehend the value of liberating ourselves from suffering at this time where a *Buddha*’s teaching is still alive before it gets concealed from human knowledge.

It is simply owing to the loving-kindness you have practiced throughout *samsāra* that, you were able to conceive in a womb of a mother with ‘Right View’ (*sammā-ditṭhi*) by having risen above the massively populous fourfold-hells consisting of those who have made ‘hatred’ their heartbeat. But the problem is that ‘loving-kindness’ too belongs to *Māra*. That is, both ‘hatred’ and ‘loving-kindness’ are phenomena belonging to *Māra*. *Māra*’s intention is to lure into his clutches through

‘loving-kindness’ those who he cannot lure into his clutches with ‘hatred’. That is because *Māra*’s hunting ground is the realm of ‘existence’ (*bhava*). *Māra* hopes to prevent you from proceeding towards the Four Noble Truths (*ariya-sacca*), and before you reach that destination, to make you halt at one interim resting place or another in the realm of ‘existence’. Therefore, any revered-person who proceeds along the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya atthangika magga*) and thereby is bound to realise the Four Noble Truths, catching such person with the bait called ‘loving-kindness’ is *Māra*’s way. But you need not be afraid of loving-kindness. Loving-kindness is a bribe, a comfort, that *Māra* gives you to not liberate yourself from the realm of ‘existence’. In truth, loving-kindness is a comfort, a bliss, a zest, a relish. In short, it is one of the perfections a *buddha*-aspirant (*bodhisatta*) must perfect. But, you must be aware of one thing. *Māra* bribes you, not because he loves you, but because of his intention to entrap you at the right moment. It may not be in this life time that *Māra* entraps you. May not even be in the next life time. We only think of this life or the next. We measure time in years. Whereas, *Māra* measures time in eons. In this eternally long journey of ‘existence’, in the world over which *Māra* extends his dominions, you will come to pass eras without an emergence of a *Buddha* where the *Dhamma* remains concealed from human knowledge, during which you will come to pass dark ages where ‘loving-kindness’ is not even heard of. Therefore, rather than merely practicing ‘loving-kindness’ in your life in place of anger, hatred and ill-will, you should be skillful to develop ‘loving-kindness’ to free yourself from the world that belongs to *Māra*... you should be skillful to develop ‘loving-kindness’ to eradicate ‘self-view’ (*sakkāya-ditthi*).

You should develop ‘loving-kindness’ to destroy your ‘thick of conceit’ that tells you that: “They are cruel... they

are bad... 'I am good... 'I am of loving-kindness". Revered-you should escape from anger, hatred and ill-will not to make loving-kindness 'mine', but to think that the mind of hatred and the mind of loving-kindness both simply arise due to a causality and then pass away (become impermanent). Then, instead of escaping hatred and proceeding towards loving-kindness, you will be able to escape both hatred and loving-kindness and proceed towards extinction (*nirodha*) of 'existence'; ...you will be a revered-person who strives on the path of *Nibbāna* who has refused *Māra's* bribe; ...you will be a descendent of the perfectly enlightened one (*Buddha*) and treading in search of the warmth of the enlightened one's good company. If you are perfectly complete in your unshakable-*saddhā* towards the triple-gem, your perfectness in *sīla*, and your view of seeing both the mind of hatred and the mind of loving-kindness as impermanent, then, through that view itself you will be elevated on to the enlightened one's good company. It is still not the end of the journey of 'existence'. But it's the beginning of the path of seeing that end (you have entered the stream). You needn't worry about the rest of the journey. Because, you are now in the refuge of the enlightened one's good company. Now you have finished tying-down the arms and legs of *Māra* with the ropes called the 'thick of conceit' that you yourself thickened for hundreds of millions of eons. You are now free from the 'thick of conceit'. You received this freedom not by hating the 'hatred' or showing loving-kindness to the 'loving-kindness', but by seeing that both hatred and loving-kindness is merely a mind that passes away (become impermanent). At this point, what you attain is only a 'view'. Not an 'insightful-realisation'. By constantly observing the mind, you can achieve this experience.

Revered-you, sit in a suitable posture that allows you to sit for half-an-hour and do the meditation of loving-kindness!

During this half-an-hour, either due to bodily discomforts or pains, or due to external sounds or disturbances, anger might arise in you. That hateful mind might be extremely subtle so much so that you may not be able to identify that it is a mind of hatred. Let's call that an 'anger'. Then look! How small, how subtle, the gap between hatred and loving-kindness is? These two are neighbours of such close proximity. Right next to the mind of loving-kindness, hatred remains licking its lips at what comes next. Because he [hatred] knows that loving-kindness too is impermanent. The thing that loving-kindness knows, the thing that hatred knows, you do not know. Because, you remain with unwise reflection (or, unwise attention – *ayoniso-manasikāra*). Solely due to unwise reflection, you are attached to both the loving-kindness and the hatred. Or else you are averse to both. *Māra* keeps you titillated and gratified with the pleasant relish of 'loving-kindness' during the very short and scarce times of a *Buddha's* *sāsana* where the *Dhamma* is still alive before it gets concealed from human knowledge. And then, during the extremely long and dreadful eras without an emergence of a *Buddha* where the *Dhamma* remains concealed from human knowledge, *Māra* lures you into the clutches of 'hatred'. And that is the shrewd way of the *Māra*. As long as you don't recognise these, by being enslaved by the short relish of loving-kindness, you will have to endure the very long adversities. In each and every *sāsana* of the past, *Māra* rushed to teach you 'loving-kindness'. Because *Māra* is your teacher, the loving-kindness you add to your life will have the characteristics of the teacher — that is, loving-kindness suffused with 'self-view' and 'thick of conceit'. While defeating this hindering phenomenon that pulls you away from enlightenment, revered-you should develop loving-kindness not for the purpose of improving the radiance of your face or cleansing your blood or to be adored by humans and deities, but to become a radiant and clean human

being or celestial being who has attained the *magga phala* (fruits of the path)... to achieve the triumphant target of 'liberation from the fourfold-hells' where 'self-view' has been destroyed. This meaning is the essence, the target, of the *Dhamma* of the Supramundane Lord *Buddha*. Rather than developing loving-kindness with the objective of merely getting its mundane (worldly) benefits, be skillful to develop loving-kindness to fulfil the supramundane objectives of transcending the world. Then, in that process you will get the privilege of experiencing within this life time both the mundane benefits of loving-kindness as well as the freedom from the fourfold-hells. But *Māra* doesn't like this method. What he wants, instead, is to make you crave for the mundane benefits of loving-kindness and thereby prevent you from proceeding along the path of enlightenment (*Nibbāna*) — which is the true essence of being a Buddhist... What he wants is to make you forget the appeasement that is free of defilements, which is constituent in the path of enlightenment, and instead, to remind you of things like the fairness of your skin... His desire is to exhilarate you with the relish, delight and glow of the mundane tranquillity of loving-kindness meditation, rather than let you proceed towards the meditation of the four 'foundations of mindfulness' (*satipatthāna*). By all of the meritorious activities you perform — such as almsgivings, helping the poor, social services, opposing animal cruelties — with the strongest intent of developing qualities of loving-kindness within you, if you feel that your 'self-view' (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*) is getting bigger, then you need to be careful. You need to be humble to identify this fact. If that humbleness is not there in you, then you must first perform loving-kindness on yourself so that that humbleness may arise in you. Because, it is simply due to the lack of loving-kindness upon yourself that you have thus far in *saṃsāra* obstructed the meaningful path of the *Dhamma*.

It is not only in this life time that revered-you have obstructed the meaningful path of the *Dhamma* (the essence of the *Dhamma*) that lies before your eyes... that can be heard. You did this same foolishness in so many *sāsana* during the time of hundreds of thousands of past *Buddha*-s. We, who did this same foolish mistake even when we personally came in contact with past *Buddha*-s, and as a result of that continued along the journey of 'existence', in a time like this where 2500 years have elapsed after the great-passing-away (*parinibbāna*) of a *Buddha* and where signs are apparent that forces against the *Dhamma* are getting ever so powerful, should be extra careful about the praises and evaluations that our ignorant mind, our transient mind, gives us. That mind of yours that is under the influence of the *Māra*'s way produces views such as 'I am right; I am wrong; I am the one who knows'. You need to be skillful to correct them as 'The path is right; The path is correct; It's the Lord *Buddha* who knows'. Then you will be able to correct yourself by proceeding along the true path that is the Noble Eightfold Path that was discoursed by the Supramundane *Buddha* by way of absolute-knowing through insight. If you make it a habit to always think that "It's the *Buddha* who knows everything... who is omniscient", that itself demonstrates that you are someone who knows something that is essential. Here lies a very subtle *Dhamma* you need for your liberation from the fourfold-hells. When you consider that it's the *Buddha* who knows everything, that becomes a cause for unshakable-*saddhā* towards the triple-gem to arise in you. When you place the omniscient *Buddha* at the foremost place and you become second, and because you know that 'you don't know', that weakens the 'thick of conceit' in you. And simply owing to the faith and confidence you have in the *Buddha*, neither 'sceptical doubt' (*vicikicchā*) about the triple-gem nor 'faith in mere rites and rituals outside of the *Dhamma*' (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), will arise in you. This will be a

great object for contemplation for you to free yourself from the liability to fall into the fourfold-hells. However, by having considered that it's the *Buddha* who knows everything, don't make the Lord *Buddha* 'mine'. If you do so, that would mean *Māra* has polluted your 'object for contemplation'. Don't think with the notion that there is an 'entity', by considering as "My Lord *Buddha*". Instead, make the *Buddha's Dhamma* your practice. The corporeal form (*rūpa*) is made out of the four great elements³⁹. Revered-you must always try to not make such *rūpa*, even that of the *Buddha*, 'mine'. Instead, revered-you must always try to think about the reality hidden in the quality of impermanence of that *rūpa*. When you attain some level of realisation in this path discoursed by the *Buddha*, you will view the *Buddha* not as a 'self', an 'entity', but simply as a phenomenon of great personality, with a venerated respect, with the perception that this is the teacher who showed you the path to this noble realisation. Because, advancing in the realisation even by a fraction means that, the craving (*tanhā*) has been eradicated at least by a fraction. Eliminating 'self-view' means that, 'thick of conceit' that was in you has been eliminated. Eliminating sceptical doubt and eliminating the faith you had in mere rites and rituals outside of the *Dhamma* mean that, the craving for seeing, seeking and believing those things has been eliminated. Due to the faith and confidence gained through realisation, he has now freed himself from doubt and from craving for things that cause suffering. At no point in the path of the *Dhamma* is there any attachment. What exists is only a liberation, a detachment, an escape, through realisation.

39 The four great elements are earth, water, fire and air.

***Māra* came disguised as a wild-buffalo**

Throughout this writing the *Bhikkhu* mentioned facts about anger and *Māra*. At this point revered-you might be interested in knowing who *Māra*⁴⁰ actually is. There are acute myths in society that *Māra* is merely a concept; or there is no such being called *Māra*; or *Māra* denotes just things like cigarettes or alcohol... like thus there are primitive thinking in society that are formed due to ignorance. In the *Dhamma*, both the mind in which such ignorant ideas originate and the *rūpa* (corporeal form) which is the condition upon which such mind arises, are also described as *Māra*. If we proclaim delusional ideas such as those mentioned above as a result of not knowing the *Dhamma*, we tend to fall into the category of media persons (the voice) of *Māra*. Although you play the role of the voice of *Māra*, it is in fact the three personal assistants of *Māra* who edits that media statement for you. They are the three daughters

40 The term "*Māra*" denotes several meanings. (see. *Māra*). In the above occurrence, *Māra* denotes the title-name of the ill-willed deity ruling over the highest heaven of the sensuous sphere, who is opposed to the *Buddha* and the spreading of the *Dhamma* due to his sensuous attachments. He uses shrewd ways to drive people away from the *Dhamma*.

of *Māra* called *Tanhā*, *Ratī* and *Ragā*⁴¹. These three are female deities. They have the ability to often transform into any form of their liking. Naturally radiant, delicate, rhythmic and curvaceous, such is the nature of their celestial body. A body that is as smooth as a soft petal and as pink as the core of a ripen grapefruit. The job of these celestial beauties is to arouse in you, who are anyway under the clutches of *Māra*, the unwholesome formations called *tanhā* (greed, craving), *māna* (conceit, pride) and *ditṭhi* (speculative views, opinions). The more these three defilements arise and develop within you, what you will feel is a delight. Even when you are lost in a desert of views and opinions, you will feel like you are enjoying divine comforts in a heavenly wonderland. It's these three daughters of *Māra* who bring you this pleasure of ignorance that you get. You have been mesmerized by the feel of the fingertips of those gorgeous agents of *Māra*. Because of your greediness for that touch, you eagerly await to voice whatever ignorant statement the daughters of *Māra* edit for you. The ideologies that you hear nowadays such as "there is no such person called *Māra* in this world" or "*Māra* is only an imaginary concept" are ideas expressed simply owing to the reason of being caught in the clutches of the daughters of *Māra*. The payment reverend you will receive for expressing to the world those ignorant statements that are edited by the daughters of *Māra*, are *tanhā*, *māna* and *ditṭhi*. The objective of these lovely agents of *Māra* is to make you affluent in the above three defilements. The more affluent you become in these defilements, you will lavishly receive the boon of residing in the hell-realm for a very long

41 *Tanhā*, *Ratī* and *Ragā*, the three daughters of *Māra*, seeing their father disconsolate after his repeated attempts to foil the *Buddha*-aspirant Gotama's quest for Enlightenment, in the fifth week after the Enlightenment they offered to tempt the *Buddha* with their wives. With *Māra*'s approval, they came to the *Buddha* in various forms and in various guises, as the *Buddha* sat at the foot of the *Ajapala* banyan tree, and danced and sang before the *Buddha*. In the end, having learnt that a *Buddha* was beyond temptation by the pleasures of the senses they returned to *Māra*.

period of time. Therefore, whatever ideologies you hear from the society, revered-you must make it a habit to always check them against the *Dhamma* of the Supramundane Lord *Buddha*. Leave aside any ideology that won't reconcile with the word of the *Buddha* understanding well that such things will only cause suffering. Don't go to argue or conflict with them. Because if you do, unknowingly you will fall into the same category. Be more and more quiet. Through quietness, get a perfect understanding about this mind that is like a desolate desert of views and opinions. Steer that understanding you get solely for eliminating the *sakkāya-ditṭhi* (self-view) in you. While letting the world be in its own nature, you come to the quality of escaping the world. While avoiding groups of people, be in solitude. But don't be attached to the solitary mind. By observing the impermanent mind, understand that there is no permanent mind as such, for you to be attached to. At this juncture, you are bound to be provoked, titillated, tickled and petted by the delicate fingertips – *tanhā, māna, ditṭhi* – of the lovely daughters of *Māra*. Revered-you must strive with energy, even more than you strive to protect your life, to not let the effort you make ever get tainted by those defiled phenomena *tanhā, māna* and *ditṭhi* that are vested in suffering. While letting the world and the rest of the people in the world carry on, you must stop. If one stops, it means he has recognised the mind.

Whatever ideologies about *Māra* may exist in society, if you proceed along the noble path of the *Dhamma* earnestly and with energy, even today you are able to experience the phenomena about *Māra* that is specified in the *Dhamma* that was self-realised and proclaimed by the *Buddha*. When you encounter such an experience, what arises in you is the force of the *Dhamma* realised by the *Buddha* by having defeated the *Māra* with extreme effort. Had it not been for the emergence of a *Buddha*, how would the world have recognised this evil,

sinful, wrong-viewed *Māra* who makes the ‘unwholesome’ his daily bread, his rapture? Had that been the case, what other recourse would we have had other than becoming *Māra*’s prey? Dear Supramundane Lord *Buddha*, Venerable Blessed One, for perfectly realising, defeating, and proclaiming to us this vicious phenomenon of *Māra*, may there be wholehearted and noble homage to you by all those in the trifold-world who revere the *Dhamma*...! How extremely fortunate we are to have sought refuge in such a noble *Dhamma*? How vicious dark and frightening of a period would it be for all beings when the *sāsana* disappears or when there is an era without an emergence of a *Buddha*? Before *Māra*’s troops of the unwholesome, who eagerly await to prey upon the *Dhamma*, takes solitary control of the world into its hands, you must get affirmed using the *Dhamma* you have already found. Without thinking of a second person, you must make sure that your next birth will be as a celestial being who has attained *magga phala* (fruits of the path).

Now what the *Bhikkhu* will state here is about a lowly and dastardly act of *Māra* that was encountered by a particular monk who walked along the truest middle path bearing only the three robes and the alms bowl and walking along this path of the *Dhamma* earnestly with the strongest determination. This monk encountered this when he was in a *samādhi* (state of deep concentration of the mind). *Māra* referred to here is the ill-willed deity ruling over the highest heavenly realm of the sensuous sphere called ‘the Paranimmitavasavatti’. At around 11 o’clock in the night when the monk was in a state of *samādhi*, a herd of wild-buffaloes was envisioned coming at the monk in a rapid, vigorous and an insane manner. This herd of insane wild-buffaloes appeared in a flash, about 25 meters in front of the monk, and came running towards him. All of those wild buffaloes were extremely vigorous and well-built animals. Like thus they came running rapidly towards the monk while puffing

air from their nostrils. And when they were about 5 metres away from the monk this insane heard of wild buffaloes turned to the right and fled. As the last of those buffaloes vanished from the monk's vision of *samādhi*, in a flash, again about 25 metres in front of the monk, a solitary wild-buffalo emerged. He wasn't any ordinary wild-buffalo, but a buffalo-king. About 5 feet tall. A well-built hefty wild-buffalo. He had no horns. The skin of this wild-buffalo was like a velvet and had a shiny black texture like of grease. The skin of this magnificent wild-buffalo was formed in fragments the size of a square inch, just like a thousand-pieced monk's robe that is prepared by joining together small pieces of material each cut into the size of a square inch. He was a wild-buffalo full of long life, good appearance, comfort and strength to the utmost level. In his nose he wore a silver-coloured ring with the circumference of about 6 inches. The ring was as thick as a human's thumb. Now you imagine for a moment, the nature of this magnificent wild-buffalo that wore a silver ring on the nose and had velvet skin like a thousand-pieced robe. You reflect in your mind... about 25 metres away from the monk at the very spot where this magnificent wild-buffalo of the aforementioned nature emerged, he spun his head once extremely fast, then levelled his head straight and stared at the monk. You might have seen the well-built foreign wrestlers in wrestling matches... As the wrestler gets into the ring where the opponent is, he spins his head very proudly and gives his opponent a direct stare. He does this to frighten the opponent even before the match begins. Similarly, the above wild-buffalo immediately as he emerged, to further increase his splendour, proudly spun his head that had a silver ring on the nose and made an insanely stare at the monk who was in a *samādhi*, and while puffing a dust-coloured smoke from the two nostrils, came forcefully running towards the monk as though he was insane. Exactly about 5 metres in front of the monk, this buffalo-king too turned to the right and fled. The

monk is still in the familiar state of *samādhi*. Once the vision was over, the monk came out of the *samādhi*. A slight smile arose on the monk's face. With that slight smile, this thought arose in the monk: "the deity *Māra* who rules over the celestial realm Paranimitavasavatti stooped to such lows even to become a buffalo before the monk". The intention of this defeated act of *Māra* was to frighten the monk. The dastardliness of the deity *Māra* is so much that he still thinks that he can frighten those noble monks who have attained holiness and are walking along the path of the *Dhamma*. *Māra* attempted to scare the monk in this way perhaps to frighten the monk and, if there was any extent of realisation of the *Dhamma* the monk had attained, to prevent him from preaching that *Dhamma* to the rest of the world. At that instance the monk was residing in a *kuṭī* on a slope located near the edge of a large cliff. Perhaps *Māra* might have thought that if he was able to frighten the monk at that moment, he might succeed in making the monk jump out of the *kuṭī* that had low-walls as equally fast as that wild-buffalo had approached, and fall over the cliff and die. If that had happened, *Māra* knows that this note will not have gotten into your hands. However, what happened to *Māra* was the exact opposite of that. *Māra* couldn't harm even a hair on the monk's body. The monk was in a bliss of *samādhi* and the deity *Māra* could not weaken one iota the state of *samādhi* the monk was in. This power was not a miracle of the monk. It's the miracle of the *Dhamma*. If you are also skillful, this miracle is your inheritance too. It is a true fact that within the state of noble *samādhi* fear is a nulled phenomenon. That is, the 'equanimity' (*upekkhā*) of the mind that is devoid of 'thought-conception and discursive thinking' (*vitakka-vicāra*) and as a result is perfectly calmed, will set you free from attachment and aversion (i.e. will prevent attachments or aversions arising in the mind). *Māra* referred to in this story is the ill-willed deity who rules over the highest heavenly realm

of the sensuous sphere, the Paranimmitavasavatti. He dislikes the *Dhamma*. He is a celestial-king who indulges in the five sense desires. The herd of wild-buffaloes that appeared first and ran insanely towards the monk who was in a *samādhi*, was the *Māra*'s army. *Māra* first sent his troops to frighten the monk. They too are celestial beings. They can transform themselves into any form of their liking. In this act of trying to frighten the monk, they took the form of wild-buffaloes. The reason why they turned to the right and retreated when they were 5 metres away from the monk who was in a *samādhi*, was because they couldn't come close to the power of pure and undefiled *Dhamma* that arises in a state of *samādhi*. When *Māra*'s army was fleeing after having raced towards the monk, *Māra* himself took on the task. The buffalo-king that emerged second, who had splendour, complete in long life, good appearance, comfort and strength, and had shiny fur, was the celestial ruler *Māra* of the Paranimmitavasavatti. *Māra* himself came forward when his troops were unable to complete the task. The moment one sees this being disguised as a wild-buffalo with utmost splendour, one knows right away that he is someone absolutely complete with celestial nutriment. Other than a deity, who else could have the radiance of his skin decorated with carvings like a thousand-pieced robe? While the monk's perfect *sīla* and *samādhi* confronts *Māra* and his troops, it's the wisdom (*paññā*) that correctly recognises them as *Māra* and his henchmen. What better examples do we need to demonstrate that the steely force that arises when *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* come together, can challenge, can defeat, even the *Māra* who holds dominion over the entire trifold-world? What you are witnessing right now are the qualities of *Dhamma* that: '*Dhamma* is directly visible' (*sanditṭhika* – real, actual, visible by self) and '*Dhamma* will bear immediate fruit' (*akālika* – not delayed, immediate, timeless'). Having read this article what you should give prominence to is not *Māra*, but the quality of *Dhamma* that '*Dhamma* is directly visible'.

Māra in another form

Having read this article [previous article⁴²] what you should go in search of is not the monk who encountered this experience, but the quality that ‘*Dhamma* is directly visible (*sandiṭṭhika*)’ which provided that experience. If you search for the monk, then what you are simply searching for is *Māra*. Because ‘searching’ is a phenomenon of *Māra*. Constantly becoming impermanent (transient), is the nature of *rūpa* (corporeal form, matter). If *rūpa* is impermanent, then there is nothing in it for you to search for. Instead, what you have to do is insightfully-realise both the *rūpa* and the mind that prompts you to ‘search’, which arises conditioned by that *rūpa*. By insightfully-realising thus, you too are defeating only *Māra*. Also on two previous occasions in the monastic life of that monk, once as a black bull and at the other instance as a red bull, *Māra* came in front of the monk in a wild manner when the monk was in a *samādhi*. The appearance of these bulls were like those competing in foreign bull fighting competitions — well-built, hefty, vigorous and wild. The *Bhikkhu* notes these things in order to explain to you the value of developing energy (*virīya*) to strive against the obstacles and attachments that arise

42 Refers to the preceding article that notes how *Māra*, disguised as a wild-buffalo, appeared before a monk who was in a *samādhi*.

in you when you practice the path of the *Dhamma*. We shouldn't be amazed by the above characteristics of *Māra*. Instead, what is amazing is how we willingly become enchanted by *Māra* who goes wild against the *Dhamma* in this manner. If one is about to attain the realisation of *Dhamma*, *Māra*'s job is to push him away from that journey. If one realises the *Dhamma*, *Māra*'s job is to eliminate any opportunity of him preaching that realised *Dhamma* to the rest of the world. These are birth-qualities of *Māra*. You cannot change them. Instead, what you *can* do is change your course away from this wrong path.

From the above note you might have understood that the notion that *Māra* is merely a concept is one that is immersed in ignorance. *Māra* is an active character in this world. He is a celestial being, a deity. His troops are deities too. You are unable to see them with the naked eye. It is something that can be seen only through the eye of *samādhi* when revered—you are complete in *sīla*, complete in *samādhi* and treading towards wisdom (*paññā*). Through the eye of perfected *samādhi*, you too will get to meet *Māra* and his henchmen... but only if you genuinely advance, against *Māra*, towards realisation of wisdom (*paññā*).

In this incident, *Māra* comes disguised as a wild-buffalo to save his dominion... to show his authority. The celestial ruler *Māra* of the Paranimmitavasavatti is a deity who indulges in sensuality. He has no such thing as moral-shame or moral-dread (*hiri-ottappa*). Isn't it the same thing that some humans do too? What many disguises do humans of the superior class create for themselves so that they can protect their power, comfort and authority? Although in the past there weren't any who committed murder or deceitful acts under the disguise of monkhood, aren't there any at present? Aren't there those in society who create so many disguises for themselves to deceit innocent young women, simply because they don't know the

Dhamma? When blinded by sensualities, there is no difference whether they are celestials or humans. Like this, try to interrelate and apply the *Dhamma* in accordance with the law of cause and effect. If not, there is bound to be so many speculative opinions. It will only cause you suffering. Revered-you must cultivate unshakable-*saddhā* towards the triple-gem... for it [the triple-gem] has paved the way for you to defeat this insane worldly natures.

Fold up the timetables that lead to 'existence' (*bhava* – becoming). 'Existence' belongs to *Māra*. Hence, by using this life you have received, go the farthest possible distance in the path of the *Dhamma*. Until the very moment of the great-passing-away (*parinibbāna*), suffused with overflowing great-compassion, the *Buddha* taught us nothing but the path for escaping suffering. Whereas the despicable *Māra*, immersed in greed for the fivefold sensuality⁴³ and with his deep ungratefulness, commits sinful acts to constantly put you in suffering. Therefore, mindfully and with clear comprehension, reflect upon the endless ray of supreme qualities of the Venerable Lord *Buddha* that is, boundless like the ocean, impossible to express in words or write in letters; and in contrast, reflect upon the ungrateful nature and the sinful acts of the despicable *Māra*. Then you will feel what an immense mountain, a boundless ocean, of great qualities Lord *Buddha* is. If you are skillful, this meaningful comprehension alone is sufficient to cultivate the unshakable-*saddhā* towards the triple-gem – *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*. The unshakable-*saddhā* in the triple-gem is one of the prerequisite conditions for eliminating the liability to fall into the fourfold-hells. By thinking of the sinfulness of the wicked *Māra*, make it a point to develop unshakable-*saddhā* towards the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*.

43 That is, sensuous desire for sight, sound, smell, taste and bodily touch.

The *Bhikkhu* wrote this note to explain about *Māra* and *dosa* (anger, hatred). The above paragraphs explained about *Māra*. What prompted the *Bhikkhu* to mention to you the following facts about anger was something that a particular gentleman said while the *Bhikkhu* was travelling in a bus. From the main bus-stand in Colombo, the *Bhikkhu* got on a bus that goes to Kataragama⁴⁴. At around Rathmalana (a suburb closer to Colombo) a middle-aged gentleman wearing a white sarong and a white shirt got on the bus and sat in the seat next to the *Bhikkhu*, which was the last remaining vacant seat on the bus. From the moment this gentleman sat next to the *Bhikkhu*, he had his head facing the other way while turning his back towards the *Bhikkhu*. At no point did he turn his head to look straight. He was facing the other way as if he was hiding his face from the *Bhikkhu*. During the journey, the bus made a stop for the passengers to have some tea. After the passengers got off the bus, this gentleman who was looking the other way politely asks the *Bhikkhu* whether he could offer the *Bhikkhu* a beverage. When he spoke, the smell of alcohol was clearly noticeable in his breath. It was at this point that the *Bhikkhu* realised why this man had his head turned the other way all this time. He was hiding his face all this time because he didn't want the *Bhikkhu* to get the smell of alcohol in his breath. The *Bhikkhu* politely said there was no need to bring any beverages. Still this gentleman went and brought a bottle of soft drinks and offered it to the *Bhikkhu*. The *Bhikkhu* passed on merits and accepted it. After the passengers had their tea break, the bus resumed its journey. Yet, this gentleman was still looking away from the *Bhikkhu*. Suddenly he turned towards the *Bhikkhu* and with much respect for the *Bhikkhu*, confessed in a very humble manner that he has had a few drinks and that is why he is

⁴⁴ Colombo is the capital city of Sri Lanka. Kataragama is a town that is located approximately 6 or 7 hour bus ride away from Colombo (roughly 300 kilometres).

still facing the other way while turning his back towards the *Bhikkhu*. Then the *Bhikkhu* asked why he was drunk this early in the morning. Then he started explaining: “Venerable Sir, I live in Matara (a town before Kataragama). My occupation is performing exorcism and forms of sorcery. Yesterday I came to Rathmalana to do an exorcise job for someone. Now I am on my way home after doing the job. Venerable Sir, as a habit, when agreeing for a job I tell my clients that I need alcohol to drink after completing the job. So, as soon as the exorcism job is done, I get both the fee and the alcohol”. The *Bhikkhu* asked him “Sir, do those exorcism jobs bear any results?” Then with much pride, he stated his capabilities. “Venerable Sir, I have the required sorcery to kill a human being if I want to. I have even done so in the past”. The *Bhikkhu* then said to him “Sir, this occupation is a very sinful one, isn’t it?” Then this man says “Venerable Sir, I perform exorcism and kill a human as a favour to another human”. Look! This person considers that killing a human is a favour he does to another human. He even boasts about it. Look how this man, while having formed enough hatred in his mind to even take the life of a human, considers it as an act of a worthy man. Through exorcism he kills or destroys someone, makes someone suffer or takes revenge from someone simply as an occupation, as a means of getting a self-satisfaction. In this, not only him, but his client too commits the above things as a means of taking revenge and for self-satisfaction. So look! How much unwholesome-karma do the numerous people who perform such exorcism together with their clients accumulate during this life due to their inability to correctly discern in accordance with the *Dhamma* the wholesome from the unwholesome and the hatred from the loving-kindness? How much unwholesome-karma do they make others accumulate? How could people who cannot recognise hatred from loving-kindness, discern wholesome-karma from unwholesome-

karma? But when thinking of this the *Bhikkhu* feels 'Oh, how easily can these two things be discerned from each other'. This particular gentleman who was seated next to the *Bhikkhu* on the bus has much respect for the *Sangha*. That's precisely why he hid his face to prevent the smell of alcohol from reaching the *Bhikkhu*. He even asked whether the *Bhikkhu* required a beverage. Even when the *Bhikkhu* said there is no need for one, he brought and offered a bottle of cool drinks with much respect. When the *Bhikkhu* passed on merits, he brought his hands together in a gesture of worship and uttered "*sādhu...*". See how much respect he had for the triple-gem. One could argue that because he brings destruction to others through his work, in order to escape those sins he honours the *Sangha*.

When summing-up all of the above, revered-you may notice the following character: Firstly, he performs exorcism, sorcery, as an occupation. In doing so, as a result of the loving-kindness towards the client, he destroys the enemy of the client or makes them ill or subject them to lethal suffering. He gives rise to such volitions in himself. He helps the same volitions arise in his client too. Secondly, that same person, asks for alcohol from that very client who was subjected to his loving-kindness and gets drunk. Thirdly, this same person, in the bus, hides his face so that the smell of alcohol won't reach the monk, so that the monk won't feel uncomfortable. With much respect he asks whether he could offer a beverage. Even when the monk says there is no need, he very respectfully offers a beverage. When passing on merits, he accepts the merits by bringing his hands together in a gesture of worship and utters "*sādhu...*". This same person, wearing a white sarong, a white shirt, lives ostensibly as a very devoted person. Now look, how diverse, how contradictory, are the minds (thoughts) that arose in this character. This contradiction forms solely due to ignorance. Simply due to the craving for enjoying the delight

of *rūpa*, despite understanding good and bad, he looks for good and bad in the dark. As a result, he picks up the bad thinking it's the good, whilst putting all the good he picks up into the pile of bad. Therefore, the *Buddha* refers to the 'mind' that arises from ignorance too, as a form of *Māra*.

What revered-you saw in the actions of the above exorcist were conflicting actions that were contradictory from each other, isn't it...? None of it has any meaning. All of it are within the remit of delusion. Where else would these *Māra*-activities lead him other than to hell? That's exactly why the *Buddha* referred to the 'mind' that leads to suffering, as a form of *Māra*. That being the case, what caused that mind that leads to suffering to arise, is merely a *rūpa*. Because the mind that leads to suffering arises conditioned by the internal *rūpa* and the external *rūpa*, the *Buddha* has referred to the '*rūpa*' too as a form of *Māra*. These are not just concepts. Instead, these are phenomena of the world that are visible to the eye and are constantly experienced by beings. In this country where so much *Dhamma* is heard, despite having ample opportunity to clearly and easily recognise 'what *kusala* means', 'what *akusala* means', 'what is meant by the difference between hatred and loving-kindness', the thing that keeps you entrapped in contradictory ideologies is solely the 'mind' that arises in the grasp of *Māra*. You need to know that here the 'mind' means sense-contact (sense-impression) (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional-mental-formation (*sankhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). The reason why these five guys operate under the clutches of *Māra*, is simply because you won't recognise the real nature of *rūpa* (corporeal form, matter). Understanding the *rūpa* would mean, you have recognised the *Māra* through understanding. At this juncture, revered-you can have both mind and matter revealed through understanding the *Māra*. However, before reaching this position, revered-you must first

develop unshakable-*saddhā* towards the Supramundane Lord *Buddha* who discoursed this noble *Dhamma* to us through self-realisation; and develop unshakable-*saddhā* in the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*. Have the belief that “to identify through understanding those phenomena that are sided with *Māra*, what other help or refuge is there other than the guidance and direction of the triple-gem”. Through that belief, you should be skillful to completely uproot with realisation the bonds of the *Māra* that are ‘sceptical doubt’ (*vicikicchā*) about the triple-gem and ‘faith in rites and rituals outside of the *Dhamma*’ (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) that prevents you from escaping the fourfold-hells.

Don't let more garbage add on to the heap of garbage known as "I"

Mindfully and attentively observe both the *rūpa* and the mind (thought) that forms conditioned by *rūpa*. Notice the impermanence of the eye. Notice the impermanence of the external *rūpa* that comes into contact with the eye. And notice the impermanence of feelings, perceptions, volitions and consciousness that originate upon external *rūpa* and eye-consciousness coming into contact with each other. When the cognisance that "aren't they all impermanent?" forms in you, the *sakkāya-ditthi* (self-view) known as the 'thick of conceit' will recede from you. When you abide by the precepts of *sīla*, what forms in you is a relinquishment of the same defilements you previously desired. Through *sīla*, you become a self-restraint and still character. In that stillness too there remains a finer nature of feeling. If you are skillful to interrelate these things in accordance with the *Dhamma*, then you are fortunate. Because every time you make an effort, the above defilements will attempt to enthrone you in the world by crowning you with the crown-of-thorns of *Māra* known as 'self-view'. Therefore, revered-you should offer *dāna*, abide by the precepts of *sīla*, develop loving-kindness, listen to the *Dhamma*, and proceed in the path of the *Dhamma*, in such a manner that the 'thick of conceit' will diminish in you.

At any point in this process if you notice that 'I', 'me' and 'mine' is gaining prominence, immediately take a step back. Always give nothing but defeat for the notion 'I' or 'me'. What you are trying to defeat that way, is 'self-view' — that is, the birth in the fourfold-hells.

This noble path of freeing oneself from the liability to fall into the fourfold-hells proclaimed by the Supramundane *Buddha*, has been discoursed solely for the revered-laity. Except the *Buddha*, who else could teach such a simple practice of the *Dhamma* to obtain such deep realisation of the world? While engaging in the responsibilities of lay life, at the same time revered-laity can develop the practice of the *Dhamma*. While engaging in a business, a job, a farming or an educational activity, at the same time the practice for escaping the fourfold-hells can be developed. While leading a married life, maintaining the dependents, wife and children, and duly fulfilling those responsibilities, at the same time you can practice the qualities of escaping the fourfold-hells. While continuing to have worldly relishes and without denying them, at the same time you can practice the qualities of escaping the fourfold-hells. In other words, you can attain the fruit of *sotāpanna* (stream-entry) while continuing to engage in the activities of lay life. What a beautiful *Dhamma* and an opportunity this is, that has been realised through the *Buddha*-omniscience and discoursed in such a simple manner that is both appropriate and comforting for revered-you? Due to this simplicity per se, there are instances where we ruin ourselves too. That tends to happen when we try to make this practice of the *Dhamma* even simpler than what it is.

We tend to do that merely because of our arrogance. If the *Buddha* has discoursed something on these deep insights about the world, it has been discoursed in the simplest possible

meaning in which such thing can be explained. But because of the arrogance we have in ourselves and due to our lack of *saddhā* towards the triple-gem, we tend to make the Supramundane *Dhamma* even simpler based on our own speculative views and opinions. In doing so, what both you and your clique will gain is not a relief, but a 'wrong-view' (*micchā-diṭṭhi*).

Both shortening and lengthening are phenomena of *Māra*. You must make the 'middle-way' your practice. We cannot make the *Dhamma* anymore simpler. Can ageing be made simpler? Can the rising of the sun and the moon be made simpler? Can the *satipatthāna* (four bases of mindfulness), the *paticca-samuppāda* (dependent-origination), or the *pañca-upādānakkhandha* (corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness) be made simpler?

These are fundamental natures of the world. These world natures have been realised through insight through the world-transcendent *Buddha*-omniscience and discoursed to you in the most straightforward and simple manner. What is left for us to do is to give precedence to the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha* (i.e. the triple-gem) and practice this noble path of the *Dhamma* and attain the insightful-realisation. Those revered-people who genuinely desire to free themselves from the fourfold-hells by practicing this path of the *Dhamma*, must think morefully of the advantage provided to you in the *Dhamma*. Thinking thus will be a cause that enables you to form unshakable-*saddhā* towards the triple-gem. For example think, there is a young man or a young woman. He or she has genuinely practiced the path of the *Dhamma* and thereby, formed unshakable-*saddhā* in the triple-gem; become complete in *sīla*; and notices the impermanence of the *pañca-upādānakkhandha* or of the mind. As a result of these three phenomena being fulfilled, the first three fetters: (1) *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (self-view), (2) *vicikicchā* (sceptical doubt), and

(3) clinging to other forms of rites and rituals outside of the *Dhamma* (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), will have uprooted and he or she becomes a person completely free from the fourfold-hells. Now this young man or young woman is a person who has attained the fruit, the insight, of stream-entry. Yet, he or she is still a lay person. Now a thought arises in him that he should get married. He gets married, bears children, engages in a job or a business, and if they so desire, takes the wife and kids too into the path of the *Dhamma*. In the lay person who attained the fruit of stream-entry, the next two fetters: (4) *kāma-rāga* (sensuous craving) and (5) *paṭigha* (anger, aversion) are still present. However, at no instance will he go beyond the word of the *Buddha*. At no instance will he break the precepts of *sīla*. Whatever things he associates, he associates them while remaining in the view that those things are impermanent. He protects himself only with the five precepts of *sīla* and perhaps he might also observe the three additional precepts related to Right Speech. Therefore, a need to relinquish things such as having sensuous pleasures in marriage or using riches like cash, money, gold or silver, will not arise in him. He has become complete in the five precepts of *sīla*, which is the bare minimum that needs to be observed by any lay disciple. Look! With how much self-restraint, while continuing to experience sensuous pleasures, can you realise this *Dhamma* of escaping the fourfold-hells? Isn't this a *Dhamma* that has been discoursesd purely owing to the great-compassion of the *Buddha*... that has been discoursesd both conforming to the truth of the way things are and at the same time compatible with your liking, and in a manner that reconciles well with each other? This *Dhamma* isn't discoursesd thinking of the *Buddha*. It's discoursesd purely with revered-you in mind.

It is even possible to have sensuous pleasures... even possible to eat after midday... singing, dancing, playing

music, adorning the body, providing comforts and luxuries to the body are all possible. While engaging in all of this with insightful-understanding, what the *Buddha* has set out here is a pathway for revered-laity to reach the completeness of *sīla*, to get established in the faultless-*sīla*. Look! Even upon having received such a simple opportunity, such a simple *Dhamma* like this, we have thus far not made use of this opportunity although hundreds of thousands of *sāsana*⁴⁵ of many past *Buddha*-s have passed. Yet, revered-laity must remember one thing. In *sāsana* that existed in the past, purely due to the arrogance, countless times you and I have been under the false impression that "I am *sotāpanna*" (I am a stream-entrant). Be humble enough to understand that. Rightly understand that that humbleness is the first *kalyāna-mitta* (noble friend) you meet in this path of the *Dhamma*. Only if you meet that 'noble friend' that you will get the opportunity to make the Supramundane *Dhamma* a 'noble friend' of yours. It's a triumph if you understand without an argument the fact that, simply due to being unskillful to interrelate the aforementioned attribute, it's only *Māra* who has thus far been your 'noble friend'. The desire you have for education, occupation, business, relatives and household; you must form that same desire to free yourself from the fourfold-hells in this life itself. This insightful-realisation you gain will also provide you the opportunity to enjoy the above comforts more meaningfully. When reading the above do you now feel as to how much the *Buddha* wanted to free you from these clutches of *Māra* and set you into the path of *Nibbāna*?

Mother, father, wife, child or relative, they all point you towards the realm of 'existence' (*bhava*). Without disengaging with those relatives who tell you the way to 'existence', if you make this noble path that tells you the way towards 'extinction

45 *Sāsana* means dispensation of the *Buddha*. As commonly used, it also refers to the time span throughout which a *Buddha*'s teaching (of the way things truly are) remains alive, before it gets concealed from human knowledge.

of existence' your absolute relative, that will be the utmost solace both you and your relatives will achieve in this world.

Don't make haste after reading this. Don't be flustered or restless. Don't let scepticism arise in you. Think quietly. Discard the scepticism that says 'cannot'. Foster belief, not in yourself, but first and foremost in the triple-gem. Give precedence to the Lord *Buddha*. You take a back seat, as much as possible. View the gap between the *Buddha* and yourself as wide as you can. View the extent of that gap as the distance between your knowledge and the *Buddha's* supreme insightful-intellect. By making use of that distance, develop infinite *saddhā* towards the *Buddha* who is so far ahead of you. Often think of nothing but the supreme qualities of a *Buddha*. Always envision the marvellous faculties of intelligence of a *Buddha*. Think of the insight of great-compassion that is unique to only a *Buddha*, and the entire world that found solace as a result of that faculty of great-compassion. Now do you sense how much farther you stand from the path of the *Dhamma* proclaimed by the Venerable *Buddha*? Do you sense how much farther away you stand from the supreme qualities and powers of insight of Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna⁴⁶ who attained complete liberation by practicing the *Dhamma* proclaimed by the Venerable *Buddha*? Firstly, having perceive mindfully the extent of this gap, develop *saddhā* towards the triple-gem. This *saddhā* arises in you by seeing, hearing and comparing with your life, the unwavering qualities, powers of insight and marvel of the triple-gem. Upon having seen with clarity the extent of the gap between yourself and the path of the *Dhamma*, now revered-you must strive to minimise that gap... to fill-in that gap. You fill-in this gap with *dāna*, *sīla* and loving-kindness. When you genuinely set in motion in your life the above factors

⁴⁶ Venerable Sāriputta Thera and Venerable Moggallāna Thera were the two chief male disciples of the Venerable Gautama *Buddha*.

that are necessary to free oneself from the fourfold-hells, the gap between yourself and the path of the *Dhamma* will get minimised. When the above noble phenomena grow in you, the unwholesome-roots – greed, hatred and delusion – that distanced you from the *Dhamma* will get abandoned gradually. What is being abandoned thus, are things that you previously desired. In the past you utilised these things to reinforce the ‘thick of conceit’ in you. Greed prevailed in you, to possess and accumulate more and more pleasures. Hatred developed in you, to create the self-respect that conceit rightfully demanded. Delusion developed in you, to nourish the illusion that pleasures are permanent. These vicious phenomena being relinquished means that, the ‘thick of conceit’ in you is getting finer. Why you continuously engage in this practice is not for others’ benefit, but for yourself. Since you have not yet learnt the nature of the world, don’t go to teach others. Freely, comfortably and quietly triumph the objective that “I will free myself from the fourfold-hells”. When the rest of the world sweats to search for the *Dhamma* while announcing it to public, you realise the *Dhamma* by engaging in the relevant practice in seclusion simply at home. Constantly be watchful of the mind. Every time ‘I’ gets hardened or when ‘I’ comes into prominence, you must donate that desire while noticing the horror of the fourfold-hells. More than donating a ton of food, see that you benefit immensely by donating, or letting-go of, the mind of conceit formed in you that “I am a big donor”. Don’t let more garbage add on to the heap of garbage known as ‘I’. The heap of garbage known as feelings, perceptions, volitions and consciousness that arose as a result of the ‘garbage bin’ known as the ‘eye’ helped only to heighten the ‘thick of conceit’ in you. Similarly, the garbage born of the other five faculties too helped only to heighten the ‘thick of conceit’ in you. Fulfil your duty towards the *Buddha* by setting in motion through your life the *Dhamma*-practice of

escaping the fourfold-hells that was discoursed by the *Buddha* solely for the revered-laity. Do this while constantly working in a manner that *Māra*'s crown-of-thorns known as 'self-view', which was adorned on you by the six-sense-bases⁴⁷ (garbage bins) and the sense-objects (garbage), becomes weak. In a time like this where indications are apparent that the *Buddha*'s *sāsana* is about to get concealed from human knowledge, why you were born as a noble human being in this land of *Dhamma*, is solely to fulfil your duty towards the Lord *Buddha* by seizing this last opportunity you get in this *sāsana*. You must understand that if you miss this great opportunity, it would mean that happiness⁴⁸ has escaped you. It's a certainty that the gradually arising extremely long period without the emergence of a *Buddha* will not be a period of humans, but a period of animal-like men devoid of the *Dhamma*. Come that day, both men and animals will operate not in different ways, but in the same way. You should humbly think that, how you can escape this harsh challenge is not by dying as a leader, a ruler, a millionaire or a scholar, but by dying as a human freed from the fourfold-hells.

47 Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

48 The term 'happiness', in the above context, denotes to supramundane happiness of extinction of 'suffering' (rather than the worldly riches).

You too have a claim on the world's most beautiful death

If revered-you live within the *Dhamma*, then if you turn your mind towards your own life and carefully observe, you can clearly see the right from wrong. The *Dhamma* means 'the impermanence'. When we see through wise reflection that something is impermanent, fear arises of it. Fear arises because it's a thing that is transient. The one who is unaware of this impermanence tends to make an effort to stop something that naturally changes, from changing. That is the point at which suffering originates. As a consequence of moving away from the *Dhamma* and thereby perceiving the corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness as 'permanent', today's society is suffused with *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (hatred) and *moha* (delusion). Whilst seeing the destruction, while speaking of the destruction, while seeing its adverse consequences, it is towards the same destruction that everyone keeps walking.

'Craving' (*Tanhā*) shows you beautifully the way to move forward even more rapidly. 'Hatred' provides you with sufficient self-confidence and helps weaken the moral-shame and moral-dread (*hiri-ottappa*) in you so that you can move forward by overcoming any obstacle. 'Delusion' blesses you

to further convince you that ‘this path is the absolute path consisting of happiness’. You love the coarse caress of being embraced in the warmth of the lap of these three best friends of ‘suffering’. Even as you enjoy this rotten pleasure, you still go to the temple; observe the precepts of *sīla*; and offer alms too. That means there is some sort of fear as well. Actually, that fear too is created by greed, hatred and delusion themselves.

For the sake of preserving the rotten pleasure we yearn for, without any meaning we tie one end of our life to the *Dhamma*. We fool our own selves. For the sake of protecting this rotten pleasure, we expect the protection of the *Dhamma*.

This is the true characteristic of a *puṭhujjana* (one who has not yet entered the stream); ...the unwise reflection (*ayoniso-manasikāra*). He is seeking the refuge of the *Dhamma* for the growth, the development, of the 3 unwholesome-roots – greed, hatred and delusion... But instead, it is to free ourselves from these 3 unwholesome-roots – greed, hatred and delusion – that we should seek refuge in the *Dhamma*. Today’s society goes on a journey that is contradictory to the meaning of the *Dhamma*. Because the rotten outer-skin called ‘the thick of your conceit’, which you still haven’t noticed, is engulfed by corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness (*pañca-upādānakkhandha*), you are misdirected towards the wrong way while the true path is concealed.

A small incident where one tries to be correct through following the wrong path is noted below as an example to you.

There is a devoted young man who comes to see the *Bhikkhu* to listen to the *Dhamma*. He is married and has a few young children. This gentleman is someone who corrected his life purely thanks to the *Dhamma*. One day this gentleman says: “Because of the disobedient behaviour of our children, my wife

often gets angry. However much I tell her not to get angry, in a moment she forgets. But because I have told her again and again, now the number of times she gets angry has reduced”.

One day when the wife became angry, as a tactic, he had said: “Because you get angry so often, your face has now become dark and ugly. So stop getting angry”. However, from the time he told her that all she does is purchasing expensive facial creams that are said to make one beautiful and applying on her face. Look! It’s through the wrong way that we try to be correct.

We cannot correct the world. Therefore, while wisely recognising that the world can never be corrected, revered-you must make the world an object for contemplation and correct your own self. That’s when you will be able to place your mind at the most correct place. And that most correct place is the *Dhamma*.

“*Aniccāvata sankhārā*” — all formations are impermanent. Here in this very verse there remains the assurance given by the *Buddha* that the world can never be corrected. Revered-you must open up to the essence of the *Dhamma*. Then that will be an example for the society as well. The impermanence of all formations is the very reason for the complexity and the rapidity that is present in the world. Revered-you must at every moment reflect the fact that “I am bound to die” and “After death, I am bound to be reborn again”. The death ceremony that occurs at the funeral or the merit-evoking religious activity that takes place at the seven-day or the three-month death commemoration... rather than waiting for such traditional death related rituals that occur after the death, before you die, become a person who is secured after death. It is only then that you will get the opportunity to get your next ‘existence’ (*bhava*),

which you receive as a result of the *sankhāra* you yourself accumulated, into a place that is not dependent on merits passed on by others.

Rather than grieve about someone's death after he dies, think of your own death while you are still alive. Live close to your death. That is an extremely beautiful experience. The most beautiful experience of death is experienced by an *Arahat* (one who is fully enlightened). For such a venerated being, death is a blessing. An event to rejoice. Such venerated being has ended the ignorance. His-holiness has perfectly realised through insight that suffering, happiness, and equanimity, all three things are impermanent. For such a venerated person, death is only just another action. It's the most beautiful death that ever takes place in this world. It is the death for which deities who have attained fruits of the path will utter words of rejoice as "*sādhu... sādhu*", and by which the rest of the deities who have not attained fruits of the path will be saddened. For which the forces of *Māra* will applaud in relief, is that death. It's the death where even the fragments of skeleton that become one with the earth, become sacred.

Just look how much value there is in a single death. Although we regard death to be of a low bid, an ominous bid, look how much dignity and sense of pride that is associated with a death. In short it's not a death, it's an extinguishment. Although you and I don't feel it, the worldly element gets shaken at the death of an *Arahat*. Why the worldly element gets shaken is because an *Arahat* is a holy being who has shaken the worldly element through his perfectly realised-wisdom... because his-holiness has insightfully-realised by seeing through the steely four-great-elements... because his-holiness has revealed the entire world element through realisation of impermanence,

and has reached that realisation by piercing through 'delusion'. The world to him is just another empty thing, a futile thing.

Even though such meaningful death exists within the *Dhamma*, what a disgrace and dishonour we bring upon death by writing the dead person's name and address on a chit and trying to pass merits on to preta-ghosts assuming he or she is now reincarnated as a preta-ghost who can receive merits passed on by others. Leave aside that traditional chit and think that: "I don't want a death that waits on others to pass on merits to me". Perhaps let's assume that you can't think that far due to weaknesses in *saddhā* and *virīya*. Still, before one develops their thinking to such level, the *Buddha* has discoursed that at his or her dying moment the revered-one who is complete in *sīla* is bound to die with a sharp mindfulness and a wise attention while uttering words of rejoice like "*sādhu... sādhu*". Who is this revered-one complete in *sīla*? He is the revered-one who has freed himself from the fourfold-hells. What a noble birth will his rebirth be? Why don't we get ready for a death like that?

We don't think of death even as much as we think of a wedding saree worn at a wedding ceremony held in a big hotel. What that simply means is that one thinks of the saree so much because she fails to think that the body around which the saree is draped, is a body that dies. For revered-you, death is an unpleasant experience. We who speak of others death fears to think of our own death. Just like the unpleasant story that lies in front of an unpleasant death, how astounding is the beautiful new life that lies in front of a beautiful death? Even the revered-old person of 75 years of age who is on a sick bed pleads for life. Even in him there is only old age, sickness and death. Yet, his only hope is life. The one who hasn't sought refuge in the *Dhamma* always confuses between suffering and happiness. He considers the suffering as a happiness, and fears

the true happiness. What gives rise to the fear in us of the true happiness, is the *akusala* (unwholesomeness).

Revered-you should make use of this note simply in order to give a value to death and to get a more worthwhile value for the new life that arises after death due to causality. Read this and generate a vigour in you. Form in your mind a thought that arose in the mind of the *Buddha*. Cultivate in your mind a thought that arose in the mind of an *Arahat bhikkhu*, an *Arahat bhikkhuni*. Generate in your mind a thought that arose in the mind of a male or female lay-disciple who have attained the fruits of the path of enlightenment.

The time when writing this note is 1:30 AM. Sleep is nowhere to be found. The *pañca-nīvarana* (five-hindrances) have run away. Simply due to the 'moral shame' and 'moral dread' towards the *Dhamma*, thoughts and ideas are flowing abundantly. Just for revered-your benefit... just so revered-you could get to know something you don't know... the *Bhikkhu* refrains from applying the perception of impermanence to those thoughts. What is flowing here is not ideas, it is compassion. What is being done here is not writing a note, instead it's the essence of the quality of *Dhamma* that '*Dhamma* is directly visible' (*sanditṭhika* – real, actual, visible by self). A faint music is spreading throughout the dawn sky that arises after the passing of midnight. When paying close attention to it, it becomes clear that it is the music of deities. The tune of the music is that of the Jayamangala Gāthā (Stanzas of victory and auspices). The tune is very clear. What that means is that deities are wishing long life, good appearance, happiness and strength upon the virtuous beings of the world. Deities are blessing them. When the celestial-music is heard denoting the act of blessing by deities in this manner, the *Bhikkhu* is absolutely certain that at this moment the *Bhikkhu* is not going to die. It is because there is still more past *sankhāra* to expend that the *Bhikkhu* is alive at

this moment. But, if in the next moment the *Bhikkhu* cognises in his faculties a sad music from the celestial realms, the *Bhikkhu* definitely knows that he is now preparing for his death.

Look! What a wonderful *Dhamma* that lies before you. This is the quality of the *Dhamma* that 'Dhamma is directly visible'. He lives knowing both the fact that he is living and the moment that he will die. **If revered-you are complete in *saddhā*, *sīla*, *cāga* (generosity), and recollection of *deva* (deities, celestials of superior state), then the deities know at what moment you will die. Deities will lay red-carpets to usher you to celestial realms. Look! What a wonderful path of *Dhamma*? What a beautiful auspicious event the subject of death is. Revered-youth... if you wed after performing all the wedding rituals and uttering stanzas of victory and auspices, from the moment you become a part of that attachment what a lot of suffering will you be enduring? In addition to the suffering called "I", how many more sufferings called "Mine" will you have to shoulder? More than the traditional deluded fiestas of attachments that revered-you get attached to, if you make the path of the *Dhamma* your partner, it will be the only true fiesta that leaves only a happiness in the end.** Although we moan crying 'death... death', according to the *Dhamma* there is no death here. At the precise moment when a person dies he immediately forms the next reincarnation in accordance with his accumulated *sankhāra*. Due to our delusion however, we embalm and adorn a rotting carcass, cover it with elegant clothes and shed tears, pay respects, bemoan and lament over it. We bemoan in this way over a being who at that precise moment has already been reborn somewhere in this realm of existence. It is purely for this very reason that the *Buddha*, rather than giving any value to a dead carcass, teaches the path to make comfortable the next 'existence' that is gained after death. At this juncture too it is clear to us that the *Buddha*'s dispensation is not a teaching that talks only of death, but a

teaching that talks about simply the path to happiness after death. It is entirely you who, with delusion, embrace a death and create a suffering that is not to be found in the *Dhamma*, purely due to the depth of your craving...

Revered-people who are weak in *saddhā* constantly grumble against the *Dhamma* saying that: “The *Buddha* always keeps talking about suffering”; or “If we went in accordance with the *Dhamma* we will have to let go of our spouses, children, properties and positions”. But nowhere has it been discoursed that for revered-laity to live in accordance with the *Dhamma* they need to let go of any of the above things. What the *Buddha* has discoursed to revered-laity is that you should use the above comforts of lay life while at the same time seeing the impermanence of the *pañca-upādānakkhandha* (fivefold existence that are objects of clinging—i.e. corporeality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness). However, it is said that more the effort revered-you make to let go, less will be your suffering. Why the *Buddha* tells revered-you to constantly reflect on death is not for you to shed tears and lament and bring it down to the level of a funeral, but for you to make it a fiesta as mentioned above. **It is only if revered-you prepare in advance for death that you will have the capacity to make death a fiesta. At that fiesta called death, the deities of prosperous celestial realms will be welcoming you to those realms while playing tunes of music of Jayamangala Gāthā (stanzas of victory and auspices). What is this rotten comfort of old-age, sickness and death of the human-realm compared to the comfort of living while seeing the impermanence of the *pañca-upādānakkhandha*, of the *saddhā*, the *sīla* and the *dāna*, which is shown to you through the *Dhamma* of the *Buddha*? It is that fiesta-like death mentioned above that the *Dhamma* talks to you about. Yet, what a delusional and dogmatic death that revered-people who are weak in *saddhā* consider as ‘death’?**

Glossary of key terms

akusala

Unwholesome. (see. *kamma*). Unwholesome karmic volitions, consciousness and mental concomitants associated therewith that arise as a result of greed (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*) or delusion (*moha*).

ānantarika-kamma

The 5 heinous misdeeds (sins) with 'immediate destiny', which are: [1] patricide, [2] matricide, [3] killing an *Arahat*, [4] wounding a *Buddha*, and [5] creating schism in the monks' Order. One who commits at least one of these are incurable and irremediable from being destined to end up in one of the lowest hells in his immediate next birth.

anattā

Non-self, not-self, non-ego, egolessness, impersonality. *Anattā* is one of the three characteristics of existence — *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā*. *Anattā* means that neither within the bodily and mental phenomena of existence, nor outside of them, can be found anything that in the ultimate sense could be regarded as a self-existing real ego-entity, soul or any other abiding substance. Whosoever has penetrated this non-self nature of all existence comprehends that in reality there exists only this continually self-consuming process of arising and passing-away of bodily and mental phenomena, and that there is no separate ego-entity within or without this process.

Without understanding *anattā* it is not possible to understand the teaching of the Four Noble Truths in the right light. Without understanding *anattā*, 'he' will tend to think that it is he (his ego, his personality, a unique entity) who experiences suffering, it is he who performs good and evil actions and will be reborn according to these actions, it is he who understands or doesn't understand, it is he who acts or causes to act, it is he who has sense-contact, feels, desires, becomes attached, continues and at rebirth again enters a new existence; it is he who walks on the Noble Eightfold Path, it is he who will be enlightened. One must be clear that it is all conditionally arisen phenomena. Thus it is said:

**"Mere suffering exists, no sufferer is found;
The deeds are, but no doer of the deeds is there;
Nibbāna is, but not the man that enters it;
The path is, but no traveller on it is seen."**

anicca

Impermanent, impermanence ("whatever is subject to origination, is subject to cessation"), transientness. Impermanence of things is the arising, passing and changing of things, or the disappearance of things that have become. All conditioned phenomena are arising and passing (vanishing, dissolving) from moment to moment. *Anicca* is the first of the three characteristics of existence of all conditioned phenomena, be they material or mental, coarse or subtle, one's own or external — meaning all formations are impermanent. It is due to 'impermanence' that the other two characteristics, suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anattā*), are derived.

anicca-saññā

Perception of impermanence. (– is developed by meditation on the impermanence of the five groups of existence. When one meditates thus, one develops a tendency where an inner signal, a perception, of the impermanent quality of things automatically springs to mind.)

appamāda

Zeal, non-laxity, earnestness, diligence; Zeal to strive to do the needful to attain *Nibbāna*; Is considered as the foundation of all progress; Is the constant presence of mindfulness; Is the opposite of *pamāda*, which refers to the laxity or belatedness (overdue) to strive to do the needful. The *Buddha's* last exhortation was: "**All formations are impermanent. Strive zealously!**".

Arahat

One who is fully enlightened by following the path that was rediscovered and proclaimed to the world by the *Buddha*; A liberated person; A holy One; A person who has completely

uprooted all ten fetters (*saṃyojana*) that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth, and therefore is not destined for future rebirth.

Noble Eightfold Path – (*ariya aṭṭhangika magga*)

The Noble Eightfold Path is the one and only path leading to the extinction of suffering. It is the last of the Four Noble Truths. The Noble Eightfold Path is:

Wisdom (*paññā*)

1. Right view (*sammā-ditṭhi*):– is the understanding of the Four Noble Truths – about the universality of suffering, of its origin, its cessation, and the path leading to that cessation.
2. Right thought (*sammā-sankappa*):– thoughts free from sensuous desire, from ill-will, and cruelty.

Morality (*sīla*)

3. Right speech (*sammā-vācā*):– abstaining from lying, tale-bearing, harsh language, and foolish babble.
4. Right bodily action (*sammā-kammanta*):– abstaining from killing, stealing, and unlawful sexual intercourse.
5. Right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*):– abstaining from a livelihood that brings harm to other beings, such as trading in arms, living beings, intoxicating drinks, or poison; slaughtering, fishing, deceit, soothsaying etc.

Concentration (*samādhi*)

6. Right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*):– the effort of avoiding or overcoming the unwholesome things, and of developing and maintaining the wholesome.
7. Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*):– mindfulness and awareness in contemplating body, feelings, mind, and mind-objects.
8. Right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*):– concentration of mind associated with wholesome consciousness, which eventually may reach the absorptions (*jhāna*).

There are to be distinguished 2 kinds of each of the above 8 steps of the path, mundane (*lokiya*) and supermundane (*lokuttara*). The latter is associated with developed states of consciousness with wisdom

that leads to attaining of the supermundane fruits of the paths (*magga phala*).

The *Buddha* explains: "I tell you, o monks, there are 2 kinds of right view: the understanding that it is good to give alms and offerings, that both good and evil actions will bear fruit and will be followed by results.... This, o monks, is a view which, though still subject to the cankers, is meritorious, yields worldly fruits, and brings good results. But whatever there is of wisdom, of penetration, of right view conjoined with the path - the holy path being pursued, this is called the supermundane right view (*lokuttara-sammā-dit̥ṭhi*), which is not of the world (mundane), but which is supermundane and conjoined with the path."

Four Noble Truths – (*ariya-sacca*)

The Four Noble Truths are the briefest synthesis of the entire teaching of the *Buddha*, since all those manifold doctrines of the threefold canon are, without any exception, included therein. The Four Noble Truths are:

- (1) The truth of suffering – teaches that all forms of existence whatsoever are unsatisfactory and subject to suffering (see. *dukkha*).

The *Buddha* declares thus: "But what, o monks, is the noble truth of suffering? Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; in short, the five groups of existence connected with clinging are suffering."

- (2) The truth of the origin of suffering – teaches that root of all suffering, and all rebirth, is craving (see. *tanhā*).

The *Buddha* declares thus: "But what, o monks, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering? It is that craving which gives rise to fresh rebirth and, bound up with lust and greed, now here, now there, finds ever fresh delight. It is the sensual craving (*kāma-tanhā*), the craving for existence (*bhava-tanhā*), the craving for non-existence or self-annihilation (*vibhava-tanhā*).

- (3) The truth of the extinction of suffering – teaches that extinction of craving necessarily results in extinction (*nirodha*) of rebirth and suffering, i.e. *Nibbāna*.

The *Buddha* declares thus: **"But what, o monks, is the noble truth of the extinction of suffering? It is the complete fading away and extinction of this craving, its forsaking and giving up, liberation and detachment from it"**.

- (4) The truth of the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the extinction of suffering – sets out the means by which this extinction is attained.

The *Buddha* declares thus: **"But what, o monks, is the noble truth of the path leading to the extinction of suffering? It is the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to the extinction of suffering"**. (see. Noble Eightfold Path)

avijjā

Ignorance, nescience, unknowing; Is synonymous with delusion (*moha*); Is the primary root of all suffering in the world, veiling man's sight thereby preventing him from seeing the true nature of things. It is the delusion that deceives beings by making life appear to them as permanent, happy, substantial and beautiful and preventing them from seeing that everything in reality is impermanent, liable to suffering, and void of a 'self'. Ignorance is defined as 'not knowing the Four Noble Truths.

āyusma / āyusmant

(lit. having life or vitality). Is used by *bhikkhu*, who are senior, to address *bhikkhu* who are junior – younger in ordination age.

bhava

Becoming, existence, process of existence.

bhikkhu

A Buddhist monk, a male member of the *Sangha*; A fully ordained disciple of the *Buddha*. (a *bikkhu* strives earnestly, trains ardently, by abiding by the rules of conduct proclaimed by the *Buddha* and following the *Buddha*'s teaching, to become enlightened).

bhikkhuni

As with *bikkhu* (see above), a female member of the *Sangha*.

bodhi

Awakenment, enlightenment, supreme knowledge, omniscience.

bodhisatta

Buddha-aspirant, a being striving to be enlightened as a *Buddha*, a being destined to *Buddha*-hood, a future *Buddha*.

Buddha

The one who realises by himself (without the help or guidance of another) the truth (in things never heard before) and therein attains omniscience, and gains mastery in the powers; The perfectly enlightened one; The one who is awakened to the truth of the way things are; The one by whom the liberating truth (the *Dhamma*), which had become lost to the world, is rediscovered, realised and clearly proclaimed to the world.

cāga

Liberality, generosity.

citta

Mind, consciousness, state of consciousness; Is a synonym of *mano* and *viññāna*. (In certain occurrences in this book, the term *citta* is used to refer to strong mind that is a determination or resolve.)

cetanā

Volition, will.

dāna

Almsgiving, generosity, giving, generously/charitably offering.

deva

Heavenly beings, deities, celestials; Are beings who live in celestial worlds, and who, as a general rule, are invisible to the human eye.

Dhamma (Sanskrit. Dharma)

The truth of the way things are; The liberating truth discovered and proclaimed by the *Buddha*; The teaching of the *Buddha* that reveals this truth and elucidate the means of realising it. (The entire *Dhamma* is summed up in the Four Noble Truths (see. *ariya-sacca*); The teaching of the *Buddha* is not dogmatic in character, but more like a raft or a vehicle to convey the disciple to deliverance. Also, the truth, towards which the teaching points, is that which is beyond words, concepts or intellectual understanding [it must be realised, experienced insightfully]. The term *Dhamma* also has the meanings:— Constitution (or nature of a thing), Law, Doctrine, Justice, Righteousness, Quality.

dosa

Anger, hate, hatred. Is one of the 3 unwholesome-roots — *lobha, dosa, moha*.

dukkha

Suffering; Pain, anguish, bodily or mental painful feeling; Unsatisfactoriness, discontent (– unsatisfactory nature of all formations; suffering due to impermanence, change, instability, of all formations). All phenomena of existence whatsoever, even the sublimest states of existence without exception, are transient and hence are unsatisfactory. The term *dukkha* is not limited to painful experience, but refers to the unsatisfactory nature and the general insecurity of all conditioned phenomena which, as a consequence of their impermanence, are all liable to suffering, and this also includes pleasurable experience. Hence, *dukkha* does not deny the existence of pleasurable experience as is sometimes wrongly assumed. The truth of *dukkha* is the first of the Four Noble Truths (see. *ariya-sacca*). *Dukkha* is the second of the three characteristics of existence — *anicca, dukkha, anattā*.

hiri-ottappa

Moral shame and moral dread. To be ashamed of what one ought to be ashamed of, to be ashamed of performing evil and unwholesome things: this is called moral shame (i.e. one's inner-shame for

committing unwholesome deeds). To be in dread of what one ought to be in dread of, to be in dread of performing evil and unwholesome things: this is called moral dread (i.e. one's inner-fear of committing sin). It is explained thus: **"Two lucid things, o monks, protect the world: moral shame and moral dread. If these two things were not to protect the world, then one would respect neither one's mother, nor one's mother's sister, nor one's brother's wife, nor one's teacher's wife"**

iddhi-pāda

Roads to power/success, which comprise of 4 qualities, namely: *chanda* (intention), *viriya* (effort/energy), *citta* (consciousness, resolve), and *vimamsa* (investigation).

jarā

Old age, decay.

jāti

Birth.

kalyāna-mitta

Noble (or good) friend — a friend wishing for one's welfare in terms of the path to enlightenment and concerned with his progress on the path. Usually a senior monk who is the mentor and friend of his pupil, guiding his meditation. In particular, the meditation teacher (*kammatthānācariya*). The *Buddha* explains thus: **"noble friendship is the entire holy life"** and that the *Buddha* himself is the *kalyāna-mitta* par excellence: **"Ananda, it is owing to my being a *kalyāna-mitta* to them that living beings subject to birth are freed from birth"**

kamma (Sanskrit. karma)

Actions (wholesome or unwholesome). More correctly denotes the wholesome- and unwholesome-volitions (*kusala-* and *akusala-cetanā*) and their concomitant mental factors, causing rebirth and shaping the destiny of beings. These karmic volitions (*kamma cetanā*) become manifest as wholesome- or unwholesome-actions by body (*kāya-kamma*), speech (*vacī-kamma*) and mind (*mano-kamma*). [In popular

usage, karma is often referred to as the result or fruit of the action although the proper term for this is *vipāka*. Thus the Buddhist term 'kamma' by no means signifies the result of actions and quite certainly not the fate of man, as often inaccurately referred to.]

"Volition, o monks, is what I call action (*cetanāham bhikkhave kammam vadāmi*), for through volition one performs the action by body, speech or mind. There is karma (action), o monks, that ripens in hell... Karma that ripens in the animal world... Karma that ripens in the world of men... Karma that ripens in the heavenly world... Threefold, however, is the fruit of karma: ripening during the life-time, ripening in the next birth, ripening in later births... "

kāya

Body, bodily, physical.

kusala

Wholesome. (see. *kamma*). Wholesome karmic volitions, consciousness and mental concomitants associated therewith that arise as a result of either greedlessness (*alobha*), hatelessness (*adosa*) or non-delusion (*amoha*).

kuṭī

A single-roomed abode, a hut, cabin, shed, in which forest monks or monks in monasteries reside.

lobha

Greed. Is one of the 3 unwholesome-roots — *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha*. Is a synonym of *rāga* and *tanhā*.

magga phala

The 4 supermundane stages of holiness, the 4 supermundane fruitions of the path — [1] the Stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*), [2] the Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmi*), [3] the Non-Returner (*Anāgāmi*), and [4] the fully enlightened one, holy one (*Arahat*).

mahā

Great, very great, worthy, lofty.

mano

Mind, mental.

Māra

The term “*Māra*” denotes several meanings. [1] The title-name of *Māra*, the ill-willed deity ruling over the highest heaven of the sensuous sphere, who is forever opposed to the *Buddha* and the spreading of the *Dhamma* due to his sensuous attachments; [2] defilements (*kilesa-māra*); [3] the aggregates (*khandha-māra* – corporeality, feeling, perception, volitional-mental-formation and consciousness; i.e. *nāma-rūpa* – mind and matter); [4] karma-formations (*kamma-māra*); and [5] Death.

The Venerable Thera uses the term *Māra* to denote ‘mind’, ‘matter’ (*rūpa*), ‘defilements’ or ‘*Māra*-the deity’, all of whom are hindering phenomena that prevent one from practicing the path of enlightenment. Readers should understand in context.

micchā-ditṭhi

Wrong view. Wrong views are declared as utterly rejectable for being a source of wrong aspirations and conduct, and liable at times to lead man to the deepest abysses of depravity. Wrong views constitute numerous speculative views, beliefs, opinions, ideologies, theories and rituals assumed by not comprehending the universality of suffering (unsatisfactoriness), its origin, its cessation, and the path leading to that cessation (It is the opposite of ‘Right View’ (*sammā-ditṭhi*) – see. ‘Noble Eightfold Path’). For example:

- denying there is a cause for every corruptness and purity of beings, and instead asserting that everything is minutely predestined by fate; or
- denying karma-results of good and bad actions; instead, going behind some ethereal being (a creator) for help and protection in daily life; or going in search of refuge from various celestial or evil beings for assistance to fulfil good or bad aspirations of

daily life; or taking the view that: “To him who kills, steals, robs, etc., nothing bad will happen. For generosity, self-restraint and truthfulness, etc. no reward is to be expected”; or

- assuming that after death no rebirth would follow, that at death man would become dissolved into the elements, etc. or in contrast asserting that after death there is eternal life in some place. etc.

moha

Delusion. Is one of the 3 unwholesome-roots — *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha*. The best known synonym for *moha* is *avijjā*.

nāma

Mind, mentality; Is generally used as a collective name for the 4 mental groups — feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional-mental-formation (*sankhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). Also used collective to refer to feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), impression (*phassa*), mental advertence (*manasikāra*).

nāma-rūpa

Mind-and-body, mind and matter, mentality and corporeality.

Nibbāna (Sanskrit. nirvāna)

Enlightenment; Is the state of liberation from all suffering and defilements; Is the state of absolute extinction of suffering, absolute extinction of all defilements; (lit. ‘extinction’, ‘to become extinguished’). *Nibbāna* constitutes the highest and ultimate goal of full enlightenment, i.e. absolute extinction of the cause for suffering and thereby the ultimate and absolute deliverance from all future rebirth, old age, disease and death, from all suffering and misery.

pamāda

Laxity or belatedness (overdue) to strive to do the needful to attain freedom from suffering (i.e. opposite of ‘zeal’. Zeal is considered as the foundation of all progress in the path). (see. *appamāda*).

pañca-nīvarana

The 5 hindrances (five qualities which are obstacles to the mind and blind our mental vision. When these hindrances are present, one cannot reach concentration.) Namely, (1) sensuous desire (*kāmacchanda*), (2) ill-will (*vyāpāda*), (3) sloth and torpor (*thīnamiddha*), (4) restlessness and scruples (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) and (5) sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*).

Simile: "Sensuous desire is compared with water mixed with manifold colours, ill-will with boiling water, sloth and torpor with water covered by moss, restlessness and scruples with agitated water whipped by the wind, sceptical doubt with turbid and muddy water. Just as in such water one cannot perceive one's own reflection, so in the presence of these five mental hindrances, one cannot clearly discern one's own benefit, nor that of others, nor that of both."

pañca upādānakkhandha

The 5 aggregates / 5 groups of existence, which form the objects of clinging. The five aggregates are: (1) corporeality/form (*rūpa*), (2) feeling (*vedanā*), (3) perception (*saññā*), (4) volitional-mental-formation (*sankhāra*) and (5) consciousness (*viññāna*). In these five aggregates the *Buddha* has summed up all the physical and mental phenomena of existence. These five aggregates ostensibly appear to the ignorant man as his ego or self and thus he clings to them.

paññā

Wisdom, insight, insightful understanding of the way things truly are. Also sometimes used to refer to knowledge. As part of the Noble Eightfold Path, *paññā* means insightful wisdom, i.e. the intuitive wisdom which gives rise to the 4 stages of fruits of the path and which consists in the penetration of the 3 characteristics of existence – impermanency (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anattā*).

paticca-samuppāda

Dependent origination. This is the formula of the conditionality of all physical and psychical phenomena, a formula which, together

with that of 'non-self' (*anattā*) view, forms the indispensable condition for the real understanding and realisation of the Four Noble Truths. It shows the conditionality and dependent nature of that uninterrupted flux of manifold physical and psychological phenomena of existence conventionally called the 'self', or ego, or man, or animal (the being).

paṭigha

Repugnance, resentment, anger; Is a synonym of *vyāpāda* (ill-will) and *dosa* (hate).

puthujjana

Is any layman or monk who has not yet entered the stream to enlightenment; Is any layman or monk who is still possessed of all the 10 fetters (*samyojana*) binding him to the round of rebirths, and therefore has not yet reached the first of the 4 stages of fruits of the path (*magga phala*).

rāga

Lust, greed. Is also a synonym of *lobha* and *tanhā*.

rūpa

Corporeality, form, corporeal form; Matter (as opposed to Mind).

saddhā

Faith, confidence. One is said to have faith if "he believes in the perfectly enlightened one's (the *Buddha*'s) enlightenment", or in the triple-gem (see. *ti-ratana*), by taking refuge in the triple-gem. His faith, however, should be 'reasoned and rooted in understanding' and he is asked to investigate and test the object of his faith. A Buddhist's faith is not in conflict with the spirit of inquiry and 'doubt about dubitable things' is admitted and inquiry into them is encouraged. The faculty of faith/confidence should be balanced with that of wisdom. Through wisdom and understanding, faith becomes an inner certainty and firm conviction based on one's own experience.

sādhu

(lit. good, virtuous, pious) Often a positive expression approval or affirmation used to convey a meaning similar to saying “Well done!” or “Well said!” or “Excellent! Excellent!”

sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi

Self-view, personality-view. (see. *anattā*). It can be entirely abandoned only on reaching the fruit of ‘Stream-entry’. ‘Self-view’ comes in following forms – being of the view that: ‘I am one-and-the-same with the 5 aggregates – corporeality, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness; ‘I am contained in the 5 aggregates; ‘I am independent of the 5 aggregates; and ‘I am the owner of the 5 aggregates.

samādhi

Concentration, one-pointedness of the mind, state of deep concentration of the mind; Mental state of concentrated calm.

sammā-dit̥ṭhi

Right view. (see. ‘Noble Eightfold Path’).

saṃsāra

Cycle of rebirth, round of rebirth, (lit. perpetual wandering); Is the name denoting the continuous process of repeatedly being born, growing old, suffering and dying. *Saṃsāra* is the unbroken chain of the 5 aggregates (*pañca upādānakkhandha*), which flow continuously through inconceivable periods of time while constantly arising and passing-away from moment to moment. A single lifetime of a being constitutes only a tiny and fleeting fraction of the *saṃsāra*.

samatha

Tranquillity, serenity. Is all unperturbed, peaceful and lucid state of mind attained by strong mental concentration. It aims at the attainment of the meditative absorptions. Is indispensable for insight too. Tranquillity frees the mind from impurities and inner obstacles, and gives it greater penetrative strength.

Sangha

(lit. Congregation). Is the term for the Community of Buddhist monks. As the third of the triple-gem (*ti-ratana*), it applies to the community of the fully ordained noble disciples who have either realised or entered the stream for realising the truth.

sankhāra

(this term has different shades of meaning)

Formation (– this is the most frequent usages and depending on the context, may also refer to the act of 'forming'.) When referring to the act of 'forming', signifies karma – i.e. wholesome or unwholesome volitional activity (*cetanā*) of body (*kāya-sankhāra*), speech (*vacī-sankhāra*) or mind (*citta-* or *mano-sankhāra*). In this sense, the 'karma-formation' would be the closest term for *sankhāra*. In the same context, it is used to refer to meritorious– (*puññ'ābhi-*), demeritorious– (*apuññ'ābhi-*) and imperturbable– (*āneñj'ābhi-*) karma-formations. As the 4th of the five aggregates of existence, *Sankhāra* includes all 'mental formations' whether they belong to 'karmically forming' consciousness or not. (see. *pañca upādānakkhandha*).

The term *sankhāra* is further used in the sense of all things (whatever in the world, all phenomena of existence) that are formed and conditioned. This meaning shown in the well-known passage, "All formations are impermanent... subject to suffering" (*sabbe sankhāra aniccā ... dukkhā*).

sāsana

Dispensation of the *Buddha*; The teaching (of the way things truly are), the doctrine. (lit. 'message'). Also *sāsana* is commonly used to refer to the time span throughout which a *Buddha's* teaching remains alive, before it gets concealed from human knowledge.

satipatthāna

The 4 'foundations of mindfulness' (lit. 'awareness of mindfulness'), the 4 courses of contemplation by mindfulness. This is considered so important for the practice of the mental cultivation for the

purpose of attaining *Nibbāna*. The Great ‘*Satipatthāna Sutta*’ which contains the detailed treatment of this subject states: **“The only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the ending of pain and grief, to the entering of the right path, and to the realisation of *Nibbāna* is the 4 foundations of mindfulness.”** The four foundations of mindfulness are: contemplation of the body (*kāyanupassanā*), contemplation of the feeling (*vedanānupassanā*), contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*) and contemplation of the mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*).

sīla

Morality, virtue (also used to refer to the precepts of moral conduct); Is a mode of mind and volition manifested in speech or bodily action (– therefore, virtuous conduct of body, speech and mind). *Sīla* is the first of the three kinds of training that form the three-fold division (i.e. morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*) of the Noble Eightfold Path. Morality does not consist in the mere not committing of evil actions, but is in each instance the clearly conscious and intentional restraint from the bad actions in question and corresponds to the simultaneously arising volition.

The 5 precepts of *sīla*, also called *pañca-sīla* which are binding on all lay-disciples, are:

- (1) abstaining from killing any living being;
- (2) abstaining from stealing;
- (3) abstaining from sexual misconduct or unlawful sexual intercourse;
- (4) abstaining from lying; and
- (5) abstaining from the use of intoxicants.

In addition to the 5 precepts, some devotees also add three additional precepts so as to complete ‘Right Speech’ (*sammā-vācā*): abstaining from tale-bearing, abstaining from harsh language, and abstaining from foolish babble.

The 8 precepts of *sīla*, also called *aṭṭha-sīla*, which on full moon and new moon days and on the first and last quarter of the moon, are

observed by many lay-disciples. It replaces the third (3rd) precept above and add three additional precepts as follows:

- (3) abstaining from unchastity (abstaining from all sexual relations);
- (6) abstaining from eating after midday;
- (7) abstaining from dancing, singing, music and shows, garlands, scents, cosmetics and adornments, etc.; and
- (8) abstaining from luxurious beds.

***sotāpanna* – Stream-entry**

Stream-entry is the first of the 4 supermundane fruitions attained in the path to enlightenment; the first of 4 fruits of the path; the first stage of the 4 stages of full enlightenment; (see. *magga phala*). One who attains Stream-entry 'becomes' completely free from the first 3 of the fetters that keep beings bound to existence. One who attains Stream-entry will only have a maximum of 7 rebirths and, during those rebirths, is guaranteed not to be born in the fourfold-hells (i.e. completely free from the fourfold-hells).

tanhā

Craving, greed; Is the chief root of suffering and of the ever-continuing cycle of rebirths; Corresponding to the 6 sense-objects, there are 6 kinds of craving: craving for sights, craving for sounds, for odours, for tastes, for bodily contacts, for mental impressions. *Tanhā* is the second of the Four Noble Truths (see. *ariya-sacca*).

***ti-ratana* – Triple-Gem**

The Triple-Gem or Three Jewels (i.e. the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*) which are revered by all Buddhists as the most venerable things. The *Buddha* – the self-awakened perfectly enlightened one; the *Dhamma* – the law of deliverance discovered, realised and proclaimed by the enlightened one. That is, the liberating truth of the way things are which was discovered and proclaimed to the world by the *Buddha*; and the *Sangha* – the community of the fully ordained noble disciples of the *Buddha* who have either realised or entered the stream for realising the truth, or who practice the path.

upekkhā

Equanimity.

vacī

Verbal, by speech.

vicikicchā

Sceptical doubt, – is one of the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca-nīvarana*) and one of the first three fetters (– as a fetter, it refers to sceptical doubt about the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, *Sangha*, the training; the things past and future, and conditionality). It also applies to uncertainty whether things are wholesome or not, to be practiced or not, of high or low value, etc. Is the lack of desire to think things out and come to a conclusion.

Vinaya

Rules and regulations for the conduct of monks and nuns in all the details of their lives.

viññāna

Consciousness. Is one of the 5 groups of existence (see. *pañca upādānakkhandha*).

vipāka

Karma-result, fruit of karma. Is any phenomena which is the result or fruit of wholesome or unwholesome volitional action (*kamma* – karma) committed through body, speech or mind, either in this or some previous life.

vipassanā

Insight. Is the intuitive and penetrative understanding by direct meditative experience of the impermanence (*anicca*), the suffering (*dukkha*) and the non-self (*anattā*). It is insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) that is the decisive liberating factor in the path, though it has to be developed along with the 2 other trainings in morality (*sīla*) and concentration (*samādhi*). The culmination of insight practice leads directly to the fruits of the path (*maggā phala*). Insight is not the

result of a mere intellectual understanding, but is won through direct meditative observation of one's own bodily and mental processes.

virīya

Energy, striving effort (is the opposite of sloth, laziness, slothfulness, torpor).

vitakka-vicāra

Thought-conception and discursive thinking, (or 'applied and sustained thought') — are the so-called 'inner speech of the mind'. They are constituents of the 1st meditative absorption (*jhāna*), but absent in the higher absorptions. 'Thought-conception' (*vitakka*) is the laying hold of a thought, giving it attention. Its characteristic consists in fixing the consciousness to the object. 'Discursive thinking' (*vicāra*) is the roaming about and moving to and fro of the mind.... It manifests itself as continued activity of mind. Thought-conception is compared with the striking against a bell, Discursive thinking with its resounding.

vyādhi

Sickness, disease.

“මහ රහතුන් වැඩි මග ඔස්සේ”

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- මහ රහතුන් වැඩි මග ඔස්සේ අනහරීම 04 (සංශෝධිත මුද්‍රණය-2016 ජනවාරි සිට)
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- මහ රහතුන් වැඩි මග ඔස්සේ අනහරීම 06 (2014 මාර්තු සිට)
- මහ රහතුන් වැඩි මග ඔස්සේ අනහරීම 07 (2014 සැප්තැම්බර් සිට)
- මහ රහතුන් වැඩි මග ඔස්සේ අනහරීම 08 (2015 සැප්තැම්බර් සිට)
- මහ රහතුන් වැඩි මග ඔස්සේ අනහරීම 09 (2016 සැප්තැම්බර් සිට)
- මහ රහතුන් වැඩි මග ඔස්සේ අනහරීම 10 (2017 ජූලි සිට)

“මහ රහතුන් වැඩි මග ඔස්සේ” පින්සින් වඩින පන්සිල් මළුව පොත් මාලාව

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“මහ රහතුන් වැඩි මග ඔස්සේ” පොත් මාලාවේ ඉංග්‍රීසි පරිවර්තනයන්

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- Giving Up Part 5 (From September 2016)
- Giving Up Part 6 (From February 2018)
- Giving Up Part 7 (From February 2018)
- Noble Eightfold Path (From February 2018)

“මහ රහතුන් වැඩි මග ඔස්සේ” අනෙකුත් පොත්

- සතර අපායෙන් මිදීම (2014 පෙබරවාරි සිට)
- කාලෙන ධම්ම සාකච්ඡා (2014 නොවැම්බර් සිට)
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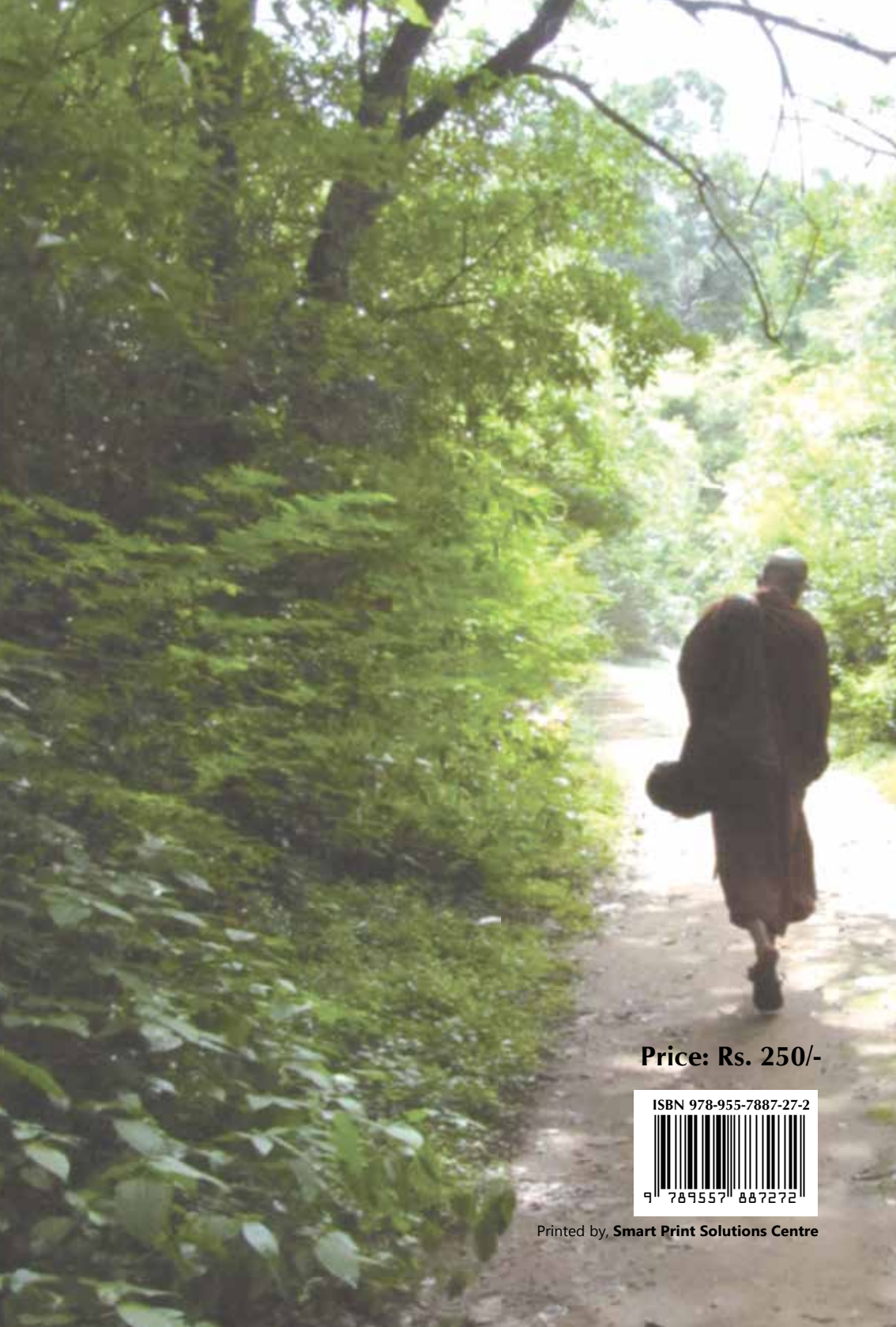
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