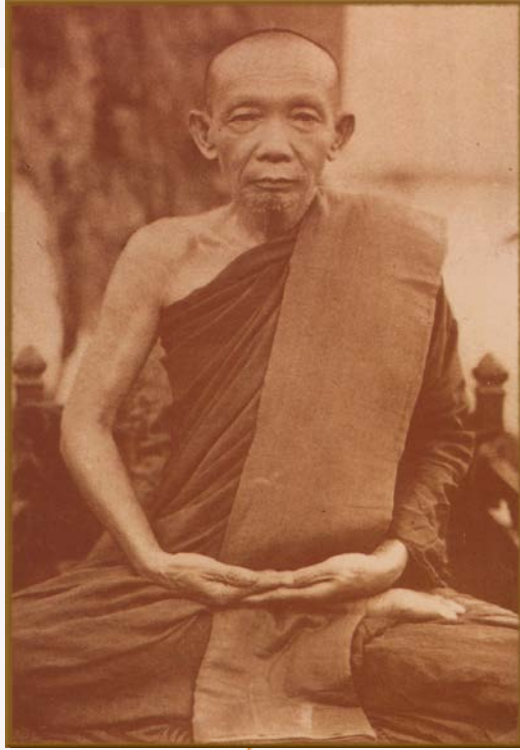


THE
NATURAL CHARACTER
OF
AWAKENING



Tan Chao Khun Upālī Guṇupamājahn
(Mahā Jan Siricando)

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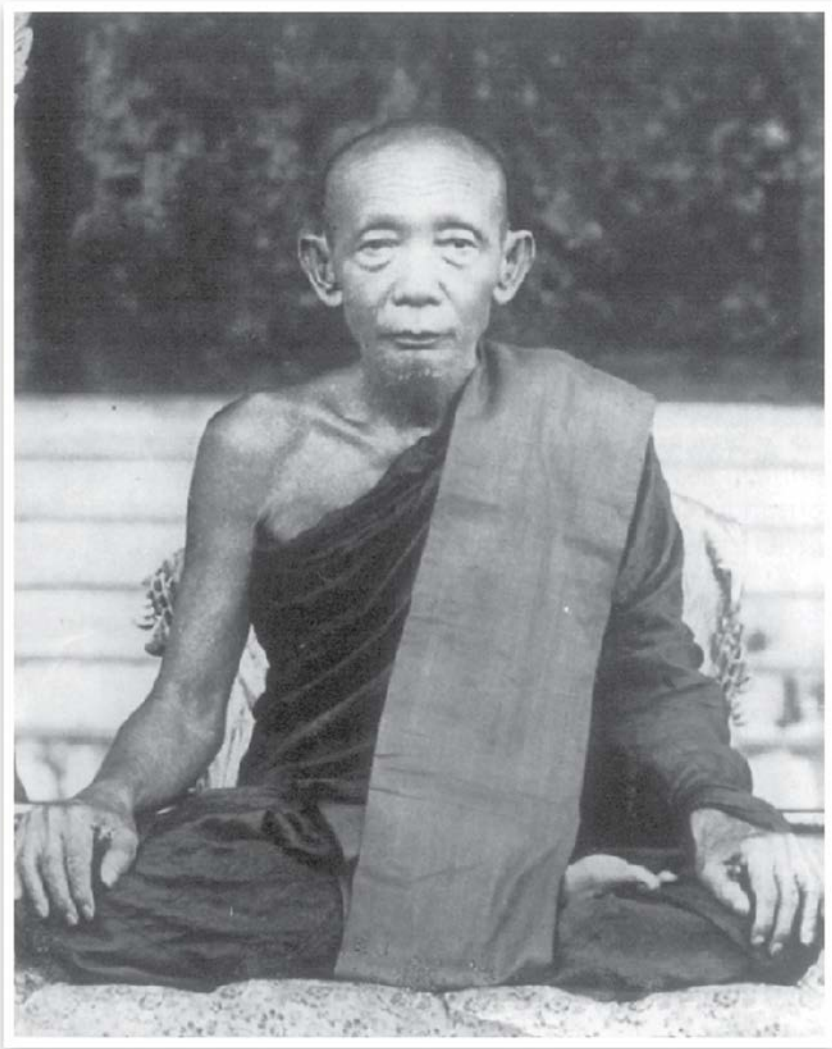
*Genuine spiritual teachings
cannot be separated
from the manner in which they are given.*

True Dhamma is like friendship: if you are being charged for it,
you already know you are not getting the real thing.

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Tan Chao Khun Upāli Guṇūpamājahn
(Mahā Jan Siricando) 1856-1932

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Tan Chao Khun Upālī Guṇūpamājahn (1856-1932) was something of an anomaly as a monk. Equally at home chatting about administration with ecclesiastical monks in the great halls of Bangkok, teaching Pāli or points of doctrine at the Royal Palace lecture-grounds, or discussing ascetic wandering and meditation in the wild upcountry forests with Luang Pu Mun, he seemed to be accomplished at everything. Luang Pu Mun would often tell his disciples “Chao Khun Upālī is an expert practitioner, he’s an expert scholar; he’s the scriptural model of a monk”. Tan Chao Khun Upālī devised and established the monastic education system in Ubon Ratchathani that would give a solid grounding in the Buddha’s teachings to dozens of Thailand’s greatest forest Ajahns. He was so respected that Luang Pu Mun actually accepted a one-year period as abbot of the most important city temple in Chiang Mai out of deference to his request.

Tan Chao Khun Upālī had many connections with Luang Pu Mun. They were both from small villages in the countryside of Ubon Ratchathani province, ordained in the same monastery, and spent their first four years as monks in the provincial capital. As adolescents, they were both skilled in ‘maw lum’ – a traditional form of entertainment in

which two people, usually a man and a woman, will battle each other in a test of ready wit, singing extemporaneous rhyming verses to traditional music complete with humour, put downs, and innuendo. They both later renounced the home life, committed themselves to the Dhamma, and eventually succeeded in their spiritual practise.

But as opposed to Luang Pu Mun, Tan Chao Khun Upāli lived mostly in Bangkok, where he was the abbot of an important royal monastery, Wat Boromniwat. He was given the highest-level title of ‘Chao Khun’ – a kind of monastic ‘peerage’ system where the king bestows titles on worthy monks. He was fluent in Pāli, and widely learned in the Buddhist scriptures. He took on many duties of administration for the Saṅgha.

However, he was most well known for his teaching. He was one of the most gifted teachers of his time. People used to say that they could sit and listen to him talk for hours and never get bored. One man has admitted that whenever Tan Chao Khun Upāli was giving a talk, he would always travel into Bangkok to be there, no matter how much it cost him. Luang Dta Mahā Boowa has said that “he could teach Dhamma like the Buddha himself, or his greatest disciples.” Luang Pu Mun spent four years in Bangkok just to learn from him.

His store of wide learning, fluency in Pāli, ready wit, and the radical wisdom born of direct experience made for a heady mix. He would frequently present straightforward subjects in a profound manner, profound subjects in a straightforward manner, presenting familiar topics in unfamiliar ways, generally surprising, delighting and astonishing listeners until, in the Thai idiom, he would ‘stab his disciples’ hearts’ – that is, give a kindly personal injunction or reflection of such simple directness that people’s hair would stand on end and tears would well up in their eyes, overwhelmed by a genuine appreciation of Dhamma.

All of this makes translating his teachings a formidable task. In addition, he spoke in an old-fashioned style that even modern Thais would find difficult to understand. There are bound to be shortcomings in my attempt at translation. I ask the forgiveness of all concerned in the hope that the intrinsic worth of the teachings still shine through the shortcomings of their translation.

Since these were talks given to monks and nuns, in a country where Buddhist culture permeated everything, including the language, I felt that some assumptions were taken for granted regarding familiarity with certain ideas and context on the part of the audience. In translating the teachings into English, I decided to supplement the material here and there, to make these ideas and context explicit: in some places I have added words or a phrase (in parentheses) to make a sentence more intelligible to the reader; mostly however, I have resorted to endnotes for longer explanations. These are merely supplementary and can be disregarded by the knowledgeable reader.

This slim volume, with its powerhouse concision and scope, impressed me as being unlike any Dhamma teachings currently available in English. Tan Chao Khun Upālī draws together all the essentials for any practitioner in a way that can serve as a good grounding in the straight way of practise, without lacking in profundity as he continually plunges directly into descriptions of the arising Noble Path, and beyond – which should encourage the reader to contemplate deeply on these teachings. I have no doubt that they will reward repeated reflection.

As Tan Chao Khun Upālī often stresses, these teachings are for the reader to bring into themselves, in order to establish a genuine refuge there. To that end, I hope this book is useful. I would like to offer my respectful gratitude to the senior monks of the Obrom Bhāvanā

Siricando Centre, Wat Boromniwat, for their kind permission to make this available as a free gift of Dhamma.

Hāsapañño Bhikkhu

March 2555/2012

This edition was revised in October 2556/2013.

Some minor errors in the translation have been corrected.



SKILL IN NATURAL CHARACTER

Nam'atthu ratanattayass'eva

Siricando-ti nāmako

Nissaya-bhedam pavakkhāmi

Sissānaṃ sukha-bodhiyā¹

I will now present aspects of natural character which can constitute a path of study for monks and novices who have newly gone forth and ordained. When you understand, you will be able to practise in line with what has been said.

The word ‘natural character’ is something refined and subtle, difficult to understand. In the beginning, we should first study the natural character of the Buddha. Having gone forth and ordained, we all focus on the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, or we dedicate ourselves to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. These three treasures are called refuges. But the natural character of the Buddha is a refined and subtle profundity. It is beyond the discernment of us unenlightened beings to adequately describe. It can only be described as far as our powers of knowing – if we know a lot we can describe a lot, if we know a little we can describe a little. But to completely circumscribe it is beyond our ability.

What I will present now is the entranceway to spiritual practise, enough for you to be able to reflect on, because it is the model natural character. This model natural character has 10 features:

1. *Dāna* – giving and sacrifice.
2. *Sīla* – heedfulness of one’s faculties.
3. *Nekkhamma* – leaving sensuality behind.
4. *Paññā* – mental characteristics which enable one to know truly according to the nature of things.
5. *Viriya* – heroic audacity in putting forth effort; not overcome by laziness.
6. *Khanti* – enduring patience.
7. *Sacca* – being true in one’s behaviour.
8. *Adhiṭṭhāna* – determined resolve.
9. *Mettā* – spreading an all-pervading sense of happiness and ease.
10. *Upekkhā* – a sense of neutrality towards all moods and objects of knowing.

The Buddha developed these 10 features of Dhamma completely – that is, to a basic level, to a moderate level, and to the highest level. It is for this reason that they have been called ‘the 30 spiritual perfections’.²

When you understand that these 30 spiritual perfections truly lie within the Buddha, then you will know the characteristic nature of the Buddha. When you know clearly that the Buddha’s natural character is like this and you wish to share that character, then you have to follow his example. That is, you have to make this natural character present within you. If you are only able to do it to a basic or moderate level, then you are merely a *Bodhisatta* – a being intent on awakening. If you are able follow it to the highest level, then you will probably be a Buddha following after him. This is called a ‘*Sāvaka-Buddha*’ – an awakened disciple.³

In truth, these 10 features of Dhamma are naturally interdependent conditions that support, strengthen and reinforce each other. They are constituents of the Noble Path; in other words, just *sīla* – virtue, *samādhi* – concentration, and *paññā* – discernment. *Dāna* and *sīla* are bound to come under the aggregate of virtue. *Viriya*, *khanti*, *sacca*, *adhiṭṭhāna*, *mettā* and *upekkhā* are bound to come under the aggregate of concentration. *Nekkhamma* and *paññā* are bound to come under the aggregate of discernment.

When you understand that these three aggregates – the aggregate of virtue, the aggregate of concentration and the aggregate of discernment – are the aggregates of the Buddha, then you will know that just virtue, concentration and discernment is the natural character of the Buddha. If you wish to have the natural character of a Buddha, then you have to make your body, speech and mind into the aggregates of virtue, concentration and discernment.

When the mental characteristics of discernment in association with the knowledge and vision of right view arise, you can evaluate for yourself that the aggregate of virtue, the aggregate of concentration and the aggregate of discernment, which are things that have come from the Buddha, have persisted and have now entered into your own body, speech and mind. At that point, you will know for yourself that the natural character of the Buddha has become part of you. You have obtained the aggregates of the Buddha and they are established as a refuge. From that point on one has to resolve to look after these three aggregates which one has achieved with such difficulty – letting them be normal according to their nature – to be a person who practises correctly.

To investigate and reflect on the natural character of the Buddha is something incredibly difficult because the Buddha's natural character is refined, and our natural character is coarse. It is for this reason that we

must investigate and reflect on this natural character until we can see easily what has been presented here, from the 10 spiritual perfections, for example, to virtue, concentration and discernment.

The aggregate of virtue can wipe out greed, hatred and delusion, which are the unwholesome roots of defilement, at a coarse level – killing living beings, for example – from one’s body, speech and mind.

The aggregate of concentration can wipe out greed, hatred and delusion, which are the unwholesome roots of defilement, at a moderate level – sensual desire, for example – from one’s body, speech and mind.

The aggregate of discernment can wipe out greed, hatred and delusion, which are the unwholesome roots of defilement, at a refined level – that is, the latent tendencies that lie in the aggregates of one’s disposition – from one’s body, speech and mind.

When you investigate accordingly, you will see the truth and clearly within your heart doubt will end. You will see that the power of higher virtue, the higher mind, and higher discernment wipes out defilement. It brought the disposition of the Buddha to a state of genuine purity.

When this becomes clear in the heart, a direct witness arises within you to the substance and meaning of the nine epithets of the Buddha, “*araham*” for example, that we have chanted together so often. The words “*Itipi so bhagavā araham*” – the Blessed One is an arahant, someone worthy of respect, or someone worthy of receiving respect – are because of this. Virtue, concentration and discernment were the causes that brought his body, speech and mind to a state of purity – that is, they made him an arahant. So we know that this “*araham*” is one aspect of the Buddha’s natural character of *purity*.

Because the natural character of purity which is worthiness of respect lies within him, he has thus been called “*sammā-sambuddho*” – someone who has seen the Dhamma of the four Noble Truths correctly

all by himself. At this point we can know that this “*sammā-sambuddho*” is one aspect of the Buddha’s natural character of *discernment*.

Because the natural character of discernment which is seeing the Dhamma of the four Noble Truths lies in him, he has thus been called “*vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*” – one who is perfectly accomplished in knowledge, having the knowledge of his past lives as an example, and in conduct, for example being possessed of virtue and restraint. At this point we can know that this “*vijjā*” and “*caraṇa*” are one aspect of the Buddha’s natural character of *discernment*.

Because the natural character of discernment which is knowledge and conduct lies within him, he has thus been called “*sugato*” – someone whose straightness of body, speech and mind have directed him to the good. At this point we can know that this “*sugato*” is one aspect of the Buddha’s natural character of *discernment*.

Because the natural character of discernment which is going to the good lies in him, he has thus been called “*loka-vidū*” – someone who knows clearly the primal aggregates of the world. At this point we can know that this “*loka-vidū*” is one aspect of the Buddha’s natural character of *discernment*.

Because the natural character of discernment which is knowing clearly the aggregates of the world lies within him, he has thus been called “*anuttaro purisa-damma-sārathi*” – someone who is a master of training, who spurs on men and women to set themselves in order, there being no one better than him at this. At this point we can know that this “*purisa-damma-sārathi*” is one aspect of the Buddha’s natural character of *discernment*.

Because the natural character of discernment which is being a master of training lies in him, he has thus been called “*sathā deva-manussānaṃ*” – the great teacher of all gods and humans. At this point

we can know that this “*satthā deva-manussānaṃ*” is one aspect of the Buddha’s natural character of *discernment*.

Because the natural character of discernment which is being the great teacher of all gods and humans lies within him, he has thus been called “*buddho*” – someone who has blossomed widely, complete with all the duties of a Buddha.⁴ At this point we can know that this “*buddho*” is one aspect of the Buddha’s natural character of *compassion*.

Because the natural character of compassion which is blossoming widely lies in him, he has thus been called “*bhagavā*” – someone who has it all: that is, someone who has Dhamma to give to the beings of the world. At this point we can know that this “*bhagavā*” is one aspect of the Buddha’s natural character of *compassion*.

When you understand these nine features of the Buddha’s natural character, you will see that the Buddha has a very expansive natural character – beyond the range of our discernment to describe. But we should go back over just these three features for the sake of reflection: the natural character of purity, the natural character of discernment, and the natural character of compassion.⁵

When you look into, investigate, and understand the Buddha’s natural character clearly in this way, and you wish to share that character, then you have to make your body, speech and mind full of the three natural characters of purity, discernment and compassion, like him.

When the mental characteristics of discernment in association with the knowledge of right view arise in the aggregates of your disposition, you can evaluate for yourself that the natural character of the Buddha has really entered into your body, speech and mind. And at that point you have to resolve to look after his natural character, making it successfully benefit you by being a person who practises correctly.

When the son or daughter of a good family comes to study the natural character of the Buddha until they understand it clearly, they will know the Dhamma in the qualities of the Dhamma according to the Pāli phrases that we chant together every day. The phrase that says “*Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo...*” for example, means that the Dhamma of the Blessed One has been well-explained. That is, it is something true, not unreliable and worthless; virtue, concentration and discernment can be witnessed within oneself. As for this virtue, concentration and discernment, it is none other than the body, speech and mind. As for this body, speech and mind, it is none other than the five aggregates.⁶ As for these five aggregates, they are none other than *nāma-rūpa* – sentient-form. As for this sentient-form, it is none other than oneself. To point out oneself is to point out the body, speech and mind, or the five aggregates, or sentient-form, or birth, aging and death as they are in truth: that is, to be clearly aware of the substance of present-moment phenomena.

Whenever you see the body, speech and mind, for example, as Dhamma that has arisen, that is “*sandiṭṭhiko*” – you see yourself, or you see by yourself. Because oneself – which is Dhamma – is something that exists, it can thus be “*sandiṭṭhiko*”.

Because the Dhamma is one seeing oneself, it is therefore “*akāliko*” – not specified in time, since oneself is something that is always present. Therefore you don’t have to pick a particular time to see it.

And because it is something not specified in time, it is therefore “*ehi-passiko*” – since it is pointing to oneself which is something actually there, not pointing to nothing, it should be described as encouraging one to come and see it.

Because it is encouraging one to come and see, it is therefore “*opanayiko*” – you should honour that Dhamma by taking it in yourself, you can’t honour that Dhamma by leaving it out in some other place.

Because it is something to take in oneself, it is therefore “*paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*” – everyone who knows, has to know for themselves. That is, the knowing turns back on oneself and one sees oneself. This means that oneself is Dhamma, and Dhamma is oneself. But you should understand that oneself at the level of ignorance is a causal condition (for the arising of suffering). When ignorance ceases, one’s self at that level has to cease as well. But “*paccattam*” – for oneself – in this case looks like we give the meaning of a self that has clear knowing as a condition, just like the birth, aging and death that have ignorance as a condition which the Buddha had seen at the time when he was still a *Bodhisatta*.

When ignorance ceases, birth and death at that level both cease as well, according to the meaning of an occasion of ‘cessation’ in dependent origination.⁷ As for the birth, aging and death that have clear knowing as a condition, they appear as the substance of the Noble Truth of suffering – as straight Dhamma. When you can see birth, aging and death as Dhamma, that will be the end of doubt.

In the teachings of the Blessed One, there are the words “*attā hi attano nātho*”, or “*atta-dīpā*”, or “*atta-saraṇa*”, or “*attamanā te bhikkhū*”, or “*paccattam*”,⁸ or the words the Blessed One spoke to the young Bhaddavaggiya men who were looking for a prostitute in a cotton field during the beginning of the Buddha’s time (as a teacher): “Is it better for you gentlemen to go looking for yourselves, or go looking for that woman?” In these cases all these words are bearing witness to, corroborating and telling us the same point: the knowledge of oneself as the owner and operator of one’s *kamma* where one sees clearly in the heart, with certainty, that oneself makes good and evil, happiness and suffering of every kind.⁹

When one sees Dhamma clearly in the heart, one has to know the qualities of the Saṅgha as they have come to us, such as “*supatīpanno*”

- those who practise well, “*uju-paṭipanno*” - those who practise straightly, “*ñāya-paṭipanno*” - those who practise in order to know, and “*sāmīci-paṭipanno*” - those who practise with utmost correctness. Because one knows the truth beyond doubt that good and evil are one’s own property, whatever happiness or suffering there is comes because oneself truly had to have been the cause.

When you have seen the truth as it really is in this way, would you be able to do evil? When you have seen yourself, would you not have love for yourself? Relying on clear knowing, just this knowledge of the truth as a cause, you would practise well by body, speech and mind because you see that body, speech and mind are the true path. As for this body, speech and mind that are the path of practise, they illuminate the witness within you. And with that as the cause, you have to know the path of purification.

When you know the path of purification, would you not walk that path? Would you run and flee the path of purity to go treading on thorns? Someone who sees the qualities of the Saṅgha clearly in their heart in this way will have massive faith in the Saṅgha, and will have to know the qualities of the Saṅgha - ‘*supaṭipanno*’, for example: this will arise in oneself, or one will have arrived at the qualities of the Saṅgha. Having drunk from the spiritual happiness one has achieved, one can be a refuge unto oneself - one doesn’t have to go believing others about the teaching of the Buddha at all. You can thus be confident that you have succeeded in arriving at the Triple Refuge.

Knowing and seeing in the way recounted here, if it is based on the strength of true seeing, then that will immediately be the end of doubt. If it is based on the strength of mere reckoning, then it’s still good, but doubt will not be finished...

Now I will describe another method for reviewing and reflecting on the natural character of the Buddha. That is, when the child of a good

family, someone who ordains with faith, investigates and reflects on this issue of the natural character of the Buddha, and they see it clearly with a vision of insight until their hearts are truly established in faith, confidence and sincerity, with an end of doubt, from then on they should investigate their own natural character and compare it with the natural character of the Buddha. This is in order to see which aspects of their natural character correspond, and which aspects don't correspond, with the natural character of the Buddha. They do this so they can correct and improve themselves to an appropriate level.

You should investigate yourself against the model natural character in this way:

Dāna

Giving and sacrifice: developing a mind of relinquishment is the natural character of the Buddha.

He cultivated this. He cultivated it abundantly for **100,000** aeons – the final apex being the ‘great five-fold sacrifice’, which is the ultimate act of giving.¹⁰ Because the Buddha trained and matured his mind for so long in a mind of relinquishment, this became the cause and condition for him to be completely fearless when he came to be born in his last life. He thus gave up the sensual pleasures of his wife, his wealth, his status, his following and prestige that the world esteems so much. That he left them to practise the purified holy life was a particularly high form of sacrifice, difficult for an average person in the world to do. When he had gone forth, he had to rely on mendicancy – that is, he had to go around (implicitly) asking for the generosity of other people to sustain his livelihood, in accordance with the customs of the noble ones.

This shows to the world that he was truly great – he got to the point where he could depend on that generosity. Because he had developed a

mind of relinquishment for so long as a support, it therefore enabled him to successfully sustain his livelihood in a convenient manner.

When we understand this, we should investigate and look into ourselves: at the moment, have we given up sensual defilements and sensual objects? Are we pleased at the chance to make donations and give? Are we able to ask others to be generous in sustaining our livelihood following the customs of a renunciant?

When you see that there is anything lacking, anything not fulfilled in you, then quickly correct and improve yourself, raising things up so that they correspond to the natural character of the Buddha.

Sīla

Restraining one's faculties to keep them natural, not letting perversions of perception blow them away – to uphold the body, speech and mind with mindfulness at all times: this is the natural character of the Buddha.

Because he had the natural character of virtue at all times, when he went to give the 'Discourse That Put the Dhamma in Circulation' he was able to advise and teach the group-of-five monks – who still didn't believe in his knowledge – by having them recollect the words he had spoken in the past. He said: "I have achieved knowledge and vision suitable for a noble being who has arrived at the Deathless. Have any of you *ever* heard me talk like this before?"

The group-of-five admitted that they had never heard him say this.

This point allows us to understand that the Buddha's three doors (of body, speech and mind) were never a cause for suspicion, but had inherent virtue at all times, even before he came to be enlightened.

When you investigate and look into the Buddha's natural character of virtue, look into your own virtue. If there is any area unfulfilled, then quickly correct and improve yourself, raising things up accordingly.

Nekkhamma

Leaving sensuality of the body behind, leaving sensuality of the heart behind: this is truly the natural character of the Buddha. Sensuality means things that are desired by the heart, things that come and provoke the heart, things that engulf the heart, things that saturate the heart – that is: sights, sounds, aromas, flavours, and tactile objects. These five things are the objects of sensuality.

If you are delighted in these five objects by way of visual contact, auditory contact, olfactory contact, gustatory contact, or bodily contact, this is called ‘someone stuck on sensuality by way of the body’.

To abstain, refrain, avoid and abandon these objects of sensuality, not entangled and stuck by way of the body, but with a heart still bound, entangled and stuck to these five objects due to the power of perception – as ideas that stay with the heart – this is called, ‘someone stuck on sensuality by way of the heart’.

Someone who is able to extract these five things out of their heart, or is able to extract their heart out of these five things, is called ‘someone whose heart has left sensuality behind’.

Leaving sensuality behind by way of the body and by way of the heart, one truly has the Buddha’s natural character of renunciation.

When you can appreciate the Buddha’s natural character in this way, investigate your own natural character. If you see that you are still stuck on sensuality, even if it is only in a minor way, just by way of the heart, you have to realise that you are still a sensual being. As for form, the realms of form, and the formless realms, you still haven’t progressed even that far. As for the Buddha’s natural character of renunciation, it transcends every world.

We are still very far from the natural character of the Buddha. Hurry and quickly follow in his footsteps, developing the quality of renunciation to the utmost of your ability!

Paññā

The Buddha's natural character of discernment is something very deep and refined. It is difficult for us to be able to know it because our maturity is on a different plane from his. As for him, his maturity is at the plane of a Buddha. Our maturity is only at the plane of a Disciple. Because of this, we have to investigate, reflect, and look into what he taught in various ways.

At the level of *lokiya-paññā* – the discernment at the low level of the world, like when he was still a *Bodhisatta* surrounded by material comforts – when he saw an old person, a sick person and a dead person, he considered: “These things are the fires of an inferno constantly burning me and other beings. To say they are delightful or disgusting is not correct. How can I escape? The naturally opposite state – where there is no aging or sickness, no death – surely has to exist, because things in the world exist as pairs, like hot and cold, darkness and light. What if I were to go forth into the homeless life, and when I obtain seclusion of body and seclusion of mind, I could experience the unshakeable state that doesn't age, suffer or die.” He thus made the ‘great renunciation’ and left to cultivate and give rise to knowledge and conduct.

As for *lok'uttara-paññā*, it is discernment at a high level – like what he presented in the cessation mode of dependent origination: the cessation of ignorance, fabrications, consciousness, all the way to birth, aging and death. When ignorance is a conditioning factor, everything ceases along with it. Or, like the words that have come to us in the ‘Discourse That Put the Dhamma in Circulation’ describing the knowledge and vision in accordance with the truth that he possessed – “*idaṃ dukkhaṃ ariya-saccan-ti me bhikkhave*”, for example, which means that birth, aging and death and so on constitute the Noble Truth of suffering. The Buddha had never heard this spoken before. It was a

vision of insight, discernment, clear knowing, the radiance of knowing clearly that had arisen within him.

To explain, the discernment that saw birth, aging and death when he was still a *Bodhisatta* was only the discernment of ignorance: it didn't obtain the (full) truth. As for the discernment that saw birth, aging and death on the occasion of his enlightenment, which was explained in the 'Dhamma in Circulation' as birth, aging and death being the Noble Truth of suffering – this is the discernment of clear knowing: it fully arrives at the truth, because he saw himself as (merely) the present-moment Dhamma of birth, aging and death.

As for us, with ignorance as a conditioning factor, how are we to investigate and reflect on this? We probably can't see it, because it is *aniccam*, *dukkham*, and *anattā*.¹¹ If we look at birth, we see it as something in the past. When we try to look at aging and death, they seem to be off in the future – if we are able to see them, it is only by taking up the aging and death of other people and looking at that. But if we go messing around with the affairs of others, we will have to meet up with suffering and the causes of suffering every time.

As for birth, aging and death that have clear knowing as a condition, it is possible to reflect on this and see it because it is true and reliable – the substance of the Deathless within oneself. One doesn't have to appraise other people, thus it can be '*paccattam*'. If there is any doubt about whether there is a self somewhere, you have to understand that when the Buddha says "*sabbe dhammā anattā*", this "*anattā*" only pertains to us; you can't look for it in the Dhamma.¹²

When you understand the Buddha's natural character of discernment in various ways like this, you have to look into and investigate your own discernment. It's still sunk down in which plane? In the plane of ignorance or the plane of clear knowing? When you see that it is still lacking in any aspect, then quickly make an effort to cultivate it to the

best of your ability, so that it rises up according to the Buddha's natural character of discernment.

The natural character of discernment is something truly subtle, but if we get to a level of subtlety and decide to withdraw our efforts and leave it at that, this is the wrong strategy. If its nature was truly beyond human discernment, how is it that, throughout history, tens and hundreds of thousands of people have managed to become *Sāvaka-Buddhas*?

Viriya, Khanti, Sacca, Adhiṭṭhāna

These four natural characters are interdependent conditions, all supporting and relying on each other. Wherever heroic effort is present, patience, integrity and resolve will have to be there. When they are all present, they become the foundations of empowerment.

There is the proto-typical story of the day the Buddha was about to realise the unsurpassed knowledge of perfect awakening, on the evening of the full moon of Visākha. He sat down in the meditation posture on a pile of grass, at the base of the bodhi tree, turning to face into the eastern direction. He then made this mental resolve: “Until I have realised the Deathless, I will not get up from this seat at all. Should my flesh, blood, bones and sinews dry up and crumble to dust, so be it.”

He then stayed in that same posture all night, and when it was coming to dawn in the last watch of the night, he *did* realise the unsurpassed knowledge of perfect awakening. He had succeeded in purifying the aggregates of his disposition.

The determined resolve that “if I haven't realised the Deathless, I will not get up from this seat at all” was his resolve. Actually sitting there until he was enlightened was his integrity. The endurance that wouldn't succumb to tiredness and exhaustion was his patience. And his courage in not becoming disheartened until he was able to succeed in his aim was his heroic effort.

When he was still a *Bodhisatta* he had these four states as his natural character at all times, until, when he had already realised enlightenment, he cultivated all the duties of a Buddha. He had these four states as his natural character at every moment, and was therefore able to carry out all these duties to perfection.

When you are able to look into, investigate, and understand the foregoing, compare it with your own natural character. If it does not correspond at any point, then quickly correct and improve things, straightening yourself out following the natural character of the Buddha.

Mettā, Upekkhā

As for loving-kindness and equanimity, these two natural characters are subtle and are present in the Buddha at all times. The cultivation of the other natural characters have these two as the cause. By both loving-kindness and equanimity being present within the Buddha, we mean that he experienced happiness and coolness because his heart was neutral. Happiness and coolness were present within him at all times, so he can be called, ‘someone replete with holy loving-kindness and compassion’. That is, he extinguished the flames of greed, the flames of hatred, and the flames of delusion from his disposition with the discernment of the Noble Path.

As for the fires of birth, the fires of aging, and the fires of death, they were transformed into the nature of fire only in the present, without any danger. They weren’t able to burn him. Therefore he is called ‘someone completely cool and refreshed’. Because that attainment is present in him, he is thus able to successfully spread and circulate those attainments all over, starting with happiness and coolness, due to the power of virtue, concentration and discernment, or the 10 features of spiritual perfection, as has been explained.

When the child of a good family – someone with faith – investigates and reflects, and they see clearly into the Buddha’s natural character

from the beginning right up to the natural character of purity, the natural character of discernment, and the natural character of compassion, thereby putting an end to doubt, they afterwards have to put forth effort to correct and improve their own natural character. To the best of their ability, they have to make themselves correspond to the natural character of the Buddha in every way.

Whenever you take on the natural character of the Buddha to whatever level, this is called ‘arriving at the Triple Refuge as your place of abiding’ at that level. This is because whoever knows the Buddha’s natural character is called, ‘someone who knows the Buddha’. Whoever takes on the natural character of the Buddha is called ‘someone who has arrived at the Dhamma’, because just the Dhamma is the natural character of the Buddha. Someone who has arrived at the Dhamma, or someone who takes on the natural character of the Buddha, is called: ‘the Saṅgha’.

The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha are different in appearance, but in their substance and meaning they are one. As it is preserved in the last seven lines (here) from the ‘*Ratanattaya-pabhāvābhiyācana gāthā*’:

<i>buddho dhammo saṅgho cā-ti</i>	<i>The Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha</i>
<i>nānā hontam-pi vatthuto</i>	<i>manifest as different things;</i>
<i>aññam-aññā viyogā va</i>	<i>separate, but interdependent</i>
<i>ekī-bhūtam-pan’atthato</i>	<i>– in meaning they are one.</i>

<i>buddho dhammassa bodhetā</i>	<i>The Buddha awakened to Dhamma;</i>
<i>dhammo saṅghena dhārito</i>	<i>the Dhamma is upheld by Saṅgha;</i>
<i>saṅgho ca sāvako buddhassa</i>	<i>the Saṅgha – disciples of a Buddha;</i>
<i>iccekā-buddham-ev’idaṃ</i>	<i>Thus just one awakening here.¹³</i>

In this way the child of a good family, who has gone forth and ordained to practise the holy life in whatever community, should be constantly recollecting and discerning to stimulate their reflective

knowledge: knowing themselves at all times to some extent thus: “Coming here, I have abandoned sensual moods and activities and have dedicated myself to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha.

If you get into a rut, lost in some community’s dogma or along the varied views of the individuals, this would not be the correct method. You should investigate, reflecting and looking to the *Dhamma-Vinaya* which is the natural character of the Buddha and is most appropriate for your mind.¹⁴

In the beginning, middle, and end, don’t waste the opportunity of having been born as a human being – a man or a woman – with the good fortune of coming across the Buddha’s dispensation. You should get to the point where you have the Buddha’s natural character as your place of refuge and security at every moment.



Now I will present the criteria for taking dependence on a teacher and preceptor. The child of a good family who will ordain in the Buddha’s dispensation has to search out someone who should receive them in dependence, someone with 10 years’ standing or more, to be their preceptor and their teacher.

The meaning of what has come to us in the Vinaya explains that when the child of a good family wants to take dependence in order to practise in a teacher’s monastery, they should practise following the teacher with heartfelt sincerity, trying things out and evaluating until confidence arises. Then they should ask for dependence, living with the teacher.

As for the person who will be the preceptor or teacher, they have to investigate, testing out and evaluating the person who is going to be their initiate or disciple. If they see that there is enough (sincerity) to be

able to teach and advise them, they should accept them. After they have accepted the person, they have to really take on the burden of advising them and teaching them.

As for the initiate or the disciple, once they have received dependence from a teacher, they have to practise correctly according to the natural character of the teacher in every way – right up to the point where if the preceptor or teacher has no regard for somebody, the disciple should not perform the etiquette of attending to that person. This is the gist according to the relevant allowances in the Vinaya.

What follows will be an explanation, according to my understanding, to serve as a path of contemplation for the children of good families – people with faith – who wish to take their studies further.

Let me explain the types of natural character. The word ‘*nissaya*’ is a word in the Magadhan (Pāli) language and it is difficult to define. If we are to get the meaning of it in English we have to translate it as temperament, or disposition, or the preferences of the heart, or behaviour. The things that a person depends on are called their ‘*nissaya*’ – natural character.¹⁵

When we have got the essence of it in this way, and you wish to take dependence on someone whom you feel is at the level of a genuine teacher – worthy of respect – you have to go check them out and evaluate them. When you see that the teacher’s natural character is amenable to yours, you should ask to receive dependence.

That natural character has many variations, each differing from another. I will point out just some as examples:

Some teachers have purity of virtue as their natural character – that is, they delight in it. They have studied and pondered the allowances of the Vinaya until they have understood and put them into practise. They see danger in the slightest faults. Endowed with restraint of the sense-faculties, they are content to practise only up to the training in virtue.

Some teachers have concentration – that is, purity of mind – as their natural character. They delight in studying the way of calm. They practise to give rise to momentary concentration, threshold concentration, and fixed concentration. They are content with the monks’ observances, whether large or small, and they see danger in the slightest faults. Endowed with restraint of the sense-faculties, they are content to practise only up to the training in mind.

Some teachers have discernment – that is, purity of view – as their natural character. They delight in studying the way of insight. They investigate, contemplate and reflect on sentient-form, the aggregates, the properties¹⁶ and the sense-faculties in order to see them truly according to their nature. They are content to live carefully in heedfulness, and they see danger in the slightest faults. Endowed with restraint of the sense-faculties, they are content to practise only up to the training in discernment.

Some teachers have lust as their natural character – that is, whatever they do, they tend to make it beautiful, attractive, appealing and endearing, and they have respect for Dhamma and Vinaya. They tend towards things that their minds can become absorbed in. They see danger in the slightest faults. Endowed with restraint of the sense-faculties, they are content to live carefully in heedfulness.

Some teachers have anger as their natural character – that is, whatever they do, they like to poke and fuss with that person or this one, injuring that person or embittering this one. They tend to be intimidating, pointing out other people’s faults: as for their own, they can’t find any. They incline to playing the spoilsport with regard to other people’s satisfaction. As for themselves, they don’t try to promote the arising of happiness or coolness. But they see danger in the slightest faults, and endowed with restraint of the sense-faculties, they are content to live carefully in heedfulness.

Some teachers have delusion as their natural character – whatever they do they tend to make mistakes, fumbling in a fog of forgetfulness. Keeping things clean is not amenable to them: they tend to be lazy and lethargic. But they see danger in the slightest faults, and endowed with restraint of the sense-faculties, they are content to live carefully in heedfulness.

Some teachers have faith as their natural character – that is, they are people who believe things easily. However they hear someone speak, they believe it. When they see something as the model of orthodoxy – however it is – they believe it. They don't find it satisfying to contemplate things in order to see with their own discernment.

Some teachers have knowing as their natural character – that is, when they see, hear or listen to something, they tend to test it out in order to see the truth with their own discernment before they believe it.

Some teachers have anxiety as their natural character – that is, whatever they do they tend not to have certainty in their hearts. They have doubts about this: “is *that* the way to get results, or is *this* the way?” They are not really able to settle down into anything.

Having explained a lot about individuals' natural characters in different ways, when we go back over it in brief, there are bound to be only two ways (to describe them): that is, just the natural character of a sage and the natural character of a fool.

Those overcome by greed, anger and delusion tend to engage in bad conduct by body, speech and mind. They don't respect the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Saṅgha. They don't have respect for the three-fold training or for states of carefulness.¹⁷ All they see is what they can get, what they can have, good things, things they like right now. Someone made up of unwholesome things like this for their natural character is called by the name: ‘the natural character of a fool’.

Those not overcome by greed, anger and delusion find satisfaction in good conduct by body, speech and mind. They respect the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. They have respect for the three-fold training and for states of carefulness. People who have modesty and contentment for their states of abiding see the Dhamma-Vinaya as a refuge at every moment. Someone with wholesome things like this as their natural character is called by the name: ‘the natural character of a sage’.

When we understand those two kinds of natural character, if we are partial to the fool’s natural character then we have to go and ask to stay with a teacher who has the natural character of a fool. When we stay in their monastery, we have to practise according to the natural character of the teacher. However the teacher practises, we have to train ourselves to practise along, following the natural character of the teacher in every way, except for things that are beyond our ability to do. If out of spite we don’t act according to any of our preceptor or teacher’s points of practise, our dependence on that point will be lacking. We won’t be able to stay in real contact with each other.

When we are partial to the sage’s natural character then we have to go and ask to stay with a teacher who has the natural character of a sage. When we stay in their monastery, we have to practise according to the natural character of the teacher. For example, if the teacher is not greedy, angry or deluded, if they live with effort and dedication towards the points of training and any other duties and activities, if we can’t find fault with them, we have to practise in accordance with that to emulate the natural character of the teacher in every way, except for things that are beyond our ability to do. If they are not beyond our ability, we have to do them. If out of spite we don’t act according to any of our preceptor or teacher’s points of practise, our dependence on that point will be lacking.

The Vinaya as it has come to us presents, in five ways, the trustworthy qualities for an initiate or a disciple who should be in dependence, namely: “*adhimattaṃ pemaṃ hoti, adhimatto pasādo hoti, adhimattā hiri hoti, adhimatto gāravo hoti, adhimattā bhāvanā hoti*”. This means an abundance of affection, an abundance of confidence, an abundance of conscience, an abundance of respect, and an abundance of cultivation in loving-kindness towards the person who is the preceptor or teacher.

When the child of a good family studies and understands the types of natural character in the way explained here, when they receive dependence living in a teacher’s monastery they have to practise sincerely and constantly, according to all the following features of the Vinaya allowances.

Upajjhāya-vatta details how a monk who is an initiate should practise correctly towards his preceptor. The correct practise is like this:

The initiates – that is, monks and novices – should get up (early) in the morning. If you are wearing shoes for walking meditation, you should take them off. You should arrange your robe askew to expose the shoulder on the right side. You should prepare a tooth-wood (a tooth-brush), with water for washing the face and water for rinsing the mouth. You should spread out a seat. If there is rice-gruel, you should wash a bowl and pour rice-gruel into it to offer. Once the preceptor has eaten, you should offer water and receive the empty bowl with respect, not banging or scratching it. After washing it, carefully put it away. When the preceptor gets up, you should put his prepared seat away.

If the preceptor wishes to enter the village, you should hand him his sabong and receive any sabong he changes out of.¹³ You should hand him his belt. You should use his upper-robe to line his outer-robe and hand him the two-layered robe. After rinsing his bowl, you should give it to him together with the water. If the preceptor intends for you to

follow after him through the village, you should cover the three circles of your body.¹⁹ Having put on the sabong even all around, you have to fasten the belt. Line the robes in two layers, wrapping them around yourself, doing up the tags and washing your bowl. Taking your bowl with you, follow after the preceptor. Don't walk excessively far behind. Don't walk excessively close. Estimate (the distance) enough for the preceptor to turn and speak to you – walking forward one or two steps to enable the conversation.

If the preceptor's bowl is hot, or full with curries or rice, you should receive the preceptor's bowl and give him yours in return. When the preceptor is speaking, don't talk and interrupt him. If the preceptor is saying something close to being an offense, you should act as if to ask "is speaking like this appropriate or not? Is it an offense or not prohibited?" – don't stop him with aggressive words.

When you return from the village, you should return first and spread out a seat for him. Prepare water for washing his feet, prepare his shoes and a towel for wiping his feet. Having arranged this, get up and receive his bowl and robes. You should give him a change of sabong and receive the old one. If his upper robe is damp with sweat, you should hang it out to air in a warm spot for a short period, but don't just leave it out there for long. Afterwards, you should fold the robe. When folding the robe, slide one edge over the other edge about four inches and then fold it so as not to wear out the centre of the cloth. You should place the belt inside the fold of the robe.

If food has been received and the preceptor wishes to eat, you should prepare water and then bring the food in. You should ask the preceptor if he would like drinking water. Once the preceptor finishes eating, you should offer the water and receive his bowl, carrying it low. Don't scratch or scrape the bowl when washing. After drying it well, allow the bowl to air out in a warm place for a moment, but don't just leave it out

there for long. Then you should put away his bowl and robes. When putting away the bowl and robes, you should put them away according to the description of the '*senāsana-vatta*' – the duties towards the dwelling.

When the preceptor gets up, you should take his seat and put away the water for washing his feet, his shoes and the foot-wiping towel. If the place is untidy or filmed with dust, you should sweep it and clear up.

If the preceptor wishes to bathe, you should prepare some water for bathing. If he wants a cool bath, you should prepare some cool water. If he wants a hot bath, you should prepare hot water. If the preceptor wishes to enter the sauna, you should grind some chunam and knead it with water. You should take a stool and follow the preceptor into the sauna. Give him the stool and receive his robes, putting them aside in an appropriate place. You should hand him the chunam for scrubbing himself. If you are diligent, you should go into the sauna with him and, when you have done what has already been described in the '*jantāghara-vatta*' – sauna-duties – you should take up your meditation theme while massaging the preceptor in the sauna.

When you are ready to leave, you should do what has been described in the '*jantāghara-vatta*' – you should keep your meditation theme while you help with the water for the preceptor. After finishing your bath, you should come out first, dry off and put on your sabong. Then you should help dry the preceptor, and give him his sabong and outer-robe. You should take the sauna-stool and set it out, (also) setting out water for washing his feet, his shoes, and a foot-wiping towel. Then you should ask the preceptor if he would like some drinking water.

If he wishes you to study Pāli, you should let him present the lesson. If he wishes to engage in beneficial conversation, cross-questioning your studies, you should accept the interrogation.

Whatever kuṭi or dwelling the preceptor is staying in, if it is untidy and dusty, then if you are diligent you should clean it, wiping and sweeping everything. When you are cleaning the kuṭi you should practise according to the description of the *senāsana-vatta* in every way, right up to filling the earthen water jar for cleaning.

If feelings of longing and dissatisfaction with the holy life arise in the preceptor and he wants to disrobe, let the initiates take him on a trip to another place, or, ask another monk to take him, or, converse on Dhamma with the preceptor to turn him back and lead him away from that longing.

If the preceptor becomes fed up, or disgusted, or doubtful, let the initiates try to assuage (those afflictions), or, ask another monk to help assuage them, or, converse on Dhamma with the preceptor to overturn them.

If opinions and wrong views arise in the preceptor, let the initiates talk him into abandoning them, or, ask another monk to help talk him into abandoning them, or, converse on Dhamma with the preceptor to overturn them.

If the preceptor needs heavy treatment – that is, *saṅghādisesa*²⁰ – and needs to do probation, or, while doing probation he falls into another offense and needs to be sent back to the beginning, or, he has completed his probation and needs to do penance, or, he has completed his penance and should receive the rehabilitation ceremony – let the initiates take the trouble (to reflect) in this way: “which Saṅgha community should give him probation, or send him back to the beginning, or give him penance, or give him rehabilitation?”²¹

If the Saṅgha desires to give a censure transaction, or, a demotion transaction, or, a banishment transaction, or, a reconciliation transaction, or, a suspension transaction – any one of these – to the preceptor, let the initiates take the trouble (to reflect) in this way:

“which Saṅgha community should not give the transaction to the preceptor, or which would give him an easier time with the transaction?” If that transaction has already been given by the Saṅgha to the preceptor, let the initiates take the trouble (to reflect) in this way: “how should our preceptor practise correctly, so that the Saṅgha will rescind that transaction?”

If the preceptor’s robes need to be washed, or, the preceptor needs to make robes, or, the preceptor’s dye needs to be boiled, or, the preceptor’s robes need to be dyed – in all of these duties – he should let the initiates do this for him, or the initiates should go out of their way (to help) in all of these duties. When you dye the preceptor’s robes, you should work the dye in thoroughly. When you hang the robe out to dry and it is still wet with dye, don’t just disappear, but stay and watch over it first.

If you haven’t spoken to your preceptor about it yet, don’t give a bowl or a robe or other requisites to some people. Don’t shave their head. Don’t recite chants for them. Don’t go out of your way to help them. Don’t receive a bowl or robe or other requisites from some people. Don’t let them shave your head. Don’t have them recite chants for you. Don’t let them go out of their way to help you. Don’t attend to them, following after them on alms round. Don’t let them attend to you, following after you on alms round. Don’t bring alms-food to them. Don’t let them bring alms-food to you. This is in case a person’s wishes are in conflict, and incompatible with, the preceptor. You have to discuss it with the preceptor first, and then you will be able to do these things.

If you haven’t taken leave of the preceptor first, don’t just go into the village or to a cemetery in order to stay there or even just to sight-see. Don’t just go in any direction you like to enter a village for alms, or

perform other duties. You should discuss it with the preceptor first; then you can go.

If the preceptor wants you to wake up earlier and go to a distant place for alms – the preceptor just has to say: “the younger monks should go *there* for alms” – then you go. When he hasn’t told you to go like this, and the initiates go to an area where they don’t see the preceptor, if they need to enter the village it is okay, even if they enter and happen to see the preceptor. Once they have seen him, it is correct to take his leave.

If the initiates want to leave (permanently), going off in some other direction, they should discuss the timing of it with the preceptor. They can plead their case three times: if the preceptor gives his permission, that is good. If he doesn’t give his permission, then if while staying in dependence on the preceptor the reciting (of the teachings), or, the cross-questioning, or, the meditation theme, or, the putting forth of effort is not being fulfilled, the preceptor is (proven to be) a fool – not skilled. Even if he doesn’t assent to you leaving according to your wishes and wants you to stay only with him, if the preceptor is like this, though he forbids you, it is alright to go.

If the preceptor is sick, you should look after him as long as life lasts. You should wait for him to recover; don’t go anywhere. If there are other attendant monks looking after him, you should try to find some medicine and, leaving it in their hands, say that these monks will look after him. Then you can go.

How should all you initiates practise well with regard to your preceptor? Just like this. This is the *upajjhāya-vatta* – duties to a preceptor – for initiates.

In the *ācariya-vatta* – duties to a teacher – a disciple, someone who takes dependence on a teacher, should practise well with regard to their

teacher. The correct practise with regard to a teacher is the same as the *upajjhāya-vatta* in every way.





THE METHOD OF DEVELOPING CALM

When the assembly of followers of the Buddha have studied, investigated, reflected on and understood the ‘going to the Triple Refuge’ by the method that has been explained, and they want to have unshakeable faith, they should further study the methods of calm and insight. The author of the *Visuddhi-magga* has presented 40 ways of (developing) calm, with the *kasīṇa* meditations, for example. The Buddha’s assembly of followers have thus heard, listened to, and understood a lot already.

I will present a summary, just enough to be what I feel is worthwhile, because I have seen that a lot (of information) tends to confuse people. If you only do a single thing, but you are true in doing it, the result is bound to arise because calm has singleness of preoccupation as its primary characteristic. But singleness of preoccupation has two forms: having a single preoccupation, and having one’s preoccupation come together in a singularity.

For the worthwhile practise of calm, I just want you to do *sati’paṭṭhāna*.²² In the *sati’paṭṭhāna* verses it points out that “*ekāyano bhikkhave ayaṃ maggo*”,²³ for example, and in the Buddha’s concern

for others, the ancient teachers have held this (teaching) up as a compassion of the highest distinction that can arise in a person's resolve. This compares to when a Brahma came to substantiate this point of the Buddha's concern – he bound up his words in verse so that it could be easily remembered:

*ekāyanam jāti-khay'anta-dassī
maggam pajānāti hitānukampī
etena maggena tarissu pubbe
tarissare c'eva taranti c'ogham*²⁴

This means that the path of purification – the end of becoming, the end of birth, the crossing of the flood – for all beings is only this single path of *sati'paṭṭhāna*. Anyone who has crossed over in the past, or anyone who is crossing over in the present, is crossing the flood by just this single path of *sati'paṭṭhāna*.

Thus in many other places, there is heavy praise of this *sati'paṭṭhāna*. At the end of the 'Greater *Sati'paṭṭhāna* Discourse' it points out the benefits: someone who develops *sati'paṭṭhāna* for as long as seven days, or seven months, or seven years is bound to achieve success in awakening – it describes how the Buddha inclined his mind towards the four *sati'paṭṭhānā* until the seven factors of awakening arose and came to growth.

When you see that praise for *sati'paṭṭhāna* is pointed out in so many ways, you should have confidence that what you hear could be true; the Buddha is like a great physician who is able to draw out the arrow, which is (the arrow of) doubt, from the world.

I will give you a simile to (illustrate) the problem: we had a serious disease arise and we have experienced pain and frustration for many years. We had taken a lot of medicine already, and the symptoms were the same or only increasing. Afterwards, we met a specialist doctor of renown. He told us "I had this disease myself before. I took *this*

particular medicine and my disease was cured. I have also given this medicine to others with the same disease, and after taking it, they were cured – lots of people, hundreds and thousands. If you regularly take this medicine you will be cured in seven days. If the disease has spread deeply into the brain, then taking the medicine for seven months, or seven years, is bound to cure you for sure.”

When it is like this, should we follow the doctor’s orders or not?

Sati’paṭṭhāna translates as: the place for establishing recollection. *Sati* means recollection. Recollecting at the body is called ‘*kāyānupassanā*’. Recollecting at sensation is called ‘*vedanānupassanā*’. Recollecting at the mind is called ‘*cittānupassanā*’. Recollecting at Dhamma is called ‘*dhammānupassanā*’. Recollecting other things apart from this is not counted as *sati’paṭṭhāna*.

In the various things that have come to us, the way *sati’paṭṭhāna* is usually presented tends to be ‘*kāye kāyānupassī, vedanāsu vedanānupassī, citte cittānupassī, dhammesu dhammānupassī*’ – a person should be thus inclined to see the body in the body, see sensation in all sensations, see mind in mind, and see Dhamma in all Dhammas.

If we were to categorise the external body and the internal body, external sensation and internal sensation, external mind and internal mind, external Dhamma and internal Dhamma, this would be burdensome and I’m afraid it would just complicate things for practitioners. I will point out just enough to see the difficulty:

The word ‘body’ means comprehensively every kind of body. Because of that, we can correctly point out the bodies of other people as the ‘external body’, and our own body as the ‘internal body’. We can correctly point to the entire body comprising every part of its form as the ‘external body’, and point to the particulars of the body, such as the breath or the parts of the body like head-hair and body-hair, as the

‘internal body’. We can correctly take outer form – that is, the four great properties of form (earth, water, fire and wind) – as the ‘external body’, and the form that we depend on – ‘appropriated form’ – as the ‘internal body’. Or, we can correctly take the entire mass of form – that is, comprehensively every aspect of our own body and the bodies of others – as the ‘external body’, and the body existing with the heart – whether it’s ours or other people’s – which we can still ‘see’ when we close our eyes, as the ‘internal body’.

As for sensations, the mind and Dhamma, they have different aspects in exactly the same way. We can therefore see that it is too difficult and intimidating, leading to confusion and doubt.

Let us take the ‘entire body’ – that is, every part of the material body from the soles of the feet on up, and from the top of the head on down – and call it the ‘external body’. When the child of a good family looks and investigates into the ‘external body’ in every way until they understand its characteristics, aspects, modes, colours and shapes clearly in the heart, that form will come in and establish itself in the heart. When we want to focus our attention on the material body, we don’t have to focus anywhere else – we just look right at the heart and we are able to see the material body in every way. Even if we close our eyes we can still see this material body in every way, because it is internal material form. Contemplating and seeing the material body that dwells in the heart in this way can be called ‘seeing the internal body’. In the words ‘*kāye kāyānupassī*’, someone who thus inclines toward this will see the body in the body.

As for external sensation, this means sensation that arises from sense contact as a cause. For pleasure, pain, or equanimity to arise, this depends on three causal factors – the mind; the eye, ear, nose, tongue or body; and sight, sound, aroma, flavour or tactile object. When they come together, this is called ‘sense contact’. Thus all pleasure, pain,

and equanimity arising from sense contact is called ‘external sensation’. When every kind of external sensation naturally enters into the heart, you don’t have to rely on external sensations. When you focus at the heart, you can see every kind of sensation existing thus in the heart. This can be called ‘internal sensation’. In the words ‘*vedanāsu vedanānupassī*’, someone who thus inclines toward this will see sensation in sensation.

As for external mind, this means the mind that knows according to its objects. That is, knowing the entire body with its head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth and skin, for example, or, knowing the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, or knowing everything outside – sights, sounds, aromas, flavours, tactile objects and ideas, for example – or, knowing every kind of sensation (that arises) from these: this is called ‘external mind’. The knowledge of all these things in every way naturally comes in and establishes itself in the mind – that is, as reckoning and thought. When you focus exclusively on the mind, you will see every mode of the mind come together right in the mind – simply knowing reckoning, knowing thought. This can be called ‘internal mind’. In the words ‘*citte cittānupassī*’, someone who thus inclines toward this will see mind in mind.

As for external Dhamma, in the three (foregoing) recollections you have one material Dhamma in the form of *kāyānupassanā*, and two sentient Dhammas in the forms of *vedanānupassanā* and *cittānupassanā* – which are considered ‘external sentient Dhammas’. Because the body, sensation, and mind here are still coarse in form, they are therefore called ‘external Dhamma’. When external Dhammas in every way naturally come together, entering the heart, coarseness completely disappears. What remains is bound to be refined – just the substance of normality. This can be called ‘internal Dhamma’. In the words ‘*dhammesu dhammānupassī*’, someone who thus inclines toward this will see Dhamma in Dhamma.

This presentation of the four *sati'paṭṭhānā*, making it into four (separate) aspects, is still a roundabout path that flies a long way from the actual truth, because recollection is one, and Dhamma presides over it. As for mind, it is mind; sensation is a mental characteristic; the body is form. Mind, mental characteristics and form radiate forth from Dhamma which presides over them.

Because of that, whenever recollection is established in the body, sensation and mind will also be established in the body. When the external body, which is coarse, disappears, only the refined internal body is bound to remain.

When the features of hot and cold, hard and soft appear, this can be considered sensation. Whenever recollection is established in sensation, the mind, sensation and the refined body will also be established in sensation. Because of that, we can't yet consider *vedanānupassanā* to be exclusively 'formless' meditation, but we shouldn't really say it is exclusively meditation (based) on 'form'. With the subtle subjective body still appearing, even though it is exceedingly refined, it should be called 'the emerging mind of formless meditation'.²⁵

When the subtle subjective body disappears, only the mind is bound to remain - that is, knowing reckoning, knowing thought. When recollection is established in the mind, with form having completely disappeared and not manifesting at all, this can be considered true 'formless' meditation. At that point refined form, on account of the body and sensation, is bound to continue to be there but it just doesn't manifest itself. For this reason you don't count it as meditation (based) on 'form'.

When the external mind due to sensation completely disappears, only Dhamma is bound to remain. When recollection is established in Dhamma - that is, established in the original chief - this is called '*dhammānupassanā*'. This still counts as 'formless' meditation, because

sentient Dhamma of a refined nature still appear. When you get to this point, *dhammānupassanā* in the way presented here, it should be considered ‘*uṭṭhāna-gāminī-vipassanā*’ (‘insight rising to its feet’) or ‘the emerging mind’ because it is the factor of ‘right recollection’ already.

As for what you should count as the true *sati’paṭṭhāna*: in the first two recollections – that is, recollection of the body and recollection of sensation, the modes of recollection that bring you to see the external body, the internal body, external sensation and internal sensation – in just these, you should consider them *sati’paṭṭhāna*. Because you see them in their natural state of normality, this should be counted as the substance of true *adhi-sīla* – higher virtue.

When you get to recollection of mind, the manifest objects of the mind settle down together in one place. This is therefore called ‘*sati-sambojjhaṅga*’ (‘recollection as a factor of awakening’) because the objects of mind come together, which is the cause that enables realisation. This should be counted as the substance of true *adhi-citta* – higher mind.

When you get to recollection of Dhamma, it counts as *sammā-sati-magga-samādhi*: right recollection in path-concentration, the substance of straight *adhi-paññā* – higher discernment.

Presenting *sati’paṭṭhāna* in this method, some listeners might be bewildered and not understand. That lack of understanding is because of one’s original view that *sati’paṭṭhāna* has four aspects, four categories, four entities. What has been presented here doesn’t interpret it in that way. The meaning here is that Dhamma, mind, sensation and body are one – one entity. Dhamma is the presiding chief which radiates out and becomes mind, sensation and body – the substance of fabrications.

Simply because they are fabricated, they can cease – but it’s not like they are going to cease in one place or another. When the body ceases, there is sensation. When sensation ceases, there is mind. When mind ceases, there is Dhamma. When there is Dhamma, there is no mode of cessation because this is the substance of the unfabricated. Dhamma has a singular nature; only fabrications can cease, in accordance with the Buddha’s words: “*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā, sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā, sabbe dhammā anattā*”. Fabrications *and* Dhamma are not-self. This also accords with the saying “*yad-aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ taṃ anattā*”.²⁶

You should see the unfabricated in any other place as not-self as well, but in this *dhammānupassanā* the three characteristics are taking us only to the ‘emerging mind’ because it (the act of recollection) is still fabricated. When the ‘emerging mind’ presents *itself* as not-self, that’s the end of the story for the three characteristics. From then on, it is the true unfabricated state: *atta-dīpā, atta-saraṇa, dhamma-dīpā, dhamma-saraṇa* are all *Dhamma-ṭhiti*.²⁷ Following the necessity of Dhamma, it is gone to the unborn, unaging, unafflicted, undying freedom from danger. This accords with the words: “*tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho*”.²⁸

With this brief summary I have presented a breakdown of *sati’paṭṭhāna*, enough to serve as a map or a geography (of the terrain), for the children of good families who wish to continue their studies.

Now I will present the method for developing *sati’paṭṭhāna* as a path of practise for the children of good families who want the true end of suffering. When you have encountered this book, you can investigate and practise accordingly, and when your accumulated natural character becomes fearless you will be able to realise a breakthrough to Dhamma, and cross the flood following the Buddha’s words.

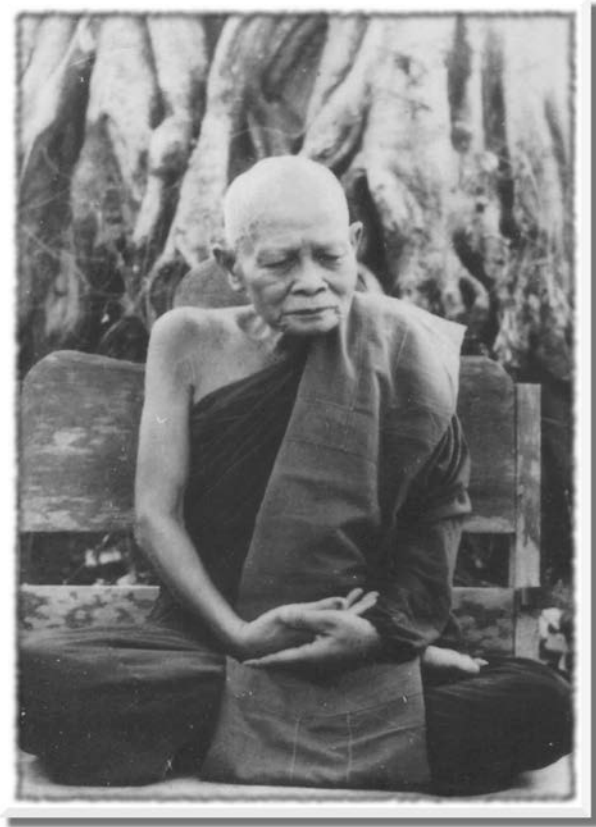
When the child of a good family – someone with faith – wishes to develop calm in the way of *sati'patthāna*, that is, to train in the practise of recollection, they have to promote a balance of heroic effort, patience, integrity and resolve. They should make a resolve, determining in their heart that, “I will practise recollection.” That is, knowing right at the body and the mind: looking at and investigating the entire body, namely, its 32 parts – head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, appendix, heart, liver, diaphragm, kidneys, lungs, intestines, bowels, vomit, stool, bile, phlegm, lymph, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, mucus, spinal fluid, urine and brain – understanding the locations, odours, colours, shapes, modes and characteristics of the parts: “this thing established *here* has *this* particular odour and colour, is shaped long or short, big or small like *this*; the modes and characteristics of *this* part are different from *that* part in *this* way”...

When you investigate to the point of clarity, you should turn your awareness to the heart. Whether sitting, lying down, standing or walking, doing any activity, seeing any object, don't let go of (knowing) the heart. Have your awareness on the heart continuously. Focus inwardly on the heart: don't withdraw for the sake of your eyes – it'll give rise to external absorption, which we don't want. Make the heart know just the heart and the body continuously.

Bring it to completion with heroic effort, patience, integrity and resolve. Whatever you know, whatever you see, don't be delighted – just keep knowing right at the heart and the body. If you want a meditation phrase (to repeat), then think: “the heart stays with the heart, the heart stays with the body”. Do this continually. When it rises to the level of *sati'patthāna*, you will know for yourself.

I will present the method for practising recollection with just this much. Rely on faith, with (the goal of knowing) truth as your motivation.

Don't be skeptical: it is bound to be everything you hope it will be.





THREE SCHOOLS

I will describe how the path of practise for the assembly of followers of the Buddha – those who see danger in the endless cycle (of suffering) – has been mostly regarded these days. It breaks down into three schools:

One school assumes that practising every kind of wholesome action by way of the body is for the sake of developing one's natural character, because they see that in this life they are out of luck – they have been born after the time of the Buddha, and the period of path and fruit is over.

One school assumes that the Buddha's dispensation still exists, meaning that the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha still exist. Practising every kind of wholesome action is only for the sake of ending suffering in the present.

Another school assumes that the time of the Buddha did not draw the period of path and fruit to a close, but they don't say or assume that the Buddha's dispensation still exists. If they are determined to practise in accordance (with the Buddha's teaching), they are bound to be able to. They can't say whether they will succeed, but they believe

that practising is better than not practising. Whatever level they achieve, they are happy with that level. Finishing the practice? Let it be. It depends on the destiny of their accumulated natural character.






SPIRITUAL FACULTIES

Saddhā – faith in the Buddha’s dispensation. *Viriya* – fearless effort in following the Buddha’s dispensation by body and mind. *Sati* – recollection in the midst of moods and objects of knowing in the Buddha’s dispensation. *Samādhi* – establishment of the mind in a single preoccupation in the Buddha’s dispensation. *Paññā* – all-around knowledge as it actually is in truth in the Buddha’s dispensation.

These five Dhammas are called ‘spiritual faculties’, because they facilitate the success of one’s work, in line with the wishes of the person who brings them to perfection within.²⁹

Saddhā, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* translate as: faith, effort, recollection, concentration, and all-around knowledge. Don’t forget these five things – be determined to remember them.





AN ANALYSIS OF APPROPRIATION

Suffering that we need to investigate is the ‘*pañc’upādāna-khandhā*’ – the appropriation and clinging to five kinds of aggregates: this form, this sensation, this perception, these mental fabrications, and this cognizance. *Upādāna* is just appropriation and clinging, which is the origin of suffering. The appropriation and clinging to the aggregates is called ‘*upādāna-khandhā*’.

If we classify *upādāna* according to how it goes out and appropriates and clings in four different ways according to the (teachings in the) Buddha’s discourses, *kām’upādāna* is the appropriation and clinging under the influence of sensuality, *sīlabbat’upādāna* is appropriating and clinging following the influence of virtue and duty, *ditṭh’upādāna* is the appropriation and clinging under the influence of views or opinions, and *atta-vād’upādāna* is appropriating and clinging following the influence of one’s own statements.

Because I said in the beginning that *upādāna* is the origin of suffering, I need to explain it so that you can understand, in order for those of you endowed with mature spiritual faculties to be able to divest yourself of a little suffering.

Kām'upādāna – the appropriation and clinging under the influence of sensuality. *Kāma* translates as love, desire, wanting and partiality. If we point out the place where sensuality becomes established, we have to distinguish between the internal and the external. The aggregates we have historically approved of as ourself, head-hair for example, are called 'internal'. Beyond that, whatever aggregates that have consciousness, or whatever aggregates that lack consciousness, are all called 'external'.

All love, desire, wanting and partiality in those types of aggregates, whether it appears as “that is me; that is mine; that is my essence”, or, assuming “that is another person; that is for consumption, for eating”, or, “a tree; a mountain”, for example, or, aversion and dislike, not wanting, dissatisfaction with those objects – appropriating and clinging in all those ways falls under *kām'upādāna*.

If we were to describe it in the way that we usually understand it, sights, sounds, aromas, flavours and tactile things are the objects where sensuality becomes established. Pleasure and displeasure, partiality and prejudice, happiness and dejection are all called 'sensuality' because they are all inherently appropriation.

To go back over it in brief: appropriation and clinging in those objects, such as the aggregates, whether it's under the influence of love, desire, wanting and partiality, or hate, aversion, not-wanting and prejudice, is all called '*kām'upādāna*'. This '*kām'upādāna*' is the origin of suffering in one form.

Sīlabbat'upādāna – the appropriating and clinging under the influence of virtue and duty. '*Sīla*' – 'virtue' – means normalness of body, speech and mind. '*Vatta*' – 'duty' – means practicing by body, speech and mind.

Good manners and behaviour, speaking gentle and endearing words, useful thinking imbued with loving-kindness and compassion – these are the characteristics of ‘virtue’.

Practising by way of the body means paying respects to the Triple Gem, or sitting and walking in meditation, sweeping the grounds of one’s dwelling and stupa, or, doing the right thing – such as paying respects and performing one’s duties in the practise towards one’s preceptor and teacher, for example.

Practising by way of speech means, for example, chanting, or teaching Dhamma, correcting translations, or intoning mantras, or, praising various qualities that one holds in high regard – all these things are accomplished by way of speech.

Practising by way of the mind means recollecting various things that one holds in high regard – generosity, virtue, meditation, calm and insight, for example.

Practising by way of body, speech and mind in the ways described here are the characteristics of ‘duty’.

Appropriating and clinging to that virtue and duty is called ‘*sīlabbat’upādāna*’.

We can distinguish two kinds of appropriating and clinging to virtue and duty. Appropriating out of faith in someone else, or faith in some model or mode of reckoning, for example, is one form and is characteristic of the true appropriation of virtue and duty.

Appropriating out of faith in one’s own knowledge and vision – such as seeing the merit in virtue, seeing the fault in vice, seeing the merit in duty, seeing the fault in someone who has no sense of duty, or, seeing as it naturally is, “when there is birth, there must be death; when there are the five aggregates, there must be suffering; suffering arises because of *upādāna* – appropriation and clinging – if I abandon *upādāna*, where will suffering come from?” Appropriating and clinging to virtue,

duty and natural states under the influence of one's own knowledge and vision is another form, and is the characteristic of *ditṭh'upādāna*.

Appropriating and clinging to one's own statements, words and expressions, such as someone who believes that "the words I have spoken here are right, good, and (about) the end of suffering", or "the words I have spoken here are wrong, bad, and not (about) the end of suffering": in the words that we speak, whether it is on Dhamma, or Vinaya, or about regulations or particular agreements, they naturally have (one of) three characteristics – that is, good, right and superior; bad, wrong and inferior; or neither good nor bad, neither right nor wrong, and neither superior nor inferior.

When we recollect those words, they might naturally arouse feelings of pleasure or disappointment, happiness or suffering through the appropriation and clinging to our own statements, words and expressions. Because of that, you should manage (to see) that appropriating and clinging to your own statements, words and expressions is the characteristic of *atta-vād'upādāna*.

Upādāna translates as appropriation and clinging, holding fast. Whenever it still appears, in whatever and to whomever, that person is bound to be unable to avoid suffering. This is an absolute certainty: there is no need to doubt this.





THE THREE-FOLD TRAINING

Outside of virtue, concentration and discernment there is no other path to the cessation of appropriation. Because of that, we have to study the aggregate of virtue, the aggregate of concentration, and the aggregate of discernment until we understand.


Virtue has many variations: the five-fold virtue, the eight-fold virtue, the ten-fold virtue and the monks' monastic code.

Concentration comprises momentary concentration, threshold concentration and fixed concentration.

Discernment encompasses worldly discernment and transcendent discernment.

The aspects of virtue, concentration and discernment can naturally be broken down into many differentiations in this way.





FURTHER EXPLANATION: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Tan Chao Khun's (perspective on) *sīla* and *vatta* is really on the confusing side and needs correcting... Please let me ask about a preliminary point first. In the three schools that see that the period of path and fruit is over, or see that the teachings still exist so path and fruit are still bound to exist, or see that whether or not they exist practising is better than not practising – Tan Chao Khun holds with which school?

A: I hold with all three schools.

Q: How can one person hold with all three schools?

A: With the first school, one sees oneself as down on one's luck, having been born after the Buddha is gone – the period of path and fruit being over because one lacks the accumulated natural character which is amenable to seeing the truth. But one believes that faith, heroic effort, mindfulness, concentration and discernment, which are called 'the five spiritual faculties', are bound to be the instruments for accumulating (that) natural character.

In this life, I have been born in the time of the Buddha's dispensation, so I shouldn't be careless. I should hurry and develop my accumulated natural character until it is completely fearless (in the practise), even though I don't realise path and fruit.

Thinking like this, being determined to promote one's accumulated natural character, is called 'holding with the first school'.

With the second school, which sees that the Buddha's dispensation still exists, it means that the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, path and fruit, still truly exist because one believes that whoever has succeeded in realising path and fruit, whether in the time of the Buddha or at any time since, has surely done so by practising according to the advice and teachings of the Buddha himself. The Buddha most definitely doesn't take path and fruit and hand it out to his disciples like we hand out mangosteens and durian. When the practitioners of the past realised path and fruit, it was following some aspect of the Buddha's advice. If we practise following that advice, we are bound to realise path and fruit *just like them*.

Thinking like this, when I determine to develop my accumulated natural character – whether it's faith, heroic effort, mindfulness, concentration or discernment – or, when I determine to cultivate everything wholesome, generosity, virtue and meditation for example, I don't wish for human or heavenly achievements in this life or in lives to come. I only do things in order to benefit myself, benefit others, and in order to escape from suffering.

Thinking like this, practising like this, is called 'holding with the second school'.

With the third school, one sees that practising is better than not practising: whatever level one gets to, Dhamma (of that level) will give its fruit.

I am partial to this. I see it to be true and I have faith that these words are completely wholesome. “Practising is better than not practising” – I take this to be correct.

When arousing effort, practising generosity, virtue, meditation, calm or insight, I encounter lethargy and laziness. If my effort becomes disheartened in any wholesome activity, I remind my heart “practising is better than not practising. Practising is better than not practising.” My diligence gains strength because of faith in this school.

Thinking and seeing in this way is called ‘holding with the third school’.

Q: Excellent! Excellent!

I would like to ask about the first days after the enlightenment, when the Buddha went to help Uruvela Kassapa and his one thousand followers. He helped them to taste the Deathless Dhamma up to the level of the fruit of ‘stream-entry’, and then he ordained them with the “come, bhikkhu” ordination. After that, he led them to Gayāsīsa and waited for their spiritual faculties to mature, ready to receive his teaching. When he saw that their spiritual faculties were mature, ready to receive his teaching, the Buddha then called a meeting to give them the ‘Discourse on the Nature of the Flame’. In this account, do those words “waiting for their spiritual faculties” refer to the five spiritual faculties, such as the spiritual faculty of faith, mentioned in the second section of this book?

A: I understand that it was those very five spiritual faculties, because they are things that one can make ripen and mature.

Q: How does one ripen spiritual faculties?

A: If we are determined in looking, determined in listening, and determined in investigating with regard to those types of Dhamma, this is a characteristic of heroic effort. It gives rise to faith and sincerity with regard to those types of Dhamma, because looking, listening and investigating are characteristics of faith. When faith and sincerity arise in some aspect of that Dhamma, one's effort becomes more fearless in that aspect of Dhamma. When faith and heroic effort become ever more fearless, recollection is firmly established. When recollection is firmly established, the mind becomes concentrated. When concentration grows, it becomes the entryway for discernment. And when discernment is perfect, that is an occasion for liberating path and fruit. The word 'ripen' in this case just means making them grow and develop.

Q: Beautiful Bhante! Beautiful Bhante!

Listening to Tan Chao Khun's presentation of *upādāna*, I was really confused. As far as the appropriation of sensuality, I was able to understand what I heard quite well, but as for appropriating *sīla* and *vatta*, that still seems strange to me. Is Tan Chao Khun sure about that reflection?

A: Which aspect of *sīla* and *vatta* are you in doubt about?

Q: You made the point that normalness and order of the body, speech and mind was 'virtue', and practising well by body, speech and mind – such as paying respects or sitting meditation, chanting or teaching Dhamma, or recollecting things that one holds in high regard, such as the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, or themes of calm and insight – was called 'duty'.

If it was the case that the 'virtue' and 'duty' that Tan Chao Khun has described was the kind of *sīla* and *vatta* that come under the appropriation and clinging to *sīla* and *vatta*, then I don't see how a

‘stream-enterer’ would be able to safeguard virtue and practise by paying respects or sitting in meditation or teaching Dhamma, chanting, recollecting the special qualities of the Buddha, or recollecting the themes of calm and insight!

A: Why wouldn’t a stream-enterer be able to safeguard virtue or practise duty?

Q: A stream-enterer has abandoned embodiment-view, doubt, and manhandling virtue and duty, cutting them out of their disposition. How could they practise?³⁰

A: I have presented *sīlabbata*, which is an area where appropriation and clinging becomes established in a particular way. On the other hand, you have come back and criticised me, thinking on your own that I have presented virtue and duty as wrong. I didn’t say anything about a ‘stream-enterer’ or a ‘once-returner’; I only spoke about the area where appropriation and clinging becomes established, or do you think that the ‘virtue’ and ‘duty’ that I have presented here are not areas where appropriation and clinging become established? Are they beyond the influence of appropriation?

Q: Appropriating, clinging and holding to these virtues and duties does manifest. They do fall under that very characteristic of appropriation, but how is there an escape?

A: I have already made the distinction on this point with regard to *sīlabbat’upādāna*, that appropriating and clinging to virtue and duty out of faith in another person, or faith in orthodoxy, or in some model of reckoning, is the true appropriation and clinging to virtue and duty. The meaning is: practising in a mode of stupidity. How will one be able to get beyond the range of appropriation and clinging?

Q: Going back to just appropriation – it gets abandoned. As for the *sīla* and *vatta* that a stream-enterer is able to abandon, is it different from the virtue and duty that have been described here, or is it just this virtue and duty?

A: It can be this virtue and duty, or it can be some other virtue and duty. I don't see any pathway for doubt here. Whether it just agrees with how you want to describe it or not – I can't guarantee it.

But I have to ask permission to cross-question you first, because in talking about 'just appropriation', you have deviated and taken up the *samyojana* Dhammas,³¹ which are within the range of what is opposed, abandoned and torn asunder at the path of stream-entry. Embodiment-view, which is abandoned at the path of stream-entry – how do you understand this?

Q: I understand that before the Noble Path has arisen, a person appropriates and clings to the five aggregates as one's identity. The arising of the Noble Path destroys appropriation, cuts it off, and for a moment one's knowing is equal to the five aggregates – by their nature they are merely just the five aggregates. The five aggregates are not one's identity. This can be called 'someone abandoning embodiment-view'.

A: And when someone has already abandoned the five aggregates, that person, who is a 'stream-enterer', goes on living with what?

Q: Uhhh... the word 'abandon' is just a conventional expression, so that we can understand each other for the sake of knowing the same thing. If I were to give a universal definition, it would be that a person knows equal to the five aggregates whose natural qualities make up oneself, beings and individuals. Cutting off appropriation and clinging to the five aggregates as oneself or as belonging to oneself, a person still

depends on the five aggregates, but this is called ‘the cessation of embodiment as one’s place of abiding until the aggregates break up and are destroyed’.

A: Now we can talk about virtue and duty.

With embodiment-view – appropriating and clinging to the five aggregates as oneself or belonging to oneself – when the Noble Path arises, that appropriation is cut off due to the strength of the Noble Path. It’s just knowing equal to the five aggregates, and then one has to depend on the five aggregates as before.

As for virtue and duty, when the Noble Path has not yet arisen, one safeguards virtue – that is, normality and order by way of body, speech and mind – and undertakes (one’s) duty – that is, practising correctly: paying respects, sitting and walking meditation, for example; by speech, for example chanting and teaching Dhamma; and by mind, such as recollecting the special qualities of the Buddha or the themes of calm and insight.

When someone has not yet realised the Noble Path, they cling to the notion that they safeguard virtue, they undertake duty, they recollect the special qualities of the Buddha, they recollect themes of calm and insight. Virtue belongs to them, duty belongs to them, the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha belong to them, calm and insight belongs to them.

At the time when someone realises the Noble Path and that person is able to abandon embodiment-view, virtue and duty then belong to whom? Virtue and duty must be abandoned as well, but the word ‘abandon’ here is only a conventional expression. To lay down the meaning: it is just knowing equal to the truth that virtue and duty, the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, calm and insight don’t belong to anybody.

With the five aggregates, they can be abandoned and torn asunder – which means they are not oneself or belonging to oneself – and afterwards one has to depend on the five aggregates. As for virtue and duty, once they have been abandoned and torn asunder, one must depend well on that virtue and duty. If there is no virtue or duty as instruments to depend on, one lives wrongly. If virtue and duty *are* present as instruments to depend on, one lives rightly. Because of that, noble beings don't have a manner different from ordinary people. Do you agree with this, or what kind of doubts do you still have?

Q: Tan Chao Khun has clarified and corrected the issue and ended my doubts. But I still have doubts about an issue that hasn't been brought up – *vicikicchā*: skepticism and doubt. A stream-enterer has been able to abandon this. They don't have to depend on doubt similar to (the issues of) embodiment and virtue and duty, do they?

A: Knowing equal to things that are liable to doubt is thus called 'abandoning doubt'. Properties, aggregates, sense-faculties, sentient-form, virtue and duty – these are called 'things that are liable to doubt' and therefore must get manhandled. When one knows equal to embodiment-view and virtue and duty, this can be called 'the abandonment of manhandling and the cutting off of doubt'.

As for embodiment and virtue and duty, which are things that are liable to doubt, one has to depend on them as long as one lives, but one lives finished with doubt.

Q: Good enough. In having spoken about the *samyojanas*, there is a little more to say. In the further *samyojanas*, one abandons sensual desire and ill-will, cutting them out of one's disposition. Does one go on living in dependence on sensual desire and ill-will similar to the (cases in the) first three *samyojanas*?

A: One doesn't have to depend on them, because sensual desire and ill-will are just defilements. Although normally a person is unable to abandon them, to count them as things to rely on is not correct. They are just what arise from a latent mix of defilements. Whenever they arise they make our minds hot and turbid, and then they normally disappear of their own accord. At the time when the Noble Path cuts them off at the root, you can say that those latent tendencies are torn asunder. Sensual desire and ill-will have no further place to become established – therefore we have the expressions 'abandonment' or 'knowing equal to'. Those words 'knowing equal to' mean one has escaped the ties that bind. If sensual desire or ill-will still inhabit the heart, they are called 'unabandoned' – one is still entangled and stuck. When one is still entangled and stuck, this is called 'someone who doesn't know equal to sensual desire and ill-will'. That is, they are still unable to abandon them.

Q: Listening to that is enough for me to understand a little. I suggest the principle is that once one is able to know equal to the *samyojanas*, whether those *samyojanas* actually cease or still persist is not the important point – the important point is that one is no longer entangled and stuck. Just that.

A: That's right.

Q: If that is the case, then as for the (five) higher *samyojanas*, I see that we take the principle in exactly the same way?

A: That's the way, but whether it's the lower *samyojanas* or the higher ones, it is not within the range of our thinking and reckoning to see the essence and take it to heart.

What has been presented here depends on study to point things out, just enough to give us a picture. This is because abandoning the

saṃyojanas is the providence of the Noble Path: that is, it is a benefit of the Noble Path exclusively.

Q: Excellent! Excellent! Beautiful Bhante! Beautiful Bhante!

Tan Chao Khun has described the aspects of virtue, duty and appropriation all the way to abandoning the *saṃyojanas*. That was really worth listening to. Now, as soon as virtue and duty have been cut loose, *ditṭh'upādāna* comes floating up of its own accord. How can I explain it further – isn't it the word for believing in one's own knowing, one's own seeing, right up to the point where one sees that being able to abandon appropriation is the escape from suffering? This is still the appropriation of one's perspective... What do you do to really go beyond appropriation?

A: Appropriation is subtle in nature. It is not within the range of worldly discernment to cut and tear out – it is the providence of the transcendent path. Transcendent discernment is able to cut and tear it out.

With *atta-vād'upādāna*, it is the same. We have to understand the nature of appropriation: it's not evil and it's not good. If we appropriate and cling to something evil, that is evil. If we appropriate and cling to something good, that is goodness. If we appropriate and cling to something that is neither good nor evil, that is neither goodness nor evil.

In appropriating sensuality, the wholesome aspect is going to be on the small side. As for appropriating virtue and duty, appropriating views, and appropriating one's own statements, if these fall under right view, right inclination, right speech and right action then they are absolutely wholesome. If they fall on the side of wrong view, wrong inclination, wrong speech and wrong action then they are genuinely unwholesome.

To loathe appropriation is not correct. To love appropriation is not correct. We have to depend on appropriation to abandon appropriation. Abandoning appropriation is not something you can do on your own – you can only promote the arising of the Noble Path, which is able to abandon it.

Q: How does one have to practise, to promote the arising of the Noble Path?

A: To promote the Noble Path one has to cultivate virtue, concentration and discernment. Virtue is virtue; concentration and discernment are duty. You have to promote virtue and duty to the fullest. I understand that the Noble Path will arise on its own.

It can be compared with fermenting sugar. If we want to make alcohol, we don't have to add alcohol. We just have to add bark or fruit with an astringent taste into the container. When the sweetness and the astringence eat each other up completely, the property of alcohol arises on its own.

This is like someone who wants the Noble Path and Noble Fruit, and wants to bring some Noble Path and Noble Fruit into being: they have to be full of virtue and duty to the utmost. The Noble Path and Noble Fruit are bound to arise on their own.

Q: Now this is a good opportunity – please let Tan Chao Khun clarify virtue, concentration and discernment, which are the constituents of the Noble Path, enough to serve as a path of practise.

A: *Sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* are things that have been extensively circulated within the assembly of followers of the Buddha already. I will point out just the essentials.

Sīla – virtue – is the five-fold virtue, the eight-fold virtue, the ten-fold virtue, or the virtue of the monks’ monastic code that we have all practised and safeguarded together. I don’t see any point worthy of doubt. Whatever kind of virtue you safeguard, just be true to it, that’s all. In every kind of virtue, there are three ways of safeguarding: that is, safeguarding virtue externally, safeguarding virtue internally, and safeguarding virtue by the middle.

Q: How does one safeguard virtue externally, safeguard virtue internally, and safeguard virtue by the middle?

A: External virtue is safeguarding virtue out of faith in someone else, or faith in some model of orthodoxy, in which you are given to know that safeguarding virtue or ordaining brings one a lot of goodness. Safeguarding virtue following a mode like this is described by the expression ‘safeguarding virtue externally’ and is labelled ‘*lokādhipateyya*’ – taking the world as one’s dominant point of reference.

Safeguarding virtue internally means not believing in others. One sees that safeguarding virtue is for the sake of wiping defilements and evil of a coarse nature out of one’s body, speech and mind. Abstaining from any kind of evil is because one sees the harm in that evil – for instance, like abstaining from killing living beings because one knows clearly that all beings love their own life to the same extent we do. And one sees the merit in refraining and abstaining from that harm – like in seeing the merit in abstaining from killing living beings: one experiences coolness in the heart because there are no murderous thoughts. For other beings in the world, this is called ‘experiencing happiness because of the ending of hatred’, since this person doesn’t kill living beings. Safeguarding virtue by seeing the harm and the merit for oneself in this way is described by the expression ‘safeguarding virtue internally’, and

is labeled ‘*attādhīpateyya*’ – taking oneself as one’s dominant point of reference.

Safeguarding virtue by the middle is the end of ‘external’ and ‘internal’ perspectives because one knows the nature of virtue. The nature of virtue is in the normality of the body, speech and mind themselves. Safeguarding here is a skilful means to keep the body, speech and mind from departing from normality. Normality here means a natural or normal state, like the mass of form being normal form, sensation being normal sensation, perception being normal perception, mental fabrications being normal mental fabrications, cognizance being normal cognizance. When one knows the normality of the five aggregates in this way, one can understand the way of safeguarding normality. Because the five aggregates are interrelated to the point of unity, states of derangement and abnormality can arise, right up to killing living beings or stealing, for example. Safeguarding is just for letting the body, speech and mind be normal following their nature – and not letting them become deranged or trespass onto the pathway of evil and misbehaviour. Safeguarding according to inherent, natural normality in this way is described by the expression ‘safeguarding virtue by the middle’ and is labeled ‘*dhammādhīpateyya*’ – taking Dhamma as one’s dominant point of reference.

Whatever kind of virtue is safeguarded, if it gets to the level of normality it naturally has this benefit: it can serve as a foundation for calm and insight.

(end of the analysis of the kinds of virtue)

As for *samādhi* – concentration – there are a lot of types. These are abundantly circulated among the assembly of followers of the Buddha and so I will present just the essentials.

Someone who has faith (naturally) wishes to develop concentration. When one gets to meet a genuine teacher who has concentration, or comes across some model outlining the method of concentration – with various methods and various types of concentration – according to someone’s faith or ideology, then don’t be averse to it if you want to learn. Whatever creed it is, just practise it. Every kind of concentration takes singleness of preoccupation as its ground. When the mind drops into singleness of preoccupation, it is naturally ‘*paccattam*’. One knows for oneself and diligence makes for mastery – that is, one becomes adept. When one is well adept and expert at singleness of preoccupation, this is called ‘someone who has a wish-fulfilling gem in their fist’. Whether you desire human achievements, heavenly achievements, or the attainment of *nibbāna*, you are bound to be successful according to your accumulated natural character.

The quality of concentration which has singleness of preoccupation can be distinguished in two forms.

If the mind is one in its object of concentration for a minute or a moment, before withdrawing from its object, this is called ‘*khaṇika-samādhi*’ – momentary concentration.

If the mind is one in its object of concentration for longer, and skill increases to the point where it could be a foundation for the first *jhāna* and a foundation for insight, then it is called ‘*upacāra-samādhi*’ – threshold concentration.

In both these types of concentration, there will be outward application, inward evaluation, rapture, pleasure and singleness, just like in the first *jhāna* – the difference is just in the coarseness or subtlety: because *khaṇika* and *upacāra* are not perfected with mastery, they simply cannot be ‘*appanā*’ – fixed.³² Although having said that, threshold (concentration) might become the foundation for the first *jhāna*. When a meditator draws up their mind to enter *jhāna*, the

meditation theme in threshold must first conform and converge (with the mind), before it becomes the method of *jhāna*.³³

As for threshold concentration as a foundation for insight – that is, after cultivating to give rise to threshold concentration – one must draw up the mind which has its object of concentration and enter into the knowledge of the three characteristics however much one wishes.

Because the mind in concentration can be compared with a clean cloth – it naturally takes the dye to whatever extent one wishes – the mind that is cleansed in concentration also naturally takes the dye, that is to say, *jhāna* and insight, to that extent.³⁴

Someone who wishes to develop concentration has to know concentration – don't see that concentration is only for mystics, or monks, or the Buddha. Don't see that it belongs outside of the Buddha's dispensation, or inside of the Buddha's dispensation. You should see that the nature of concentration is one kind of natural state – it doesn't belong to anybody. It's in the public domain, but it's exquisitely refined and subtle. It has a miraculous feeling of pleasure. If someone gives rise to it in their mind, they may succeed at whatever task they wish. And you don't have to be afraid of getting reborn as a pumpkin-Brahma because it is something that enables success according to your wishes.³⁵

In practising concentration, having a teacher to give you advice is good. If you don't have a teacher and have to depend on a model of guidelines, this is possible – just understanding the four *sati'paṭṭhānā* is enough. The four *sati'paṭṭhānā* are the true theme of concentration. The four *sati'paṭṭhānā* are distinguished into two areas: that is, internal and external. The body, sensations and mind are internal; Dhamma is both internal and external. If you take the body, sensations and mind as form-Dhamma and sentient-Dhamma, then Dhamma as an object is

internal. If you take other things, such as *kaṣiṇas*³⁶ or unattractiveness, then Dhamma as an object is external.

Whether it is internal or external, that's fine – the four *sati'paṭṭhānā* harmoniously coalesce into a singularity. To break them apart and isolate them is impossible. When recollection settles down and becomes one in its theme, the meditator will know thus: “the four *sati'paṭṭhānā* come together in a singularity”. When you understand this, you can recollect the in-and-out breathing as a single object to fasten recollection. Do this until *uggaha* and *paṭibhāga*, or threshold and fixed concentration, arise in order to be a foundation for insight.³⁷

Someone who develops calm should have recollection – knowing how things are for oneself in advance. Because the mind has settled down and entered into a state of subtlety, some people will occasionally have something terrifying arise, or something totally revolting, or something incredibly endearing, or completely infuriating. Someone who puts forth effort shouldn't be overly daring or overly timid – they should have (recollection of) the three characteristics overseeing things continuously: “this object of awareness is uncertain. Having arisen it will cease as a matter of course.”

When someone proceeds with recollection in this way, that person is bound to succeed in their theme of meditation in accordance with their wishes, and should further understand about the nature of concentration. This is because concentration means ‘the mind drinking from a single object’.

If the mind drinks from a single object and becomes concentrated, one is bound to understand that concentration is neutral – it is possible on the side of wholesome states or unwholesome states, right up to outward application, inward evaluation, rapture, pleasure and singleness, which are counted as factors of *jhāna*. These are bound to

be possible on the side of the wholesome and the side of the unwholesome.

In the various things that have come to us, where the Buddha has taught the types of concentration, he has exclusively taught the wholesome types of concentration, making it correspond to ‘right concentration’.

Because concentration is genuinely neutral by nature, it can enable the arising of success in the person who develops it, according to their wishes. All those beings who are wise sages, Buddhas, for example, have to depend on and praise concentration, not oppose it, but we must understand that the Buddha only praised ‘right concentration’.

Because of that, all of us who are in the assembly of the Buddha’s followers should be diligent in developing, and giving rise to, this concentration. It can be the foundation for insight further on, but don’t get stuck in (mere) concentration under any circumstances.

(end of the analysis of concentration)

I will present just enough to give the essentials of *paññā* – discernment – because what has come to us in various forms has presented a path of discernment in two types. The discernment that investigates and sees the arising and ceasing of fabrications is discernment of a low variety. The discernment that investigates and sees suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path (leading to its cessation) is discernment of a high variety. In other words, *lokiya-paññā* – worldly discernment – is low-level, and *lok’uttara-paññā* – transcendent discernment – is high-level.

The word ‘*paññā*’ translates as ‘all-around knowing’. The word ‘*viññāṇa*’ translates as ‘knowing distinctions’. The word ‘*viññā*’ translates as ‘clear knowing’. The word ‘*vipassanā*’ translates as ‘seeing clearly’. The word that translates as ‘knowing in abundance’ is the word

‘*medha*’. The word ‘*mati*’, the word ‘*sati*’, the words ‘*pañḍita*’, ‘*vedanā*’, and ‘*saññā*’, for example, all take on (some aspect of) the meaning of ‘knowing’.³⁸

Someone who cultivates the path of discernment should understand that all conventional labels only take feeling and comprehension as their measure. Don’t get lost following the conventions of this book as I present the conventional label – that is, discernment – explaining it just enough for you to understand.

In the beginning, when one develops virtue and concentration, giving rise to both, one should then reflect, giving rise to discernment – all-around knowing – with regard to the five aggregates. That is, know all-around with regard to form and the aspects of form. Know all-around with regard to sentience and the aspects of sentience.

‘Form’ means the meeting-place of the four properties (of earth, water, fire and wind) – a single mass which can’t really endure hot or cold. This is called ‘form’. The aspects of form: if I were to describe them (all) it would be a massive amount, so I will relate only a summary. As for the torso, which is about a forearm-span long or more, this is conventionally called ‘the body’, and it breaks into five appendages which are called ‘the head’, ‘arms’, and ‘legs’, respectively. These are counted as the aspects of form, which are (collectively) one form.

As for sentience, it doesn’t have a body – it is just knowing through perception. It only has a name appearing as its characteristic. As for the aspects of sentience: sensation is, namely, pleasure, pain, and equanimity; perception is recognition; mental fabrications are thoughts – pondering and reflecting; cognizance is knowing various distinctions. These are the aspects of sentience.

Form and sentience both come together and enter into a union called ‘oneself’, ‘beings’, ‘individuals’, ‘us’ or ‘them’ according to

conventions. One form and one sentience, or one form and a four-fold sentience according to its aspects, are called ‘the five aggregates’. When there is the appropriation of just these aggregates, they are ‘us’. In truth these five aggregates are (just) nature – once they have arisen, they cease. As for form, it ceases according to the nature of form. Sentience ceases according to the nature of sentience. They are uncertain, having arising, ceasing and change as their normality. They are suffering because of appropriation. Following their nature, they are not an identity.

Arising, ceasing and change is something certain. If appropriation can be withdrawn there will be a sense of ease, knowing that, following their nature, they are not our identity. In truth, sentient-form is not us, and we are not sentient-form: there is just a continuity of sentient-form.

If we see that sentient-form is ‘us’ – this is called ‘sentient-form which is presently a causal condition’ – and after death we must be reborn continuously, this falls into an eternalist view.

If we see that sentient-form is not ‘us’ and after death there is nothing, this falls into an annihilationist view.

Birth and death are absolutely the responsibilities of sentient-form. Our responsibility is to look and search for our self, trying to find it. To reflect until one sees however things are in truth is called: ‘the low-level discernment that sees arising and ceasing’.

Arising sentient-form and ceasing sentient-form is normally, inherently suffering: investigating and seeing that this is true, that it is something that should be genuinely comprehended, and that it *has* been genuinely comprehended, is the first truth. Seeing appropriation and clinging, arising from craving rooted in sentient-form, as the true essence of suffering, that it is something that should be genuinely abandoned, and that it *has* been genuinely abandoned, is the second truth. Genuinely seeing the cessation of appropriation and clinging that

arises from craving rooted in sentient-form, that it is something that should be genuinely realised, and that it *has* been genuinely realised, is the third truth. Comprehending sentient-form as inherently suffering, abandoning appropriation and clinging that arises from craving rooted in sentient-form – that is, the substance of the origin (of suffering) – and realising the abandonment or cessation of that origin – that is, cessation (of suffering) – is the true Noble Path of practise: seeing that it is something that should be genuinely brought into being, and that it *has* been genuinely brought into being, this is the time of the fourth truth. You can count the discernment which sees these four truths as a high level of discernment.

If we were to distinguish between worldly discernment, transcendent discernment and insight discernment, in the beginning one just sees sentient-form arising and ceasing continually until one sees the four truths manifest clearly to oneself, following the plane of merely knowing comprehensively through study like this. But the dispassion of the Noble Path has not yet manifested. This is the full spectrum of what is called ‘worldly discernment’. After the dispassion of the Noble Path has arisen, it is thus transcendent discernment.

This description has gotten quite long and lengthy, but it should be counted as just a summary of the essentials, because I haven’t presented the mind’s methods (for developing discernment). To do this would count as a summary of the essentials being called a ‘long and lengthy description’, because the methods of the mind don’t follow the long and lengthy description given here.

In the beginning, I said how virtue, concentration and discernment were important, but reaching the end it seems like virtue, concentration and discernment have disappeared. Suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the words virtue, concentration and discernment are no different. Whatever suffering there is, its origin is there. Whatever origin there is,

cessation is there. Whatever cessation there is, the path is there. Whatever virtue there is, concentration is there. Whatever concentration there is, discernment is there. Whatever discernment there is, the path is there.

Diligently think, diligently investigate; let a lucid singularity put a halt to thought.

(end of analysis of discernment)

Q: Excellent Bhante! Excellent Bhante! That was worth listening to and investigating, but it brings up some doubt – it sounds like path and fruit are unattainable, being overwhelmingly deep and profound. Please let me hear a little more... Do path, fruit and *nibbāna* really still exist?

A: If the five aggregates which are the place where suffering is established really exist, if craving and appropriating one who suffers really exists, if the cessation of craving and appropriating really exists, path and fruit are bound to really exist. If these things don't exist, then for sure path and fruit are bound to not exist.

Q: That is enough for me to understand that they really exist, because path, fruit and *nibbāna* have been made known in connection with the five aggregates. Listening to this is really worth thinking about and reflecting on, but I still have a small concern. Please let me raise another question first: if *nibbāna* has been made known in connection with the five aggregates, heaven – that is, devas, Indra, and Brahma... – it doesn't have to be made known in connection with the five aggregates, does it?

A: Where else would it be made known? And don't just talk about heaven – even hell must also be made known in connection with the five aggregates.

Q: If that is the case, please let me hear just a little about heaven and *nibbāna*.

A: You'll have to hear just a little bit.

Sights, sounds, aromas, flavours, tactile things, and the objects and moods of a cool mind – just things that are agreeable mental objects – are places where the full spectrum of pleasant sensations become established. This is therefore the ‘sensual sphere’ or the property of sensuality. As for form that exists beyond the property of sensuality, it is called the ‘sphere of form’. And as for the property of consciousness that exists beyond the property of form, this is called the ‘formless sphere’. What has been described here is all conventionally called ‘heaven’, but they have not been made known outside of the five aggregates.

To extract the meaning in brief: the sensual worlds, the worlds of form, and the formless worlds are completely associated with the five aggregates – in these three worlds, agreeable mental objects which are the place where pleasant sensations become established are ‘heaven’. Disagreeable mental objects which are the place where painful sensations become established are ‘hell’.

And in connection with just these five aggregates, beyond all the three worlds, is the ‘world of the Deathless’ or the property of *nibbāna*.

Q: Listening to this is really strange – it brings up faith. It is different from my original understanding. If it is like that, then what I have previously heard and listened to, that heavenly beings at the level of the Four Great Kings or the level of the Thirty-Three, for example, are constituted of celestial form and endowed with celestial objects of sensuality, furnished with superior sensual pleasures, delighted and content in a place of safety and peace day and night, with a life-span of more than a thousand years – it doesn't exist? If it does, then that

worries me a little, since because of that I would not yet be particularly partial to *nibbāna*.

A: Who cares whether it exists or not? You can't find a witness. But have you ever heard the Buddha's words in the 'Discourse on the Nature of the Flame'?

Q: Yes, I have heard them.

A: The words "*rāg'agginā dos'agginā moh'agginā... ādittan-ti vadāmi*": how do you understand them?

Q: I understand *rāga* is lust, *dosa* is resentment and anger, *moha* is delusion, *jāti* is birth, *jarā* is aging, *maraṇa* is death, *soka* is sorrow, *parideva* is lamentation, *dukkha* is frustration, *domanassa* is grief, *upāyāsa* is distress: the Lord Buddha said "I tell you that these things are a blazing fire." – this is how it presents itself to me.

A: Your understanding is already correct. With regard to the devas, Indra, and Brahma – have they already escaped from those fires or not?

Q: Where could they have escaped to?

A: That's right. When you know that beings are getting scorched and burned at all times in this way, shouldn't you also be worried? When it has come and burned you already, hasn't that shown you enough? If it isn't enough, you'll have to go jumping into fire some more. Do we understand ourselves as stupid or clever when the Buddha has said that these things are a fire? When we still see that these things are beneficial and good, this is just called 'not believing in the Buddha'.

Q: You are right. From now on I will think and look for skilful ways to get out of the fire by all means. But what is a good path-way for getting out? Please give me some advice.

A: There is no other path-way outside of generosity, virtue, concentration and discernment, because generosity, virtue, concentration and discernment are the very substance of goodness. This goodness is the one who wipes out evil. When evil cannot endure the strength of goodness, it has to be eradicated. When evil is eradicated and has disappeared, the flames of lust, the flames of resentment and anger, and the flames of delusion are extinguished on their own. That is bound to leave just the flames of birth, the flames of aging, and the flames of death as the flames (which are a consequence) of birth. When there is no more birth, those flames are extinguished on their own.

Q: There is no other goodness outside of generosity, virtue, concentration and discernment?

A: There's tons. Goodness arises by way of body, by way of speech, and by way of mind, in association with loving-kindness and compassion – such as building a Sālā or digging a well. It is just 'sensual sphere' wholesomeness. As far as generosity and sacrifice, sharing happiness with others – this is just merely a cause and condition for making suffering go away and experiencing the results of happiness in this life and the next, just that much. It tends to fall on the side of 'sensual sphere' wholesomeness, cycling and spinning within the mass of fire.

For the most part, the goodness that arises from virtue, concentration and discernment tends to fall on the side of 'sphere of form' wholesomeness, or 'formless sphere' wholesomeness, or 'transcendent' wholesomeness. For the most part, it lies close to the path that can extinguish the fires of defilement and the fires of

suffering. Therefore, you can reckon that it is the goodness needed for a person fleeing the fire – you should develop it so that it genuinely arises and comes to growth.

Q: In the analysis of virtue, concentration and discernment, I listened and was able to understand, but I feel heavy-hearted at Tan Chao Khun's condensed presentation of the four Noble Truths, that “whatever suffering there is, its origin is there; whatever origin there is, cessation is there; whatever cessation there is, the path is there”; or, the words that “whatever virtue there is, concentration is there; whatever concentration there is, discernment is there; whatever discernment there is, the path is there”. I investigated this, but I haven't gotten any clarity. Please, can Tan Chao Khun rectify this so I can get some of the meaning?

A: I can sufficiently correct your understanding only to the level of the path of practise; (for me) to rectify this (for you) all the way to the Noble Path is not possible. Having said that, I have to quote what has come to us in the ‘Discourse that Put the Dhamma in Circulation’: “*saṅkhittena pañc'upādānakkhandhā dukkhā*”. This means “in brief, the mass of suffering is the five aggregates when appropriation is present”. If the five aggregates are empty – with no appropriation – or, if appropriation is empty – without the five aggregates – they are not suffering, not its origin. It is specifically when the five aggregates and appropriation are interfering with each other, that the five aggregates are thus the substance of suffering and appropriation is thus the substance of its origin.

Discernment is the tool for making appropriation wither and fade. That is, discernment sees clearly that “this is suffering, this is its origin”. This is the withering and fading of appropriation and is the substance of path-discernment. The actual withering and fading of

appropriation is the substance of cessation. Thus we talk about the four truths, describing them according to their aspects as they truly are: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path are bound to come down together into a singularity in just the five aggregates. Does this rectify things enough to be able to understand, or not yet?

Q: Enough to be able to understand a little – I’ll have to set it aside to investigate and test it out further. In the point about “whatever virtue there is, concentration is there; whatever concentration there is, discernment is there; whatever discernment there is, the path is there” – how could this be explained? Please let me hear some more.

A: Virtue means normality. The true nature of the five aggregates is naturally normal – not good and not evil – there’s only their normal arising and ceasing. This (normality) can be counted as inherent virtue. With regard to the word ‘concentration’, you have to understand conventional expressions: speaking according to (differing) aspects and a single inherent essence, you get words like ‘view’, ‘craving’, ‘appropriation’, ‘sensuality’, ‘interest’, and ‘concentration’, for example. These are different only in their manifestation – their substance is the same: inherently neutral. When you investigate and see this clearly, you have to understand the word ‘concentration’ is inherently appropriation and clinging. This is normal – appropriating goodness is goodness, appropriating evil is evil.

If the aggregate of virtue is empty – without concentration – or, concentration is empty – with no aggregate of virtue – they are not suffering, not its origin. It is specifically when the aggregate of virtue and concentration are interfering with each other that the aggregate of virtue is thus suffering and concentration is thus its origin.

Discernment is the tool for making concentration wither and fade away. That is, discernment sees clearly that “this is virtue, this is

concentration”. This is the withering and fading away of concentration, thus it is path-discernment. The actual withering and fading away of concentration is cessation. When virtue, concentration, discernment, and the path get entangled and bound together into a singularity, the five aggregates are the place they become established, as has been explained.

Q: I can follow that, but it would be difficult to be able to investigate accordingly... If it is like that, then the three characteristics – that is, *aniccam*, *dukkham*, and *anattā* – are not the counterparts of suffering, its origin, its cessation and the path as well?

A: If we make our investigation subtle, I understand that they go together and are not different. This is because *aniccam* – uncertainty – means the five aggregates, through the five aggregates naturally having arising and ceasing as their normal reality.

Thus it is *dukkha-sacca* – the truth of suffering, and as for the truth of suffering, it manifests in the five aggregates because of appropriation. If there were no appropriation, the truth of suffering would not be able to manifest. Because of that, we therefore define appropriation as ‘*dukkham*’ – oppressive – in accordance with the word ‘origin’.

As for *anattā*, it is discernment: knowing inherent suffering – that is, the five aggregates – and knowing its inherent origin – that is, appropriation – as one natural phenomenon: it’s not a being, an individuals, me or myself... These are just phenomena of form and sentience: depending only on causes and conditions, having arisen they cease.

Whenever discernment becomes mature and fearless in association with the dispassion of the arising Noble Path, the power and influence of appropriation wanes, subsides, dwindles and collapses step by step. The discernment that wipes out the influence of appropriation, making

it wane, subside, dwindle and collapse is *anattā* – not-self – that is, (it is just) practise of the path. The actual waning, subsiding, dwindling and collapsing of appropriation is the substance of cessation, corresponding to the words “*yad-aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ taṃ anattā*”.

In presenting this, I haven’t attributed an essence to appropriation by seeing it categorically as the substance of filthy defilement. Appropriation is naturally present everywhere, all the time, right up to a person finished their training. But when someone gets to the plane of finishing their training, it has to be called by a new name: ‘purity’.

The Noble Path only cleanses out the sour and bitter nutritive essence, or the sap, that there is in appropriation. It just makes it wither and fade. It doesn’t abandon or draw out appropriation and discard it. Whenever the arahant-path arises, appropriation completely fades to flavourlessness, corresponding to ‘*visuddha-khandha-santāno*’. ‘*Khandha*’ means the five aggregates become pure, ‘*santāno*’ means that appropriation becomes pure, because the substratum continuity of the aggregates (‘*khandha-santāno*’) has faded to the point where it has no nutritive essence or sap – that is, defilement. The five aggregates – form, sensation, perception, mental fabrications and cognizance – are bound to be there, and appropriation is bound to be there, but it is no longer within the range of their abilities to get entangled and stuck, creating further being and birth. There is bound to be only perfunctory activity, or ‘undeclarable’ (moral significance to action). Thus it is called ‘purity’.³⁹

Q: Tan Chao Khun’s presentation of the Noble Truths here has been presented in terms of only ‘right view’ alone. The factors of the Eight-fold Path outside of ‘right view’ – such as ‘right inclination’ and so on – you think we don’t have to know, don’t have to understand? We don’t have to cultivate and give rise to these factors? “How are virtue

and concentration useful?” – we don’t have to talk about things in that way?

A: Once again – speaking quickly together makes us forget – in what I have described with regard to the words ‘suffering’, or ‘virtue’, or ‘uncertainty’, we have to understand that ‘right speech’, ‘right action’ and ‘right livelihood’ have been explained. With regard to the words ‘origin’, or ‘concentration’, or ‘oppression’, we have to understand that ‘right effort’, ‘right recollection’ and ‘right concentration’ have been explained. And with regard to the words ‘cessation’, or ‘discernment’, or ‘not-self’, we have to understand that ‘right view’ and ‘right inclination’ have been explained.

Q: How have they been explained? The types of virtue, concentration and discernment – Tan Chao Khun has just catalogued them in a heap. Speaking so briefly, how is the listener to understand?

A: Oh! Presenting things in this way was for the sake of understanding with regard to the word ‘path-convergence’, which is just the transcendent path, because someone who reflects on this tends for the most part to have doubts about how the modes and aspects of virtue, concentration and discernment will come together in a singular mind. If I present it like this, you are bound to be able to feel that it may truly be possible, and it will straighten you out according to the Buddha’s teaching methods on the Noble Path – elevating discernment first.

You must understand that I have presented the transcendent path exclusively. When the transcendent path arises, the aggregate of virtue becomes ‘abstinence through having cut off (defilement)’,⁴⁰ the aggregate of concentration becomes ‘transcendent concentration’, and the aggregate of discernment becomes ‘transcendent discernment’. You have to understand it like this.

Q: If that is the case, how come the Lord Buddha was able to teach the Dhamma in not just one way – like in the Noble Eight-fold Path he presented discernment and ‘right view’ first, but in the ‘Exhortation on the *Pāṭimokkha*’ he presented the lower virtue first? How come these aren’t the same?

A: Oh! That they weren’t the same was because the people who were receiving the teachings had temperaments that weren’t the same! If there was a group of people who had already done a lot of initial practise, like the ‘group-of-five monks’ or Uruvela Kassapa, for example, the Buddha would present the path of discernment directly, because the virtue and concentration of those people served as a foundation already.

If there was a group of people whose spiritual faculties were still weak, such as the thirty Bhaddavaggī individuals or Yasa Kulaputta, for example, the Buddha presented a ‘progressive talk’ – that is, generosity, virtue, heaven, the harm in sensuality, and the merits in ‘going forth’.

Or, if there was a group who had already left the home-life, such as any number of monks, the Buddha would just present virtue, concentration and discernment, which is the initial practise, like what has come to us in the ‘Exhortation on the *Pāṭimokkha*’, for example.

Because the Buddha was ingenious in using skilful means, he thus had ways of teaching which necessarily followed the temperament of his audience – often coarse, often subtle – in an appropriate way. Nevertheless, the words of Dhamma that he taught and instructed are bound to come together in a single path – that is, he taught just to abandon evil and cultivate goodness. When a being was replete with goodness, the Buddha would just point out the path of cessation of suffering, which is the cessation of its origin, for the sake of destroying *āsavā* – the compulsions of the heart.

All of us, who are the assembly of followers of the Buddha, must not see according to our coarse defilements that the Buddha did not teach any encouragement to practise goodness – teaching only abandonment like in the ‘Discourse on the Characteristic of Non-Identity’.

In the Buddha’s teachings encouraging abandonment he saw that, by way of body and by way of speech, only the coarse defilements – that is, greed, hatred and delusion – should be forced out, but to do that he had to teach an encouragement to practise the wholesome – that is, cultivating to give rise to virtue and concentration. When virtue and concentration have arisen and are present, whether you call it ‘abandoning’ or ‘withdrawing’, the coarse defilements can no longer remain established.

As for the subtle defilements – which are called ‘latent’ – the Buddha taught the straight abandonment and letting go of these wherever they exist. Getting to the ‘Discourse on the Characteristic of Non-Identity’, he taught to see straight with regard to the five aggregates, to give rise to ‘*yathā-bhūta-nāṇa-dassana*’ – that is, the knowledge and vision that arises in accordance with the truth, however it is.

When knowledge and vision in accordance with the truth, however it is, has arisen, *nibbidā* – weariness and disinterest – arises on its own. When disinterest has arisen, the dispassion of the Noble Path arises on its own. When the dispassion of the Noble Path has arisen, freedom – that is, the Noble Fruit – arises on its own. When freedom has arisen, *paccavekkhaṇa-nāṇa* – the discernment which is a tool for concluding that defilement of even this (subtle) level no longer exists for us – arises on its own.

I have just presented the way it is on its own. When the way it is on its own has arisen like this, we can suppose that we have abandoned defilement, or defilement has abandoned us, or defilement has broken loose from the heart. There is no need to object that ‘speaking like *this*

is right, speaking like *this* is wrong'. The terms 'right' and 'wrong' just lie in the perspective of the person who is speaking. As for Dhamma, there is no right or wrong – it just is, in its natural state.

Q: If you have presented 'the way it is on its own' like that, then we don't have to do anything – we can just lay back and wait for the way it is on its own?

A: It's not like that. We have already discussed how the Buddha taught to successfully give rise to knowledge and vision of the truth – the truth of the five aggregates – by the power of virtue, concentration and discernment, which constitute the initial practise. You have to practise following this teaching to the utmost, and then you will be able to see and experience the way it is on its own. We can't just lay back, do nothing and wait.

Q: The things that Tan Chao Khun has presented here – has he presented it according to some traditional model, or has it been presented according to Tan Chao Khun's own knowledge and vision?

A: Whether what has been presented here has been presented according to some traditional model, or according to my own knowledge and vision, it is *your* duty, and the duty of all the listeners here, to deliberate over these teachings and decide for yourselves what measure of truth there is to them.

Q: If that is the case, please let us listen finally to a 'progressive talk' step-by-step, in order to be able to go and practise according to the strength of our recollection.

A: If that's what you want, then determine in your minds to listen and investigate accordingly.

With regard to talk on generosity, the Buddha spoke with a lot of implications, not simplistically, but I will condense this into merely describing two types – that is, firstly, giving in order to successfully spread happiness to others with a mind of loving-kindness and compassion, and secondly, giving as a respectful tribute to a meritorious person who is worthy of respect.

The generosity and giving that will bring a lot of benefits is influenced by three causal factors: the article to be given is pure, with the giver having obtained it by lawful and just means; the intention of the giver is pure, not being stuck in intentions of greed, hatred or delusion; and the receiver is pure, being established in the characteristics of someone worthy of offerings.

If what has been presented here is fulfilled, then it is primarily good but the giver should know the substance of goodness. If they don't know the substance of goodness, then they are liable not to see that they get anything out of giving – there being only losing. The word 'losing' here is like something being burned up in a fire, or covered in ants, or falling into a river and getting washed away.

In generosity and giving, there is no 'losing' – only 'getting'. That is, we, the person who gives, 'get' to give; the person who receives 'gets' to receive. The word 'losing' – where can this be found in the act of generosity?

When getting to give and getting to receive arises in whatever article, that article becomes (charged with) the substance of goodness because it becomes an instrument for washing away the stains – that is, stinginess – that have greed at their root, making them lighter and fading them away. Therefore it is huge goodness, vast goodness, massive goodness. It is liable to adorn us with the arising of expansive happiness both in this life and in lives to come. It is the appropriate fortune for someone

who sees danger in wrongdoing to build and preserve throughout the past, present and future – called ‘the wealth of relinquishment’.

(end of talk on generosity)

In the talk on virtue, the Blessed One presented it through its manifold expressions, which condense down to two: firstly, the ‘virtue of a householder’, and secondly, the ‘virtue of one gone forth’.

The ‘virtue of a householder’ translates as the virtue of someone who maintains a home: namely, the five-fold virtue – that is, refraining from killing living beings, refraining from stealing, refraining from transgressions on the wrong side of sensuality, refraining from telling lies, and refraining from consuming alcohol. These are called ‘the five precepts’.

Abstaining in this way is, in other words, the ten pathways of the wholesome: that is, refraining from committing wrongdoing that arises by three ways of body – not killing living beings, not stealing, and not transgressing on the wrong side of sensuality; by four ways of speech – not telling lies, not giving piercing, inflammatory, vicious criticism to others, not using gross, coarse, abusive and sarcastic language, and not speaking in useless ways; and by three ways of mind – not focusing with greedy intentions on the sensual defilements and sensual objects that belong to others, not engaging in thoughts of ill-will – damning others to destruction, and not having ‘wrong view’ – seeing a wrong path to be the right one.

These ten pathways of the wholesome are, in other words, the eightfold-virtue, which is called ‘the temporary holy life of the Observance Day-virtue’. This is virtue of a high standard for householders who are able to see the harm in sexuality – that it is the ultimate instrument of attachment. If one is able to abstain from it, this is the ultimate instrument of ease. It is not feasible to abstain one’s

whole life, because one still breaks over into untrue Dhamma, so one should stick to it temporarily on occasion – that is, the lunar observance of the eighth-day and the fourteenth- or fifteenth-day of the fortnight. Determining to safeguard (this virtue) just for one day and one night, this is called ‘safeguarding the Observance Day’ – which means that one safeguards the peacefulness of the body, speech and mind from actions that are evil, or from objects and moods of the mind that make it scattered. That is, one determines: to refrain from killing living beings, to refrain from stealing, to refrain from untrue Dhamma – practising the (celibate) holy-life, to refrain from telling lies, to refrain from drinking alcohol, to refrain from consuming food in the ‘after-hours’ – that is, after noon, to refrain from dancing, singing and watching entertainments, or ornamenting the body with flowers, perfumes, cosmetics and dyes, and to refrain from lying down on beds that are high or large beyond measure. This eightfold-Observance Day-virtue is a type of ‘householder’ virtue.

As for the ‘gone forth’ virtue – the virtue of people who are ordained and practise the holy life, abstaining from untrue Dhamma now and in the future – it is, in other words, the ten-fold virtue that a novice or some groups of reclusive nuns safeguard, or, the virtue of the monastic code that is safeguarded by the assembly of monks. These are the types of ‘gone forth’ virtue.

I will say just this much as an outline so that you get the meaning.

Q: Safeguarding the five-fold virtue and safeguarding the eight-fold virtue have merits and benefits that differ in what way?

A: They have very different merits and benefits, because the form of abstinence is different. As for the five-fold virtue, it is virtue mixed with following the ways of the world and the ways of sensuality. It is the virtue of someone who is genuinely impressed by untrue Dhamma.

Therefore it is virtue that has beneficial results of a small order, because untrue Dhamma is a cause in which harm, suffering and danger normally become established.

As for the eight-fold virtue, it is virtue that has a lot of merits, and a lot of beneficial results, because it is a refined level of abstinence. It is virtue mixed with following the ways of the holy life. It is the virtue of someone who sees the harm in untrue Dhamma, that “it is where various kinds of harm, suffering and danger are established”, but they are not to the point of being able to abandon it completely – they can abstain from it for a day and a night on the lunar observance day. From this they receive a provisional and temporary coolness of heart, and they are liable to see people (monks and nuns) who are able to completely abstain (from untrue Dhamma), giving them however much coolness of heart.

As for what was said about ‘following the ways of the world’, the five-fold virtue, the eight-fold virtue and the ten-fold virtue have not yet gone beyond this, although they are successively more refined. This is because they all hold up ‘not killing living beings’ as their first principle. The virtue of the monks’ monastic code is virtue that genuinely follows the ways of the holy life and the ways of Dhamma, because it upholds the abstinence from sex as its first principle. Relying on this as a basis, we can infer the Buddha’s wishes: that someone who is able to completely abstain from sex is truly and correctly following the wishes of the Buddha.

One more thing – if we were to speak at the level of ‘abstinence through cutting off (defilement)’ of a person in higher training according to the model, we can consider that an individual who has ‘entered the stream’ has three actions (of moral abstinence) by body, four actions by speech, and one ‘right livelihood’. This is called ‘*ājīvam-aṭṭhaka-sīla*’ – virtue that has right livelihood as the eighth

factor. We can understand the meaning of this is that just the five-fold virtue constitutes their ‘abstinence through cutting off’.

As for the ‘non-returner’ or an arahant, this person has the eight-fold virtue – that is, the Observance Day-virtue – for their ‘abstinence through cutting off’. This is the virtue at the level and the plane of a person like this.⁴¹

If we were to consider the people who achieve these two sorts of ‘abstinence through cutting off’, we can (already) understand which of them will have more coolness of heart.

In considering things in this way, don’t misunderstand that the five-fold virtue and the eight-fold virtue are the virtue of a noble being, and don’t think that they are the virtue of a run-of-the-mill person. If they were the virtue of a noble being, then those of us who are ordinary people would not be able to safeguard them. If they were the virtue of run-of-the-mill people, then noble beings would not be able to safeguard them. Virtue is genuinely neutral. It is a true natural state. It is universal ‘public-domain’ Dhamma for the beings of the world.

Whoever truly safeguards virtue at whatever level, they are liable to see the results and the usefulness for themselves at that level. You don’t have to ask anyone about it.

(end of talk on virtue)

In the talk on heaven, the Blessed One presented this with a myriad of implications, not categorically. What I will hold up for presentation here is just enough of a synopsis for you to get the general idea. The word ‘*saggo*’ translates as ‘heaven’, and ‘heaven’ can be further translated as ‘the world of superior mental objects and moods’, or ‘the superior world of mental objects and moods’. The meaning of this is that tree-devas, earth-devas, sky-devas, the devas of the Four Great Kings, up to the level of devas Who-delight-in-controlling-the-creations-

of-others are all called 'heaven' – right up to the level of Brahma it is called 'heaven', because they have superior mental objects and moods.

Accordingly, each and every group of devas have a bodily appearance of dignified demeanor, beautiful bearing, radiant splendence, adorned with dazzling necklaces and decorative sashes. They have celestial pleasure-palaces with thrones of gold and silver in the likeness of dragons. There are celestial maidens by the thousands, tens-of-thousands, hundreds-of-thousands, sitting in the air and waiting to lavish their attention, making the deva kings on the thrones completely infatuated with sensuality.

They behave according to their temperament, partaking of celestial food with the most absolutely appealing flavours, never doing without, never feeling hunger. They don't have to buy this food, they don't have to go looking for it, they don't have to farm or tend orchards – everything of a celestial nature simply arises from goodness.

Because they have massive funds (of goodness) – that is, generosity, virtue and meditation – that they have accumulated with faith, they have subsequently been reborn as devas, something to admire and wonder at. They are all long-lived, even up to ten million years.

Of the deva worlds I have related only enough to serve as a summary; I will now describe celestial endowments. The human earcup is barely able to listen (to such things) – they are truly engrossing and enthralling – and don't think that this is only the deva world: the endowments of happiness and pleasure that arise because of the miracles of goodness even in the human world are beyond my ability to adequately and completely describe, such as that of great kings, ministers, court officials, and the millionaires all over the world these days.

They all naturally experience superior mental objects – that is, sights, sounds, aromas, flavours, tactile objects, and everything of

absolutely the highest quality: buildings, shops, houses, estates and halls all shapely and attractive like mansions, with electricity like heavenly fire used for illumination and to regulate the flow of air. They travel in vehicles pulled by multitudes of thunderous strange horses, or in motorcars that move by the power of combustion in accordance with their heart's desire. Beautiful pale goddesses ride up with them in the carriages – the carriages of the rickshaws, automobiles and trains – in every direction. Magnificent ships ply the waterways, powered by electricity or coal. Day and night, there seems to be comfort and joy all over the cities, with jeweled rings and uncountable silver coins giving delight and contentment.

Why would they concern themselves with human endowments? They are absorbed and engrossed by day and by night, but the King of Death is somewhere lurking...

If we were to point to this illustration as a measure of human endowments, it should be called '*saggo*' or 'heaven'. There is no need for doubts about the truth – the human endowments that have been described here are naturally achieved through the power of goodness, the goodness of generosity, virtue and meditation that has been accumulated, under the influence of faith, from previous lives. This is for certain.

If anyone wants happiness in the world of human beings or the world of devas, they shouldn't be careless about generosity, virtue and meditation. When we haven't yet realised *nibbāna*, these are the things we have to depend on for happiness in every life.

(end of talk on heaven)

In the talk on the drawbacks of sensuality, the Blessed One presented this through its implications, not unilaterally. I will bring up for presentation here just enough of the essentials to convey the meaning.

‘*Kāma*’ – ‘sensuality’ – translates as desire or obsession. The Buddha divided this into two – that is, firstly, sensual defilement, and secondly, sensual objects. Lust, love, desire, anger and delight, greed, hatred and delusion, for example, are the characteristics of defilement. Sights, sounds, aromas, flavours, tactile objects, conscious things and unconscious things are the characteristics of ‘objects’.

If we were to condense this, it is bound to be one – because objects are the place where defilement becomes established. If there were no objects to become established in, defilement would not be able to arise. We can then agree that objects, sensuality, and defilement come together as ‘defiled sensuality’. Condensing ‘defiled sensuality’ into one (word), we are bound to be left with just ‘sensuality’. If we use just the single word ‘sensuality’, the listener has to understand that we are talking about all three aspects (– objects, sensuality and defilement).

All sensuality, whether it is human or celestial, in truth naturally offers only a little delight. It is permeated with various kinds of harm, suffering, danger and distress, a burden with regard to three periods: that is, (the period of) searching, (the period of) maintaining, and (the period of) being separated.

In truth, the beings of the world experience harm, suffering, danger and distress of the various kinds that there are these days, with sensuality as the natural cause. People who are shackled in jail or in prison, as happens these days, have just this sensuality as the cause. People with issues, making accusations against each other until they have to enter some court of law according to the level and jurisdiction (of their complaints) – for example, a king and another king on the march coming up against each other in competition, or, businessmen, millionaires, moguls, merchants and labourers raising accusations of ‘master’ or ‘slave’, challenging each other, taking up sticks and clods of

earth, persecuting and destroying each other – as happens these days, all naturally have sensuality as the cause.

The nature of sensuality offers little delight, and a lot of harm, suffering and danger burdening the one who tries to oversee it. Sensuality as a whole, the Buddha compared to a pit of flaming coal – liable to kill the person who falls into it, or bring them suffering to the edge of death.

Furthermore, he compared it to a hunk of meat – if an animal were to have a piece hanging from their mouth, they are liable to get hacked and pecked and crushed and bitten by their friends and rivals.

Furthermore, he compared it to playing with fire – if someone were to take it up, not letting go, when the wind came it would naturally fan the flames, burning and ravaging the person's body, giving them nothing but trouble.

Furthermore, he compared it to fruit – when it comes forth in whatever tree, overwhelming and bending the branches, they come down, crushing the person who wants the fruit.

Furthermore, he compared it to a sharp sword or spear – anyone who is absentminded or careless will impale themselves and will naturally receive injuries and pain.

Furthermore, he compared it to the head of a poisonous snake – someone who is not judicious trods near it and will naturally experience suffering from the poison, which kills them or brings them to the edge of death.

Furthermore, he compared it to a chopping block – someone wants to mince up only the meat, but the chopping block gets cut with every slice.

Furthermore, he compared the full spectrum of sensuality to borrowed goods – once one has used them they have to go back to their owner.

Furthermore, he compared it to something seen in a dream – once one wakes up, it all just disappears.

Relying on these similes for sensuality that the Buddha has related, we get the point that there is small happiness and delight to be had, permeated with a lot of harm, suffering, danger and distress. Because of that, countless wise people in the world before the time of the Buddha, or during the time of the Buddha, or these days, tend to see the harm in sensuality, and therefore ‘go forth’ into the homeless life as hermits and wanderers, practising far from centres of sensuality with the desire to escape from sensuality. Right up to the perfectly enlightened Buddha – he saw the harm in sensuality and thus was able to renounce his royalty, going forth as a monk.

At the time when the Buddha realised the true Deathless Dhamma, he highlighted the harm of sensuality and presented it as wrong – like when he presented ‘bound and attached to sense-pleasures’ at the beginning of the ‘Discourse that Put the Dhamma in Circulation’, for example.

This is enough to be a path-way for all of us to reflect accordingly, that the full spectrum of sensuality is something that is truly harmful. When we see the harm in sensuality – which is the sensuality that human beings experience, permeated with this harm – then even though there may be objects and moods of sensuality of a celestial or heavenly nature, they are bound to be full of much harm and little merit in the same way, because they are not above the three characteristics: that is, they arise, persist, and change as their normal nature. Although one may be a deva, Indra or Brahma, one still falls within uncertainty. In things that are uncertain, to derive pleasure anywhere from them, or to see that a long life-span would give us pleasure – this is a point on which we need to reflect well.

A long life-span and a short life-span are the same. Because pleasure and pain are particular to the present moment only, how long of a life-span can they have? Pleasure and pain from the past, from this morning all the way back to the day you were born – to take them and experience them as pleasure or pain this afternoon is not possible. Pleasure and pain on the side of the future that haven't come yet, counting from this evening right up to the day you die – to take them and experience them this afternoon as pleasure or pain is also not possible. We can only work exclusively with the pleasure and pain of the present moment. If we just work with present-moment pleasure and pain, a long life-span and a short life-span are equal – they both only have the present moment.

If we contemplate to see the advantages and disadvantages, appearing to us in this way, we are bound to feel weariness and disinterest towards objects and moods of sensuality, because we see that uncertainty and change is oppressive, and that it is universally not our identity. That is, the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body – the masses of internal form – are not certain. Sights, sounds, aromas, flavours and tactile objects – the masses of external form that compliment internal form – are not certain. The intellect is an internal sentient phenomenon – it's not certain. Ideas, the compliment of internal sentience, are external sentient phenomena – they're not certain.

When all things, which are uncertain, are pushing and pressing against each other – whether it is felt as pleasure or pain – what is there to be inspired and delighted about?

Form and sentience themselves are inherently sensual, and form and sentience are normally and naturally uncertain. The full spectrum of sensuality, even though it may be celestial or heavenly, is called 'something thoroughly uncertain', but it is not only uncertain: whenever it still has fires burning us – that is, lust, anger and delusion; birth,

aging and death; sorrow, lamentation, frustration, grief and distress, accordingly – the Buddha said that these fires of defilement and fires of suffering are pushing and pressing against us at every moment. Mull this over well – it’s incredibly pitiful.

(end of talk on the drawbacks of sensuality)

With regard to the benefits of renunciation, the Blessed One proclaimed this with a great deal of implications; it is really worth listening to, worth investigating. But here I will present and highlight just enough for you to get the essential meaning, like when the Buddha taught the group-of-five monks “*dve me bhikkhave antā pabbajitena na sevittabā*” – someone ‘gone forth’ who sees danger in the cycle (of birth and death) should not partake of two types of natural states. That is, “*kāma-sukh’alikkānuyogo*” – establishing effort in oneself to practise ongoing adherence to sensual pleasure, and “*atta-kilamathānuyogo*” – establishing effort in oneself to practise taking on difficulty and deprivation.

These two are both naturally “*hīno*” – poor, contemptible things, “*gammo*” – practises of village-folk, “*pothujaniko*” – things for run-of-the-mill people encrusted with defilement, “*anariyo*” – not for noble beings, and “*anatta-sañhito*” – they are dhammas with no overarching point or purpose.

Then he taught that the middle path – that is, the Eight-fold Path with ‘right view’, for example – was the way that didn’t stop or circle or get entangled and stuck in those two crude dhammas in this way.

We can take this to mean that the Eight-fold Path should be counted as the Dhamma of renunciation, which is the instrumental quality for truly leaving sensuality behind in one form, because the method for leaving sensuality behind has two types – that is, leaving behind by way of the body, and leaving behind by way of the heart.

Leaving behind by way of the body is assuming that the role of one 'gone forth' is the best. This is because the role of one 'gone forth' is secluded far from objects that are provocative to the mind. In truth, someone who is determined to refrain from and avoid sensual pleasures, abstaining from sex, and who doesn't need to acquiesce to wearing black or red or green or white or yellow or shirts or pants or moustaches or longhair or shorthair is called 'one gone forth' in every way.

With regard to someone who takes on the role of 'one gone forth' and pledges to themselves that they will be 'one gone forth' in this way, if they are still beset with the duties of supporting a home and family, then they shouldn't be counted as 'one gone forth' at all. This is because they don't have renunciation, the instrumental quality for leaving sensuality behind.

The obtaining of bodily seclusion is a cause and condition for obtaining mental seclusion. That is, someone who is 'gone forth', having withdrawn bodily from sensual objects, has to contemplate, giving rise to faith and heroic effort, which make recollection, concentration and discernment arise.

If recollection and concentration are well established, and the mind has an object in which it is established, the heart will naturally be withdrawn from sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, and thoughts of cruelty. This is counted as right thought. It is renunciation, the instrumental quality that leaves sensuality of the heart behind.

We should take this to mean that practising abstinence from sex is the quality of renunciation that leaves sensuality behind by way of the body. This enables the arising of a concentrated mind, which can prevent sensual thoughts and is the quality of renunciation that leaves sensuality behind by way of the heart.

Someone withdrawn from sensuality at this level has not yet arrived at ‘abstinence through cutting off (defilement)’, but getting even this far one naturally experiences the results – that is, happiness and pleasure of body and mind. Because one is not beset with the duties of supporting others through finding a material livelihood, it is a clear and favourable opportunity – there is nothing in opposition – with regard to the duties of developing calm and insight. Success in virtue and *jhāna* opens the door to the path which leads to clear knowing and liberation.

This is the end of the fires of defilement and the fires of suffering, because one is utterly removed from dangerous repercussions. In this way, finishing one’s work, according to the accumulated natural character of the person who practises, is the ultimate benefit of the quality of renunciation.

(end of talk on the benefits of renunciation)

The perfectly enlightened Lord Buddha was ingenious in using skilful means to present the Dhamma, drawing out the implications with various methods of teaching, according to the accumulated natural character of beings to be trained. It is appropriate for us, the assembly of followers of the Buddha, to reflect accordingly, giving rise to faith and inspiration until we are able to know for ourselves that we can be a refuge unto ourselves. This is the ultimate rightness in the practise of the Buddha’s dispensation.⁴²

We should practise and train to set our body, speech and mind in order, beyond misbehaviour, having qualities of ‘true human value’ within us at all times. Qualities of ‘true human value’ have fourteen features, which the Buddha divided into two groups of seven:

first group

1. *saddhā* – faith in the Buddha’s dispensation
2. *hiri* – shying away from evil
3. *otappa* – being appalled at evil
4. *bāhu-sacca* – having heard and remembered much in the
Buddha’s dispensation
5. *viriyārambha* – arousing heroic effort
6. *sati* – recollection within *sati’paṭṭhāna*
7. *paññā* – all-around knowing with regard to *sati’paṭṭhāna*

second group

1. *dhammaññū* – someone who normally knows states of
normality
2. *atthaññū* – knowing the substance and meaning of ‘normal’
3. *attaññū* – knowing oneself
4. *mattaññū* – knowing the right amount
5. *kālaññū* – knowing the right time
6. *parisaññū* – knowing one’s audience
7. *puggalaññū* – knowing the individual

Whoever has read or listened, reflected, and has felt a sense of sincerity arising in line with what has been related here – become someone who knows yourself.

If you know yourself, you will naturally obtain a refuge for yourself, and you won’t have wasted the opportunity of your birth and encounter with the Buddha’s dispensation.



ENDNOTES

¹ Monks will usually recite a verse or a line in Pāli from the Buddha's teaching to set the theme for a talk. Tan Chao Khun Upāli has apparently spontaneously composed his own verse in Pāli. It reads: "The one named 'Siricando' thus pays homage to the Triple Gem. I will speak on the breakdown of natural character, for the happiness and awakening of my students."

² Traditionally these 10 '*pāramī*', or 'spiritual perfections', are further distinguished into 3 levels: the 10 '*pāramī*' – spiritual perfections for the sake of which one is willing to sacrifice wealth and property, or to lose friends and family relationships; the 10 '*upapāramī*' – spiritual perfections for the sake of which one is willing to sacrifice one's own limbs and health; and the 10 '*paramattha-pāramī*' – spiritual perfections one is ready to die for. Analysing them by the level of one's commitment constitutes the basic level, moderate level and highest level referred to, and results in a total of 30.

³ Enlightened disciples are commonly referred to exclusively as 'arahants', and their ultimate teachers exclusively as 'Buddhas', although this is merely a linguistic convention. The word 'arahant' denotes someone free from defilement, and is thus synonymous with being enlightened, or a 'buddha'. Traditionally, enlightened beings are classified as '*sammā-sambuddha*' – someone who becomes enlightened on their own and then becomes a world-teacher, a '*pacceka-buddha*' – someone who becomes enlightened on their own

but their liberation remains a private matter, or a ‘*sāvaka-buddha*’ or ‘*anubuddha*’ – an enlightened disciple.

All three of these great beings are arahants who have developed the 10 spiritual perfections to either a near-infinite scope (*sammā-sambuddha*), at least to the massive extent necessary for unaided enlightenment (*pacceka-buddha*), or at least to the amount needed for enlightenment (*sāvaka-buddha*).

The term ‘*Bodhisatta*’ previously referred to in the talk is given here slightly unusually, in the sense of a being striving to become a ‘Buddha’ of any kind. Elsewhere in the talk Tan Chao Khun Upāli reverts to convention, using the terms ‘*Bodhisatta*’ and ‘Buddha’ in their more usual sense, referring to Siddhattha Gotama before and after he became a *sammā-sambuddha* of the present age.

⁴ Tradition recognises five ‘duties’ of a Buddha, which all *sammā-sambuddhas* uphold throughout their lives. These are: 1) surveying the minds of beings in the early pre-dawn to see who is ripe for being taught, 2) going on almsround in the morning to give people a chance to create the goodness of generosity, 3) spending the afternoon receiving and teaching laypeople, 4) teaching monks in the evening, and 5) receiving and teaching devas (celestial beings) and beings of other realms late at night. These five duties are regarded as the selfless life of a Buddha, and are the duties also referred to on page 7.

⁵ These three characteristics are a traditional Thai way of describing the Buddha. ‘Buddha’ is usually explained in Thai as ‘*pooh roo*’ – one who knows (in purity), ‘*pooh deun*’ – one who has awakened (through discernment), and ‘*pooh berk bahn*’ – one who has blossomed widely (with compassion).

⁶ Our experience at any moment in life can be analysed into five ‘aggregate’ qualities – form, sensation, perception, mental fabrications and cognizance. As a frame of reference, this will be explained more fully throughout the book.

⁷ An occasion of ‘cessation’ in dependent origination generally means the permanent impossibility of arising anew, due to the ‘cessation’ of its necessary cause – which in turn can be traced back all the way to the actual destruction of ignorance. The sub-commentarial explanation of basic cessation (found in the commentary to S.XII.21) is: “... *what is meant by non-existence in the second part of the formula is not mere absence as such, but the state of having been brought to cessation by the path*” – which I take to mean that whether or not something has ‘physically’ disappeared, once the pre-fabricated aspects collapse they can never arise again.

⁸ “*attā hi attano nātho*” – oneself is one’s own mainstay, “*atta-dīpā*” – oneself as an island (of security), “*atta-saraṇa*” – having a refuge in oneself, “*attamanā te bhikkhū*” – those monks (lit. ‘individual minds’) were inspired, “*paccattaṃ*” – for oneself, by oneself, within oneself.

⁹ ‘*Kamma*’ is the most fundamental teaching of the Buddha. ‘*Kamma*’ refers to the intentional acts that we engage in: these *always* have consequences, both externally and *internally*, in that the things we consent to do actually change us. Depending on the quality of the intention and the skill involved in the action itself, this can change us for the better, resulting in happiness and pleasure, or for the worse, resulting in suffering and pain. The Noble Path is a special mastery of *kammic* principles which results in neither happiness nor suffering but in complete liberation.

¹⁰ Tradition says that the Buddha struggled as a *Bodhisatta* (through millions of lifetimes) for 4 incalculable periods and 100,000 aeons until he was able to bring all the *pāramī* to ultimate perfection – which was the fund of inner resources that enabled him to become a *sammā-sambuddha*. In one life, as the Prince Vessantara, he finally perfected the *pāramī* of generosity by the method mentioned here: he gave away his kingdom, his wealth, his every last belonging, his children, and his wife.

¹¹ These are the three universal characteristics of fabricated experience, or the three signs of the path: ‘*aniccaṃ*’ means uncertain, inconstant or impermanent, ‘*dukkhaṃ*’ means oppression, stress or suffering, and ‘*anattā*’ means ‘not-self’ or not one’s identity. Seeing these three ‘signs’ is an indication that one is on the right path.

¹² “*sabbe dhammā anattā*” – “*sabbe*”- ‘all, every’; “*dhammā*” is a word with as many as 13 meanings according to context, but here generally means- ‘natural phenomena, natural states’ (which comprise both fabricated states and unfabricated states); ‘*attā*’ colloquially means ‘self, oneself’ as in the references given on page 4 and in note 8, but “*anattā*”, its negation, is generally intended more philosophically as- ‘not one’s (genuine) identity’.

Although intended philosophically, it is *practical* philosophy as Tan Chao Khun Upāli’s brilliant play-on-words explanation (a quadruple entendre!) makes clear: *anattā* cannot be fully understood by studying the ‘Buddha’s teaching’ (the most common meaning of ‘*dhamma*’) as an abstract theory – our existential doubts about it can only be resolved by carefully examining the natural states (like birth, aging and death) that we, ourselves, identify with.

[In the next chapter, this Pāli phrase will be repeated, but emphasizing ‘*dhamma*’ as an ‘unfabricated state’, as opposed to ‘*saṅkhārā*’ – ‘fabrications’ (see page 17; note 26).]

¹³ The ‘*Ratanattaya-pabhāvābhīyācana gāthā*’ is a traditional Thai chant, being a royal composition by King Mongkut (Rāma IV), dating back to the middle of the 19th century.

¹⁴ ‘*Dhamma-Vinaya*’ is the Buddha’s own term for his teachings. Dhamma refers to the discourses preserved in scripture in the *sutta-piṭaka*, while the Vinaya is preserved in its own section called the *vinaya-piṭaka*. Dhamma usually emphasizes principles important in training one’s mind, while Vinaya stresses principles important in training one’s actions and speech. Together they comprise a complete spiritual teaching.

¹⁵ The word ‘*nissaya*’ in Pāli (‘*nissai*’ in Thai) is used both for the idea of someone’s natural character, and also for a state of dependence – one literally asks for ‘*nissaya*’ from a teacher. This double-entendre is used here, and often by other teachers in Thailand, to say something significant and profound about one’s attitude to taking a teacher and the nature of practise. This was once highlighted for the translator after asking for dependence from one of the great teachers in the forest tradition. The Ajahn began an impromptu Dhamma talk by starting with: “When you come and ask for *nissai* (dependence on a teacher), you have to really take it. That means being willing to change your own *nissai* (natural character)...”

The name for this book in the original Thai, which is for these reasons too rich in meaning to adequately translate, is “*Buddha-Nissai*”.

¹⁶ ‘properties’ – ‘*dhātu*’ – refers to the four properties of material form: earth (solidity, impenetrability), water (cohesion, mass), fire (heat, temperature) and wind (movement, vibration).

¹⁷ The three-fold training is ‘*adhi-sīla*’ – higher virtue, ‘*adhi-citta*’ – higher mind, and ‘*adhi-paññā*’ – higher discernment. It is synonymous with *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* – virtue, concentration and discernment – which itself is a condensed version of the Eight-fold Path, or Noble Path. These are all different ways of referring to the same course of practise. The eight factors of the Eight-fold Path are mentioned on page 37.

¹⁸ ‘sabong’ – the ‘skirt-like’ lower robe worn around the waist.

¹⁹ This is the Vinaya’s charming way of describing modest dress. The three circles to be covered by the sabong are the belly-button and the two knees.

²⁰ ‘*saṅghādīśesa*’ – a serious class of offenses in the monks’ monastic code that, when transgressed, entail meetings of the Saṅgha to perform the procedures mentioned here on the monk who has broken the training.

²¹ In this and following references, the initiates are supposed to help find suitable communities that would not be overly hard on, or prejudiced against, the preceptor.

²² ‘*sati’paṭṭhāna*’ has been left untranslated throughout – the teachings in this section will fully explain what is meant by the term.

²³ “*ekāyano bhikkhave ayaṃ maggo*” – ‘this, monks, is the only path’, or ‘this, monks, is the one-way path’, or ‘this, monks, is the point of convergence of the path’.

²⁴ This quote is from Saṃyutta Nikāya 47.18 – the Brahma-sutta. The verse translated in full:

*He who has seen the last end of birth
And is moved
For the welfare of others,
Knows the only path to tread;
By that very way they crossed before,
In times to come, it’s how they’ll cross,
And by just that way is also how
Beings cross the flood right now.*

²⁵ In all the places where it occurs, ‘the emerging mind’ is a translation of the difficult term ‘*gotrabhū citta*’.

²⁶ “*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā, sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā, sabbe dhammā anattā*” – all fabrications are uncertain, all fabrications are oppressive, and all Dhammas are not one’s identity.

“*yad-aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ taṃ anattā*” – whatever is uncertain, that is oppressive; whatever is oppressive, that is not one’s identity.

Tan Chao Khun is stressing the point here that only fabrications, not Dhamma, arise, cease and are oppressive, but that both fabrications and Dhamma are not-self.

²⁷ ‘*atta-dīpā, atta-saraṇa, dhamma-dīpā, dhamma-saraṇa*’ – ‘oneself as an island, oneself as a refuge, Dhamma as an island, Dhamma as a refuge’ – at this point these are all synonymous phrases because one has reached ‘*Dhamma-ñhiti*’ – ‘the fixed, unchanging state of Dhamma’ (liberation).

²⁸ “*tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho*” – the stilling of them (all fabricated states) is ease.

²⁹ This sentence in Thai is literally “These five Dhammas are called (spiritual) ‘faculties’ because they are organs that enable the success of one’s work...” The Pāli/Thai word translated here as ‘faculties’ is the word ‘*indriya/insee*’; it is also used for the (sense-) faculties, or organs, of the eye, ear, nose, etc. In Thai, the word can also mean ‘organ’, or ‘organic’. The play on words here doesn’t quite work in English, so I have adopted a pseudo play-on-words based on the role of the sense-faculties as facilitating various spheres of experience (e.g. seeing, hearing, smelling, etc.).

³⁰ ‘manhandling virtue and duty’ – ‘*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*’ – is one of the ‘fettors’ abandoned at the stage of ‘stream-entry’ (see next note). It is often mistranslated (and misunderstood) as ‘clinging to rites and rituals’. In this misinterpretation a ‘stream-enterer’ has cast aside empty rites and rituals and no longer adheres to them: a ‘stream-enterer’ here is merely a non-superstitious person. This assumption seems to underlie the line of questioning here. Tan Chao Khun Upāli’s explanation will show that the correct understanding is much more profound and cuts right to the heart of spiritual practise.

³¹ ‘*samyojana* Dhammas’ – the ten ‘fettors’ that prevent the experience of freedom. They are:

1. embodiment-view
2. doubt
3. manhandling virtue and duty
4. sensual desire
5. resistance (aversion)
6. desire for (meditative states in the realm of) form
7. desire for (meditative states in the realm of) the formless
8. pride (self-estimation or self-confidence)

-
9. restlessness
10. ignorance

The first Noble Path, the path of ‘stream entry’, cuts the first three fetters. The next two succeeding Noble Paths, of ‘once-returning’ and ‘non-returning’, first weaken, and then cut the next two fetters, respectively. Collectively, these five fetters are called the ‘lower fetters’. The final Noble Path of the ‘arahant’ cuts the five ‘higher fetters’.

³² ‘*appanā samādhi*’ is fixed concentration and is generally synonymous with ‘*jhāna*’ – ‘*jhāna*’ merely the term for the different distinguishable levels within the sphere of fixed concentration.

³³ The preceding four paragraphs are a little bit ambiguous. Having introduced ‘two forms’ of concentration, he talks about momentary and threshold concentration, and then mentions the third form, fixed concentration. This ambiguity admits of multiple interpretations:

It could be an explanation of the earlier point (made on page 14) that ‘*singleness of preoccupation has two forms: having a single preoccupation, and having one’s preoccupation come together in a singularity.*’ The first two types of concentration – momentary and threshold (as well as the first *jhāna*) – are examples of the first form, while fixed concentration is predominantly (from the second *jhāna* onwards) the second form.

Alternately, Tan Chao Khun could be speaking particularly about momentary and threshold concentration here as an encitement to practise, while reserving the arising of both fixed concentration and insight as the fruits of one’s efforts (based on his comments in the next two paragraphs).

³⁴ There is an untranslatable play on words here in the Thai. The word ‘*yawm*’ means both ‘dye’ and ‘persuasion, encouragement’. Just like the clean cloth takes the dye, the mind cleansed through training in concentration takes the encouragement to enter *jhāna* or to see the three characteristics, and the subsequent knowing and seeing is coloured either by absorption in peaceful states, or by the truth of things as they actually are.

³⁵ ‘pumpkin-Brahma’ is a colloquial Thai idiom for the ‘*asaññī-sattā*’ – a world of non-percipient Brahma gods who are reborn there as a result of ‘wrong *samādhi*’ equal to the level of the fourth *jhāna*. A popular misconception in Thailand, one that Luang Pu Mun and many early forest monks had to correct, is that meditation makes you either stupid or crazy.

³⁶ ‘*kasīna*’ – a class of meditation themes comprising 10 perceptions that lie at the very heart of our experience of the external world.

³⁷ ‘*uggaha* and *paṭibhāga*’ – these refer to *nimittas*, or mental images, which one may experience during meditation. When one’s mind reaches threshold concentration, an image may arise – ‘*uggaha*’ means ‘arisen’. If the image is suitable for contemplation, then one can neutrally observe the image continuously until the mind’s concentration becomes fixed. The image will then break apart on its own – ‘*paṭibhāga*’ means ‘broken in pieces’ – and the broken image will be a basis for deeper understanding of what was first apprehended. ‘*Uggaha*’ and ‘*paṭibhāga*’ are thus used here as shorthand for threshold and fixed concentration as a basis for insight.

³⁸ ‘*matī*’ – thinking, ‘*sati*’ – recollection, ‘*paṇḍita*’ – a wise person (a pundit), ‘*vedanā*’ – sensation, ‘*saññā*’ – perception.

³⁹ ‘*khandha-santāno*’ – ‘the substratum continuity of the aggregates’ – is a fairly obscure Pāli term. Its Thai counterpart ‘*khandha-sandahn*’ is more common and has been translated earlier in the book as ‘the aggregates of (one’s) disposition’.

Both the Pāli (in a technical sense) and the Thai (in a more casual sense) refer to the same thing – the fact that the five aggregates of our experience have a particular trend of constitution or natural make-up specific to each individual, which can be called that individual’s physical and mental disposition. The arising of the aggregates, their constitution, and their continuity, or how they change over time, is shaped by our own actions – our ‘*kamma*’.

‘*Kamma*’ is a loaded kind of action based on appropriating the aggregates as ‘oneself’, with the naturally self-referential intention that proceeds from it. This intention will be inherently mixed with varying degrees of greed, hatred and delusion. For most of us, the *kamma* we have made in the past – physically, verbally, and mentally – is giving its results but getting complicated by the *kamma* we are making in the present. As Tan Chao Khun Upāli explains, an arahant, *not* appropriating the aggregates, initiates activity which is *kammically* ‘undeclarable’ – being neither ‘wholesome’ nor ‘unwholesome’, so is not reckoned as ‘*kamma*’ – ‘(loaded) action’ – at all, but as ‘*kiriya*’ – ‘perfunctory activity’.

Tan Chao Khun Upāli’s treatment of appropriation here – appropriation, being a neutral, natural state, is not abandoned in the same way as greed, hatred and delusion – is his way of explaining how an arahant can still engage

in meaningful activity out of kindness and compassion, even as far as prolonging the length of their own lives, without creating *kamma*, further being, or birth. The resulting purified ‘substratum continuity of the aggregates’ explains how that enlightened being can continue to be recognized by others, both physically and in terms of their personality.

⁴⁰ This term is explained further on page 40 and in the next note.

⁴¹ A ‘person in higher training’ is someone who has realised some level of Noble Path and Noble Fruit. Their virtue has become ‘abstinence through cutting off’ because the amount of greed, hatred or delusion necessary to propel them beyond the limits of the precepts no longer exists for them. The five-fold virtue or the eight-fold virtue has thus become their natural, unconditioned abiding.

⁴² There is perhaps some unfamiliar terminology coursing through the entire book that might be usefully clarified and summarised at this point.

Three Pāli/Thai words that Tan Chao Khun Upāli uses, importantly, over and over, are ‘*nissaya/nissai*’, ‘*upanissaya/upanissai*’ and ‘*santāna/sandahn*’:

‘*Nissaya/nissai*’ – translated as ‘natural character’ – refers to one’s disposition as it generally gets expressed through one’s habits and behaviour. It is ‘natural’ in the sense of being the natural result of past *kamma* and longstanding tendencies. This is the perspective on one’s character Tan Chao Khun takes to stress the need for correcting and improving one’s character, through training, by urgently and repeatedly making appropriate new *kamma*.

‘*Upanissaya/upanissai*’ – translated as ‘accumulated natural character’ – refers to this same disposition, but in terms of the five spiritual faculties, and in particular, how mature and developed they are for enabling the arising of successive levels of Noble Path and Fruit. Tan Chao Khun uses this perspective on one’s character to stress the importance of increasing and augmenting the goodness (or spiritual capital) within oneself until it rises to a level of fearless confidence in practising Dhamma.

‘*Santāna/sandahn*’ – translated as ‘substratum continuity’ or ‘disposition’ – is used in the sense of the character of an enlightened person who has managed to extract all greed, hatred, delusion and ignorance – all defilement – from their disposition. Tan Chao Khun uses this perspective on one’s character in terms of the idiosyncratic nature of an enlightened person’s five aggregates themselves, without any further interference from ignorance, craving or appropriation.

In Thailand, Ajahns often stress that the enlightened disciples of a Buddha, even the greatest ones, have distinct, often very idiosyncratic, characters. Only a *sammā-sambuddha* does the massive, tortuous work of developing a perfectly rounded, unflawed character disposition.

The difference between defilement and the idiosyncracies of our character is open to misunderstanding (within ourselves and from others), so is something that has to be '*paccattam*'. For these reasons, some teachers are suitable for some people, but only a *sammā-sambuddha* can be a 'world teacher'.

The Buddha is the one teacher that we can *all* ultimately depend on.

(This sentiment is another possible interpretation of '*Buddha-Nissai*'.)

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