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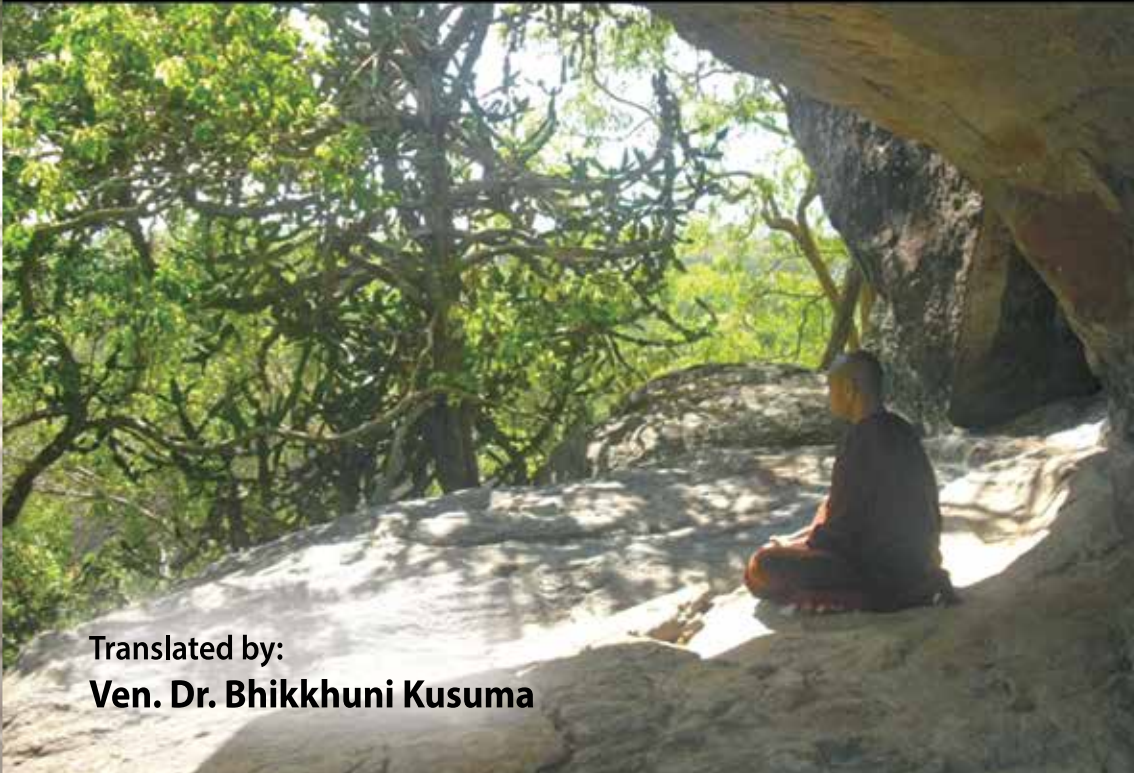


A Collection of Articles

GIVING UP 7

Maharahatun Wedimaga Osse

(On the trail of Arahat)



Translated by:
Ven. Dr. Bhikkhuni Kusuma



Giving up

Part 7

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

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

by **Indrajith Subasinghe**

Translated by:

Ven. Dr. Bhikkhuni Kusuma

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Giving up

Part 7

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

(Note by the Reveren Thero)

To you the fortunate one, is this article written in the handwriting of the Bhikkhu.

“Maha Rahatun Wedi Maga Osse” On the Path trod by the Great Arahants. The Bhikkhu who placed these articles for you, did so anonymously. In a deep forest far away in the quiet of the mind and the environment, while the world was asleep, streaks of moon light falling through branches of trees or may be the faint light of the lantern, gave illumination, to write these notes to the Divaina Sunday News Papers. Soon fragrance of the Dhamma wafted far and wide in the island. The good and noble wanted to know from where the sweet scent of Dhamma is emanating. They who felt the scent in their heart, wished and prayed to see this son of the Great Sakya Muni. They took vows by “asseveration of the Truth”. There are many questions that need to be resolved regarding the Dhamma. So, they made great effort to meet him and ask him.

After a long period of time their wishes came true. They who had seen him only through the notes published in news papers were able to see him with their own eyes. They who read the Dhamma seeing with eyes now heard with their ears. People thronged in tens of thousands. The Bhikkhu was just not moved by the multitude or the mountains of gifts piled up. He saw all of it as “Mara”. The sound of sadhu echoed their great appreciation, criticism and insults hurled were seen in the light of the Dhamma.

The loneliness of the forest among huge trees, he spent in restful quiet. The rainy season was spent in the village or town in the open air preaching pavilions, gaily decorated by people.

Offering

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

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

Indrajit

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Who took away your youth and beauty?

The word "Love" is a word that gives pleasure. We call it pleasure when the eye enjoys the sight of another, when the ear enjoys the sound of another, when the nose enjoys the smell of another, tongue enjoys the taste of another, the mind enjoys the thought of another, when the mind and body enjoy the touch of another.

When the eye is attached to sight it is suffering. It means attachment to sorrow. Whoever is attached to enjoyment does so due to five factors, said the Buddha. They are material form, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness. These five factors are constantly changing. When anything is not stable, it is suffering.

The Buddha says, "Monks, there is pleasure in attachment". The Buddha never denies that there is pleasure in attachment. "Monks, there is pleasure in attachment. That is the very reason why living beings are constantly seeking pleasure through eye, ear, tongue, nose, thoughts and body. They exert so much energy day and night in search of these pleasures. But monks just as much as pleasure, there is pain. The pleasure is short lived, but the exertion is long suffering and painful". Then

according to the Buddha, in the name of love, if one is attached to another, it means long suffering to achieve short pleasure.

For Short Pleasure, Long Suffering....

You, the fortunate ones, who are reading these notes, are ones who are victims of attachment. In the name of love, you suffer. You are willing to pay the price! Try to look at your life in terms of the Noble Dhamma. Look at the wedding photo standing in the middle of the sitting room, so beautiful, young and smiling are the bride and bridegroom. Where is all that beauty today? What has happened? Who robbed you of all those good looks? Where did they take it? Towards birth, old age, sickness and death surely.

What is left now? Mental and physical pain, wailing and suffering. Those elders living in society, grandmothers and grandfathers were full of life like you, enjoying the pleasures of youth. They may have been more beautiful to look at than you. They may have been candidates for a Beauty Queen Contest. When they look at themselves, what did they have to offer? When they remember the past, all that is there now, is suffering due to the five aggregates of clinging.

This is a society that believes in spending lakhs of rupees to dress the bride and the groom. Whom are they dressing? Ignorance! The drapes and fashionable clothes, gold and silver ornaments, they dress to look beautiful. Sure, it is beautiful. The scent of perfumes, the smile...who is looking appreciatively? Mara! Mara is enjoying this beautiful sight. Mara is looking: At whose beauty? He himself is looking at his own beauty. Physical body is Mara. The five aggregates associated with material form is also Mara. Mara looks at his own beauty. You, the fortunate one, do you understand this parable?

To make it more lucid: dukkha is looking at the beauty of dukkha!

The body is painful because it is made up of the four elements which are constantly changing. One is attached to allurements of the body that is changing....subject to birth, old age, sickness and death. Because of the constantly changing body, there arises five mental features, i.e. contact, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness. If the body is impermanent then these five mental features due to the changing nature of the physical body are also impermanent.

The Buddha says that the body is constantly dying and being born. But you do not know that. You do not want to think of death. If a close relative dies, may be you remember death as long as the dead body is lying in the house. Alas! I also will die. Why did you go away leaving me behind? You even say, "Please take me also along with you"? You even welcome death by force. During the couple of days while the dead body is lying in the house there is death awareness. But it stays only a short while. You soon forget death. You even do not want to think of death. It is a bad omen to think of death. It is a negativity to go to the past. But if one sees and remembers death, it means always one is seeing the reality of existence. It is neither positive nor negative thinking. It is reality, it is what is constantly happening. If you are afraid to think of death, it means you are afraid to see the truth. From morning till night we are supplying food, water, medicine, etc. in order to conceal birth, old age, sickness and death. You want to hide the truth and what are you taking as truth? Ignorance! You are taking Dhamma as non-Dhamma, nature as non-nature. In the society, there are large numbers of powerful Mara's followers to support your ignorance of the law of nature. "Live your life to the full! Don't think of death". Such beautiful thoughts are

prevailing in the society. As much as they are pleasant, there is pain and suffering in birth....in such thinking.

The Buddha says that the eye is constantly dying and being reborn. It is the same with the ear, nose, tongue, mind and body. They are constantly dying and being replaced anew. When eye, external object and consciousness are in contact, the eye is born afresh. Immediately it dies. The eye is born means that eye consciousness is born and immediately it dies. Then another faculty arises. May be ear and sound and mind consciousness arises and dies. This is an extremely fast activity, faster than the speed of light. Every moment any one of the faculties arises and passes away. It means that when one faculty is activated, the others remain dead and dormant. Because one or the other organ is always active, there is no visible death, and the body remains warm and the life span is not over. Thus consciousness arises and passes away always due to any one of the six sense organs and this keeps the body and mind alive. So you do not see a visible death. You only know death when the life span and warmth and consciousness disappear altogether and do not arise again.

Be Careful! There are many agents who show the way to suffering

We mentioned in the previous chapter the amount of time and trouble taken to dress the bride and groom. Now you can understand that you are spending lakhs of rupees to decorate a body that is constantly dying and being born again. According to convention it is different, but according to the Dhamma it is a reality. You yourself must observe this truth. If you look at your beautiful wedding photo now, you may never realise the truth. But if you see the wedding photo of your mother and father, may be you will see the truth. If you look carefully, you will see the birth, old age and death of the "same" body.

If you can, try to realise the truth regarding your own body, then you see the Dhamma. But you will not like to see the truth. Because the wish to see the truth is the world's rarest wish. These Arahant Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis are the rare ones who wished to see the truth in themselves. These heroic, brave individuals did not believe in dressing up in all the finery and decorating in gold and silver, the body which is dying and becoming reborn at tremendous speed. They became enlightened by their grasp of this fact. At the moment of attaining Arahant Magga Phala

they realized the nature of the body. They decorated the body with Dhamma i.e. they understood impermanence, suffering and the non-self nature of the body. For them there remained not much to do. Even though the world is complex, wonderful, wide and extensive, you can understand the whole world if you understand two things, so said the Buddha. These two things are the nature of the body (materiality) and the nature of consciousness. It is Mara that has made this world so complex! You need only to understand the nature of the mind-body continuum then you know all.

Did anyone except the exalted Buddha ever understand this fact? This world created by Mara is a trap, a ramified complex with its legal and social conventions. Even then one is enmeshed and unable to extricate oneself, going round and round in circles in samsara. You should understand the extraordinary magnificence of the wisdom of the Buddha. You have the opportunity to go on the Path of the Dhamma that the Buddha showed. The Buddha Dhamma has the quality of "come and see". Immediately the results are visible!! It is the Buddha, who showed the way out of suffering. It is not the planets or the horoscope, nor the Gods in the sacred places dedicated to them. You always ask the way of suffering from those who are themselves suffering and they show you the way to more suffering.

If you feel the life of suffering at all, also ask yourself who showed you this way that leads to suffering. One thing is sure, that it is certainly not the Path shown by the Buddha. The Buddhas never show the Path that leads to suffering because of the great compassion that they possess. The Pacceka Buddha or the Arahant do not possess this wisdom arising from great compassion. There is none that compares with the Maha Karuna of the Buddha.

Why is it that you do not take the Path that is so secure, the way of the Dhamma, but ask the way from those agents of Mara?

There was a noble young man who followed the Path of the Buddha. His name was Chatta. He belonged to a Brahmin family having a pernicious view. He was educated by the famous "Disapamokkha" teacher, and came home after the training and showed his skills to the family and relatives who were very impressed. So, he took gifts and went back along the lonely road in the jungle to see the teacher. The Buddha with his clairvoyant vision saw the danger to his life, the robbers were waiting in hiding to kill him and take the money. It was some bad kamma of the past and the Buddha wanted to bless him and sat under a tree waiting for him to pass. Chatta never knew about the Buddha. But he was so overwhelmed when seeing the Buddha, he was willing to listen. The Buddha questioned : Do you know of the Triple Gem, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sanga? No ! Do you wish to know? Do you wish to take refuge in the Triple Gem? Chatta said, he was willing. So the Buddha spoke to him about the excellent qualities of the Triple Gem. But the Buddha knew that Chatta was destined to die on the way. He could have said, "Don't go this way, you come along with me".

Chatta would have taken his advice but the Buddha cannot stop the Kamma that is now giving effect. Chatta died at the hands of the robbers. But because his mind was so infused with the thought of the Triple Gem, he was born as a divine being in fortunate circumstances.

The Buddha's wisdom is so obvious in these stories. The Buddha shows the way leading to a more prosperous life. Why did the Buddha not prevent Chatta's death? He could have been saved only to go back to the Brahmin family and lead a worldly life,

with wife and children and work hard to sustain life, looking after aged parents and subject to old age and death. May be he would live a maximum of 100 years. Instead the Buddha showed him the way to heaven with all luxuries for eons of a life span. He died and was born as if he slept and awoke. He was a young man born to wrong view but was so fortunate to have seen the Buddha and died peacefully. His confidence in the Triple Gem made him so peaceful.

On the other hand, your parents and elders always show you the way to worse suffering in this world : a degree, marriage, house, bank balance, children and grandchildren and business. In short : a respectable pensioner in retirement, who is so suffering having a life span of 100 years at most. Compared to the heavenly bliss, human life is a rubbish-heap – living a life of pernicious views.

The Buddha shows the way to maximum happiness. So you must try to follow that way. The young man of wrong view was able to develop confidence. So must you develop confidence in spite of all the obstacles on the way. Make use of the infinite compassion of the Buddha to protect you. Do not go with the wrong advice, risking your life and happiness. Even though your fingers are tied ceremoniously with a golden thread in marriage, you are both unprotected as far as life in samsara goes.

The Unfortunate woman who never asked the way from The Buddha

In a previous chapter we mentioned about love. We showed how close love and Mara are together. The golden thread that ties you on the wedding day to the world is designed by Mara. Love can make a person mad, a murderer, commit suicide or be a good human being. Considering the physical body or the five aggregates of clinging, one can see the close proximity of love and Mara.

It is useless developing anger or metta to a material, changing physical body. The body is a deception. The body exists not for the enjoyment of good feelings or painful suffering of bad feelings but for the understanding of the nature of the body. If anyone takes the body as enjoyment, he is merely taking ignorance as enjoyment. If you look at society, you see so many who are crowned with ignorance. We cannot question them. It is the nature of life and living. It is normal for the worldling.

The Buddha points out that living beings are attached to the five aggregates of clinging. Their freedom lies in the giving up of attachment to the five aggregates. The five aggregates

of clinging are the object of attraction between two physical bodies designed by Mara. You may be deceived by the tying of golden thread, the warmth, and think : Ah...what happiness is love. But behind the ecstasy of love is a shadow always lying hidden, just as make-up covers the spots in the face. But it is there for sure and that is anger and hatred. Though love and hate appear to be opposite, they are very close. Those who do not realise this closeness, suffer intensely. The confused mind running aimlessly cannot be controlled. If you do not know how to control this mind, invariably love itself will turn to hate.

The arising of hate due to love can make your delightful school days into a fire of hell. The story of an unfortunate woman in the time of the Buddha will make this clear.

This note may help you, the fortunate person, to take a good decision according to the Dhamma and not according to love. So, please think twice.

When confronted with an extremely difficult decision to make, your untrained, frivolous mind will lead you to the wrong decision. Remember the great compassion of the Buddha, who saved Chatta, the young man. Remembering the compassion of the Buddha you will be able to think in terms of the Dhamma rather than follow your wayward mind.

If you say the mind is a number one loafer, tramp and loiterer, it will not be wrong. Not only in this life but also in the past and future lives, it takes you round endlessly, nourished by ignorance and wrong view. It yields pain and pleasure. Because of the restless mind you may have noticed, how emotionally tensed you become. You may remember, how you suffered with such an uncontrollable mind. The Bhikkhu who is writing down this note, himself is wondering how did he control this wayward, self-opinionated, stubborn, vulgar mind to become

so subdued and conquered. It is wonderful, marvelous, the amount of time and trouble taken is fully worth it. When realizing this fact you become so humble and with your head you venerate the Buddha a million times. It was the Buddha alone, that showed the way to the only refuge, the protection we have.

The story I am relating now is about the parents and children, who never took refuge in the Buddha and destroyed themselves.

There was a family living in a remote village. There were four members. The main character in this story is the younger daughter. The father died when she was very small and she never had the love of a father. But the mother looked after them with great effort. Later she found employment as a housemaid in a foreign country. She left the 15 year old daughter and son in the custody of the grandmother. This 15 year old lost the love of both parents. The mother sent them money every month. She went abroad again and again and this girl for want of love fell in love with a boy in her class. They are together in the ecstasy of first love. The village came to know of this and the boy's parents who were well off, advised him to break up the affair. The boy was so frustrated that he committed suicide. The girl became the target of blame from the boy's relatives, she was so unhappy and decided to commit suicide in order to meet her lover in another world. She told her friends in school that her lover appears in her dreams, calling her. She, who did not even know the meaning of the word "love", having no one to rely on, suffered intensely. "The miserable woman who killed their son" was the theme of their abuse.

She takes a pen and paper and writes an emotional letter saying that her lover is calling her. "He was the only one I had in the whole world, so I shall leave these wicked people to join him and live happily.

I cannot live in a society that is blaming me for no wrong I have done. Please keep two flower baskets on my dead body. After you bury me, please plant two plants having white flowers. One for me and the other for my lover." Very peacefully, without any animosity, she behaved, believing that she will be eternally happy with her lover. She entered her empty house and put a rope on the rafter and hanged herself. The mother was abroad. Every one who heard of these young children was extremely distraught and distressed.

Now you please try to reconcile kamma and result of this episode. What can be her birth? She writes her last letter without any anger or remorse, so can you guess what her re-birth could be? When you read the following, you will know whether your grasp of kamma and result is right or wrong. Do not try to give marks, but try to see the karmic repercussion. If you do not agree with what follows, you may reject it. Agreeing and disagreeing is the worldly way.

A certain Bhikkhu in a moment of deep Samādhi focusses on the re-birth of this girl. The Bhikkhu gets the vision of a huge square shaped fire. If you see this as 10'x 10' it becomes that. If you see it as 100'x 100'then it becomes bigger. You cannot estimate its size. The colour is a mixture of orange and yellow. There is no smoke or charcoal. There is no other colour, such as black or blue or red. It is a brilliant light, pure orange and yellow. This is one aspect of the vision. It means that she is born into the flames of Niraya hell, and is in extreme pain and suffering.

You, the fortunate one, will remember with what peace and calm she wrote her last letter. She writes about trays of white flowers and white flowering plants. How could she fall into hell?

It is necessary to think in wisdom and mindfulness. She had a great longing to see her lover and be with him. It was happiness born out of craving that motivated her to die. Because of the blame and anger of the villagers, she is so frustrated, and her wish to be with the one and only love became more aggravated. She was so lonely, that she willingly prepared the noose and she put it around her neck, hoping to be with her lover. But when the noose tightens around the neck, you do not die at once. You struggle so much, that the wind pipe is crushed. The thought between the excruciating pain and her final death, does not have any room for thoughts of her lover. It is just unbearable panic. She is angry with herself. It would be extreme anger towards all those people who put her into this situation. She will never think of white flower baskets or white flowering trees or a divine lover who is calling her. She realizes her folly. There is regret for having brought so much suffering on herself, an extremely grave karmic formation. With this last thought she dies and is re-born into the fires of hell.

You, the fortunate one, may now compare this with your own inference. Lots of people believe that such a death of a young person could get a heavenly re-birth. That is because you feel so sorry about the whole episode. But you should see the reality of this.

The Bhikkhu having seen her re-birth in hell probed into her previous life to see what kind of karma she has done to have such a destiny as this. Why did she have to suffer so much as school girl? She was born into a poor family. The suicide of her father in her infancy; The mother leaving her and loss of love of mother and father; her lover committing suicide; the abuse from relatives and teachers and the villagers and finally her own suicide were all tragic.

The Buddha says that beings are born out of Kamma. It is their heritage. It is obvious that some previous bad Kamma has become effective. Hence the Bhikkhu thought of finding out what exactly was the cause for her misfortune. Her previous life was as a ghost. Through deep samādhi the Bhikkhu perceived a body about two feet in length, like a small doll, the hair plaited in two, a girl child, floating in empty space. She had all the sensory organs; eyes, ears, nose, tongue, mind and body, but her feet were not on the ground. Just a floating ghost. Then the Bhikkhu focused on her life before becoming a ghost, because the Bhikkhu could not find out what bad Karma she had done. Then in deep concentration the Bhikkhu perceived a girl of about 7 years of age. Today she is burning in hell and before that a human and before that a ghost, still what is the grave Karma done, could not be comprehended. Then the Bhikkhu focusses on the life before being a 7 year old girl. The 5th birth before her re-birth in hell. Then only did the Bhikkhu see cause for her life of calamity, the suicidal death of her father, lover and herself.

She was a woman about 25 years old. She was pregnant. She was squeezing and wringing her abdomen to kill the baby in her womb – to abort it. As a result of this grave Karma, she died young in her next birth at the age of 7. Since there was no strong karma in that birth, she became a ghost girl of about 7 years having shared someone’s merit. She is reborn to poor parents and commits suicide as a school girl. The Karma done four births previously has finally given her a birth in the fire of hell. The results of Karma are a reflection of the Karma done. The Buddha word is so evident. Can you visualize the Karma entanglement of the past? Aborting the child in her womb brought so much pain and suffering: having to witness the suicides of father, lover and her own suicide.

Now do you see the gravity of bad Karma? How long suffering it entails....life after life? You live in a society that brings legislature to legalise abortion, which is deadly Karma. There are many organized places that perform abortion. You cannot stop this. In the world of Mara, this is the rich harvest of sensual desire. When one is so intoxicated with sensual desire, harvest is the greater. That is the nature of the world. You, who are reading this note, make a determination never to do such hideous Karma. If you conceive an illegitimate child, do not ever kill it. Let the world insult you, and throw stones. Have confidence in the Triple Gem and bring up the child, giving it Metta. You may be the victim of disgrace and disrepute, but surely you will not suffer burning in hell. The Buddha gives you that assurance.

The above episode proves beyond doubt the Karmic retribution will be following you, life after life, even though you were ignorant about such repercussion at the time of committing the Karma.

The popular question of Buddhists - eating meat and fish

(Consumption of flesh No.1)

The Buddhists today have a question which is frequently asked. It is about vegetarianism and eating meat and fish. Some have made it a big issue and have strong views. They oppose those that do not agree with them. It is certainly a blessing if people refrain from killing and hurting animals, and be free from sickness caused by eating flesh. They will be healthy and their minds will have more Metta for others.

In such an environment you may be able to eat puddings, cakes and savouries without fear and doubt. Also it is possible that there could be breeding of cattle, goats, pigs, fowls in large numbers causing epidemics which may destroy human population. Such a situation is only an utopian imagination and not realistic.

The world exists due to causes and conditions. But the world is developing in the direction of ignorance and wrong view. The education that moulds the character of the child is basically structured in ignorance, perpetuating the continuation of other ignorant educators. For them what is important is not

the consideration whether you are human or animal, but the continuation of the educational system in the name of “development”. The aim and purpose of their “education” is to ensure that all human beings after death will be born as human beings with wrong view, or be born as hell-beings, ghosts, animals or demons. Today their progress report has exceeded even their aim and purpose.

The way of Dhamma has shrunk and is cornered. The future educators will not see the human being and animal as separate. They will see them as the same. They do not know the value of a human being, born in the Buddha era. Hence they consider man and animal as equal. The future generations of human beings will not distinguish between mother, father, son and daughter...just like the animals. They will not know Karma and result, just like animals. They will not know the Dhamma of the enlightened human beings and so will be getting closer to animals, seeking carnal pleasure, food and security. This is the target of “development” of the ignorant world. They will even call it respectably, “the free world”. When you become human beings living in a free world with no restrictions, no limitations, no social or religious conventions, one can behave just as one pleases. The ignorant “education” system will promote this freedom and lead you speedily to the four hells. The freedom will only give you pain and suffering, acute and unbearable. Man must become deranged and confused before the world will crumble at the end of the eon, disintegrate and disappear. It means man will be degenerate, bereft of human qualities. Having no spiritual guidance, men will hurt each other and kill each other because they are full of power that supports the ego, conceit, pride and selfishness. The present education system is heading for this disaster. The misguided man, being self-opinionated, in ignorance, considers the world as permanent happiness. This thinking becomes vague and you

and I are agents that pursue this education, being members of this disastrous trend in society. Therefore the present wakeup call of the Dhamma, should be taken note of and lead you away from this impending disaster. The question of eating fish and meat is taking you away from the Dhamma that is open in front of you.

The question is truly charming and pleasant. The one practicing vegetarian seems to be a holy person, extremely harmless, so he becomes a prominent, outstanding person in society. A highly attractive concept. But it must be said regrettably, that contrary to the Buddha's teaching, such a person is hanging on to an extreme. The Pali word "amagandha" is not referring to the smell of raw fish and meat as interpreted by some. It refers to the repulsive smell of mental defilements. This is clearly explained in the "Amagandha Sutra" by the Buddha. If you still believe in things contrary to the Buddha word, and you still contradict the Buddha, then you are not one who has taken the Triple Gem as refuge.

The Bhikkhu writing this note is now living in a "kuti"(hut) in Hambantota District. There are large herds of cattle roaming the place, sometimes 200 or even more. They graze and lie in abandoned fields, roaming from place to place and being tired they lie down. Foreigners, who see this, are so enthralled and fascinated by the scene, they stop their vehicles and gaze at them. But unknown to them, there is a tragic painful story behind this scene, even though they enjoy it. In the herd, there are no old cows or male bulls. There are only young females and calves but only a few stud bulls. The old cows that do not calve, and male animals are sold for flesh. There may be some who do not do this. Imagine the tragedy behind the wonderful scene. Finally everyone in the herd will be sold for meat.

Not eating fish and meat is a similar tragedy. Outwardly it appears to be a good and attractive topic. Though you may not see, behind this vegetarianism lies ego, conceit that can give you a hell rebirth. "I am vegetarian, I am virtuous, others are sinners, my stomach is not a burial ground for carcasses", etc. are wrong views born out of ego-conceit. They develop pride and attachment to their view and to themselves. These are views contrary to the Dhamma. They increase the ego, pride and conceit. Do think in a humble way. You are sure to understand. You are clever.

What use is not eating fish or meat, when you are consuming wrong view with metta?

(Consumption of flesh No.2)

A certain lay person asked “Ven. Sir, what is your opinion about eating fish and meat?” The following is the reply of the Bhikkhu; because you are a noble layman, the Bhikkhu is saying this. But this answer is not for everyone in society. The answer changes from person to person according to the grasp of Dhamma they have. The Bhikkhu as a layman prior to ordination did not consume fish or flesh for about five years. If any fish or flesh was eaten, then the Bhikkhu visualized the animal, e.g: when eating chicken the live animal is visualized. So, meat eating was given up willingly, but there was no criticism against those who ate fish and meat. He did not say that he was vegetarian. If someone served fish and meat, it was kept aside on the plate. When he was a lay person he did offer fish and meat for Sangha dana. Though himself vegetarian, others’ wishes were never contested.

After ordination as a monk this condition changed. This question is being asked by a lay person. Whoever enters the Dhamma way, is in the worldly state “puthujjana”. Later he may develop into the 1st stage of sainthood. The person who is asking this question, is such an enlightened one. We cannot straight away

say to him, "You should eat meat and fish and eggs. It is wrong not to eat". Then it could be a great setback for this person. Also it is proper that he practices vegetarianism and advises others to do so, because he is still on the Path. When he has reached "sotapatti phala" the fruition, he will have unshakable faith in the Triple Gem, observing the pure virtue of "ariyakanta sila".

If someone feels more Metta by refraining from eating meat, the Bhikkhu will never say that you must eat it. But there is a big mistake done by some people, who practice vegetarianism. If one refrains from eating because of compassion to animals, it is good. He becomes more committed to the Dhamma. If not, it may be practiced to disparage others, who are not vegetarian. Then you develop not Metta, but pride, ego, conceit and such like and also wrong view. Such a person is likely to disparage others. Then what happens to his Metta? In pursuing compassion for animals, he creates anger and animosity for good and noble human beings and monks. In such a situation he cannot proceed on the Path.

You cannot change the world, nor can you save the world from pain and suffering. You cannot change the Karmic power that has given a rebirth as an animal. So what you could do is, while being vegetarian, go along the Path. That does not mean that those who eat fish and meat cannot go on the Path. If you have no strong views about eating fish and meat and you are vegetarian, you have the facility to tread the Path. Even if you are vegetarian and hold strong views about not eating meat and fish, your chances on Path are relatively less, compared to one who is neutral and holding no view, but yet meat eating. The important thing is your greed and hatred that hinders you on the Path.

You, the good person, do not misunderstand. Enlightenment does not depend on whether you eat meat or not. The Bhikkhu wants to stress that those who are on the Path to the first stage

of sainthood, should have compassion to animals and as well as to all human beings. Then your progress will be fast.

Having given up eating fish and meat, if you attach yourself to a view, it will be detrimental. The Bhikkhu is not discussing about whether fish and meat are allowable or not according to Vinaya discipline. Everything is changing in this world. How can the Bhikkhu hang on to a view permanently? If we hold to any view hard and fast, there is ignorance “avijja” in us.

Whatever people offer to us into the bowl, the Bhikkhu does not see them as good or bad. It may be rice, vegetable, fish or meat, but merely it is seen as sustenance to the body. All food end up as vomit, blood, etc. and belong to the four great elements. As you proceed on the Path, this fact becomes so clear. The day you realise the Dhamma and become free from the four hells, this question will be automatically resolved.

Then you do not have to ask this question anymore. But those who are still worldlings ask this question and it is normal. Their views and questions come in the guise of compassion, Metta, virtue, etc. But they are forces of Mara to prevent them from getting freedom from the four hells. If your life style is strong with Metta, then others, who are not vegetarians will not be despised by you. If you do, there is no Metta. Just because you have prolonged the life of an animal, you have no power to prevent Karma-vipaka from victimizing that animal.

If you insist on your view beyond limits, even though you refrain from eating meat, eggs, fish, etc. your food by way of contact and intention of mind and by way of resultant consciousness, (phassa āhara, mano sancetana vipāka-viññāna) make you unfit to proceed on the Path of the Dhamma.

Be happy with what you get whether it is vegetarian or not. So you are free from wrong view.

The stomach has consumed fish and meat it is is a cemetery.....

You the fortunate one, think this way. The Bhikkhu who is writing these notes is eating food. There is a piece of cooked fish in his bowl. A devotee seeing this says "Ven. Sir, eating fish is a sin, is it not?" The answer the Bhikkhu gives is written below.

The animal, whose flesh is cooked, is now no more. He is born elsewhere, may be as a divine or a human being or as a fish. This is a natural law. The Bhikkhu sees the cooked fish as a materiality consisting of the four elements. He sees the tender jak fruit leaf salad also just the same, as comprised of the four elements.

If you, the good person, sees a fish in the cooked fish, or a live chicken in the chicken meat, it is a strong ego-conceited view. We, who traverse the Path with effort, do so in order to understand that there is no me, I, mine within the body and that the body exists due to causes and conditions.

One is in a confused view if he regards a cooked piece of fish as a live animal. So, one is lost in a world of views. The piece of fish in the bowl was killed by a fisherman, who must receive

the results of the bad Karma of killing. The fish has done bad Karma to die in this way. If he did not get caught in the net, a bigger fish might have devoured him. You cannot regulate the Karma done and the results that appear. It is nature. If the government should enforce a law forbidding fishing in the ocean, the bigger fish like shark and kingfish and whale will thrive having plenty of food. Even if you do not fish in the ocean, the Karma takes toll of these lives. Since his life span is over, he must die in some way.

So, you will have to force the big fish to refrain from eating small fish!! Do not be unhappy about the Bhikkhu. Due to the end of my life span, someone may kill me the next moment. Therefore, if you cannot see the sequence of events that lead to death, you may not agree.

I remind you once again, you the fortunate one, if you wish, you may become a vegetarian or a non-vegetarian. Do not criticize those who are against your view. It makes bad kamma.

How the mental and physical faculties mature are different in each individual. Therefore differences of view and opinions that are contradictory arise. It is natural. The world is full of such differences. It is the environment you live in. Give up getting entangled in these views and see the reality of causes and effects and see the Dhamma. The fish that died is now reborn as a human or animal or divine person and we are quarrelling about an individual no longer existing.

The next is the idea that the stomachs of those who consume fish and flesh are a cemetery. Does it mean that those who are vegetarian have a stomach filled with sweet smelling golden stuff? Whether you eat vegetarian or non-vegetarian food, the stomach is certainly a cemetery. The food of all individuals turns to vomit, blood, fat, excreta, urine, etc. If you think, it is

good under any circumstances, how can you ever know and realise the four foundations of mindfulness...see the impurities of the body. You will see only the external features of the body as good and pleasant with attachment. You will live and die amassing unwholesome greed, hatred and ignorance. You, the fortunate one, have lost the wisdom and meaning of the Buddha's message.

Do not seek beyond the Buddha word. If you do, whether you are vegetarian or greedy for fish and meat, it is a loss for you. Do not fall into ego-conceit and false view by attachment to vegetarianism or otherwise.

They eat animal protein to make the body strong and healthy. Others become vegetarian to make the body strong and healthy. In both situations, they develop ego-conceit and wrong view. Having the wonderful chance to hear the Great Buddha, do not get lost in the desert of wrong view. You, the fortunate one, may have eaten fish and flesh for eons in samsara, being born as lion, tiger, crocodile, fish, etc. How much flesh of others must we have eaten? Having false views about fish and meat, how much time did we suffer in hell? How much rice, dhal, jak-fruit, coconut, green leaves, salad must we have eaten through eons in samsara?

But we, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, have so far not had a good life. We are still in a state of dying, being born, in sickness. Those who like or do not like are yet two sides of the same coin, being held by wholesome and unwholesome Kamma formations. You are destined to Bhava – Birth.

What difference does it make whether it is fish or beans? See the ignorance of mankind. What you need to see is, not whether it is fish or beans, but the way you develop thoughts of greed. It is this greed and attachment which is the cause for all suffering.

Do eat to sustain and strengthen the body in order to tread the Eight Fold Path. See food that turns to vomit, excreta, urine and blood. Whatever food eaten results in a prolonged life, giving colour, beauty, pleasure, etc. These are impermanent, sorrow-laden. If you perceive life, colour, pleasure, etc, with ego-conceit, whether you are consuming fish or beans, understand that they are connected to defilements in the mind and nothing else.

Being attached to, averse to eating fish and meat, shall we be born again with a body full of flesh?

The Bhikku writing these notes will go on alms round tomorrow morning carrying the bowl. If he gets a little rice and coconut sambol, it is enough. It is quite enough for the Bhikkhu till the next morning. He does not see it as rice and coconut sambol, but as some food that is inherently repulsive.

Fish, meat, rice, pulses, coconut are Mara's list of food, that is considered a stomach-full by the ignorant world. Mara's waiters serve you food on silver tray to entice you. You should therefore, consume it with reflection, without being caught up by taste. Reflection is: to see that the food and the body are both of a repulsive nature and the food is consumed as sustenance for the body to continue the journey along the Path.

You, the fortunate one, must try to see the food, whether fish or pulses is contact with the tongue as mere feelings of impermanence and see without consideration of good or bad, tasty or tasteless. Do not contemplate on your likes or dislikes but turn over to contemplation of nature of food and body (Dhammanupassana). Then you will be able to see with insight

(vipassana), the way you take contact as permanent and the way you end up with false view. Whatever is said and done, perception as an animal is dangerous. The Animal Kingdom is the realm of results of unwholesome actions. All animals born, are invariably beings, that killed animals in pervious births. They are suffering the results of bad kamma, being born in the animal kingdom. We cannot change this natural Karmic Law. We only have to turn towards the direction of escape from Karmic bondage.

You, the fortunate one, do engage in your daily businesses while observing the five precepts. Before you undertake the precepts try to find out what are the advantages of observing sila. Never try to underestimate the value of keeping precepts. If you cannot keep a particular precept, then it is better for you not to take the precept rather than take it and violate it. Out of respect for the precept do not undertake it. Being vegetarian or non-vegetarian is not a precept to keep. Do not misinterpret the Buddha word according to your wish and will. Because you will become a self-opinionated person of wrong view.

The Buddha defines wrong livelihood as selling fish and meat, selling live animals and human beings, selling weapons, selling intoxicants and poison, etc. There is no doubt that selling fish and meat is wrong livelihood. The hotelier selling cooked fish, fried rice and roti, etc. also has a wrong livelihood. But those in business earning a regular income have only five precepts to keep. Then, when they sell fish or meat or frozen meats, etc. it is not breaking a precept. But there is a wrong livelihood, which the Buddha said to give up for you to follow the Path. You, the fortunate one, try to follow the teaching judiciously.

The Buddha extended great compassion towards all living beings. Our sensory system is developed in various degrees. So, not all can follow the Dhamma in the same way. If we

criticize the hotelier, that he is unvirtuous selling cooked fish and meat and will go to hell, it will be inimical. Certainly, it is not recommended by the Buddha. If you ever say thus, the poor hotelier will surely seek another religion and become one with wrong view. What you have to tell them is "Please observe the five precepts and continue your business". Then they get the protection of the Dhamma because they do not transgress the precepts taken and also they have respect for the precepts undertaken. If they develop the strength to refrain from selling fish and meat because it is wrong livelihood, then he will certainly become a winner.

Even if he does not refrain from it, he is not unvirtuous, because he has taken refuge in the Triple Gem and is keeping the five precepts. He gets the protection of the Dhamma. The Buddha has declared that for lay disciples with worldly responsibilities, the five precepts are a must. Therefore, such a person who takes refuge in the Triple Gem and keeps precepts is not unvirtuous. He is one, who can strengthen the precepts and we can show him the way to avoid wrong livelihood.

Finally, it must be said, "You, the fortunate one, can live as a vegetarian or non-vegetarian. Though you do not transgress a precept by eating or not eating fish or meat, if you make it an issue and fall into wrong view with greed, conceit and pride, etc. it will be a strong mental Kamma that entails painful Karmic results. Let the things that belong to the world be as they are. But the craving for food is what is keeping you in the world of suffering. It is due to this craving that you create, that you become the owner of the body full of flesh. This must be seen again and again".

Giving up eating animals as tasty food and giving up craving for the taste of beans curry, is the way you can escape from the body of flesh and blood. You may now see clearly that the

question is not meat, fish or pulses, but the craving you have for them.

Devadatta requested the Buddha to institute a Vinaya rule to refrain from eating fish and meat and the Buddha replied, "No! they can do so, if they wish".

Equanimity is free from attachment and resentment and is the middle way. We do not have to transcend the Buddha word. If we do, we can never have unshakable faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Let the world be what it is. You come to the way of Dhamma. Do not disinherit the Dhamma by being victimized by craving for material food, four kinds of nutriment, food nutriment (*āhāra*) contact nutriment (*phassa*), karmic nutriment (*mano Sancetanā*) consciousness nutriment (*viññāna*).

We are all children of the Buddha. See the world through the Dhamma eye as the Buddha has shown. When you do not even own your likes and dislikes, how can you make others likes and dislikes your own? You only suffer by it.

Before Meditation – Part 1

Are you learning A,B,C, again and again

Today, meditation has become a favourite subject. Large numbers of people both old and young, here and abroad search for happiness through meditation. It is said that during the life time of the Buddha there prevailed 62 pernicious views. People believed in them in the hope of gaining happiness. These views developed when life and living became more complex.

Complexity of life means more pain and suffering. Today we see the lives of people becoming so complicated and people are confused in their minds that it is leading them to dissatisfaction and despair. To overcome this unrest, people look for meditation. If you are inclined to meditation due to worldly unrest, then you need to know this condition before you begin meditation. If you want to succeed in meditation, you need to address your mind as to the causes, that led to your unrest. Society does not become more complex on its own. It is due to peoples' highly sensitive and excessive thinking patterns. Once a thought arose in King Ajatasattu on a full moon night. He wanted to enjoy to the fullest the beautiful moon-lit night. It would be fine to discuss some Dhamma, he thought and asked

his ministers, “Who is the best to lead the discussion”? Each of them suggested various names while one good and noble minister suggested, that the Buddha was residing in his Mango grove and that it would be best to go there. The Buddha is spending the night with 500 Arahant Bhikkhus he said.

The King being pleased with the suggestion, visited the mango grove accompanied by his security personnel. When they approached the mango grove, it was so quiet there was no indication of anyone living there. The King became frightened. “Am I being taken to this lonely place to be killed in the night? You have cheated me.”, he said to the ministers. “No! They are all inside the hall”. The King could not believe. How could there be pin-drop silence in a place with 500 people. The silence was due to their simple life style. Their minds free from the five hindrances. When the mind has less and less hindrances, life becomes easy and simple. It is due to cause and effect. One must begin meditation after seeing causes and effects of a complicated life style. When man is excessively given to material pleasures, he has to devise ways and means to acquire many things and this results in competition, desire and problems to be solved. When man runs for greater pleasure, his pain and suffering becomes more. In spite of the great time and trouble taken in acquisition, the enjoyment and satisfaction is little. What is more, old age, sickness and death takes toll. The wonder is that you still have to live in this unjust unfair world. If someone does some injustice to you, you want to get away. But now you want to find a solution while being a shareholder of the unfair world. It is like trying to find fault with the other, when you are yourself in the fault. It is your own desire and attachment that is the cause for the unfair, unjust world.

You, the fortunate one, whatever meditation you are practicing you must be continuously alert and watch your own greed,

desire, etc. You are not practicing meditation in this world for the first time. In the long past of samsara you have practiced frequently Samatha meditation and attained Jhāna and did astral travelling to be sure. You were born in the Brahma realm in the material and non-material Brahma world. You and I have practiced Metta meditation and as human beings and after death were reborn in Brahma realms and lived there for eons. This is the absolute truth for all of us. Even though you enjoyed the bliss of Jhāna and you became a winner in the world, you are still unable to realise that desire, greed, ego, etc. are the cause for all the sorrow. This is why you, the fortunate one, are seeking advice from a monk or teacher or reading books about meditation. How to do in and out breathing meditation? How to develop the first Jhāna of applied thought and discursive thought (vitakka, vicāra). How to watch the breath? What is Jhāna? See what a shame. You, who lived eons in Brahma realm, have to ask these questions. Just that you did not see your own greed and craving. So you are trying to learn the A,B,C, once again.

Before Meditation – Part 2

Invest in your previous energy with wisdom

Do contemplate on all your possessions in the past desert of samsara. Visualise how you attained Jhāna and super normal powers and did astral travelling, walked on water, with Metta Jhānic power you enticed and charmed human beings, divine beings and Brahmas and put them under you spell. Do contemplate on things you did in the past. You were such a wonderful person. Develop confidence in yourself and raise wholesome energy. Know who you were without exaggeration. Try to see where you stopped meditation. Bring forth the iron will that lies hidden. See your potential. There is no living Buddha today to show you your talents like the Buddha showed them to Sunita, Sopaka and Kisa Gotami. There is no one to remind you of your own achievements in the past samsara. But you could do so yourself, and get to know your own worth without pride, and only then must you sit in meditation. Your aim should be not to achieve Samādhi but to reach the extinction of feelings. Do not crave for the Jhāna you already had in past samsara. When such an idea arises quickly see the craving and that craving is the cause for sorrow. Any material object whatever that is perceived must be seen as impermanent.

On no account must you lend yourself to craving of any sort. Even if you get the power to be reborn in the Brahma realm, see it as impermanent. What is impermanent is suffering, isn't that so? If so, why run after that suffering because of your old habit. The Bhikkhu writing these notes never had craving for Jhānic pleasure, even for a moment. The impermanent Jhāna arises and passes away. You should not shoulder such suffering. Making use of suffering, you should turn towards absolute freedom from suffering. You, the fortunate one, if your objective is to enjoy physical, mental calm and tranquility, then this method may not be appropriate for you. But such people must think that there is no meaning in trying to enjoy Jhānic pleasure, which is transitory.

The complexity of society today is caused by excessive craving for sense pleasure. To escape from the oppression and pressure of life and living, you turn to meditation. It is certainly good. But if you are clever, you will see, that the same craving that oppressed you, is what you are seeking through Jhāna. Then only will you enter the Eight-fold Path. When you, with wisdom see the reality of impermanence, you are a winner. Why, you already have experienced Jhāna of material and non-material realm, so it is not difficult to see the impermanence of Jhāna. If not, just as you got entangled in previous lives, you will again get entangled. It is very necessary to have a liking for meditation, but as soon as you reach samādhi, you must be clever to see impermanence. See how your likes and dislikes for samādhi itself shows up impermanence. This is the only thing you never did in samsara, with the result that you are still traversing in samsara. Do now, what you failed to do before, seeing impermanence, should be your object in meditation.

You do not need to look far or near. You have to only look within. The world you have constructed is within. See the

world you have constructed due to craving. The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are in your world. Sun, moon, stars, mother, father, child are there. You have made it “my world” with craving and are bonded with iron chains. Those strong chains that held you throughout samsara will be broken when you tread the Eight-fold Path. Then the previous world will be given up.

But the Arahant too, has eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. He also has the sky, earth, mother, father. The difference is, there is no craving for any of these. So he is not suffering due to ownership of the world. Before you meditate, see the difference between suffering and the cause of suffering. You do not need to sit cross legged, every free moment to devote to this contemplation.

Before Meditation – Part 3

Making the unruly diffused thoughts an object of meditation

Many who begin meditation on the breath, cannot keep the mind on the subject of in-out breath. Because many stray thoughts arise and you are carried away. Then you will become restless and disgusted. This happens because of the five hindrances. It means you are prone to attachment and resentment that are strong in you. You will realise that your attachment or resentment is due to material objects. The Buddha reminds you that it is the work of Mara. So you should be clever to see the unruly mind as Mara. It is Mara that is a hindrance to meditation and does not allow the mind to settle down in tranquility and Samādhi. Once you recognize this fact, then stop watching in-out breath and watch the thoughts that arise and pass away at great speed.

When Mara prevents you from following the Dhamma way, you should be clever to devise ways and means to circumvent the problem. You must fool the “Mara thoughts”. Sit patiently watching all those stray thoughts. See the endless flow of thoughts. See how they appear and disappear and do blame yourself for the unruly mind without anger. Keep on watching

with great enthusiasm. See the speed of thoughts of Mara. Mara is busy arranging for your rebirth in samsara. Your thoughts of attachment and resentment means Karmic organization for rebirth in samsara. You first sat down to do in-out breathing, but being unable to stay in focus, you resorted to watch the thoughts that come and go. You are clever, because now you are in mind-object contemplation (dhamānupassana) or feeling contemplation (vedanānupassana) or thought contemplation (cittānupassana). Ānāpānasati is kāyānupassana. They are all within the framework of satipathāna.

When you watch your thoughts you will identify whether the thoughts are rooted in greed, hatred or ignorance, restlessness or Metta. When you see the arising and passing away, it is vipassana meditation. You penetrate into the nature of thought and you investigate, probe and scrutinize the thought processes. This is the way you can dispel Mara.

You first started with ānāpānasati, but due to the five hindrances you could not proceed. But you were clever to devise another meditation method. You became clever, because you understood that Mara is this unruly mind. Therefore, you should practice this as a meditation subject. Then you can overcome the hindrances.

Think of it as a game: your opponent is Mara. He is continuously devising methods to defeat you by restoring to the use of the five hindrances. When Mara is attacking you, you peacefully watch the method. You do not need to think of winning or losing because they both are impermanent. The hindrances belong to Mara. Your aim is to see reality. Not to win or lose. You are freed due to your own observation with wisdom. The Dhamma points out, that freedom from all defilements can be obtained by continuous observation of the mind and eradicating defilements as and when they occur.

If you follow this method of mindfulness you will make Mara tired and gasping, fretting, fuming and finally he will disappear. You, the fortunate one, keep on observing the restless thoughts arising and passing away at great speed. You will smile at yourself. Be ever energetic and vigilant. Do not be disheartened about Mara nature, or have any regret. You need to make defilements fatigued out and to get back to your meditation with added strength.

Never should you accept the arising of frivolous thoughts as natural. Do not structure your meditation according to a time table. When the stray thoughts arise see it. Get back to meditation with the knowledge that “all compounded things are changing”. You, the fortunate one, must be clever to recognize the arising of the five hindrances and change your meditation suitably. If you do not know how to deal with such situations, you will feel frustrated, which is a great pity. When you see attachment, desire, anger, resentment arising in your mind, you are in mind-object contemplation (dhamānupassana) or you have pleasant or unpleasant feelings which you must recognize and let go. Then you are in feeling contemplation (vedanānupassana). But generally without seeing the reality of the arisen thoughts, if you get frustrated or enjoy them, then you miss the great opportunity to do vipassana. These stray thoughts arise not for you to become victimized by them, but for you to see and understand with wisdom and letting them go.

The Bhikkhu writing these notes, got wisdom by comprehending and understanding the nature of thought. The acute greed and hate that arose, were so useful to comprehend the nature of the thoughts. The thoughts of Mara must not be seen as me and mine, but be driven away towards Mara himself, who is the creator. It was so cleverly dispelled, that finally it became the

greed and hatred of Mara himself. It was so strong that Mara learnt a bitter lesson from the Bhikkhu. He is now frightened. It was because his thoughts were recognized as his and not mine and it went back to him. It is not a case of retaliation, but a case of rejection. If you respond with anger or attachment, Mara would win and be so pleased. "Mara thought" must be seen and comprehended as his and rejected. Then Mara is lost and very much perturbed.

Before Meditation – Part 4

Evil thoughts must be suppressed. See evil non-human beings as impermanent

An old couple who came to see the Bhikkhu said that due to their ignorance in youth they aborted their baby, who they thought was not wanted. But now they are continuously remembering this with deep regret.

The Bhikkhu replied that, if you remember this continuously, then it is very dangerous, because you may remember it at the moment of death. What you have to do is to have confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and go in refuge and keep the five precepts. So you may have a chance to forget the unwholesome deed by immersing yourself in wholesome deeds.

But, they said, however much they tried, they can never forget it. In that case you should do very strong wholesome deeds. You both go to a children's hospital and see some terminal patients and select some of the sick children and give necessary medicine and spend time and money to save their lives. After the children have recovered make use of the strong wholesome deed and remember it to forget the incident of abortion.

Intention is what makes Karma. You must be clever to forget past unwholesome Karma by a strong intention to do good Karma. Having done such good Karma, if you still recall the same memory of the abortion, it means that you are stupid and not clever. You should have the skill to rise up above the misdeeds by resorting to powerful good deeds. This is to show you that consciousness arises according to the intention.

There are some good people, who regret their past actions. Such thinking only makes more unwholesome thought. So you need to do more and more good to forget the unwholesome deeds of the past. Of course, there are some severe Karma (anantariya) that cannot be suppressed by whatever good you do. Whatever bad evil has been done, knowingly or unknowingly, it is useless to be regretful of what has happened in the past. You should live righteously in the present.

When you begin meditation, you find it difficult to concentrate, because the past incidents held in memory flow obstructing meditation. You, the fortunate one, if you are pure in sila, that is: if you have restraint of the senses, if you have shame and fear to do wrong, it means that you are fearful of hell rebirth and then your meditation will be successful. It is the fearfulness of samsara that you should see and make an effort to escape from samsara. If you are born in hell, what suffering, what a pity, what escape?

Remember the suffering in hell and try to focus the unwieldy, restless mind. Remember your past births when you were born as a bull, a cow or pig and others killed you and ate your flesh. Or you were born as a hungry ghost, and went about naked starving and hungry, the body was rotten and with oozing wounds, bound by craving for house and property or born as stone ghost as gnome, as spirit, non-human being, etc. That was

our life before for you and others. Try to recall the life you led in samsara, in hell, the fire and the molten lava, red hot coals, how you were burnt. Do not be shy to recall the past. If you are shy, the word is ego and selfhood (sakkāya ditthi). It is the right word. See this with wisdom. If someone has their personality view, ego-conceit, remember that his lease signed with Māra is not over yet. The hell lease is not just five years or ninety nine years, it extends to eons. The lessor is Māra and the lessee is you. In other words lessor Māra is your own craving and attachment and the personality complex is the lessee.

If a person is unaware of hell suffering, it is questionable whether he wants to escape from hell. Remember that hell-beings, animals, ghosts, demons were previously human beings. Whenever you see an animal try to see it as a human being previously, who misconducted and lived an evil life. If you see a ghost, you should see it as a form of a miserly human being.

These are small tricks for you to remember as aids to your meditation. These are tricks and devices to fool Māra. When you enjoy the bliss of Samādhi, Māra is covering the four hells with a white cloth to deceive you and he shows you non-human beings to mislead you. So if you see such sights in meditation, see the impermanence and watch it disappear. Do not enjoy seeing such sights. Some meditators want to see such sights in Samādhi and they lose the way to Nibbāna.

The sights of non-human beings, when you are in Samādhi, are mostly dead relations. Even though you cannot recognize them, they can recognize you. They are those unfortunate beings in sub-human realms who have no care for good or merit. They do not want you to develop meditation, and escape from the four hells. What the non-human beings want is for you to join them

in hell. They do not want you to go to heaven and leave them behind. Therefore, see these non-human visions as Māra and be clever to let them go as impermanent. If not, they will instigate different forms of hell-beings to capture your attention. This is the work of evil sub-humans who have no idea of Dhamma. If you are pure in virtue, keeping precepts, you can be sure that no non-human can ever hurt you. But your virtue must be free from greed, conceit and pride. Such a person whose virtue is great is essentially humble, courteous and polite.

Before Meditation - Part 5

The day you see samsara as an ocean of tears

When speaking of Samādhi, what becomes always evident is the strength of virtue. The four hells are created solely because of the weakness of virtue. Therefore, you the noble one, before sitting in meditation contemplate on the four hells and your virtue as a preliminary object of meditation.

In this universe of living beings, human, divine or Brahma, before anyone can attain Arahant hood by the realization of the Four Noble Truths, while in a high state of Samādhi, even without one's knowledge, acquires the wisdom of knowing one's previous lives in samsara ("Pubbe Nivāsa Nāna"). His memory becomes so sharp, he becomes aware of his previous lives. He recalls how in previous lives: he lived as an animal, as a bull or pig or goat or cock; how people killed him and ate his flesh and how his head was cut off; and how he suffered state punishment when born as a human being with his hands and neck being cut off; or he was killed by accident and the body crushed to smithereens; and how in war he fought and they killed each other in fierce battle.

This knowledge proves beyond doubt that samsara is a veritable ocean of tears, an ocean of blood. This frightful story you understand when you see your previous births. Then only the Seven Enlightenment Factors arise in your mind with compelling force. Thus arises mindfulness, investigating the law, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration and equanimity. When such a person realizes the fearfulness of samsara, he applies tremendous effort to reach the end of samsara. But he does not realise that he has acquired knowledge of previous lives, he even did not expect such knowledge. He never knew before such a situation. The only focus of the moment of realization is the ending of samsara. May the last breath be over with no attachment or resentment but in perfect equanimity. Mindfulness and memory are so well focused, and obviously clear and self-evident in his observation.

At this point he had got two options, either the ending of samsara or death. 90% of your longing for life is gone now. But there appears to be some attachment somewhere. There is a subtle thread binding him to samsara. But he is quite sure, that at the moment of death due to lack of food or some accident or some other reason, he will put an end to samsara even one second before death. This conviction comes due to mindfulness and investigation of the law of the Enlightenment Factors.

The great effort of iron will arises and cuts off the strand of attachment left. He contemplates again and again that there is no permanent happiness anywhere in the universe even in divine abodes. Then he realizes that in the human world all those illustrious personalities, kings and the rich and powerful rulers and artists, etc. in the world around and those relatives and others, all become afflicted with old age, sickness and die utterly helpless. The whole episode becomes alive with his own suffering in previous lives and he loses his love for

life, even as much as of a needle point and sees with wisdom and mindfulness, the nature of the world of suffering. Even if a needle point of craving is persisting, there will be grasping for life. He sees his own mind liberated from all craving, not even an infinitesimal amount of craving is there. It is his own experience and observation.

He contemplates on the powerful divine beings. How these beautiful Gods and Brahmas live for many thousands of years and finally come to the same end. He sees with wisdom their unthinkable suffering and lamentation when death is near. The divine dresses and shawls become dirty and the golden body is wet with perspiration. The beautiful gem studded crown loses its lustre and fades away. Having enjoyed sensual pleasure for so long, there is nothing left now and they fall into hells of suffering after death. The shocking experience makes him disillusioned of worldly pleasures. He considers the great powerful God Sakra, the King and his wife Goddess Sujampati, after enjoying limitless pleasures, they come to utter frustration in impermanence and death. He sees the great Sakra and his retinue falling into the four hells. Is there even a needle point of craving left for the divine life? If there is even a needle point of craving for the exquisite divine pleasures, then there is bound to be grasping for samsara.

These visions are perceived effortlessly in his powerful samādhi mind. The mindfulness and effort taken to meditate raises the enlightenment factor of investigation. There is no other worldly reckoning, the object of meditation is Nibbāna.

Having no more desire for even the exquisite heavenly pleasure, craving for samsara existence comes to an end. They are causality conditioned and operate naturally. Even so, he contemplates on the highest Brahma realms. He sees the

Brahmas seated cross-legged in the Brahma realms enjoying Jhānic serenity. These are the Brahmas having Magga and Phala consciousness. Their bodies are hardly visible, so subtle, misty, airy bodies. There is no gross earth element in them. The body is there but hidden. Some Brahmas believe that Jhānic serenity is permanent and it is the end of samsara. The Bhikkhu seeing their wrong view (*avijjā*), reposing in calm tranquility for eons, notices the delay in ignorance, the not knowing impermanence and non-self they are still in the round of samsara.

Finally he sees Maha Brahma, the Great Brahma. Even though he is enjoying the highest bliss in the universe, still living in ignorance and wrong view. If ever there is wrong view, there lies pain and suffering. Even the Maha Brahma has no escape from the four hells. This wisdom dawns on the Bhikkhu and there is no more craving in him for even the highest pleasure of Maha Brahma. He contemplates again and again to see if there is any more lingering craving of a subtle nature. The mind of the Bhikkhu cannot be captured by anything in the universe. Conviction through wisdom sees the nature of human, divine and Brahma realms and rests on *Bhava nirodha – Nibbāna*. Through the night the Bhikkhu has no worldly concern, in short *me, I, Mine*, have ceased to exist. There is no other Dhamma except impermanence. Either *Nibbāna* or death is where the mind of the Bhikkhu is oscillating willing to die and seek *nibbāna*, becomes the prerogative and this makes *Māra* frightened. *Māra* cannot influence the Bhikkhu in *Nibbāna* as in death. The Bhikkhu is dealing with the five aggregates of clinging and has become the Judge and Jury of his conviction. One cannot pretend and expect to defeat *Māra*. Then one knows that one is trying to deceive *Māra*. This is the cause, that many fail, at the final moment of the battle with *Māra*. One has to be extremely honest. The Bhikkhu writing this note and you will have to face this reality of facing death or *Nibbāna*.

In the final operation of the battle, one has to face either death or Nibbāna. It is in this final determination that you become a winner.

The Bhikkhu did not realise that what were developing were the 37 requisites of Enlightenment (Bodhipakkhiya dhamma). If the objective of Nibbāna is strong and honest, these 37 factors lead you towards liberation from fearful, painful, unbearable samsara.

Before Meditation – Part 6

Fearfulness of samsara is all that you should see

Along the Path, whatever insights you get is not unknowingly. Every insight arises with wisdom oriented vision. These visions arise in deep Samādhi and wise comprehension. A person gets these visions only once in a life time. The Bhikkhu understands the vision with full comprehension. Ever afterwards the vision remains indelible in memory and can be recalled. It has become a part of life. In the operational battle for Nibbāna, the Bhikkhu develops the perception of impermanence in the three realms of sensual, material and non-material realms and along with it the four foundations of mindfulness.

When contemplating again and again the life of human, divine and Brahma realms, one realizes the impurities of body, of death, of the changing nature of body in old age, sickness and death. The human body of man and woman are seen internally with wise reflection. Not only human but also divine and Brahma body is seen with the skeletal sign. The skeleton disappears as dust, fire, wind and the impermanence is seen by vipassana insight that is well developed. Each and every body that becomes an object of reflection is seen through and

the Bhikkhu has no more sensual desire. Just as the TV show is built up by successive physical objects arising one after another in speed and gives the illusion of a person performing, one sees the arising and passing away of materiality of the body. Māra, that is the five aggregates is seen in its reality making use of the four foundations of mindfulness, body, feeling, thought and objects of thought. It was covered and hidden by the shawl of craving. The absolute reality is now seen in transparency in order to let go of the craving. In this manner, craving for the five aggregates disappears.

It is amazing how by making use of the four foundations of mindfulness, you see the impermanence of material body. You, the fortunate one, will be seeing the real truth of cessation of rebirth and the seven factors of enlightenment will prove to be seven towers of strength arising in sequence as your help to realise cause and effect in your own mind. It is not your concern to know or see these at that moment, because there is nothing permanent to think about. If you are attached to the seven permanent enlightenment factors, they become a hindrance. See these as impermanent and passing away, even though they help you in the right way. Even the 7 enlightenment factors will surely become Māra, why? You, the fortunate one is now trying to understand Dhamma – the pure nature. There are no two Dhammas, there is no past or present, nothing deep or shallow. Dhamma is one and only, that is impermanence. Then the 7 factors of enlightenment also fall into the same category of impermanence, why? Because they are also Dhamma. If you can understand the afore mentioned, you will effortlessly experience them. That is the Dhamma that can be experienced. The most marvelous experience is the impermanence of the aggregates; and the four foundations of mindfulness; and the 7 enlightenment factors. In the process the Four Noble Truths are evident and experienced.

In the Bhikkhu, the 4 foundations of mindfulness and the 7 enlightenment factors develop as the five aggregates of clinging. To the Bhikkhu while reminiscing, it became clear that the world is but the five aggregates of clinging and that there is no world apart from the five aggregates.

This experience could be of anybody, it is the Path to Nibbāna. In previous chapters the Bhikkhu described the 4 fearful hells, so one is motivated to follow the Path. One who does not have fear for the hells will never follow the Path. He will never escape from samsara. It is the one who is fearful of hell, who builds up strong virtue (sila). Such a person is strong in Samādhi. One who is strong in Samādhi is the one who develops wisdom (Pañña).

Before Meditation – Part 7

Think also before meditation. Is there anyone in the world who did not suffer in the four hells?

In the present day world, the fear for hells is hidden. Whoever dies is born in heaven, or as a human being. This is the deep rooted idea of society. The meaning of the Dhamma of cause and effect is diluted and weakened. They happily dream by day and night, seeing the white clad dead relation!!

There is a sign board fixed in front of the funeral house “May he attain Nibbāna”. There are banners that wish Nibbāna. So easy is Nibbāna!! Attaining Nibbāna is easy, simple. Most of them, when their dear relation dies, perform the death ceremony “Pansakula” or the 7th day alms giving and believe that a wonderful rebirth is secured for the relation. This happens mostly because they have the funeral orations, speaking of the great loving personality, his goodness, eulogizing him at great length. If they see the dead dressed in white then they believe that the dead person is in a good rebirth. On one hand it is a dream, on the other hand it is a ghost white clad, a hell being, asking for merit “Paradatta-upajivi”. They have not escaped

hell. What is there to be happy about? If one is satisfied with such a ghostly realm, he is one who cannot get a better rebirth than of a ghost. Because of this, you the fortunate one, before meditation do understand the pain and suffering of hell. Only such a person can follow the Path. Afore mentioned description of hell, heaven and Brahma realms are there. It is essential for meditators to know the conditions in the universe. Only such a person will find an escape.

The second important thing is to know about personality view “sakkāya ditthi”. Without knowing the meaning of this, there is no use meditating. The shortest rendering of this is, the vice like grip of selfhood, me, I and mine. It is greed, pride and conceit of self that you have been carrying throughout samsara.

Once the Bhikkhu mentioned to a lady, “You and I have been enjoying the pleasures of heaven in one long samsaric journey”. She said at once, “Ven. Sir, do you think that I have ever been in heaven”. The Bhikkhu said, “It is true according to the Buddha Dhamma”. Then she was so happy beaming with smiles. Again the Bhikkhu said, “You and I have been born in hell and as animals, hungry ghosts and demons for eons in samsara”. Then she was extremely frustrated and said that she was never born in hell. See, she was first so happy and second time was very upset. In both cases her personality view was clearly seen.

There are some who are very unhappy to hear us speaking about hell. This unhappiness is due to ego-conceit. The Bhikkhu writing these notes likes to speak mostly about life in hell. It is fear of four hells that gave the wisdom to write these notes. The Bhikkhu says with pride that he knows every inch of the four hells from his previous lives. You, the fortunate one, if you do not know the Dhamma how can you ever realise the Dhamma?

You, the fortunate one, please become humble. Remember, if anyone says that he was never in hell, he is one in the deep abyss of ignorance. If you are able to give up this wrong thinking, it is the greatest good thought you conceived in this life time. Not knowing the Dhamma and meditating is the best breeding ground, the haven for the growth of personality view. Unless you are careful about this, in the name of meditation, what will develop is me, I and mine, the strong ego-conceit.

Meditation is not for grasping but for letting go, whatever you have you let go. For this you need to humble yourself. You should know this before embarking on meditation. What you take as me and I is materiality, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness. Therefore meditation must constantly be in self-analysis. Does my desire for the above grow more and more or less and less with meditation?

Then it is of utmost importance to know the theory of causality “*paticca samuppāda*”. The exalted Buddha with his clairvoyant vision has proclaimed that the knowledge of causality is a means to attain Nibbāna. Starting with wrong view due to causes and effects, birth, old age, sickness and death take place, along the samsaric journey. This becomes evident to the meditator.

First of all you should know the cause for the arising of wrong view. The Buddha proclaims that wrong view arises due to the five hindrances. The cause for the arising of the five hindrances is the commitment of unwholesome Kamma through, thought, speech and action. The cause for all this is unwise attention “*ayoniso-manasikara*”.

To avoid unwise attention to the things of the world, you need to associate with noble friends in the Dhamma. Listen to the pure Dhamma. The twelve links of causality are equally important and must be comprehended thoroughly because one factor

depends on another. So we cannot isolate one or two factors and interpret according to our need. The beginning, middle and the end must be seen in its full meaning. It is useless attempting any Dhamma practice, without knowing the first cause....wrong view. Also any meditation without causality does not lead you to Nibbāna. What we focus in meditation is Nibbāna. That is the extinction of wrong view. What is suffering and what is the cause of suffering is the content of Paticca Samuppada Dhamma (Dependent Origination).

There is something very important here, that is clinging, longing, grasping (upādāna). It is this upādāna that is the cause for rebirth. This is very important for all those who meditate or do not meditate. Because, even though you meditate or do meritorious actions, most of the time what increases is desire, pride and conceit of self. To prevent this unwholesome arising, one needs to study the process of extinction of the various factors of causality in sequence. It must be a full-time awareness during daily living. Even when you do rituals such as offering flowers and venerating the Buddha, do recite the paticca samuppada meaningfully. For a meditator this knowledge is more important than offering flowers, incense, etc. Why? Because before offering, one must know why you pay homage, what are the qualities of the Triple Gem that deserve venerating. If you get the full meaning it is best. But please do the ritual even if you do not know. It will never be a waste.

Before Meditation - Part 8

Metta meditation is also a giving up

It can be seen that most of the meditators do not give sufficient attention to grasping (upādāna). To understand the gravity of grasping, you, the fortunate one must look at your life critically, intensely.

Think of the full moon day. How many lakhs of people observe Sil on that day in the temples? Of them, how many can stay overnight in retreat. By 4 PM, already grasping for home is started. You, the fortunate one, can you leave your home for even one day? Can you escape from friends, relations, home and business and go on pilgrimage for one week or take a meditation retreat? If the answer is no, think if you were to die suddenly, whether can you ever give up the grasping. This is what rebirth is planning for you.

Today even grandparents cannot leave home even for a couple of days. They think of home, the grandchildren, grasping comes from memory. Therefore do see the nature of grasping and as far as possible go to those teachers who speak of the impeccable virtues of the Buddha. Go searching for such monks.

Children and grandchildren please do support parents and grandparents to leave the house in retreat to practice and listen to the Dhamma. Get them used to leaving home for a week or so. Of course if you are not afflicted to the fivefold grasping for sense pleasures, you may stay at home and meditate. It may be more convenient.

Your grasping should be always directed towards the eightfold Path. The right effort (*sammā vāyāma*) “grasping” at the 12 links of causality has been already mentioned. But remember that all other Dhamma practices are equally important. See the cause of suffering and the extinction of suffering in terms of causality. Then the concept “I” was living before; “I” am living now; “I” will live in the future; will disappear. Then only the personality view will disappear. Personality view develops when you believe there is a permanent unchanging Me, Self, Person is there. You must escape from this false view. That is why the Buddha has said that such a person has not escaped from the four hells, and is not pure in virtue. Before, meditation these facts must be fully comprehended. Wrong thinking must be corrected first.

Because of wrong view arises volition (*Kamma*); because of volition arises consciousness (*Viññāna*); because of consciousness arises mind and body (*nāma rūpa*); because of mind and body arises six sense bases (*salayatana*). The concept of Me, I and the personality complex arise in this order of consequence. It is necessary to target before firing!! If not you will only increase your enemy. Therefore you should contemplate and focus on the cause of suffering and the extinction of suffering. This is a continuous meditation through daily living.

The next thing is before meditation, you, the fortunate one, be a good human being. This note is for lay people. You must be

one who respects parents and relations, one who respects the ordained community and performing social obligations, duties, that is the way you pay back the luxuries you enjoy. You, the fortunate one, before leaving the world consider whether you can live according to the code of conduct written below.

Imagine you are travelling to Kataragama from Colombo and the bus is full. At Moratuwa a woman carrying an infant gets in, or an old woman gets in. Can you give them the seat without considering the long distance yet to go? If you cannot give up your seat, how can you ever think of giving up the world. You have bought a ticket to sit in comfort for a few hours. Before meditation, try to sacrifice small things like that as a habit. If you cannot give up your good feeling for a comfortable seat, how can you ever give up feelings from your mind and body? Without practicing the least Metta meditation of this sort how can you proceed on the Path?

Metta meditation is a form of giving up. Giving up what? Anger, resentment, fear, jealousy, self-pity and so on. You need to give up these and also develop compassion for others. If so, giving up your seat is simple. If not, in the guise of Metta what you are developing is ego-conceit – personality view (sakkāya ditthi).

Before Meditation - Part 9

Without an object of meditation, what meditation?

If you live 22 hours of the day with the concept of a permanent “I, me” and 2 hours of the day with the impermanence of “I, me” during meditation, how can you balance the two?

If you put 22 hours on one side of the scale and two hours on the other side you imagine the condition.

Therefore all those who like to engage in Vipassana meditation, must make every moment of the day, contact with every object, or every activity, an object of meditation. You can contemplate on the impermanence of food while in the toilet. See the impermanence of the body in spite of the great care you take to clean and perfume it. While in bed recall the work of the day that has gone to impermanence. In whatever posture through the day, see the impermanence of the eye “anicca, anicca....” Then you can see the eye apart from sight. See the eye in isolation. Then you realise that both eye and sight (materiality) are two separate things that do not belong. Ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are similar. They do not belong. Seeing this constantly is possible. You do not need to sit in a meditation posture.

While seated in the bus if you catch glimpses of things outside, speedily, then you can notice impermanence. If you want to succeed in meditation every experience during the day must become an object of meditation.

I will give an example to you the fortunate one. Once the Bhikkhu was walking along the main road, there was an old woman in the pavement. There was a push cart nearby and a dog. She was bending in two and shouting "my god" (budu ammo) and trying to push in the intestine that has protruded from the anus. It was about 6 inches long and a coiled fleshy mass. It is a terminal disease of piles. This incident took place in the open in a public place. The old woman unaware of the surroundings because of the suffering, she had no idea that there are people watching. There were hundreds walking up and down, but no one ever looked at her. It was such despicable, fearful sight but as a lay person the Bhikkhu was looking closely while passing and also mindfully. I saw even as a lay person with the four foundations of mindfulness, body, feeling, thought and mind objects saw the repulsive nature and death awareness. Saw the miserable results of volitional activities in terms of Kamma.

If you cannot observe and contemplate on such a worldly sight, how can you ever be successful in meditation. It is what you underwent in past samsara. It is the destiny for the future. Be clever to see others' misery as your own. Do not evade what you see or hear or the thoughts that arise. See them and take note of them.

You, the fortunate one, in this way, throughout the day try to observe sights, sounds, etc. and all activities. If you do so, you may be able to balance out signs of impermanence and permanence as mentioned before. If you practice this, then during seated meditation you will be able to tackle the

five hindrances that arise as stray thoughts, because you will remember with the practice that materiality that confronts you is impermanent, it is not an experience but a help along the path.

Now what you must contemplate on, is the meaning of the 10 defilements. Specially those wearing white and observing five or eight precepts are prone to a weakness. They are honest about keeping precepts and the 7 defilements covered by precepts – 3 bodily defilements, and 4 verbal defilements. But you the fortunate one is weak about the mental actions of greed, hatred and ignorance. They are disregarded. The great Buddha says that the three mental actions are the worst. You, the fortunate one may not be killing, stealing. But due to some small incident greed, hatred and ignorance can crop up immediately. This is the biggest obstacle to meditation. Greed, hatred and ignorance arise because of attachment to self. It is the severe ego and personality complex that makes it acute. It can become extremely bad, severe and dangerous. That is why the Buddha says that mind creates the worst evil – mind is foremost.

In society today, we see that over small incidents, even dhamma discussions, can raise evil mental volition and they even go to take revenge from monks who advice according to the Dhamma. This is the danger in living ignoring the 10 defilements.

Before Meditation - Final Part

Are you not getting angry with your own ignorance?

A certain lay woman said to the Bhikkhu, I repeat the qualities of the Buddha....iti pi so bhagava... hundred times every day. So far I have counted up to 50,000.

It is very good said the Bhikkhu. You are remembering the exalted qualities of the Buddha. If someone remembers the qualities of the Buddha even for a moment, it will be for his own good.

But while you recollect these qualities, you should be clever to go forward, because there is the danger of counting the number of times, which can turn to desire and attachment. Therefore, you should think of the meaning of the chant. How did the Buddha acquire all those qualities? Because, Buddha eradicated the roots of evil, greed, hatred and ignorance with wisdom.

Therefore it is more meaningful if you while doing the chant, think every morning "Today may I never raise a thought of greed or anger or ignorance". If you do this with great effort, that will be the greatest puja for the Buddha. Such veneration, if

you do lakhs of times, you may defeat the thought of greed and develop non-greed. The mere chanting without meaning and without practice, there is not much result. If we raise thoughts of greed, hatred and ignorance the day long, you are only becoming foolish at the end of the day. Therefore, go on the Dhamma way meaningfully. Remember that greed, hatred and ignorance are enemies to happiness and obstacles to meditation. This you must know before doing meditation.

At this point one incident is remembered. Once an elderly lay man in attendance on the Bhikkhu asked, “ Ven. Sir, I always help monks to get into a bus. I help in bringing medicine. Often I come to the road side with monks and signal to stop a vehicle. When they don’t stop, I get angry. Sometimes the devotees don’t bring alms at the right time and I get angry and scold them. I do this for the sake of monks. Does my anger make bad Kamma for me”?

This good gentleman actually believes that getting angry for the sake of monks is not bad Kamma. It is good Kamma to support monks in this way. See the magnitude of ignorance. The Bhikkhu said, “For the sake of monks or even for the sake of the Buddha, if you raise anger, it is certainly bad Kamma”.

This gentleman is very fond of monks and is ever doing meditation on the virtues of the Buddha. This incident is mentioned as a warning. Be careful, greed, hatred and ignorance are bosom pals of ego-conceit (*sakkāya ditthi*).

So, you the fortunate one, on account of temple, hermitage, merit making, etc. do not raise thoughts of greed, hatred and ignorance. They are unwholesome. You are only angry with your own ignorance. If anger and ignorance is yours the results also will be yours.

If you the fortunate one, are able to practice according to the aforesaid, you can develop concentration Samādhi without a hindrance. Along with that, listening to dhamma and discussing the Path to deliverance with noble friends, it is possible for you to attain Nibbāna. You the fortunate one make the right effort.

Special Letters

The following letters are special chapters on special conditions.

The hurtful night

Today is 1st of January. The end of a year and the beginning of another year. It means that our life span has reduced by one year and we are nearer death by one year. Whatever way you see, there is nothing to be happy about.

But if you the fortunate one, spent your last year mindfully, treading on the Dhamma way and you take a determination to do even better on the Dhamma way, then there is cause for enjoyment. Also if you slacked in virtue and generosity and meditation and take a determination to progress on the Path, in the coming year, then also it is a cause for enjoyment.

In the New Year, you the fortunate one, if you take a determination that in the coming year I will take maximum effort to escape from the four hells, it will be the greatest hope and ambition for you for the New Year.

The great Buddha says that the best legacy you can bestow on another is to show the Path of escape from the four hells. This

is what the ordained community can bestow on lay people, parents can bestow on children, teacher on students, one person on another. Beginning the New Year with offering a sheaf of betel, sweet meats, cake, good wishes and exchanging these with relatives, masters, monks, etc. to show loyalty and love, is so primitive and primary compared to the real show of affection that the Buddha advocated. It is true when you wish a happy New Year there is a certain amount of Metta and good human emotion. But alongside this truth, there lies hidden ignorance and wrong view just as much.

Wrong view is the opposite of right view, not seeing right as right and not seeing wrong as wrong. Seeing pain as pleasure, pleasure as pain, wishing a Happy New Year, is wishing that you are closer to death by one year, closer to birth, old age, sickness and death by one year. If instead you wish, may you escape from four hells in the New Year, it is a positive wish, may you escape from birth, old age, sickness and death. But if you the fortunate one, is shy to make such a wish, you give up the meaningful and hold on to the meaningless. You just say blessings of the Triple Gem, or Buddha blessings. But you are shy to echo the admonition of the Buddha. Taking refuge in the Triple Gem means truthfully following the Buddha's admonition. You the fortunate one, going for refuge in the Triple Gem means you have unshakable faith ("acala saddhā") and have committed yourself to keep the five precepts. You see the impermanence of the five aggregates of clinging. You hear these constantly from the ordained community, but your life is spent in such weaknesses, contrary to the Dhamma you profess. While there is endless pleasure following the Path, you go for long suffering, for short pleasure of the senses. You dilute the Dhamma that was preached by the greatest teacher that ever walked the earth. It is a pity that you go for transitory, foreign, alien pleasures that come through sense doors. You should

think there is no use of teachers who show the Path of transitory pleasure, let me hear the Dhamma that the Buddha shows. The weaknesses of teachers should be objects of reflection and objects of meditation.

We should strive to see that the world is prone to attachment and resentment. The society of humans is getting more complex and more deceptive, distorted and misrepresented. This must be seen as natural Dhamma in the nature that the Buddha saw. You will never see impermanence in the world given to attachment and resentment. It means you never see Dhamma. Those that are oscillating between attachment and resentment give up the Dhamma and go in search of short pleasure of the senses. This is the way the entire society has become complex and distorted. Endless craving, endless anger and endless expectations are what the world has become.

The causes arise in the minds of people. These causes are invisible but the results are visible. The conventional world is made up of disintegration, breaking down, dispersing, etc. The small world of mind and body shows cause and effect. Therefore, you the fortunate one come and enter the Path of Dhamma. Be disciplined to traverse the Path, then your world will change. You will be safe in the world of Dhamma. You will be saved from the burning world. All these are of your own making, your own responsibility. The disintegrating world, the dispersing, breaking down world due to natural impermanence is the creation of the small world of mind and body. When the very meaning is impermanence, where can you find permanence? You will never get it how much you search. You and I have traversed in a useless samsara, is the end of the story.

You, the fortunate one, you decide by yourself how much further away from the Dhamma you are. Try to make the

distance short. Take a determination and your confidence, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom must develop equally, uniformly. The uniform development is not seen in most people in society. Life is not lived in a way to develop confidence, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. The development of these will be conducive to vipassana (“Insight”). You should structure your life so the ego-conceit becomes less and less. With the dawn of the New Year, give top priority for Dhamma. Then what a peaceful New Year it will be. May it be a year of meaningful refuge in the Triple Gem. Are you not the one who will be peaceful in doing so? The one going towards escape from all suffering. If not, the direction you will go will be different.

I am writing below:

When you remember 1st of January, then at once 31st December night will be remembered. This night the Bhikkhu was residing in a forest hermitage close to the main city. By 12 midnight the sound of crackers was so much...you may have also heard. The echo and reverberation is the sound of “wrong view”. This sound has become louder and louder over the last 25 years. It did not become less every year. This is the worldly Dhamma, the nature. When man gets weaker in the Dhamma then what is not important becomes important. The silence of virtue, concentration and wisdom is undermined by loud sound. In the absence of virtue and concentration, there is no talk of wisdom. But the absolute silence of the world can be experienced in the midst of sound. The Bhikkhu, while reclining in bed experienced the absolute silence of the world on 31st night. When the outside world becomes louder the inner silence becomes more. The loud sound of wrong view and the silence of the right view become so clear, so meaningful. Then you do not see pain and suffering but you see the liberation from danger and peace of

freedom. There is a fantastic dhamma before you, but the peace and silence of virtue, concentration and wisdom are being destroyed by the sound of crackers.

You the fortunate one, think of the Happy New Year. How much crackers you burn? Is there a Happy New Year as a result of crackers? Day by day, anger, hatred, evil kamma and lack of virtue are rising in society at great speed. A student does not know the teacher. Teacher does not know the student. Parents do not know the children. Rulers do not know the truth of fair play for the people. Society is going towards destruction. All the crackers that burnt did not make the New Year any better. How can the New Year become better when the human mind is full of evil? So much animal slaughter and pain and suffering they give. When you light crackers do you wish that the animal slaughter will end? The visual world you see is made of houses, trees, people, etc. You are not guilty, it is true. But without your knowledge how many non-human beings are hurt. Ghost and gnomes and animals suffer intensely with the sound of crackers and they raise so much hatred and fear that is the New Year gift that the world gets. Divine beings living on trees and land are so much disturbed by the sound of crackers. Anger and hatred are also formed in the minds of these beings. This hatred is the inauspicious gift you get as the New Year dawns. Animals run shivering and in them are also raised fear and hatred. Millions of insects die, their bodies burn and burst, the eggs in the birds' nests are shaken and birds fly away only to be devoured by other animals. So the New Year dawns with so much anger, fear and hatred in the environment. This inhuman infliction of suffering on innocent lives is never known because of the wrong view of human beings. You may think with Mara and wonder...we had no intention to kill or hurt by lighting crackers. This may be true. But pain, suffering and anger of millions of non-humans are not a blessing as of Pirith chanting. Their crying and wailing

is carried away in the atmosphere. Those that die in agony are born again as worse living beings that curse humanity and take revenge. You, the fortunate one, must understand that human beings are going towards the direction of anger and hatred in a confused state of mind. The above mentioned is only one cause. Now can you understand that ignorance is taking you towards pain and destruction?

When you hear the drums in the temple, the toll of this bell, what a sense of peace and comfort the sound brings. Does the kind of destruction mentioned above give you the same peace and tranquility? May be a baby will be disturbed. You, the fortunate one, if you feel the need for sound puja, do ring the bell in the temple for the whole village to hear on the 31st midnight and have the drums beating in resonance. It is not a social convention, but you do not hurt anybody by such means. Even divine and human beings enjoy the music of the drums. Even animals like to hear the rhythm of drums and with the blessings of every one, the New Year will dawn. Even divine beings in high heaven will bless. Bless what? The virtue that you have understood the pain and suffering of crackers. So you give priority to virtue with the dawn of the New Year. It was the admonition of the Buddha to refrain from hurting living beings. When you are virtuous, you have the refuge of the Triple Gem. I give peace and comfort to animals by taking refuge in the Triple Gem. Your mind is in wholesome thinking. So the New Year dawns with the hope of escaping from the four hells. What a great difference it makes even through small kindnesses. If you cannot do such a small thing, what kind of samsara can you expect to go to?

This is the hallowed ground, which divine beings worship

You, the good and noble person, should not be fearful of the prediction of a disaster in 2012.

The Venerable Bhikkhu sent this article in the end of 2011. By this time believing in the calendar of “Maya Clan” of the ancient, a fear and doubt and views of the impending disaster in 2012 was instilled in the minds of the people. The Bhikkhu got this message by chance, wrote this article combining the Dhamma and the protection of the Triple Gem. Even though a few years have gone by since, you can recall the impending disaster that was predicted and make your own opinion of facts and figures according to Dhamma.

A visiting monk who met the Bhikkhu informed him of the prediction and of what people think and say. The Bhikkhu who had no idea of the various opinions simply listened with interest. That episode was over. A certain Bhikkhu while in deep Samadhi meditation in the night, heard clearly the national anthem of Sri Lanka “apa sri....lanka, namo/// matha”. The entire anthem was sung both in male and female voices. At once it occurred to the Bhikkhu that they were divine voices.

It was about 1 a.m. in the night. The song was heard fully. The entire forest was dark and in pin drop silence. The thought of the Bhikkhu a moment ago in 2012 was responded to by the singing of the national anthem by divine beings.

Along with the singing, there was heavenly music accompanying. The Bhikkhu is keeping these notes to show you how fortunate you are to be born in Sri Lanka.

Even divine people bless the noble people in this Buddhist land, "May Mother Lanka be blessed and protected". You, the fortunate one, should know the heavenly beings who are not enlightened, living in heavenly abodes. In the "Payasi" sutra it is mentioned that they are unable to stand the smell of human beings and stay 100 yojanas away from the human world. Here what is meant is not the smell of the physical body, but the smell of the unvirtuous and the misconducting, the smell of the greedy, but if they are virtuous and in concentrated Samadhi, such clean virtuous people they come near and bless. They have made their divine sounds so clear as if through radio. This is the wonder and supernatural reaction resulting from virtuous living of the human being. Vipassana meditation has made it possible to communicate with the divine world as a great legacy.

You should be inspired while reading, hearing and seeing this amazing episode. You should develop Saddha – confidence in the Triple Gem. You are heir to this boon. Divine beings are those who were previously human beings, who practiced virtuous living, were generous and pure in conduct. Divine abodes are the temporary abodes of those who had given up the dirty environment and low human life of longing for house and property, husband, wife and children, greed and craving for status, pleasure, conceit and pride, etc. The divine beings

remember, though you have forgotten, how you suffered, seeking dollars, pounds and riyal. Divine beings know that their good and virtuous conduct as human beings was the cause for their super existence now. That is why they bless humans who are virtuous.

They also know that the Dhamma exists in pockets even now in this Island of Dhamma. Having born in this hallowed land, if you go in search of money and prestige and make yourself weak in Dhamma, they know it. They wish the Dhamma to flourish that is why they sing the National Anthem. May Sri Lanka be prosperous and be protected.

May this Island survive long years, not preserving rubbish of worldly living, but preserving the Dhamma and living according to the Dhamma. "May this Island survive even one more day" and they bless with joy. Divine beings know, once they die they need to return to the human world and the Buddha's dispensation must be protected. Also they know that the pure Dhamma will stay protected in this Island of Sri Lanka until the end of the Buddha's dispensation.

The Gods living in divine abodes say "Mother" to the Dhamma, because they became divine due to Dhamma, the "Mother". See how grateful they are to Dhamma. You, the Fortunate one, having had the rare opportunity to be born as human, do you ever spend one hour of the day seeking Dhamma. Do you give away even 10% of your income with the conviction of karma and effect, without undertones of greed. At least do you keep the five precepts. Never mind the world, do you ever have loving kindness for your husband, wife and neighbor? You the fortunate one do tap your heart and ask the question. If the answer is "No" please do remember that you are evil, not noble. Be humble, because you are ungrateful to the Dhamma

that gave you a human rebirth. You the fortunate one, even if you do not see divine beings, remember that they can see you. At least try to see in this way to lead a righteous life. Though we may deceive the world by our worldly standards, you cannot deceive the natural karmic law. Similarly we can deceive human beings but we cannot deceive divine beings living in the high heavens. We must remember that we have to face karmic consequences even though we may live a life of prosperity, misconducting and deceiving the world through our smile and outward show. If, after death we are born in the hell world, we need to appear before "yama" the king who is a heavenly being who knows about our misconduct in the human world. Even though in the human world we may escape punishment by bribe or other means, in the presence of King Yama you are a hell being. Why Oh Why do you abandon the Noble Dhamma, and enter hell for a temporary position or for at most a life of 80 years.

The Buddha points out that our life is so transitory and can come to an end with the last in-breath or out-breath. Death is for sure. But the world will go creating a fertile soil for karma formations. Nothing goes on for our satisfaction entirely. The world is transitory as well. The four great elements, solidity, fire, water and air can disrupt and create havoc. On account of taking the five aggregates of contact, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness as 'self, me and mine', the greed, the illusion of the diving beings, the human beings and the non-human beings can cause destruction. Nobody can prevent, not even divine beings. Disaster is the nature of life and living. Impermanence is what life is about. All living beings except those that have understood the nature by achieving Sainthood 'Magga Phala' by realization of the truth will suffer intensely. But those great divine beings who have realized the truth by 'magga-phala' are in a position to help others because they

are secure by their realization of the truth. This security they obtained by living the Dhamma. The Buddha proclaimed that even when the earth crumbles and disintegrates and disappears at the end of the aeon, these fortunate divine beings who have achieved sainthood are secure. They are the ones who sing "Namo Namo Mata-apa Sri Lanka" because they are secure having achieved sainthood. So you the fortunate ones should become secure by living the Dhamma as a human being. See how such holy divine beings utter a lion's roar with the idea that they are secure even in event of destruction of the planetary system. This hallowed Dhamma is found in Sri Lanka. But human beings are eternally in fear of impending disaster. Tsunami or Missile or earthquake and making bunkers to hide, perform ceremonies for blessings or pleading and praying to god. In other words we are weak having no confidence in the Triple Gem and weak in our conduct and generosity.

You the fortunate one if ever, fear arises what you should do is not make bunkers or resort to black magic or ask for blessings in prayer but to develop the necessary confidence, strong virtue and generosity. These are the 3 bunkers that must be built to secure yourself from all disaster. Even in the event of the destruction of the earth at the end of the aeon, these bunkers that the Buddha certifies are the most powerful security for you.

The last stage

Today is Wesak Full Moon day. There is a sound echoing that is 2500 years since the Enlightenment of the Buddha. The Bhikkhu is residing in a lonely hut far away from humanity and unaware of what is happening in the world. Today the Buddha realized the Four Noble Truths. Such a wondrous day is fit to inculcate the Dhamma in the lives of people. Dhamma is the Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination, Four Foundations of Mindfulness, Five Aggregates of Clinging, Seven Enlightenment Factors. The 37 requisites of Enlightenment that are conducive to ending of re-birth. If you live today in a way that develops these requisites then certainly you are taking refuge in the Buddha, trying to conquer craving and selfhood and conceit. Instead of this if you are concerned with erecting pandals and Wesak lanterns and giving free food, decorating and producing drama and dance then they fall into the category of peddling ware. Not that they can be eliminated because it makes you and others happy. If a man who in his life never entered the temple and observed precepts dies suddenly and remembers the beautiful pandal with all the flickering lights shining brightly and sees the image of the Buddha in his dying moment, may be the thought of faith and confidence can ensure a favourable rebirth. But these are the cheap peddlers of the Dhamma. Each of us is possessed of varying degrees

of development of faculties and therefore the world caters to different requirements. They must see with equanimity and without attachment or resentment and should be clever to see the world around as such always. The Buddha proclaims taking a handful of soil, "Monks which is more, the soil in my hand or the soil in the great earth? Monks those that die and get a happy rebirth are as little as the earth in my hand. Those that go to woeful states are as great as the soil in the earth". It is not for us to criticize the world but to see it in the light of the Buddha word. We should strive to become a grain of sand in the fistful of sand in the hand of the Buddha.

The world is ludicrous. When the ignorance of beings increases in the world, ludicrous episodes increase. It is because your mind works faster than all these, that you believe that more and more humorous feelings arise, that the world is complex, that the world is beautiful and that there is no end to this experience. Material form always appears as material form. It is because of attachment to material form that you project various values to material. Shall write below an episode that illustrates this point.

The Bhikkhu was living in a remote village and there was an old woman living in a small house. The Bhikkhu visited this place seven or eight times begging for alms. Every time, he sees the old woman walking from the room, holding on to the wall and sitting down with great difficulty. She may be 85 years old and is rather fat. Not clean. The daughter never gives a hand for her to sit. She herself comes holding on to the wall. In short the mother is now an unwanted person. At the very least those living in the house do not even offer the tray of food to be given to the monk, for her to touch in obeisance, before being offered to the monk. This woman finally dies in old age. The Bhikkhu with clairvoyant vision sees the rebirth of the woman

and sees the same features of the old woman gloating in air as a ghost. A difference was that the hair was plaited in two long strands just like a young girl. She is floating horizontally. It is her rebirth. She has all the faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. She also can contact the world through these faculties just as we do. She may have got this rebirth because of not having a good or bad object as a dying thought. She looked like a child woken from sleep. When a child awakes from a deep sleep she is not of a normal mind and often you sprinkle some water on her to awake her fully. This woman was never offered any merit on the 7th day from the day of the burial by any meritorious performance and died in confusion or in sleep. This condition can be observed in death by accident and death of children. For such people the 'pansakula' ceremony is of much use before burial and the 7th day Dhamma Sermon and alms giving to monks is also important. Such a merit may give her a sudden impetus to gain a better rebirth. The Bhikkhu witnessed this scene three days after her death. The Bhikkhu continued to share merit with the ghost. A few days after the funeral was over, the Bhikkhu again saw the woman born as a small girl. It means she was conceived in the womb of a woman. Now you can see why the world is ludicrous. This woman of 85, despised by all, dirty and ragged, with oil smeared and smelling, became a floating ghost and after receiving merit died and conceived in a human mother. This old woman due to good and evil done during her life time became a ghost and died and her consciousness found a mother's womb.

The mother after 28 days knows she has conceived. As soon as the good news is known she informs her husband and what does he do? Without any reserve he hugs and kisses her a fortunate child has come to us to pet and pamper a beautiful little baby you will give me! And from that day he makes much merit to invoke blessings on the unborn child. Baby suits are sewn;

pillows are made. The finest cotton material is being sought. The rocking cradle and toys are being brought. The delivery of the child will be in the best hospital and so on they dream of the future. For whom are they preparing? For the divine being who has descended to the womb. No! it is for the old ragged woman of 85 despised by all, who died a month ago. Then she never had any one to even to support her by holding her hand to offer a seat. She was so cornered and hopeless and desperate. Today they are collecting the finest silks and cradles and so on and looking for the best hospitals to welcome her. Is this not what the world is? Is not the world a joke? The magician called consciousness-("Vinnana") is creating such things making use of karmic volition and we get deceived by the various material bodies that come within our purview. Have you seen terminally ill patients in hospital, lying unconscious, with tubes in the nostrils and mouth, catheters in the urethra, being given saline and blood transfusions? The dying are lying hopelessly. Even the relatives are so tired out that some even fear to look at them. The attendants are bored and dull and helpless. But if such a patient dies and gets reborn in a human mother, what enthusiasm, love and concern do they get from the world. Is not this what they call the world? One who in a previous life was an animal, a cow or elephant or fowl became a human being in this birth. Such incidents the Bhikkhu has witnessed in states of Samadhi. What a joke! It is ridiculous. The attachment to the material body is such that, even on a Wesak day we do not see the reality to give up the craving for materiality. They still go chasing after materiality.

Pandals, Wesak lanterns, decorations, carols and singing and dancing, light bulbs... Going around searching for more material pleasure will certainly give you a long tedious samsara. The volitional karma makes whatever material body you want. Just as the Wesak night in the capital city is so alluring and

varied, volition makes such vivid varied bodies for you, life after life. Bird life, fish life, what fantastic bodies. Contemplate on this in your leisure hours. It is a meditation subject.

All those born into this system have old age, sickness, death inbuilt. Because of the desire for material body you do not see the reality. The affection arising soon after the baby's birth, due to its tenderness and helplessness hides the old age and sickness embedded in the child's life. But if you see the baby with wisdom and mindfulness you will see what pain and suffering is in store. You love the baby only when you are not mindful and wise. You give support and protection to conceal the store of old age sickness, death, etc. Even though to some extent you temporarily enjoy life, in the final analysis you lose totally.

The ending of Samsara means you understand contact ("phassa") as being impermanent and obtain release from all three factors, namely, attachment, aversion and neutral feelings.

So much is the love cherished on a new born baby that people say the mind of the baby is pure and bright and glowing ("prabhassara"). It is the craving for the baby that makes adults think this way. But the mind of the baby is also full of defilements due to the samsaric habit, but not mature yet. When anything is uncomfortable or not pleasant they yell and cry. We feel sorry that the baby was crouching inside the mother's womb suffering for nine months unable to move. That is what we think but the baby thinks this is my house, my room, my place in the womb and has craving and grasping for the mother's comfort, security and warmth and is quite happy and enjoying. He does not feel pain and suffering. What we see as suffering he sees as pleasure. At the moment of birth he is so frightened to leave his comfortable home and cries

and yells with all his might for fear of death. Why are you taking me away from my peace and comfort? Pain, anger and resentment is clearly there. Thereafter he clings and longs for the mother's warmth and milk, he is grasping for the breast that is life-giving. If he is disturbed and taken by someone else, he cries loud uncontrollably. His face becomes red. This is due to the anger and desire in the mind of the baby who is not fully mature. That is why it is ignorant to think that the baby's mind is pure and bright and flowing. So whatever material body you are attached to, please do realise on this Wesak day that your attachment is Mara. This is what the Buddha realised on Wesak day.

During a Dhamma discussion a young mother asked the Bhikkhu, "Venerable Sir, I have a baby. How can I live the Dhamma while doing work, caring for husband and baby"? You are a fortunate one. This question is relevant to you. The answer of the Bhikkhu was, "You are bound by your duties, so don't regret about your situation. You must do your duties to the maximum. See that everything you do is merit ("kusala"). Be equanimous and do not have desire or resentment for the work in hand. The bondage you have to worldly duties should teach you not to get involved in further responsibilities that will bind you more. Even if you are a nursing mother, still you can keep virtue and precept of lay people. Give maximum attention to sila, virtue. Give up ego and conceit of self and desire for sensual pleasures as far as possible. Even when you enjoy temporary satisfaction, remember impermanence and let go in daily living. When you observe these rules and have confidence in the Triple Gem you are developing your virtues to become another Nakula Matha or Visakha."

On a Wesak Day like this the Buddha realised the Four Noble Truths that pain and suffering arise due to craving for pleasures.

Your craving is for material things. The craving for material body is what takes beings through the round of samsara. The way to escape from craving is the Eightfold Path. This advice to the mother of the baby, if you can follow, you are going on the Eightfold Path. The great Buddha has shown an invaluable, important and a practical way for lay people to traverse the path while engaged in mundane living.

The Buddha pointed out that when your desire for a material pleasure is more, your attachment to husband, wife, children and wealth becomes a craving and said as follows: Once when the Buddha was walking he saw a line of black ants across the path. Then he stopped and said to Ananda, "Every one of these ants in this samsaric journey were universal monarchs". If an ant would have been an universal monarch, you the fortunate ones, how many times would you have become universal monarchs. The universal monarch is so fortunate, his wife is a beauty with 5 attributes and a priceless gem. The pure bred horse could fly in the air. His chief minister could detect gems underground. He had thousands of sons by the harem. You the fortunate one has enjoyed such luxuries in past Samsara. Every woman had been the chief queen endowed with five attributes and a priceless gem to the monarch. Every woman would have borne sons of great value. You have ridden on super normal horses and elephants. Compared to all that splendour what are you enjoying now? Not worth a tuppence. You whose queen was of such beauty should be compared with your wife or compare your husband to the great universal monarch. What worthless people are you attached to now. You who were flying across the air on super normal horses and elephants in majestic splendour are now travelling in a metal heap. You were ministers of power and status to the monarch, now you are servants with fear in spite of your ministerial status. Your sons who were so strong could not be vanquished. Compare

them to your present sons. Compared to luxuries you enjoyed what rubbish is all this human luxury. Whether you like it or not, this is the reality of life. So do develop confidence in the dhamma and see the truth. You will see that you have enjoyed all the pleasures of the human and divine in samsara. Even though you had all the experience you are still not satisfied, you crave for more over and over again. You the universal monarch became a black ant as an insect, and again you got a human rebirth, the cause is craving for pleasure. Surely you the fortunate one have experience enough. Now try to liberate yourself from the round of rebirth that is the escape from suffering. So now consider positively there is no limit to craving for pleasure. We experience it over and over for aeons. There is no difference being male or female. Think of all the luxuries you had and compare with the poor quality of pleasure now, and give up craving for the allurements, which are really unreliable, despicable and frustrating. See this with wisdom. Because of attachment arises resentment. The lay person who sees this will fulfil his duties to the maximum and live in equanimity. Then you are making merit as never before. Do not regret for what you have done or not done, because it leads to anger and resentment. Due to ignorance lots of people think giving up with wisdom is the same as giving up with anger and they make evil karma. Such thinking takes you away from Dhamma. To escape such dilemmas you need to give up pride and conceit and ego.

What is the reason that you raise craving? Why do you raise pride? Why think in terms of ego conceit?

Do you raise pride because of the eye? What is it that is called eye? It is something that gets sick and rotten, old and blind, with secretions and tears and pus. Imagine you are removing the eye from the socket. It is truly a ball of flesh tied up with

veins and arteries and nerves smeared with blood smelling and rotting. Is there anything in the eye to crave for, to be proud about, to be owned as me and mine and cherished? No. You the fortunate one, not only your eye, every bit of the body is the same; small, big, beautiful, ugly. All humanity is the same. Even the eye of the hell-being or deva are of similar material element. Understand with wisdom and give up craving for eye.

Now you do the same with your ear. What is this ear? It gets sick and painful, rotten and old, secretions come from the ear. It can go deaf. If you remove the ear and hold it in the hand, it is only a mass of flesh covered with veins and arteries and blood, rotting away. Is there anything in the ear that is beautiful, and can be considered as me and mine, and held with craving? As a baby they were smooth and nice to look at but with old age they are rough and ugly and crumpled.

Now the fortunate ones look at your nose. It gets sick with mucous secretion, it gets old and dies. There are hairs inside the nostrils and phlegm. With catarrh it brings up blood and with cold it hurts in a severe way. Now mentally remove the nose and take it in your hand. It is only a mass of flesh with two holes and rotting away and infested with bottle flies. Now is there any reason for considering the nose with pride as ego, me and mine? No.

Now you the fortunate ones look at your tongue. It gets sick, old and dies. It gets coated with fungus. If you fail to brush your teeth even one day it smells bad. It can get sick with pustules and sores. Now remove the tongue mentally and hold it in your hand, covered with blood and veins and arteries rotting. Is there any difference between this and the tongue of a cow or goat or pig? It is flesh of the same type. Sometimes the tongue is sick and does not feel taste. Even while alive the tongue will die. Why do you have craving for tongue, pride and conceit?

Now the fortunate one look at the mind, sometimes full of greed, hatred and ignorance. Sometimes full of non-greed, non-hate and wisdom. Just like the wind, changing moment to moment, the changing mind sometimes taking on the divine path, sometimes on the hell way. Sometimes it makes you happy. Sometimes it is crying and wailing. It gives perceptions of good and bad continuously. As you grow older the memory fails and dies. Do you have craving and ego conceit for a mind like that? What is the use?

Now the fortunate ones look at your body. It is a body that grows old and sick and dies. It depends on food and water and respiration. It excretes tears and body perspiration, phlegm, saliva and mucous, urine and faeces. If not washed and cleaned it gives a bad smell, unbearable. If it gets rotten and wounded and maggots settle on it. Is there anything to be proud about and think in terms of me, I and mine with pride and conceit?

Now you the fortunate one saw the six sense organs. There was nothing good and beautiful. All that was there was old age, sickness and death.

Now you contemplate on the body in terms of the four great elements. In the Satipatthana Sutta the Buddha gives the example of a slaughtered cow. The butcher has killed and separated the various parts of the carcass and is selling at the junction of cross roads. Flesh, entrails, bones, skin, etc. Now try to dissect your own body mentally and visualise the various parts according to the four elements—pathavi-hardness, apo-fluidity, tejo-heat and vayo-air.

Consider separately the parts with hardness such as the flesh, bones, entrails; the parts with fluidity such as blood, mucous, phlegm, saliva, urine; the parts combined with hardness and fluidity and showing the heat element; and the air element

throughout the inside of the body. The structure of the body is nothing but the 4 elements which are impure and ugly to look at. It smells bad, gets rotten and is infested with maggots. Is there any means of raising pride and conceit about those 4 elements of the body? No. The Buddha divided the body into 32 parts. Take them separately and observe their characteristics. They all come under old age sickness and death. Is there any which can be identified as me and mine? What is the cause for greed, pride and conceit of self?

Whichever way you look at this body either as elements or entities, you must realise that this body which you claim to be your own is actually something which is subject to impermanence, suffering and the non-self nature of all things. If something is subject to impermanence, suffering and non-self and if you the fortunate one, takes it to be permanent, non-suffering and having a permanent self, then won't you be suffering under an illusion? If you think that your eye is a permanent entity, giving you joy and belonging to you, aren't you chasing after something which is non-existent? If you believe that the four elements and the 32 body parts are permanent, gives happiness and belongs to you, aren't you being fooled and dumped?

The concept of 'I' and 'mine' which is a result of wrong thinking, leads you to think that your body is permanent and brings you happiness, but in truth, it brings you great unhappiness and disappointment because you cannot maintain it as you want it to be.

Therefore, you fortunate one, can understand the first Noble Truth of suffering as explained by Lord Buddha, on this Wesak day, through your own body itself.

This suffering arises because of the craving you have for this body which is made out of the four elements and which is maintained with food and the air you breathe. An Arahant will not have this suffering. He too has eyes from which he sees images. He has ears and hears all sounds. All his other sense organs do exist, but he does not undergo any suffering because at the moment of contact with the outside world, he realizes that this contact is impermanent. This is because an Arahant has realized the impermanence of the body with the special wisdom he has gained at the moment of Enlightenment. Because he realizes the impermanence of contact, he does not 'feel' or enjoy the sensations. He will only see or hear but not feel or crave. But you on the other hand will have craving for the sensations you feel through you senses which invariably lead to suffering. So if this craving and suffering arise through you own self, isn't it you who should walk on the Noble Eightfold Path which leads to non-craving and non-suffering? Isn't it you who should realize the Four Noble Truths by yourself? Can any god or brahma help you with this task? No. It is only if you make the Dhamma preached by Lord Buddha a part of your life with wisdom that you can achieve this enlightenment.

See how simply Lord Buddha has expounded the Dhamma so that you can understand it so easily and clearly. When Lord Buddha has shown the way to escape hell fires and all suffering, see how you waste your precious time doing useless things? This is because you do not know how to make the Dhamma a part of your life. What you should try to understand is the impermanence of both suffering and happiness and not see them as being permanent. Actually there is only one thing you should do to escape from this huge burden of suffering you are carrying on your shoulders. And that is to give up the craving you have for this body about which you think in terms of 'I' and 'mine'.

As long as virtuous Bhikkhus live and the Buddha Sasana exists, you have the chance to achieve this great victory. So do not delay to take maximum advantage of this opportunity. When you have a bit of quiet leisure at home or at your office, try to contemplate on your eye and the images which you focus on. Can you see that both your eye and the eye-objects are ever changing and impermanent? Think on this with wisdom. Do the same with the ear and the sounds you hear. Are they permanent? Think on the nose and the smells. Observe that they are not permanent. Do the same with your tongue and the tastes. Is anything permanent, or unchanging? Then look at your mind and the ever changing thought processes. Observe the impermanence. Finally think about your body and the various sensations you feel and notice how everything changes from moment to moment.

Likewise, next you think on your favourite people, male and female and think on their impermanence. Then think about the people you dislike. See that they too are impermanent and ever-changing. When you think in such a way, after sometime you will give up your craving and revulsions towards these people and you will become neutral. These neutral thoughts will help you to become more calm, less turbulent and develop your personality towards being an ascetic on the way to being an enlightened one. Become a lovely person who is helpful and civic minded towards all. Fill yourself with good deeds and thoughts. Always think that all the merit you may accumulate should help you on your onward journey. If you are not true and honest to your own self, you will never be able to be honest towards the others. Try to see the difference between the short term 'happiness' which comes through delusion and the long term, lasting happiness that comes from true understanding and wisdom.

You who are now celebrating the thrice blessed Vesak day in this year commemorating the 2600 years of Buddhahood, try to think where you would be when the world celebrates the next commemoration of 2700 years. Could you imagine how many hundreds and thousands of people who celebrated the 2500 years of Buddhahood some time ago are languishing in hell worlds, undergoing untold suffering? Therefore you must try to tread the path of enlightenment today itself. While you are looking at all the beautiful decorations on this thrice blessed Vesak day, also look at the craving within you, which gives you so much of suffering.

The meaning of suffering is craving. The cessation of suffering is the realization of impermanence. So in the same way you looked at the impermanence of the body you must see the impermanence of the five aggregates as well.

To understand the impermanence of the five aggregates in a simplified manner, you can start contemplating as follows:

The eye is impermanent, the Image is Impermanent.

The sensations created by the eye are impermanent.

The feeling of the sensation created by the eye is impermanent

The recognition of the feeling created by the eye is
impermanent

The reaction to the recognition created by the eye is
impermanent

If any consciousness arises because of the eye, it is
impermanent

The eye is impermanent, the image is impermanent, the five aggregates which arise by the combination of the eye, image, consciousness and reaction are impermanent.

Mind and body are impermanent.

Likewise,

The ear is impermanent, the sound is impermanent

The sensation created by the ear is impermanent

The recognition of the sensation created by the ear is
impermanent

The reaction to the recognition created by the ear is
impermanent

The consciousness that arises because of the ear is
impermanent

The ear is impermanent, the sound is impermanent

The five aggregates created by the combination of the ear, the
sound, the consciousness and reaction are impermanent.

Mind and body are impermanent.

Likewise

The nose is impermanent, smell is impermanent

The sensation created by the nose is impermanent

The recognition of the sensation created by the nose is
impermanent

The reaction to the recognition created by the nose is
impermanent

The consciousness that arises because of the nose is
impermanent

The ear is impermanent, the sound is impermanent

The five aggregates created by the combination of the nose,
smell, the consciousness and reaction are impermanent.

Mind and body are impermanent.

Likewise

The tongue is impermanent, the taste is impermanent

The sensation created by the tongue is impermanent

The feeling of the sensation created by the tongue is
impermanent

The recognition of the sensation created by the tongue is
impermanent

The reaction to the recognition created by the tongue is
impermanent

The consciousness that arises because of the tongue is
impermanent

The tongue is impermanent, the taste is impermanent

The five aggregates created by the combination of the tongue,
the taste, the consciousness and reaction are impermanent.

Mind and body are impermanent.

Likewise

The mind is impermanent, the thoughts are impermanent

The sensations created by the mind are impermanent

Feeling of the sensations created by the mind is impermanent

The recognition of the feelings created by the mind is
impermanent

The reaction to the recognition created by the mind is
impermanent

If any consciousness arises because of the mind it is
impermanent

The mind is impermanent, the thoughts are impermanent

The five aggregates which arise through the combination of the mind, thoughts, the consciousness and reaction are impermanent.

Mind and body are impermanent.

Likewise

The body is impermanent, touch is impermanent

The sensations created by the body are impermanent

Feeling of the sensations created by the body is impermanent

The recognition of the feelings created by the body is impermanent

The reaction to the recognition created by the body is impermanent

If any consciousness arises because of the body it is impermanent

The body is impermanent, touch is impermanent

The five aggregates which arise through the combination of the body, touch, the consciousness and reaction are impermanent.

Mind and body are impermanent.

The world is actually the five aggregates. Try to always contemplate on all the past and present images which are constantly subject to impermanence.

Whatever you do, if you always have a deep respect for Buddha Dhamma you will never fail either in this birth or the next. Instead of singing a song if you recite the Dhamma as a habit, it will be very beneficial. The gods will respect you because you will be reciting the absolute truth of the universe when

you recite the Dhamma. Each time you contemplate on the impermanence you are heading towards Nibbana. Every time you think that something is permanent, you are going toward the Mara, the dreadful samsara.

Lord Buddha extinguished the Samsaric journey on a Vesak day like this. So you too must follow this great example and try to eradicate the concept of 'I' and 'mine'. To do this you must develop unshakable 'Saddha' (confidence) in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha, practice absolute virtue (sila) and practice generosity (dana) and with the help of the Sangha who will lead you in the correct path, try to understand the absolute impermanence of the five aggregates.

It will be the greatest offering that you ever made to the Buddha. It is not food, that goes stale but an offering that eventually will eradicate all defilements of your mind. The Buddha expressed this at the moment before the final passing away to Parinibbana "Do put off the flames of samsaric suffering and do not increase the flows of samsaric suffering". This is the Buddha Puja that is expected from us. It is the final advice of the Buddha. The passing away of this most venerated Buddha is also an event of exquisite blessing, if only you live up to his compassionate expectations. At least may you reach up to Magga Phala in this life. So you will die and get a fortunate rebirth in a divine world as a god or goddess. I hope that the above description will inspire you to attain such heights. You must remember that it all depends on how much effort you put in to traverse the Noble Eightfold Path. But your effort will be diverted towards the path of Mara if you associate evil friends. Then all your efforts will only bring more suffering life after life in samsara. Your efforts will be useless if you are lured by evil friends towards enjoyment of sensual pleasures along the path of Mara.

Your own development and realisation of the impermanence of clinging to the five aggregates will be your greatest friend and guide along the way. It all depends on your wish and will to follow the path. So please understand the suffering of clinging to the five aggregates and make up your mind to give up the wrong concept of a personality view 'sakkayaditti', so that you will escape from the four hells. Your effort is to see the five aggregates of clinging as suffering. Then you put an end to clinging.

Do not waste your effort because of pride and conceit and clinging. Use your effort as an aid to become a white-clad devotee praised by the Buddha and not for obtaining sympathy and praise from the world. Stop thinking about the objects of the six senses for a while and see all the sensory objects as impermanent. The peace and comfort you gain by such contemplation must be experienced again and again. At leisure see the mind prone to enjoying sensual pleasure and think of the impermanence of sensual objects instead.

You the fortunate lay disciple, when you get to bed at the end of the day, do not indulge in discursive thoughts of desire. Try to remember the food you ate all day long. The morning cup of tea, bread and string hoppers for breakfast, a cup of tea at 10 a.m., lunch with rice and curries, tea in the evening and dinner at night. Think of the taste and the looks of the fresh food you ate and contemplate on what became of that delicious food. It became vomit in the stomach and then into excreta and urine and saliva and mucous and fat and blood and finally life giving energy enhancing the life span and complexion and comfort. From morning till night you work at your profession to procure the food for the body. You even break the precepts to give this food for the body, produce vomit, excreta, urine, phlegm and blood and such life excretory matter and to prolong the

precious life span and complexion and comfort and energy all of which disappear in impermanence with only temporary benefits. Is it not pain and suffering this impermanence? Can you conceive of “me”, “mine” and ownership of this changing phenomena? Contemplate on the ‘success’ of the events of a day from morning till night, so you get firmly established in impermanence.

Try to see the food and the by-products of food in your own body. You who wanted tasty food for the tongue, see it change into dirt, at least until you fall asleep. Your night will be a restful night. Then with the dawn of the next day start contemplating on the food. It will be a day spent in mindfulness and wisdom. If you die in your sleep it will be with a wholesome death consciousness. If you practice thinking this way it will never be bad because you see the nature of the world, the Dhamma. You see the impermanence of all materiality. Even though food is such loathsome impure stuff, still you can contemplate giving value and goodness. This food is not consumed in order to produce long life, complexion, comfort and energy that eventually disappear in impermanence but the food is consumed without greed only to sustain the life of purity and develop virtue, concentration and wisdom. Food is thus utilised for higher purposes.

Thus the food that changed into impure excretory matter is utilised to transcend the world of pain and suffering and loathsomeness.

If you contemplate this every night you will overcome the greed for food and traverse the Eightfold Path that leads to eradication of greed for food. This realisation is of right view of the Eightfold Path. Ven. Sariputta gives you a certificate in the Samma Ditthi Sutta to ensure the development of Right View by

those that practice. It is not a certificate given by governments of super food that makes the mouth water, and builds a body that is prone to sickness and death, the menu that becomes vomit, excreta, urine and a cause of pain and suffering, but a certificate to escape all the misery of life and living. Those that enjoy the taste are in ignorance, relishing, raising the eye brows, lolling eyes and making expressions displaying the greed with gestures of satisfaction. They mistake their greed for taste in their ignorance, just as the worms inside the stomach relish the putrefying food and then may very well take rebirth as worms.

You the fortunate one do make use of the food that nourishes you, to extinguish the materiality of body. You who have enjoyed the divine pleasure of excellent divine food in your previous lives and were never satisfied, now do enjoy the taste of the excellent Dhamma to eradicate the greed and overcome the indulgence. Then you realise that food is not something to enjoy but a thing made up of causes and conditions.

Yet the fortunate one must conduct your life on the path of eradicating the personality view. Be always careful of the Mara's retinue that assails you in the guise of greed, pride and conceit of a self. When the sign of 'me and mine' arises in you, see it immediately as impermanence. This will be your constant reflection and habit, seeing the five aggregates of clinging arising and passing away within you. The outward show will be your lack of pride and conceit in utter humility.

If you do not see your own humble mind of humility, then be sure that you are under the spell of Mara. There is Buddha today to show you the right path with compassion. So you need to find the right path with compassion. So you need to find the right Path yourself seeing the suffering of the 4 hells. The great disciple of the Buddha, Ven. Sariputta once made a lions roar,

“I am like a little outcaste child of the outcasts’ community”; an epitome of his great humility.

See the great Buddha on a Wesak day like this. See the greatness of understanding the Dhamma. It is the great excellent Buddhas from the moment of Enlightenment to the last day of final passing away that showed the lay disciples the value of unshakable faith, the value of virtue and renunciation, the value of generosity and the impermanence of aggregates in order to escape from the four hells and the road to the ending of the samsaric travails. Know that such an excellent teacher will never arise again in the world for lakhs of years to come. Realise this in your mind. You the fortunate one if you do not see the present moment of challenge and win over, you will become a person of wrong view. Rudderless, floating in the ocean of samsara. Your wrong view will give misery even if you are born human. You will live in a world devoid of virtue, devoid of shame and fear, of evil, equal to animal. You will escape this danger in this very life, only if you are clever and energetic. The Bhikkhu has written down this note for the sake of lay persons in his moment of leisure.

Escaping from the four hells is the same as attaining the state of first sainthood, ‘Sotapatti’. There will be mistakes in this short note. Do not worry about it. Do read intensely the Sutras that the Buddha preached and correct yourself. Because it is only the Buddha who is all knowing. We are full of defects. Only if you see it this way that you can get the benefit of Buddha Dhamma and Sangha and go for refuge. If not, you think you know everything and go further away from the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and get closer to Mara. The way to win this challenge is to give up your greed, conceit and pride which are the Mara Dhamma.

When you traverse the right path, first of all you will give up your selfhood, the personality view 'sakkaya ditthi' and escape from the four hells. It is not a total escape but a small escape in a period in which the Buddha sasana is declining. In the future, the fortunate you, as a divine being on the Noble Eight Fold Path, and enjoying the luxurious life in divine worlds, and having completed your understanding of the Dhamma, can attain Nibbana in these divine worlds themselves.



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