

Sensual Pleasures Are Painful – Ajahn Suchart Abhiṇṇāto

Sensual Pleasures Are Painful

Eight Talks on Dhamma



Ajahn Suchart Abhiṇṇāto

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Sensual Pleasures Are Painful

A collection of Dhamma talks in English
By Phra Ajahn Suchart Abhijato
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1 Sensual Pleasures Are Painful

When we join this meditation retreat, we are committing ourselves to practicing *nekkhamma* or distancing ourselves from sensual pleasures that derive from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching. However, this kind of happiness cannot make us fully satisfied or at peace with ourselves. It is happiness filled with worries and anxieties, because when we come into contact with what we like, whether it is a person, or thing, we tend to cling on to it. We want to own it forever but are anxious that it may soon leave us one day. Sadness or *dukkha* then replaces this initial happiness. Hence, it is happiness tainted with pain. When we have what we like, we want to keep it to ourselves and become anxious that it may be gone one day. Then one day it really happens because nothing in this world lasts forever. They are constantly changing and we cannot control them or make them stay with us forever. We then become miserable.

However, there is one thing that we can make stay with us forever, that can give us happiness forever, that is permanent and never changing. That one thing is what we are striving for, namely our mind or *citta* that never dies. It is like water, which can never be destroyed. You boil it. It evaporates. Then it becomes cloud before falling down again as rain. It goes round in a circle. Human mind is the same. It never dies. It moves from one body to another, guided by *kamma*. *Kamma* is what we do, what we say, and what we think. If we do good *kamma*, we shall go to a good place, *sugati* or heaven. The Buddha said that he who practices the five precepts will go to heaven, and he who constantly breaks the five precepts will go to hell. When

we die, the mind will leave the body and go to another body or another state of existence. The mind does not die. It will go on to a new body or a new state of existence depending on that person's *kamma*.

Normally no one is totally good or totally bad. We do good *kammas*, bad *kammas*, and neutral *kammas* depending on our emotions and circumstances. Therefore, the results of our *kammas* are sometimes good, sometimes bad. Some people do very good *kammas* in this life but feel that they are not fully rewarded. That is because the good *kammas* are not yet producing results. What they encounter now is the result of past life's bad *kammas*. This gives the impression that good *kammas* are not rewarded. On the other hand, people who do bad *kammas* are being constantly rewarded. That is because the present bad *kammas* are not producing results yet. What reward they are receiving now comes from the good *kammas* they did in the past. This makes us feel that people who do bad *kammas* are rewarded while people who do good *kammas* are not rewarded.

We must understand that there are past and present *kammas*. The consequences of these *kammas* may occur quickly or slowly depending on the type of each *kamma*. It can be compared to trees or plants. Some give flowers quite quickly. Others slowly. If we plant large trees, it will take many years before we get their fruits. However, if we plant rice or corn, we can harvest in 3 months. *Kammas* are the same. Some consequences occur quickly, others slowly. Nevertheless, there will be consequences, and what is affected is none other than the mind of the person who commits such *kammas*.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the consequences of *kammas* are similar to cart wheels rolling on a path. They leave marks on the path just as our *kammas* will always have consequences, sooner or later. Good *kammas*, like making merits, will bring good consequences; bad *kammas* will result in bad consequences. Good *kammas* bring happiness. While bad *kammas*, such as breaking the precepts or hurting others will bring misery. Effect on the mind is very fast. It occurs immediately. For example, when we help others or making merits we feel happy. This is the result of doing good *kammas*. If we break the precepts, hurt others, or cause them to suffer, we ourselves become miserable. The consequences that follow such as being put in jail, being praised, receiving rewards may come slowly, or in some cases, never come. But these are not considered important. Once we feel happy, we do not really need anything else. Prestige and money are useless for a person who is full of contentment. This kind of happiness is fulfilling and makes one no longer want anything more. If we are always wishing for this or that, we can never be satisfied with what we have. Suffering is caused by never ending wishes because we feel we never have enough.

For example, today you give someone 500 baht. Then tomorrow you give him another 300 baht. He will then feel that 300 baht is too little because he used to receive 500 baht. This is *kilesa*, namely greed, hatred and delusion. Human wants have no bound. Therefore, we can never be happy if we cannot curtail our wants. On the other hand, happiness resulting from giving makes us feel contented. When we have more than we need, we become worried about how to take care of them. If we give them away, we shall be more at peace because we no

longer have to worry. Therefore, giving things, which we do not really need, can bring us real happiness.

If we take advantage of others, assault them, kill them, or hurt their feelings by stealing their possessions or committing adultery, we are inflicting pain on them. If we lie to them or lead them to falsely believe us, they will feel hurt once they know the truth. They may want to revenge or get the police to arrest us. Once we break the precepts, we can never have peace of mind. We will be nervous and jittery because we are hiding skeletons in the cupboard. When we see policemen, we become frightened even if the police neither know us nor want to arrest us. We become nervous every time we see policemen. This is *dukkha* or suffering. On the other hand, if we keep the precepts, we shall not have these worries. There will be contentment instead.

Happiness, which occurs as a result of peaceful mind, is what we all wish to attain. This state of tranquility will occur if we can control the mind from wandering around. It is similar to our sitting here. Controlling our body is not so difficult. We can make ourselves sit still for one hour or two hours. On the other hand, to keep the mind from wandering for 2 or 3 seconds is very, very difficult. It is difficult because we lack the necessary tool to control the mind. The tool, which can control the mind, is called *sati*, or mindfulness, or awareness. Awareness means we must be aware of the present, here and now. If we are sitting, the mind must acknowledge that we are sitting. To be aware of the in and out breath is called *ānāpānasati*. By being aware of our breathing we can control our mind. *Ānāpāna* means breathing in and out. *Sati* means mindfulness or awareness.

Ānāpānasati, which means being mindful of the breathing, is the method to control the mind from wandering around.

If the mind is made to continuously follow the breathing rhythm, it will gradually stop wandering. Eventually, it will stay still. This is when we will feel something extraordinary happening in our mind which we have never experienced before. It is the feeling of emptiness, calmness, delightfulness, happiness, and bliss. Sometimes, we get goose bumps or tears falling down, an extraordinary kind of feeling never experienced before in our life! This is happiness resulting from peace. The Buddha says that no other kind of happiness in this world can be greater than the happiness resulting from peace of mind. The tremendous amount of wealth or the ability to buy things, to own high-rise buildings and expensive cars may bring us happiness. But that happiness is very minute compared to the happiness resulting from peace of mind. The Buddha says that the taste of Dhamma surpasses all other tastes.

This kind of happiness that arises from *samādhi*, mental calm and concentration, is just a beginning stage of happiness. There are higher levels of happiness, which are even more sublime than the happiness resulting from *samādhi*. They are the happiness resulting from wisdom, leading to liberation, or *vimutti*. We have to practice step by step to attain succeeding levels of happiness, starting with the happiness that arises from giving, to the happiness from keeping the precepts, not hurting others, to the happiness from *samādhi* or mental discipline. When the mind is calm, it will stop wandering. We no longer have to force it to remain still. After we concentrate on our breathing and the mind stops wandering around, we gain *samādhi*. That is when we can stop concentrating on the rhythm of our breathing. We

can let go. The breathing rhythm is gone. The mind remains still, like a prisoner who is too exhausted to run away. He is sitting still. The wardens no longer have to guard him.

Once the mind stops wandering and we attain *samādhī*, we are free from stress unlike while we concentrate on the breathing. During that time we have to fight within ourselves to remain aware of the breathing. Our mind has a tendency to wander away from being mindful of our breathing. We have to keep bringing it back. Then it goes away to some far away places again. It is a fight between the one that wants to keep the mind from wandering and the other that wants to take it on tour. If *sati* is more powerful, it will keep the mind at bay. Then the other side will tire out, letting the mind stay still. It is similar to two teams pulling rope. When one team gives up and let go of the rope, the winner no longer has to pull. When the mind stops wandering and we attain *samādhī*, there is no more stress. We no longer have to fight to keep the mind from wandering. The mind automatically remains still. It stops imagining things. It stops wandering. It is at peace.

It is a very wonderful experience! Anyone who has experienced such happiness will be glad to leave all other happiness behind. He will gladly give up palaces, possessions, servants, all the money he has. These things no longer mean anything to him. He will henceforth search for a quiet place, away from people. In the past he used to be outgoing, now he is tired of people. He no longer wants to socialize or talk to anyone. It is meaningless and useless to chat. It is more fruitful to be alone, concentrating on one's breathing and keeping the mind from wandering. When one achieves that, one finds true happiness.

However, happiness from *samādhī* is only temporary. When the mind first stops wandering, it may be for only a fraction of a second. But that short moment is so wonderful, it will never be forgotten for the rest of one's life. It can make one leave all the worldly happiness behind. From someone who used to put on a lot of make-up, wear beautiful clothes, socialize, one now prefers solitude and peace of mind. This is the result of happiness caused by *samādhī*, even though a short-lived one.

Unfortunately, when one is not meditating, the mind starts wandering again. It will start imagining things, jumping from one topic to another. The mind no longer stays calm. Nonetheless, it still moves within moral boundaries. It still wants to make merits. In some cases, one who has attained *samādhī* may become anxious when making merits because one worries about making appointments and preparations. When arrangements do not go according to one's plans, one becomes worried. Therefore, if one has attained only *samādhī* but not yet wisdom, one may not make much progress towards higher level of Dhamma.

On the other hand, a wise person will know how to keep watch on the mind. When he is not meditating, his wisdom will be on the lookout. It will monitor the mind. When the mind starts wandering and worrying, it will steer the mind onto the right path. Without wisdom, the mind will be falsely led by the *kilesas*. Before one attains *samādhī*, making merits was a good thing, because it was a stepping-stone to the higher level of Dhamma. Once he gets up there though, he risks being led by the *kilesas* to become more obsessed with making merits, to the point where he has no time to meditate. He will then retreat back to the lower level of Dhamma.

Therefore, for those who have attained *samādhi*, they must use their wise judgment to see if the mind is making progress towards the higher Dhamma levels or being dragged down. With a little common sense, one can make merits without a fuss and in a simple way. If one has a check, just simply write it out. Then everything will be taken care of. There is no need to make a lot of preparations, causing undue worries. Our time can be better used in trying to attain higher levels of Dhamma. To progress, one must think wisely to rid the mind of the *kilesas* and worldly attachment. One must practice insight development or *vipassanā* to realize that nothing is worth being attached to. The five *khandhas* or elements of existence are what the *kilesas* tie our mind to, making us believe that these elements are us and belong to us.

The five *khandhas* or elements of existence consist of body, feelings, memories, thoughts, and sense awareness. Body is the gross physical body. Feelings can be happy, sad, not happy nor sad. Memories remember whose image or whose voice it is. Thoughts can be both ways: spiritual or worldly. Worldly thinking, for example, are thoughts about traveling, eating out. While spiritual thinking are thoughts about going to a meditation retreat to strengthen one's mind in order to fight the *kilesas*, such as cravings and greed. Without will power, without patience, without morality, the fight against greed will be an uphill one.

Thoughts can be good or evil; it can be the path to the extinction of suffering or the path to the arising of suffering. Thoughts on greed and worldly happiness are the cause of suffering. They will bring misery and pain. Thoughts on finding solitude, being away from people, away from gossiping and useless talks, while

concentrating on one's breathing will enable one to proceed towards right mindfulness and right concentration. This will be the one who will be on the Noble Path leading to the cessation of suffering.

These thoughts are very important. Thinking about Dhamma is called wisdom or insight. Thinking about worldly matters is called *kilesas*. Normally, we do not think about the Dhamma or about the Noble Path. It is our habit to be led by the *kilesas*. In fact, the *kilesas* are in our sub consciousness. When our friends ask us to go shopping or to see movies, we quickly accept. On the other hand, when we are asked to go to the temple, we take time, maybe years, before going. This is because we lack Dhamma. We have not been promoting and guiding our thoughts toward the Dhamma. Because we never have any experience with the Dhamma before. We have not experienced the happiness resulting from making merits, from keeping the precepts, from the tranquility of *samādhi*. But as soon as we begin to acquire the *samādhi* experience, we must be careful and make sure that our thoughts proceed along the path that we want it to go.

When we are not meditating, we must watch our mind, our thoughts and impulses. Look to see which way they are taking us. If in the past we used to think of going to the temple or going to the meditation retreat just once a week, now we are thinking of staying for a week, ten days, a month, or three months to increase time for Dhamma activities, then we are proceeding in the right direction, toward nibbāna. If we want peace of mind, we must follow the path laid down by the Buddha, the path of moral conduct, meditation, and wisdom.

One should look for seclusion, a quiet place like our temple, where there are sense-restraining rooms, where people who wish to control the mind and the sense faculties can come to stay. The sense faculties consist of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. One should restrain them from contacting those visual objects, sound, smell, flavor and tactile objects, which will stir up one's emotions and incite the *kilesas* to crave for them to the point where one can no longer remain staying at the temple. One will keep hankering for those sensual pleasures that one used to experience but forget the accompanying pains. Sensual pleasures are short-lived, similar to a sugar coated bitter pill. At first, it tastes sweet in your mouth. As time goes on, the sugar is gone, then comes the bitter taste, just like worldly happiness. When one acquires something new, one feels happy and entertained. Later on, one becomes bored with it and no longer cares for it.

Therefore, once we have attained *samādhi*, we should work towards attaining wisdom to realize that sensual pleasures are painful. The duration that we can remain in *samādhi* is very brief. After emerging from *samādhi* the *kilesas*, which prefer sensual pleasures, are still in charge and will drag us back. Do not think that people who meditate will not go to bars and nightclubs. They do, if one lets the *kilesas* to have their way! They will come up with excuses like they should not hurt their friends' feelings by not going out with them. People like this meditate without using wisdom. If they use wisdom, their mind can withstand the pressure and refuse to follow the *kilesas*.

One must therefore strive in developing insight or *vipassanā* to realize that worldly happiness is not permanent. It is painful, like a bitter pill covered with sugar. That kind of happiness is

very short-lived and is soon replaced by boredom. Then one has to constantly search for new kinds of happiness. The truth is there is nothing new in this world. Everything has been here since time immemorial. They are all composed of earth, water, wind, and fire. Combined together into various shapes and sizes, and making various noises, enough to entice us into enjoying them for a time. After a short while, novelty wears off and they become boring. We will then have to look for something new, something different again. Look at clothing. Fashion changes all the time, just like skirt lengths. They are long, then short, then long again. They move in a cycle, changing all the time. They keep turning around like *vatta* or the rounds of rebirths. They just keep turning around and around. But these changes do not turn us into better persons or make us let go of these things. Instead, they bind us and make us cling to them.

We cannot stay young forever. When we grow old, we will not be able to keep up with the latest fashion. One day we will feel like living in a different world. Then, it will come to us like a shock and we will find it hard to accept, simply because we never tried to live with the truth before. Some people aged 70 or 80 years old still dress up and go to parties until they die because they are so attached to having fun. When they die, their mind still remains at the same level. It has not developed to a higher and better level in order for it to experience the subtle kind of happiness that is pure and genuine.

But if you regularly go to the temple, go on retreats to meditate and listen to the Dhamma talks, you will know what you have to do. You will know that taking good care of your mind, keeping it calm and peaceful, as much as you can, is the ideal thing you

can do for yourself. If every day you can do only these two things, namely walking meditation and sitting meditation that would be ideal. Just keep on sitting and walking. Control your mind so that it cannot go wandering like it used to do. Discourage it from wanting things or wanting to go to various places. Say no! These desires are impermanent. They are painful. You have already done it so many times before. You have already been there so many times too. Nothing good will come out of them.

The best thing is to control our mind, stop it from wandering around, free it from all attachment and worries, and minding only our business. However, apart from walking meditation and sitting meditation, we need to do other things too, such as looking after ourselves. These activities can be done at the same time as we practice meditation. If we concentrate on what we do, we are actually practicing walking meditation and sitting meditation. For example, while we sweep the floor, if we concentrate on using the broom, we are in fact meditating.

The mind is with the activity and not wandering. The mind is not imagining things or creating undue worries.

If we can keep the mind with us, not allowing it to wander around, we will be cool, calm, collected. We will find peace of mind in whatever we do because the mind is under control. We have the wisdom to fight off all the vices, not allowing them to lure us to useless things that we used to do. Nothing is better than to be always mindful of what we do and attain peace of mind. This is the ultimate happiness. When we are at peace, we do not feel hungry. We may be used to eating a lot, but now we only eat just enough to keep us going. The mind is not so attached

to the taste of food. Enjoyment which one gets from eating delicious food is nothing compared to the happiness of a mind at peace. In the past, when we ate, it was to enjoy the tastes of the food and its beautiful arrangement.

When monks eat, they mix different kinds of food and deserts together in the alms bowl, whether they are curry, rice, grapes, or apples. You should try it sometime. It is quite tasty. Eventually, all this different kinds of food will go down to the same place anyway, in the stomach. Once we have acquired this unconventional way of eating, we will not have to bother with the eating rituals. We will not crave for food anymore because we know that they are just made up of the four flavors, namely sweet, sour, salty and oily. That is all. We should not eat because the food tastes good. We should eat only in order to survive so that we do not get sick or go hungry for lack of food. We only have to eat just once a day because the meal will keep the body going for the next twenty-four hours.

Human greed is never ending. Having just finished a meal, we already want to eat again upon hearing someone mentioning about delicious food. If we want to stop ourselves, we have to use reasons. Why do we want to eat again? We just finished eating and we are full. The food is still being digested. Wait till tomorrow if we really want to eat it. This is an example of how we use reasons to stop our craving. Never ending desire is what causes problems for all of us.

If everyone thinks rationally, we all can live peacefully on this planet. The world has plenty of everything, more than we ever need. However, due to unrelenting greed, it feels like we never have enough. We think that the more we have, the happier we

will be. This creates problems. Wars occur because of greed. If everyone is a Buddhist, people can live peacefully together. There is no need to invade other countries or to take advantage of other people. We, Buddhists, live and eat in simple ways. We do not take too much food. We are content with what we have. We eat only what our bodies' need. We consume only what is necessary. Two sets of white garments are enough. We can wear them alternately. Today we wear this set. Tomorrow we wear the second set while we wash the first set. On the following day, we change again.

Monks use only three pieces of garments. They consist of an inner robe, an outer robe and a double-layer outer robe for use during the cold season. Normally, only two pieces are used. If we live according to the Buddha's teachings, we do not need much. There is no need for closets to keep our clothing. However, in reality people have so many kinds of clothing for various uses, such as morning dress, daytime dress, evening dress, and nightgown. These clothes need to be cleaned and taken care of. This give rise to all kinds of problems because we don't think rationally, and not know how much or how many is enough for us.

If we think wisely and logically, we will live peacefully together in this world. Real happiness is within us. It is having peace of mind. Unfortunately, we never keep the mind under control. We allowed it to be dragged by the force of our *kilesas* that cause so much suffering and pain, pain from greed, pain from anger, and pain from delusion. The Buddha says our mind is aroused and agitated by what we see, hear, smell, taste and touch. When we see or hear something, we immediately want it. When we have this desire, we become restless. On the other hand, if

we are rational and follow the Buddha's teachings, we can tell our mind not to blindly want things. In this world, no matter how much money we have, be it in the millions or billions, we can never buy the kind of happiness, which the Buddha points out to us. That kind of happiness is inside us. We only have to make it happen. We will then be free from all kinds of problems.

We can be forever happy because when we have this kind of happiness we can keep it. It is truly our own possession. Other belongings can be stolen. They can deteriorate. Cars can be stolen. Thieves can break into our houses. Even our husbands and our wives will one day leave us. But no one can take from us the happiness that comes from having peace of mind. I would like you to think about this, keep it close to your heart and mind, and to strive with all of your might to achieve the real kind of happiness that arises from a peaceful mind.

2 The Five Spiritual Powers

Listening to a Dhamma talk can be a very profitable experience because there are five benefits to be gained namely:

1. The listener will hear of things not heard before.
2. Have better understanding of what have been heard before.
3. Have correct views.
4. Dispel doubts and skepticism.
5. Have peace of mind.

This is because the Dhamma teaching of the Buddha is cool like cool water, refreshing and cool. When we read or listen to the Dhamma teaching, we will feel cool, calm, and peaceful. While listening to a Dhamma talk, it is essential for us to be attentive and receptive. Do not try to memorize everything the speaker says. Just concentrate on listening. Be attentive to the sound of his voice that flows into our ears. Think of what he is saying. What we understand, we will remember. What we do not understand, we will not remember. But that doesn't matter. It is impossible to remember everything each time we listen because the speaker covers a wide range of topics. We should just listen. What we understand will be useful for us. When we understand something profoundly we will say "I see!" By listening repeatedly, again and again, we can gain better understanding of things previously not understood by us, and consequently eliminate doubts in our mind, and help us gain a correct view of the world.

Practicing meditation at a temple is like going from one place to another place. When we travel from home to this temple, we

need transport to get us here. Likewise when we wish to move from this point of our lives to a better one, because we are not satisfied with our present conditions and status, we need the Dhamma teaching of the Buddha to get us there. If we think we deserve something better than what we have now; or wish to be a better person, because right now we are not morally upright; or want to make more merits or *puñña*, to be happier; then we must practice *bhāvanā* or mental development as practiced and taught by the Buddha.

In order for our mind to develop to a higher level, it needs fuel to get there, just like a car, which needs fuel to move around. It needs gasoline to drive the engine, oil for lubrication, water for cooling, distilled water for the battery, and many other kinds of oil. If any of these things is missing, it will not run smoothly or deliver us to our destination. While driving, if there is not enough water to cool the engine, it will overheat and stop running. Without gasoline, it will not run. Without lubricating oil, the engine will stop running.

Likewise, for us to go from our present status to a higher and better one, namely, to be morally upright and wise, we need the fuel of Dhamma or the five spiritual powers to get us there.

They are as follows:

1. Conviction or *saddhā*.
2. Exertion or *virīya*.
3. Mindfulness or *sati*.
4. Concentration or *samādhi*.
5. Wisdom or *paññā*

We need these five spiritual powers to lead our mind to a better place, to heaven, to nibbāna, just like the Buddha and his noble disciples did. They all used these spiritual powers to propel their mind to achieve their goals.

Conviction or faith is belief in the Buddha, the Dhamma or teaching, and the Sangha or noble disciples. We believe that the Buddha was an enlightened being, an arahant or pure one, whose mind was free of defilement or *kilesa*, as opposed to a *puthujjana* or ordinary worldling like all of us, who have not yet realized any of the four stages of enlightenment. We still have greed, hatred and delusion, which subject us to *dukkha* or suffering. An arahant, on the other hand, no longer has any *kilesa* or spiritual defilement namely, greed hatred and delusion. He is therefore free from all forms of suffering, because the causes of suffering have all been eliminated. This is what the Buddha had achieved. He then taught it to others, to humans and devas or inhabitants of the heavenly realm.

Teaching to human beings is something we can comprehend since the noble disciples were all human beings. They took up his teaching and eventually attained enlightenment and became arahants like him. There is no doubt about this. But teaching to *devas* or inhabitants of the heavenly realm is something else. I don't know if you believe in *devas* or not. They are transparent and cannot be seen with our naked eyes. They can only be seen with spiritual eyes that can be developed by meditation. When the Buddha meditated, he used his spiritual powers to communicate with heavenly beings. That was the way he taught the *devas*.

Every day the Buddha performed five daily duties. In the afternoon he taught Dhamma to the laity, just as you are being taught today. In the evening he taught Dhamma to the monks. Late at night during meditation he taught Dhamma to the *devas*. In the morning before going out for alms, he would use his spiritual eyes to see whom he should bless first, someone who would quickly understand the Dhamma teaching and realize any one of the four stages of enlightenment, or someone who was about to pass away. Then he would go on his alms round. This was his daily activity during the remaining forty-five years of his life.

Teaching Dhamma to interested persons is therefore the primary goal of Buddhism. Whoever follows the Dhamma teaching will benefit from it immensely. This is the task of the Dhamma and the Buddha, who had tirelessly and selflessly worked for the benefits of others. If we truly believe in his enlightenment, then we will not question his teaching. Faith in the Buddha will therefore lead to faith in the Dhamma teaching that taught us to cultivate good, avoid all evil, and cleanse our mind. This is the path to real happiness and liberation. If we believe in the Buddha, we will believe that his Dhamma teaching is correct and precise. Nothing can surpass it. Even if we are very rich and have millions, we will never find true happiness because it is not about wealth, not about possessions or people. If you have a girl friend or a boy friend, do not think that will make you truly happy. At first you might feel delighted but after a while things begin to change. New becomes old. Sweet becomes bitter. Nothing remains the same. This is the law of nature.

People who are wealthy and have everything that money can buy are not truly happy because the things they have cannot give them true happiness. As we all well know, during the time of the Buddha, there were millionaires who gave up their money, kings and princes their throne, for a life of a recluse because they believed in the Dhamma teaching that taught real happiness was in the mind that has no *kilesa* or defilement. We are not happy and afflicted by all sorts of suffering is because of the *kilesa*. Greed, hatred, and delusion are constantly agitating and disturbing our mind. They make us feel uneasy, discontent, insatiate, and lusting for more and more. This is the work of the *kilesa*. If we can get rid of them, then there will be nothing to agitate and push us to crave for this and that, to go here and there, and to lust for lots and lots of money so we can buy lots and lots of things to make us feel happy. But this kind of happiness is very short-lived before boredom sets in. Familiarity breeds boredom. After we own these things for a while, we get tired of them and want other things. This is the nature of unending lust. No matter how much we have, it is never enough.

Dhamma therefore teaches that true happiness does not depend on having money to buy things because everything in this world is transient, full of stress, and not under our control. We may think that having this or that will make us happy. But after having it for a while, we will get tired of it. When it becomes old, damaged, breaks down, or leaves us, we will feel dejected. Therefore, please remember that everything in this world that we see, hear, taste, smell, and touch, is impermanent. They will surely leave us one day. When we lose something that we love dearly, it will make us very sad indeed.

Because of this, the Buddha left all his possessions to become a monk in search of the real kind of happiness that doesn't depend on external things such as wealth, fame or praise, the happiness that derives from peace of mind, devoid of the *kilesa*. When the *kilesa* are subdued, the mind becomes tranquil, content, at ease and happy. But when the *kilesa* is active, the mind is set on fire. We look mean and ferocious when we are angry or greedy. Our facial expression reflects our state of mind. But when the *kilesa* is subjugated, the mind radiates love, compassion, peace, charity and forgiveness. This is what happens when the mind is rid of all the *kilesa*. It experiences the supreme bliss.

We should therefore have faith in the Dhamma teaching and the noble disciples who help propagate it, like all the Ajahns whom we believe to be arahants or noble ones, who have all attained the highest goal of Buddhism, nibbāna. They have practiced correctly according to the Buddha's instruction until all of the *kilesa* are entirely eliminated from their mind, becoming noble disciples, and imparting *puñña* or merits and benefits to their faithful followers, who will get to hear their teaching of the way to the extinction of suffering, and when they faithfully follow this teaching they will eventually achieve the highest goal of Buddhism, becoming arahants or pure ones.

This is the real purpose for going to the temples, to cleanse our mind and free it from the *kilesa* or defilement. We should not go to the temples to pray for a son or daughter, a husband or wife, his or her fidelity or to have good children. These things cannot be had by request. It is up to their good or bad *kamma* that makes them good or bad. What they have become today are the results of what they did in the past. It is our bad *kamma* or

delusion that makes us cling to them. If we are wise, we will detach from them. We will be a lot better off living alone. When we are attached to them, we will be worried and anxious by wanting them to be good, be nice, be kind to us, but they are not. What can we do? We can only suffer. Therefore, we should not go to the temples to pray for this or that but to listen to the Dhamma teaching that will guide us to the true happiness that doesn't require us to pray or beg from anyone.

Buddhism doesn't teach people to beg, it teaches people to act. *Attāhi attano nātho*, we are our own refuge. Do not just light up three joss sticks and pray or beg for this or that. It just doesn't work that way. If it does, then Thailand would prosper by just selling a lot of joss sticks. We wouldn't have to do anything else except produce them. We only have to buy joss sticks, light them up, and pray for millions of baht that would come floating our way. Our country is now experiencing an economic downturn because of our begging; just think of the national debts that we have accumulated as a result of our immoral and unethical ways of doing things. We have all pitched in, plundering our national assets and turned our country into what it is today. Still we keep begging for more, but it will never work. What we have to do is to work hard and produce more.

This brings us to the second of spiritual powers, exertion or *virīya*. If we want to achieve the lofty goal of Dhamma practice we must be diligent and hardworking. We must come to the temple regularly to give alms, maintain the precepts or *sīla*, listen to Dhamma talks, and make as much merit as we possibly can. Don't be lazy. The more we sow, the more we will reap. If we don't put in the effort, we will reap nothing. No one can do it for us, not even the Buddha or his noble disciples. They can

only point us the way, instruct us on how to realize the goal. This goal is not to be materially wealthy, but spiritually wealthy. We should be rich with morality, charity, spiritual happiness and contentment. This kind of wealth can never be stolen from us, unlike the worldly possessions. Our husbands and wives can be taken away from us. Our children and our property can be seized. But the real wealth within ourselves can never be stolen from us by anyone.

Meritorious actions or *kusala-kamma* are truly our possessions. They will protect us; make us happy and content, now and in the future. When we die, we will go to *sugati* or a happy destination, not to *apāya-bhūmi* or state of deprivation, the four lower levels of existence into which we will be reborn as a result of our past unskillful actions namely rebirth in hell, as a hungry ghost, as an angry demon, or as a common animal. If we could maintain all the meritorious actions such as keeping the five precepts and giving to charity, we would at the least be reborn as a human being endowed with beauty, brain and wealth, and suffered no hardship or injury because we were led by our skillful actions. Without these meritorious actions, we would go to a lower level of existence, to be reborn as an animal such as a cat, a bird, or a buffalo. Such is the consequence of not doing meritorious actions. This is the law of Dhamma, the truth.

Therefore, if we want to improve ourselves, go to a happy destination or *sugati*, a good existence, a noble plane of existence or *ariya-bhūmi*, we must be diligent and persistent in doing meritorious or skillful actions. We must strive in maintaining our ethical and moral purity, not allowing it to slip away, and push to have more of it. For example, if we now keep the five precepts, we must not slide back but should keep more

precepts, going from the five precepts to the eight, ten and eventually to the 227 precepts practiced by the monks or bhikkhu, which is a good and right thing to do.

We must also work hard in preventing ourselves from doing more unwholesome and unskillful actions that we have already discarded. For example, in the past we used to be erratic and emotional. Now we are calm and rational. People may say bad things about us, but we don't mind, we can forgive and forget. We can now manage our anger and keep it under control, not allowing it to reappear. If we still possess any other unwholesome qualities like holding grudges or being stubborn, we should also strive to eradicate them. We should be rational, rather than being greedy, hateful and delusional. What we haven't yet discarded we ought to do. What we have already eliminated we must not allow to return. In other words, we must strive to cultivate good, avoid all evil, and cleanse our mind. This is what is meant by exertion or *virīya*, the second spiritual power.

To begin we must first have faith or *saddhā*. When we have faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, we will then have the courage to do what they taught us to do because we know that there will only be good consequences. People who don't have faith will have doubts about rebirth in heaven or hell, about whether we are being falsely led to believe in performing meritorious and skillful actions without reaping any benefits in return. Maybe it's better to go out and have fun, enjoying ourselves by drinking and getting drunk. There is no such thing as hell to fall into. Surely it's better than sitting here with our eyes closed and going hungry because we abstain from our

evening meals. If we think like this, it means we are skeptical. We have no confidence in the Buddha's teaching.

On the other hand, if we believe that by maintaining the eight precepts in which we have to abstain from having our evening meals, though it may cause us hunger pain and hardship, we know that it will be better for us in the end. The Buddha and his noble disciples have already proved it. They could vouch for us that these actions are good and will make us truly happy. When we believe this, we will put in the effort to do meritorious and skillful actions like coming to spend a day and night at the temple on every observance day, which occurs about once a week. In the past, we never came to the temple.

But once we start coming and get to listen to the Dhamma talks, we start to see the benefits. We gain something that we never had before, namely Dhamma, which is unlike all other material things, such as automobiles. We can see these motor vehicles with our naked eyes, but not so with Dhamma because it is spiritual. It gradually seeps into our mind. We might not feel anything at all although we might have been coming to the temple for a long time. But Dhamma continues to slowly infiltrate. Then one day, suddenly there is calmness in our mind. We will then realize that this is what we have come to the temple for all along.

Maybe in the future we might encounter some crisis, go through unpleasant situations such as losing our loved ones. If we have the Buddha's teaching to reflect on, we could remain calm and peaceful, rather than being afflicted with sorrow and lamentation to the point of not being able to eat or sleep, because the Buddha has told us that parting from our loved ones is a natural

occurrence. It happens to everyone. It is not unusual. There is no need to be sad or tearful. We are still alive. Life goes on. We should maintain our composure and not fall prey to depression. If we could do this, we would see the benefits of the Dhamma teaching. In the past we came to the temple without knowing why we came. But when we run into trouble the Dhamma teaching that we have heard before could help get us out of our predicament and ease us out of our suffering, we would then appreciate immensely the value of the Dhamma teaching, would be a lot more diligent in our practice, and would want to do more meritorious actions like giving to charity.

Why do people give to charity or keep the training precepts? We might ask ourselves. It's because it makes them feel good and help them in time of crisis. If we haven't done it before we might not appreciate it. To find out we just have to do it. Just keep doing it until we reap the results. It is like planting trees. We don't expect trees to bear fruit right away. When we plant durian or mango trees, we have to wait five to ten years for them to bear fruit. It's the same with making merits, keeping the precepts or listening to Dhamma talks. It doesn't come to fruition instantly. It takes time. What we have to do is to have faith in the Buddha's teaching and apply it untiringly. The fruits of our labor will come in due course.

The third spiritual power is mindfulness or *sati*. If we want quick results from our practice we need mindfulness. We must always be mindful of what we do because mindfulness controls the mind. The mind is like an automobile and mindfulness its driver. If the driver has no mindfulness like when he is drunk, he would not be able to drive safely. He would probably unknowingly run through a red light at an intersection. Without

mindfulness we will not be able to stop our mind when we want to. Without mindfulness to rein it in we could go mad and do things that normal people dare not do. We could go berserk and eventually be incarcerated in a mental asylum because we have lost touch with reality. We have lost our mindfulness or *sati*. Mindfulness is therefore essential in the performance of meritorious and skillful actions such as giving to charity, maintaining the precepts or sitting in meditation.

Having mindfulness to control the mind is like tying a monkey to a tree. If it were not put on a leash it would go everywhere causing a lot of troubles. On the other hand, if it's tied to a tree, it couldn't go far. At first it might struggle to free itself. After a while, it would get tired and stop struggling. It is subdued. Similarly, we can use mindfulness to control our mind. When we get angry or become greedy, if we have mindfulness, we would be able to stop our anger and greed.

Mindfulness is therefore extremely essential and useful. When we lose our mindfulness, we would be like cars without brakes. We would misbehave and cause a lot of troubles for ourselves. People wouldn't respect or admire us but get sick of us. They would think that we are insane because we would do or say whatever we like without giving consideration to what is right or proper. We are driven by our whims and fancies. People wouldn't like to be associated with us. It's therefore imperative for us to have mindfulness if we want to excel and become a good and respectable citizen.

Having mindfulness means we must always be mindful of our actions. We must be mindful of what we do or say. Our mind must always be in the present, here and now, not drifting away

to some other place. If it does, we wouldn't be aware of what we are doing. For example, if our mind is thinking about something else while we cut meat or vegetables, we might cut our fingers instead. This is because we have no mindfulness. If we do we would know all the time what we are doing. Without mindfulness, we wouldn't be able to thread the needle because our mind is drifting here and there. But when we have mindfulness to control the mind, we would be able to do it easily.

Mindfulness is a very valuable tool that should be earnestly developed. One way to do this is to mentally recite '*buddho*'. '*Buddho, buddho*' at all times. Whatever we do, just think of '*buddho*'. Concentrate on it. Do not let the monkey or our mind run away. Tie it to a tree. That tree is *buddho*. If we could restrain our mind, it would eventually calm down and realize *samādhī* or concentration, not wandering here and there but stay put, here and now, like this glass of water that was placed here. It is still here and not going anywhere. Similarly, if we use mindfulness to control our mind, we would be able to concentrate and remain still. Once that happens, we can accomplish many things.

Therefore, apart from having faith, exertion and mindfulness, we must also have concentration or *samādhī*. What should we concentrate on? Well, we should concentrate on doing good deeds. Normally, it is not easy for us to do this. Why? It's because our mind tends to drift with our emotions. On days when we feel charitable and want to make a charitable contribution, we would do it. On other days when we don't have that feeling, we wouldn't do it. But when we have *samādhī* or concentration, we would be doing good deeds all the time. Refraining from doing evil would also be easy to do because the

mind is now primed by *samādhi* to do it. We would then be always concentrating on refraining from doing evil and cultivating good deeds. To be successful in our endeavor, we must therefore have concentration or *samādhi*.

It's therefore imperative to meditate on a regular basis, at least once or twice a day. After we get up in the morning, wash our face and brush our teeth, we could start with some chanting. It's a form of meditation. If we could do it for half an hour or an hour, it would help calm the mind down. The mind would stay put, not wandering around. If we don't like chanting, we could meditate by mentally recite '*buddho, buddho, buddho*'. Do it as long as we possibly can, half an hour, an hour, or two hours. This is the way of training the mind to keep still with the aid of mindfulness. If we meditate without mindfulness, the mind will drift away. While chanting, if we also think of some other things, it means that the mind is not concentrating nor being mindful.

For example, while we chant '*araham sammasambuddho*', etc, and also think of what we're going to do today, it means we are not being mindful. We are chanting but our mind is also thinking about something else. This will not yield the desired result. The mind will not stay put. To keep it still, we must be only mindful of what we are chanting. If we chant '*araham sammasambuddho*', then '*araham sammasambuddho*' must be the only thing on our mind. Don't let other things in. Our mind must be focused on only one thing. If it is, it will stay put. If there are two or three things on our mind, it will wobble, drifting back and forth, unable to keep still or calm down. It will become restless. This restlessness is caused by the defilement or *kilesa* such as love, hatred, boredom and the like. They will upset us, making us unable to do good, for example today we planned to

go to the temple to make some merits, but when we saw something not to our liking it put us off and we decided then and there not to go. This could happen because our mind is not set. We have no *samādhi*. So we should keep on meditating.

We can meditate all the time no matter where we are or what we do. We can do it while driving. Just don't close your eyes. While driving, we can recite '*buddho, buddho, buddho*' in our mind while concentrating on driving. This is also a form of meditation. While eating, concentrate on eating; reading, concentrate on reading; working, concentrate on working. We don't have to wait until we can go to the temple, to a quiet place, or to sit in front of a Buddha image, in order to meditate. That will be too late. Why? It's because the *kilesa* are always active and ever present. Greed and hatred can pop up anywhere, anytime. They don't wait until they get on the stage to reveal themselves. They don't operate that way. Whenever we see something greed or hatred can pop up right away. To fight them, we must use Dhamma. To stop them, we must use mindfulness and *samādhi*.

Fighting the *kilesa* is a 24hrs-7days job, from the time we get up in the morning until the time we fall asleep. We must always be on guard, be mindful all the time of our thoughts. Is it about greed or anger? If it is, we must use mindfulness to stop them. We must remind ourselves that they are not good. They are like fire. When we hate, become greedy or lustful, we are setting our mind on fire. When we are not greedy or hateful, we would feel cool and at ease. Greed and anger can only be stopped by mindfulness. We must therefore strive to develop mindfulness and meditate all the time. When we have free time, instead of looking at comic books or fashion magazines, we should

mentally recite ‘*buddho, buddho, buddho*’. Our mind will be cool, happy and relaxed. It will focus on doing good like meditating and developing *samādhī* or mental stability that will assist in our quest for the noble goal of spiritual purity.

Finally the fifth and last of the spiritual powers that will assist us in our spiritual advancement is wisdom or *paññā*. To have wisdom is to be wise as opposed to being ignorant. The difference between the wise and the ignorant is that the ignorant become street sweepers and dish washers, while the wise get better jobs, working in air-conditioned offices, giving orders. This is because they are educated, smart and knowledgeable. They know what should be done and what should not be done. Those who don’t know how to type, for example, will have to wash dishes, mow the lawn, or sweep the streets instead, because this kind of work does not need a lot of knowledge or wisdom. To be able to work in a specialized field, one has to be capable and knowledgeable.

In Buddhism however, the emphasis is on knowing about suffering or *dukkha*, about the four noble truths or *ariya-sacca* namely, suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path of practice leading to the cessation of suffering. Usually when we are unhappy we don’t know what causes it. But one who possesses wisdom or *paññā* will know right away that the mind is on fire. Right now as we sit here quite comfortably, if someone does something that bothers us, we can no longer remain calm. If we don’t have wisdom, we will not know that we are suffering. If we have wisdom acquired from regularly listening to Dhamma talks, we will know that when we feel ill at ease, we are suffering.

Mental suffering or stress has its origin, not from the external but from within the mind itself. Its causes are the three cravings or *tanhā* namely, craving for sensuality, for becoming, and for not-becoming. Craving for sensuality is our lust for visible objects, sounds, aromas, flavors and tactile sensations, such as beautiful clothes and other material objects. When we lust for them it would stir up restlessness right away. When we see advertisements on the television for some products with tantalizing offers and the telephone number to call, we would immediately make that call. We could not remain still because the mind has been set on fire. It's now afflicted with suffering.

Craving or lust for becoming is another form of suffering or stress. If we think that there is a possibility for us to become a prime minister, we would not be able to remain indifferent. We would have to go out campaigning for votes. We couldn't just stay at home and let it all happen by itself. On the other hand, if we have no desire to become a prime minister, we could sit back and do nothing and be spared the suffering or stress that come with the race. We would be happy from our contentment.

Suffering or stress occurs in the mind. Its origin, the three cravings, also comes from the mind. If we have no craving, we wouldn't be afflicted with suffering or stress. When we are full from a meal, we couldn't take another bite, even if it's our favorite dish. That's because we don't have any craving for food. But if we were hungry because we haven't eaten for a day or two, we would devour even plain rice and a banana, let alone our favorite dish, because of our lust for food. When we are restless we are being consumed by stress. If we can stay put, we would be happy. Suffering or stress is therefore in the mind. The origin of suffering is also in the mind. Stress or suffering

has to be quelled in the mind. The tool to achieve this is also in the mind namely *magga* or the path of practice leading to the cessation of suffering. What is *magga*? Mindfulness and wisdom or *sati* and *paññā* as mentioned before are the components of *magga* along with faith, exertion and *samādhi*. We just have to realize that our craving causes our suffering or stress. Once we do all we have to do is to give up our craving. For example, we are already full from a meal but still crave for more, especially when we see some tantalizing dish on an advertisement. The mind wants to run to the refrigerator to grab some more food. If we are mindful of our thoughts we could tell the mind that we have just finished eating. If we eat again, we would get fat and gain weight, the cholesterol would be higher, the blood pressure would increase, and we would die sooner. This thought would stop us and put a brake on our craving. When the craving has been eliminated, the mind would become calm and peaceful.

In Buddhism, this is wisdom. All things in this world are impermanent and bring suffering or stress. Don't be attached to visible objects, sounds, aromas, flavors, tactile sensations, wealth, status, praise, and sensual pleasures that we treasure so much. When we acquire wealth we feel so happy. But in the eyes of the wise they are the source of unhappiness if they are more than what is needed for our existence. When we have more than we need they become a mental liability causing restlessness and anxiety, driving us to spend and spend, and to acquire more and more, locking us in this vicious circle of acquisition and spending, never ever find peace of mind and contentment.

Don't ever think that wealth, status, praise, and sensual pleasures can bring true happiness, because it's transient, it comes and goes. When we get rich, we feel happy. When we become poor, we are unhappy. When all the money is gone, there could be no greater suffering. But if we, like monks, were used to living without money, we would not suffer. Life can go on with just having enough to eat each day. Use your head and come to the realization that true happiness comes from contentment, no more greed, hatred, delusion, no more craving for sensuality, for becoming, and for not-becoming, no more craving to become a lieutenant, a general, a director, a Miss Universe. If we want them, we would have to go after them. If we don't, we could stay put and be truly happy.

The origin of all sufferings or stresses is the three cravings. To get rid of them, we must use wisdom or *paññā* in order to make us realize that they don't give us true happiness. True happiness is in the mind, the mind that has quelled all the cravings. If we possess the five spiritual powers namely, faith, exertion, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom, we would have the tools to eliminate the *kilesas* and vanquish suffering or stress from our mind. Please develop these five spiritual powers as much as you possibly can then true happiness would eventually be your possession.

3 Self Reliance

When we make merits, like giving to charity or keeping the moral precepts we are providing our mind with sustenance. Our life is made up of two parts, body and mind. Our body needs the four requisites of life namely, food, shelter, clothing and medicine in order for it to live comfortably. Our mind needs meritorious and wholesome actions, and the Dhamma teaching. Without them we will not be happy although we may have lots of money and possessions. This is because money, possessions, and the four requisites of life cannot quell our restlessness, worry, and stress. What we need is the Dhamma teaching of the Buddha to sustain our mind, and make it peaceful, happy, and content. This is because the Dhamma can tell us where suffering and happiness are located.

If we are not wise, then we are deluded. In this world there are two categories of people: the wise and the deluded. The latter seek after useless things that make them miserable rather than happy. Most of us belong to the second group because we still have *kilesas* such as greed, anger and delusion. Delusion is the cause of our greed and anger. It prevents us from seeing that greed and anger are like fire. When they appear they set our heart on fire, becoming restless and agitated. Our mind is blind and lacks the light of the Dhamma teaching. If we turn to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha to seriously study the Dhamma teaching, we would be able to separate the cause of happiness from the cause of misery. If we have the guiding light of Dhamma to lead us, we would live a good and trouble-free life.

The Buddha said that whether we are good or bad, happy or miserable, prospering or not, depends on ourselves. The causes of our happiness and stress are the three kinds of *kamma* namely, physical, verbal and mental. *Kamma* by itself is neutral; it's neither good nor bad. Good *kamma* is called *kusala-kamma*, skillful and meritorious. Bad *kamma* is called *akusala-kamma*, unskillful and demeritorious. These two *kamma* are the primary forces that propel us to go on a certain path, either good or bad. It is like when we come to the Sukhumvit intersection where we can turn left or right. If we turn left we would go to Sattaheep, turn right to Pattaya and Bangkok.

Similarly skillful and meritorious physical, verbal and mental *kamma*, will lead us to *sugati* or happy destinations; to rebirth in the human world or in the heavens; to happiness; to *magga* (path to the cessation of suffering), *phala* (fruition of the four transcendent paths), and *nibbāna* (liberation). Unskillful and demeritorious physical, verbal and mental *kamma* will lead us to *apāya-bhūmi* (state of deprivation), to rebirth in hell, to suffering, difficulties and hardship. This is the absolute truth. Whether the Buddha teaches it to the world or not, it still is true. It's the law of nature, just like the sun that rises in the east and sets in the west. Whether someone tells us about it or not is not important because that's the way it is.

The same is true with *kamma* and its consequences or *vipaka* that follow us like our shadow. If we do good *kamma*, happiness and prosperity will follow. When we die, we will go to heaven, to *nibbāna*. If we do bad *kamma*, unskillful and demeritorious actions, we would go to *apāya-bhūmi* (state of deprivation) such as hell. No one can help us. The only thing that can help us is our physical, verbal and mental *kamma*.

The Buddha says that we can only rely on ourselves. *Attāhi attano nātho* means we are our own refuge, for better or for worse. The Buddha only points the way. If we don't believe him and follow his advice, then it cannot be helped.

A Brahmin once queried the Buddha about his teaching people to go to heaven, to *magga* (path to the cessation of suffering), *phala* (fruition of the four transcendent paths), and nibbāna (liberation). Why then only some of his followers could realize nibbāna, while the rest couldn't. In reply the Buddha asked the Brahmin why some of the people whom the Brahmin gave direction to go to a certain place never get there. Since the Brahmin knew the way and told them precisely how to get there, how come only some of them made it while the rest didn't. The Brahmin replied that it was beyond his control. He could only give them the direction, whether they followed his instruction or not was entirely up to them. If they followed what he told them, they would definitely get there. The Buddha replied that it was the same with his teaching. Good *kamma*, heaven, *magga* (path to the cessation of suffering), *phala* (fruition of the four transcendent paths), and nibbāna (liberation) do exist. He has told them how to get there. Whether they get there or not is entirely up to them. They have to do it themselves. They are their own refuge. The Buddha only points the way. If they follow his instruction, not making any wrong turns, they will definitely get there.

The Buddha teaches that *kamma* separates human from animal. It also makes human different from one another. There are tall, short, intelligent, stupid, diligent, lazy, good and bad people. It's because our past *kamma* are not the same. In our past lives, if we did good *kamma*, were diligent and wise, liked to study, liked

to listen to the Dhamma, we would possess these qualities in our present existence. If in our past lives, we were lazy, hated to go to work, liked to live off others, hated to go to school, didn't pay attention to the teachers, and didn't learn anything new in order to become wiser, we would be like that in this life. Our differences are mostly due to our past *kamma*.

We can't change the past, but we can change the present. If we are lazy we can train ourselves to become diligent. We can use diligence to overcome laziness. If we are ignorant, we should study hard and associate ourselves with the wise and learned, who are more knowledgeable and wiser. They can teach us, and we can learn from them. Don't hang around with the foolish and ignorant. If we do we wouldn't learn anything from them. It would be a waste of time. We should instead stick with the good and the wise, who regularly go to the temples to make merits by giving to charity and keep the moral precepts. They could influence us to do good. We can't change the past, but we can change the present. We can start anew. When we have done a lot of good *kamma* today, then good consequences will appear in the future. Our lives will be better tomorrow, next month, next year and next life because we are living a virtuous life today.

The Buddha says that we are not all equal and have our differences. Even siblings are different. Some are bright, some are not, some are stupid, some are diligent, some are lazy, some are good, and some are bad. The Buddha divides them into three groups namely, those who are brighter and more virtuous than their parents; those who are the same; and those who are worse.

Parents with brighter and smarter offspring are considered blessed and lucky. They hardly need to be taught because they are able to learn by themselves or have already acquired lots of knowledge from their past lives, like the Buddha for example. He belongs to the smarter and brighter kind. His father couldn't teach him anything that he didn't already know. He even knew more than all of his teachers. Parents who have offspring who are worse than they are have to be patient in teaching them about good and bad, right and wrong. If they can afford it, they should provide their children with quality education. If they study hard, they might one day become brighter and smarter than their parents.

On the other hand, if they don't like to go to school, to study hard and be good students, but like to go out and have fun, to drink and gamble, parents shouldn't lose sleep over them, but should consider that their children are not themselves and vice versa. The Dhamma teaches that all beings are created by their own *kamma*. Whatever *kamma* they have committed, good or bad, they themselves would reap the consequences. Although they may be your sons and daughters, they are only so physically, but not spiritually or mentally. Their spirit or mind has their past *kamma* as their real parents. Parents shouldn't therefore lose sleep over their children's failures if they have done their best to raise them to be good and smart. If they insist on going down the road of moral deprivation, then it's not your fault but the consequence of their past *kamma*. In this regard it can't be helped, as the Buddha points out: *Attāhi attano nātho*, we are our own refuge.

Therefore, if we wish to live a happy and prosperous existence, and avoid all the trials and tribulations of life, we should keep a

close watch on our physical, verbal and mental *kamma*. Make sure that they are going in the skillful and meritorious direction. If we don't know what they are then we should learn from someone who knows, like all the well-learned and well-known ajahns. Go to them and learn from them. Then we will know how to live a happy and prosperous life.

If we are going down the wrong path, we must resist it with all our might. For example, if we like to go out and drink, to gamble, to cheat, to lie, to steal, to kill animals like hunting and fishing, then we must put a stop to all of them. If we have friends who like doing these things, we should avoid them. Don't socialize with them because they would only drag us down. We should therefore consider *attāhi attano nātho*; we are our own refuge as our guiding principle and put our physical, verbal and mental *kamma* into good use in order for us to subsequently reap their good consequences.

4 Ten Ways to Make Merits

Attāhi attano nātho, we are our own refuge is the central theme of Buddhist teaching. The Buddha teaches us to rely only on ourselves because we are the creator of good and evil, and the one who will reap their corresponding results of happiness and pain. The creating mechanism of good and evil, joy and sorrow, heaven and hell are inside our mind. Mind is the principal architect. The Buddha therefore concludes that the mind is the chief, the forerunner of all things. It is both a doer and a receiver of its own actions. The mind is the master who gives order to his servant, the body, to do and say things.

There are three kinds of actions or *kamma* namely physical, verbal and mental. When we do good *kamma*, happiness, progress and heaven will be the results that follow. On the other hand when we do evil *kamma*, then pain, worry, anxiety and degradation will follow. After death, the mind will go to one of the four states of deprivation (*apāya-bhūmi*) such as hell for example. Therefore, the Buddha insists that we must rely only on ourselves. We shouldn't wait for someone else to create happiness and prosperity, heaven and nibbāna for us. We must do it ourselves. To pray to Buddha images or to ask monks for blessings of success and prosperity is not the Dhamma teaching of the Buddha because he can only point the way to peace, happiness, and prosperity, and the way to suffering and deterioration. His teaching can be summarized as follows: avoid doing evil, do good and cleanse the mind of all impurities.

Doing good *kamma* or making merits such as giving to charity is like depositing money in a bank. The more we deposit the more money we will have accumulated. The interest will also

increase and soon we will be rich. On the other hand, doing evil *kamma* is like borrowing money from the bank in which we would have to pay back the loan plus the interest as well. It can become a heavy burden to bear. People in debt are always anxious and worried, unlike those who have money in the bank, who are always smiling because their money keeps growing all the time. It is the same with making merits. It gives us peace of mind; make us feel happy and content. But when we do bad *kamma*, our mind would be set on fire. We become worried and restless. This we can see because it's happening in our mind instantaneously, here and now, not in the next life. Therefore, if we want to be happy and prosperous, to sleep well and suffer no pain, then we must do only good *kamma* and avoid doing bad *kamma*.

There are ten ways to make merits or do good *kamma* as recommended by the Buddha namely;

1. *Dāna*, giving, liberality; offering, alms. Specifically, giving of any of the four requisites to the monastic order. More generally, the inclination to give, without expecting any form of repayment from the recipient.
2. *Sīla*, the quality of ethical and moral purity that prevents one from falling away from the eightfold path. Also, the training precepts that restrain one from performing unskillful actions.
3. *Bhāvanā*, mental cultivation or development; meditation.
4. Dedicating merits to the deceased.
5. *Anumodana*, congratulating on the merits or good *kamma* done by others.
6. Serving others.

7. Humility, modesty.
8. Right or correct view.
9. Listening to a Dhamma talk.
10. Teaching Dhamma.

What we are doing today is called *dāna* or giving. After we have given something good and valuable like money for example, we would feel content because we have overcome our selfishness, greed, and miserliness. If we only think of ourselves, are greedy and selfish, we would always be hungry and lusting. By giving we can overcome them and make ourselves happy and satisfied.

To have *sīla* is to abstain from hurting others by what we say and do such as killing, stealing, committing adultery, telling lies, and drinking alcohol, which could only hurt us and other people. *Sīla* helps us eliminate stress, anxiety and worry that come from our misconducts. When we lie, cheat or steal we would worry about being caught and punished.

To *bhāvanā* is to cleanse our mind of defilement or *kilesa* like craving, greed, anger and delusion that make us depressed and miserable. It is like washing our clothes. In order to do it successfully following the example of the Buddha and his noble disciples, we need to have mental collectedness (*samādhi*) and discernment (*paññā*) just as we need water and detergent to do our laundry.

By developing *samādhi* and *paññā* the Buddha eventually achieved enlightenment, thus becoming a Buddha, one who rediscovers for himself the liberating path of Dhamma, after a long period of its having been forgotten by the world. He also became an arahant, a worthy one or pure one; whose mind is

free of defilement (*kilesa*), who has abandoned all ten of the fetters (*samyojana*) that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth, whose heart is free of mental effluents (*āsava*), and who is thus not destined for further rebirth. Along with enlightenment the Buddha also realized the supreme bliss that is unsurpassed by anything in this world be it wealth, status, praise or sensual pleasure. The only way we can acquire it is through the practice of mind development (*bhāvanā*), developing *samādhi* and *paññā* until the mind realizes *vimutti* or freedom from all forms of suffering (*dukkha*).

To dedicate merits to the deceased means to share the inner sense of well-being that comes from having acted rightly or well. The recipients of our dedication are those people who have passed away and acquire the existence of a *peta*, a hungry ghost, one of a class of beings in the lower realms, sometimes capable of appearing to human beings. The *peta* are often depicted in Buddhist art as starving beings with pinhole-sized mouths through which they can never pass enough food to ease their hunger. We can't dedicate our merits to the living since they can make merits for themselves and in greater quantity. The *peta* on the other hand are not able to do so and must rely on the living to do it for them. Those who are reborn in the human world or in the heavens have accumulated enough merits to keep them satiated and happy or are able to acquire more merits if they wish to do so. Those who are reborn in hell can't also receive our dedication because they are completely consumed by the fire of suffering.

The *peta* who lust for our dedication are like beggars. Only a tiny fraction of the merits we have accumulated can be shared with them, like money for a bus fare or a cheap meal. That is all.

Therefore, every time we have done something right or well like giving to charity and would like to do something for those who have passed away such as members of our family or friends, we could dedicate this merit to them. They might be waiting. But for us who are still alive, we shouldn't be complacent. Don't expect that after we die, others would share merit with us. Even if they do, it's very little. We can accumulate a lot more merits ourselves while we are still alive like what we do today, coming to the temple to give alms, keeping the moral precepts and listening to a Dhamma talk, which are a lot more merits than what the *peta* would receive. Every time we give alms we should share this merit with those who have passed away. If they are waiting they would receive it and we would also gain more merit by sharing it.

Anumodana is to congratulate someone who has acted rightly or well. When we show our appreciation we would feel good. Acting rightly or well doesn't hurt anyone; it only brings benefits. Even if we don't directly benefit from it, we should not feel jealous, because it is a form of *kilesa* that would only make us feel miserable. On the other hand, if we congratulate and show our admiration, we would be happy. Acting rightly or well is like waves in the ocean that will eventually hit the shore, sooner or later the benefits will eventually come to us. When someone in the community acts rightly or well, the community as a whole would gain by making it safe and peaceful and will benefit. It becomes a good, peaceful community. When the community is peaceful, we who live there will benefit from that. Therefore, when we see someone acting rightly or well we should show our support and admiration.

To serve others is quite obvious, so there's no need to go into further detail.

Humility or modesty is a virtue that can only endear us to others; as opposed to arrogance, which can only generate aversion. If we still need the support and goodwill of other people and don't want to be isolated, we should be humble and modest.

To have right or correct view is to understand the law of nature or the truth that governs our existence, such as *attāhi attano nātho*, we are our own refuge because we are the one who makes us happy or sad, good or bad. When we realize this, we would know how to live happily and prosperously, because we know that by acting rightly or well we would be happy, and by acting wrongly or badly we would be miserable.

If we believe this law of nature and act wholesomely and meritoriously we would gain happiness and a favorable outcome. If we don't, but still act wholesomely, we would also reap the same benefit. But if we don't believe and act unwholesomely we would surely gain an unfavorable outcome. If we believe we would definitely not dare to misbehave or do wrong. Believers would benefit from this law of nature while non-believers would not because they would rather misbehave. Driven by the domineering *kilesa* such as greed, anger and delusion, they would rather act wrongly or badly since they don't believe in heaven or hell, in rebirth and in reaping the fruits of their *kamma* in a future life.

This is due to having the wrong view of the law of nature that would propel them to endless rounds of rebirth and ceaseless pain and suffering resulting from their unwholesome actions, because of their inability to get rid of greed, anger and delusion.

On the other hand, those who have the right view of the truth would know that it is their unwholesome *kamma* that generates the unfavorable consequences that they themselves would have to bear. They would then act rightly and well because they wouldn't like to reap the undesirable outcome. By continuing to act wholesomely and meritoriously, their minds would gradually advance until reaching the same level that the Buddha and his noble disciples have achieved.

To listen to a Dhamma talk is a very profitable experience because the Dhamma is like a light in the dark that will dispel the delusion in our mind that blind us from the truth. There are no benefits to be gained from associating with those who are similarly deluded. We should instead stick with those who are not deluded, like the Buddha and his noble disciples who have acquired the light of Dhamma that makes them know right from wrong, good from bad. If we regularly listen to their Dhamma teaching, we would gain knowledge, wisdom and insight that would make us do only what's good and right and would generate good and favorable outcome. For these reasons listening to a Dhamma talk is another way to make merits.

Teaching Dhamma to others is another way of making merits. If we know some Dhamma, however little, we should teach it to others. When someone we know has fallen on hard times and doesn't know how to get out of his or her predicament, a little word of Dhamma advice could be extremely useful, and could give him or her the strength to carry on. These days we are lacking in Dhamma. When in trouble, we don't know where to turn to for support and encouragement because we haven't been going to the temples to listen to the Dhamma teaching, to train and develop our mind. So when we run into troubles we

wouldn't know how to cope with them when in fact they could all be easily dealt with if we could accept the fact that whatever will be, will be. We must face up to reality. Whatever we do we would have to pay for it sooner or later.

If we did something wrong, accept it and be ready to face the consequences. If we should lose everything, so be it. If we think like this, there would be nobody committing suicide. But these days when we are confronted with unfavorable outcome, we wouldn't know what to do except thinking of killing ourselves to escape from it, not realizing that we could only kill only the body. The mind would continue to suffer in hell. When we are reborn as a human being again, we would commit suicide again when we run into troubles that we couldn't cope with. The Buddha says that for each suicide committed another 500 suicides would follow in future human existences because it's habit forming.

The only way to break this vicious circle is to turn to Dhamma and use it to cope with our adversity. Use patience, perseverance and tolerance to face up to our problem, however severe it may be. We must not run away, even if it means going to jail or condemnation, just think of it as the consequence of our past unwholesome *kamma*. Once it's paid off it would be gone forever.

Most of us probably think that to make merits is to give to charity only when in fact there are other ways to make merits. Like eating, we don't eat rice alone; we also consume vegetables and fruits. Our body needs the five food groups in order for it to be strong and healthy. Similarly, our mind would only develop if we cultivate the ten ways to make merits. It is therefore

incumbent on us to put what we hear today into practice. Then and only then would we reap the favorable outcome of bliss and prosperity.

5 Mental Development

When we come to the temple to give alms to the monastic order, to keep the moral precepts and to cultivate mental development, we are in effect creating happiness for ourselves. There are two kinds of happiness namely, physical and mental. To feel good physically is not hard to do, all we need are the four requisites of life such as food, clothing, shelter and medicine to prevent the body from getting sick, go hungry or thirsty. But the happiness of the body is insignificant when compared to that of the mind both in strength and intensity. Though the body may be well and fit, the mind could still be afflicted with sorrow and pain that could adversely affect the body. On the other hand when the body is not well, has aches and pains here and there, a happy mind could diminish or eliminate them entirely. Taking good care of the mind has therefore become the central theme of the Buddha's teaching.

When the body gets sick it doesn't hurt so much if the mind is happy. A happy mind could rise above the physical pain. But when the mind is unhappy, it could cause the physical fitness or well-being to diminish or disappear entirely. For this reason the Buddha kept stressing the importance of taking good care of the mind, more than taking care of the body. The mind needs the Dhamma, meritorious and wholesome *kamma* to make it happy. Otherwise it could never be happy. What we are doing here today is installing the Dhamma inside our heart and mind because the Dhamma is like medicine that could cure the sorrow and pain caused by the mental defilement or *kilesa* that have been embedded inside our heart and mind since time immemorial and accompanied us through countless rounds of rebirth. We have to use the Dhamma, wholesome, skillful, good

and meritorious *kamma* to cleanse our heart and mind of the *kilesa* in order to eliminate all of our sorrow and pain.

The Buddha's enlightenment is a cause for rejoicing and celebration because of the invaluable assistance he could offer to all sentient beings, as he is the only person in the entire universe who has discovered the secret to true happiness or supreme bliss that results from the elimination of the *kilesa* from the mind by the good and wholesome *kamma*. The *kilesa* are like germs and viruses inside the body that could cause sickness and death such as the HIV virus that causes aids, an incurable disease. While the *kilesa* are not eradicated from the mind, stress and suffering can still afflict all of us.

We are fortunate because we have the Buddha to help us cure our mental illness. He is like a physician who has discovered the Dhamma medicine to heal our mind. Unfortunately no one has yet found a cure for Aids and, for those afflicted, death seems to be the only outcome. Before the Buddha became enlightened no one in this world knew how to make the mind stay happy all the time. Now we know by his teaching that bliss and contentment can only be realized through the eradication of the *kilesa*, namely greed, anger and delusion from our mind by the cultivation of Dhamma, good and meritorious *kamma*, a message he had been propagating for forty-five years.

The purpose of our coming to the temple is to cultivate the various levels of Dhamma, skillful and wholesome *kamma* as much as we can. Some of us could only cultivate *dāna*, the giving of the four requisites such as food, clothing, medicine and shelter to the monastic order. Others could do more, like keeping the five or eight precepts depending on the strength of

our *indriya* or mental faculties like *saddhā* (conviction), *virīya* (persistence), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhī* (concentration), and *paññā* (discernment) that we have developed thus far. If they are highly developed we would be able to practice *bhāvanā* or mental development in order to lift the mind up to higher planes of bliss, tranquility and purity by eliminating the various kinds of *kilesa*.

The Buddha exhorts us to calm our mind as the first priority because when the mind is restless and agitated it is confused, it can't tell north from south, cause from effect, right from wrong, good from bad, pain from pleasure; it is deluded, not seeing things clearly as they are, such as seeing pleasure in sensual gratification when in fact it's miserable and painful. When we are addicted to sensual pleasure we are subjected to stress and discontent like a drinker or a drug user, whereas a non-drinker or a non-user of drugs would know the difference, that it's better not to be addicted to alcohol or drugs.

When we are possessed by the *kilesa* or delusion we would not be able to see clearly. It is therefore imperative that we should first make the mind calm in order to clear up the clouds of defilement blinding the mind like purifying water of pollutants. Once the water is separated from the pollutants it would become clear and transparent and would enable us to see what's in the water. It is the same with the mind, when it's defiled it would become murky, couldn't see clearly, not knowing what is obscuring its vision. But once the mind has calmed down it would temporarily be cleared of the defilement of greed, anger and delusion, enabling it to experience a brief moment of joy and peace, long enough to let it know what true happiness is and where to find it.

Next we must use discernment (*paññā*) to separate good from bad, right from wrong, wholesome from unwholesome, etc., just like separating the pollutants from the water. With a mind calm and content we would see that the defilement (*kilesa*) such as greed, anger and delusion are really a threat to our happiness and contentment because when the mind is calm and tranquil, it would render the *kilesa* temporarily inactive, creating peace and contentment as a result, but as soon as the mind emerged from repose (*samādhi*) the *kilesa* would become active again by inciting greed, anger and delusion into action causing it to become restless and agitated. We would be able to see the harmful effect caused by the *kilesa* very clearly if we have already developed *samādhi* even if we haven't heard of the *kilesa* before, we would know them by their destructive impact on our peace of mind and mental well-being.

When we realize this, we must apply *paññā* (insight) based on the four noble truths (*ariya-sacca*) and the three characteristics of existence (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) inherent in all conditioned phenomena namely, being inconstant (*anicca*), stressful (*dukkha*), and *anattā* (not-self) to eliminate them. If we cling to anything in this world we would be consumed by stress, sorrow and pain because they are impermanent, subject to change and dissolution and are not ours or ourselves such as our body for example, which we can see clearly will get old, get sick and die one day, sooner or later. If we cling to it we would then wish it to live for as long as possible which is a form of greed or craving that runs contrary to the truth of the Buddha's teaching that says all bodies are impermanent, cause stress and anguish, and not a self.

If we have the Dhamma teaching residing in our mind to remind us of the truth of the *ti-lakkhaṇa* we would be able to eliminate our attachment to our body because it's like a lump of burning coal that would burn our hands if we scoop it up. But if we merely look, it would not cause us any pain, because the body is just a lump of the four physical elements namely, earth (solidity), water (liquidity), wind (gas) and fire (heat) that our deluded mind happens to take possession of. If we know this and let go of our clinging, it would then not cause us any pain or anguish. It's similar to taking possession of a plot of land that doesn't belong to anybody and claims it to be our property. If someone should snatch it away from us we would be sorry because we were attached to something that doesn't really belong to us in the first place and would not permanently remain with us anyway. Our body is like this plot of land that we stake our claim to by considering it to be ours and ourselves. When it becomes old, sick and dies, we would be consumed by sorrow and pain because we lack *paññā* or insight into its true nature.

If we continually contemplate on the truth of the three characteristics of existence such as *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (stress) and *anattā* (not-self), we would not dare to cling to anything or wish for things to be as we would like them to be, but instead we'd let them be as they are and will be, and be ready to see them depart even if they are our possessions. If we could really do it, then we wouldn't be consumed by pain and sorrow because we have *paññā* (wisdom) and *vipassanā* (insight) to eliminate the *kilesa* from our mind leaving it peaceful, content and blissful. We'd have achieved the supreme bliss that the Buddha had pointed out to us by declaring that the happiness of this world can never equal or surpass the supreme

bliss that arises out of a mind permanently subdued by the total removal of the *kilesa* from the mind.

The bliss that results from the development of *samādhi* (concentration) is not this supreme bliss because of its temporary nature. Once the mind emerges from this *samādhi*, the *kilesa* which were also subdued by the power of *samādhi* would also emerge to wreak havoc on the mind again, which is not the same as the supreme bliss that results from the work of *paññā* (wisdom) that has completely eradicated the *kilesa* from the mind, not allowing them to ever return again, like the minds of the Buddha and his noble disciples. If we truly aspire to this supreme bliss, we must develop both *samādhi* and *paññā*. Do not be content with just *samādhi* because it's like a piece of rock sitting on a patch of grass preventing the grass from growing. But when the rock is removed the grass would eventually grow again, because it was not uprooted, just like the *kilesa*, which can't be uprooted by *samādhi* alone. We need *paññā* (wisdom) or *vipassanā* (insight) to do the job.

Therefore after we have developed *samādhi* we must then turn to the development of *paññā* or *vipassanā* by continually contemplating on the characteristics of all conditioned phenomena such as the five *khandhas* or the five physical and mental components of our existence namely, *rūpa* (body), *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (memory or perception), *saṅkhāra* (thought), and *viññāṇa* (sensory awareness) as being impermanent, stressful and not-self. By continually contemplating on these three characteristics of conditioned phenomena *paññā* (wisdom) would gradually transform from conceptual to practical. Conceptual wisdom is contemplation of the truth while practical wisdom is the application of the truth in

our daily life like when we get sick and become anxious. We must let go of our attachment to the body if we want to eliminate our anxiety. We should always be vigilant by constantly developing *paññā* and *vipassanā* after we emerge from *samādhi*.

After contemplating for a while, the mind gets tired. We must then return to *samādhi* for a rest, after having rested we would then do more contemplation. This is the way to develop *samādhi* and *paññā* - they go together like the left and right foot we use for walking, taking turns stepping. Don't listen to those who say skip *samādhi*, develop *paññā* straight away, or those who say once you have developed *samādhi*, *paññā* would automatically appear. These views are not correct. In fact both of them have to be cultivated and developed, one at a time alternatively. They perform different duties. *Samādhi* is for resting and recharging the mental energy, while *paññā* is like a knife for cutting our attachment to things that agitate and vex the mind.

We must watch what we are getting into in our practice. If we are devoting all our time to *samādhi* even after we have already mastered it, we should turn to developing *paññā* or *vipassanā* by contemplating on the three characteristics of all conditioned phenomena such as our body, feeling, memory, thought and sensory awareness. But if we are engaging entirely in contemplating without the support of *samādhi*, we could become more deluded by our contemplation, by thinking that we have become enlightened when no such thing has actually occurred. We should therefore rest and recharge the mind from time to time to keep it in balance. *Samādhi* and *paññā* are interdependent; they support and assist each other. Cultivating

both would make our journey toward nibbāna smooth and trouble-free.

6 The Ten Unwholesome Actions

The Buddha teaches that we all have our *kamma*, intentional acts that result in a favorable or unfavorable outcome, as our possession. Whatever we do we are the recipients. Through his enlightenment he could see that our joy and sorrow are the consequences of our actions done through our body, speech and thought. If we do good, wholesome and meritorious *kamma*, happiness and prosperity, would follow. On the other hand if we do bad, unwholesome, and demeritorious *kamma*, sorrow and deprivation would follow. Knowing we all desire happiness and detest pain he therefore exhorts us to do good and avoid doing evil because good *kamma* generates joy and peace, while doing evil creates stress and pain for both ourselves and others.

If we cannot do good, at least we should abstain from doing bad *kamma*. Our mind may not be cool, but at least it's not on fire. Unwholesome actions can be committed in three ways, through body, speech and mind that would result in sorrow and pain.

The ten unwholesome actions consist of three actions committed through the body - killing, stealing and committing adultery; four actions by way of speech - lying, foul mouthing, inciting hatred, and frivolous talk; and three actions by way of thought are greed, anger and delusion.

We should refrain from these ten unwholesome actions because they would only hurt others and ourselves, like killing for example. To lose our lives is excruciatingly painful because we all value life very dearly, whether we are human or the tiniest animal. All living creatures large or small are the same in this regard. If we don't want to be killed then we shouldn't kill others.

We should also abstain from stealing because it hurts the people we steal from, and also from committing adultery, which causes us to worry about getting caught and punished.

To resist these unwholesome actions we must develop and deploy *mettā* or loving-kindness because when we have *mettā* we know how to forgive and forget. By forgiving we eliminate hatred and vengeance and save others and ourselves a lot of trouble and pain. We should therefore develop lots and lots of *mettā* by treating others as our brothers and sisters, as friends in aging, sickness and death, and as fellow travellers in these ceaseless rounds of rebirth and suffering. We all already have enough suffering on our hands; we shouldn't therefore inflict any more on each other.

Stealing can be avoided by getting a job. If we have a job and earn our own living then we won't have to steal.

To avoid committing adultery, we should be satisfied with what we have, with our own husbands and wives. If we are satisfied, then we will not want more. Wanting more is delusion. We think that it will be better if we can just have this person. But instead of getting better, many problems follow. The best way to prevent sufferings caused by adultery is that we must restrain our desires. If we let our desires lead the way and do what we want, we will never feel that we have enough and will never be satisfied.

Some men have hundreds of wives because they lack mind control. They think that they have money and can use it to buy whoever they want. But they are not really happy because they feel they need more. Therefore, please be satisfied with your

own husbands and wives. One is enough. It is happier than having dozens because you will not have problems with mistresses quarrelling and fighting. The husband who is in the midst of all these will not be able to eat or sleep because he will have to choose one or the other, and he cannot make that decision easily. Therefore, restrain your desire. Have only one love, one wife. This will bring the real happiness.

Unwholesome speech like telling lies can be prevented by striving to tell only the truth. Always tell the truth. Do not tell lies or deceive others. Before saying anything, make sure what we say is true. If not, then do not say it. Better to keep quiet. When you want to say something, it must be true. Then there will be no lies. If you are used to telling lies, then your words become worthless. When Rahula, the Buddha's son, was ordained as a novice, the Buddha taught him that his integrity is measured by his truthfulness.

The Buddha gave an example by filling a bowl with water then pouring it out little by little. He then told Rahula that every time he told a lie, his integrity decreased just like the water that had been poured from the bowl. If he continued to speak falsehood, his trustworthiness would entirely disappear just like the water from the bowl. Lies destroyed our integrity. Every time we told a lie, our credibility diminished. If telling lies became our habit, then no one would ever believe what we say. We would become worthless.

It is like the story of a shepherd who yelled for help. The first time that he yelled wolf, people rushed to help only to discover that they were deceived. Then when the wolves really came, no one came to help because they no longer believed him. His

words carried no weight. Therefore, please value truth, value your words, know the consequences of telling lies, and refrain from telling them. If you cannot tell the truth, just keep quiet or talk about something else such as the weather, the rain, the sky, the sun or the storm. It's better to be evasive than to tell lies.

Next, don't use foul language because it's not nice. There are two kinds of beauty: beautiful looks and beautiful words. No one will want to be with girls who look beautiful but have foul mouths. Boyfriends and husbands will soon leave them because of their vulgarity. When they get angry, they swear. How can husbands live with them? Even being as beautiful as a Miss Universe cannot obscure their rudeness. If you want to be loved and cherished by others, then you must be beautiful both in your looks and your words. If you don't look beautiful, you can still be beautiful by what you say. Words are more important than looks. Everyone wants to hear nice things and be near such speakers. Listening to the Buddha's Dhamma talks brought joy and contentment because they were beautiful from the beginning to the end. Hearing them brought happiness and wisdom. Therefore, please check your words the same way you check yourself in the mirror to see how you look before leaving the house. Think before you speak. Be mindful when you speak; make sure you speak politely.

Next, do not incite people to hatred by saying things that will cause them to misunderstand each other. For example, do not drive a wedge between a loving couple by telling the husband that his wife was with another man, and vice versa. This causes people to break up and brings them sufferings. If people find out the truth afterwards, no one would want to associate with us.

When we say something, say it with kindness. Make sure it benefits others. If what we say is not useful, then do not say it. When a wise man says things about himself, he only talks about his faults even though he has very few. He does not talk much about his achievements although he has plenty. On the other hand, when he talks about others, he only concentrates on their good side even if they do not have many. Saying something good about others can only be beneficial while saying something bad can only be damaging. There are good and bad in all of us. Why talk only of the bad side? Why not talk about the good side? Saying something nice brings happiness to everyone, including the speaker and the one being talked about. Therefore, be careful of what you say. Say only good things, nice things. Do not destroy each other with your words.

Next, abstain from frivolous talk. Talking for the sake of talking is useless. Gossiping is a waste of time. We should talk about things that impart knowledge and benefits like talking about our work, about maintaining the moral precepts or about the Dhamma teaching.

There are three unwholesome actions committed by the mind namely, greed, hatred, and delusion. When greed arises, suffering follows; we become restless and agitated. When we see things, we want them immediately. If the desire is so strong and we cannot obtain these things in the proper way, we will resort to dishonest ways such as stealing. But if we are satisfied with what we have, this greed will diminish or may even disappear. If we have no greed, we shall be happy because no *kilesa* remains in our mind.

Likewise, the same is true with hatred because it strokes the fire of revenge in our mind. When we are very angry, we may want that person to die a thousand deaths. We must forgive and have kindness. If we can always forgive, we shall be able to conquer ourselves. When we vanquish others, they would hate us. When they beat us, we would hate them. But if we conquer ourselves by subduing our anger, our mind will be cool and calm. For example, now you are sitting here without any anger, you are comfortable and at ease. But if you were angry, how would you feel? You would be agitated and ill at ease.

Therefore, when we become angry with someone, try to stay calm and tell ourselves to leave him alone. Whatever he said or did has already happened. Nothing could be changed. It is impossible for him to do things that would please us every time. What can be done now is to forgive him. Once we forgive, we become peaceful because the poisonous elements have been driven out of our mind. It is as though nothing has happened. But if we swear at him or constantly think of him, we become hateful and unhappy. When we get angry, it is like banging our head with a hammer. When we get angry, others don't suffer with us. The person who makes us angry knows nothing of the pain we are going through or suffers the pain with us. The ones who suffer are ourselves. Therefore, when we get angry, try to forgive, then we will be calm and cool.

Finally, we must get rid of our delusion. What is delusion? It's the misperception of the truth such as seeing wrong as right, bad as good, doing good as a waste of time, or doing evil as profitable. Why is this so? It is because we haven't yet experienced the consequences of our good deeds. After making merits and not seeing the immediate results, we have

no incentive to do good deeds and prefer to do bad deeds. For example, instead of giving to charity, we spend money on alcohol, on parties, on having fun, which make us instantly happy. But we fail to see the pain and anxiety hidden behind this happiness when we run out of money to spend on having fun.

Therefore, we must listen to the Dhamma teaching in order to see that wholesome actions are meritorious, and unwholesome actions are harmful. Doing good deeds bring happiness, doing evil deeds brings suffering. When we experience the result of our skilful actions in our mind, we will want to do more. Bad people prefer to do evil deeds and do not like to do good deeds because they do not believe in the consequences of good and bad *kamma*. Good people like to do good *kamma* and abstain from doing bad *kamma* because they believe in the results of *kamma*. The way to understand the consequences of *kamma* is to constantly listen to the Dhamma teaching. We should seek after enlightened teachers and study Dhamma from them in order to become wise and enlightened ourselves. Then we will see that doing good *kamma* is beneficial and doing bad *kamma* is harmful for us. We should therefore do only good *kamma* and abstain from doing bad *kamma*. Then we will always be happy and prosperous.

7 Faith

Time is an essential element in proving a person's integrity. Before we put our faith on someone we must be certain that the person we want to trust is truthful and honest, in order to avoid disappointments later on should that person turns out to be deceitful and dishonest. Like the old proverb that says distance tests a horse; time tests a man. People can often be deceitful and untrustworthy. So we tend to get ourselves into trouble by believing in anything too readily. It is therefore essential to remind ourselves to listen with an open mind and do not rush to judgment until a careful study is made.

The same is true with the veracity of the Buddha's teachings, which have so far remain intact for over 2,500 years. Although there are many people both in the past and present who tried to disprove his words. But Dhamma is a universal truth; it could therefore withstand the test of time. Those who followed and practiced Dhamma until attaining enlightenment, becoming Noble Disciples have never disputed that the Buddha's Teaching is untrue.

Therefore the one thing on earth, which we can put our complete trust on, is the Triple Gem, namely, the Buddha; the Dhamma, his Teaching; and the Sangha, his Noble Disciples. Nobody can dispute that the Dhamma Teaching is still fresh and alive today. What he taught is not fairy tale or fiction, but truths that exists within us. He and his Disciples taught the Dhamma out of compassion and the desires to help all of us get out of the fire of suffering. Not expecting any rewards in return. He had lived like us before, had experienced both the joys and sufferings that we all have to go through. So he knew exactly what it was like.

After his enlightenment, he subsequently spent the rest of his life, 45 years in all, teaching and propagating the Dhamma in order to shed lights on our deluded mind.

When we take up the Dhamma practice we will find that his profound teaching pierces right into our hearts and minds, like a ray of light penetrating the dark cloud of delusion covering our minds and opening up the eye of wisdom hidden inside all of us, thereby allowing us to see things clearly as they are. As normal people we can only see physical objects around us, whereas the Buddha could see things beyond the range of our normal perception. He could see heaven and hell, all the different realms of existences, rebirths and nibbāna. So it is prudent of us to have faith in the Buddha and what he told us, such as heaven and hell, right and wrong, good and bad, which can immensely affect our life and well-being.

If we want to deny the existence of heaven and hell, we must also deny the existence of the *kilesas*, namely greed, hatred and delusion that reside in our hearts. It is they that led us to hell. If they exist so too do heaven and hell. Hell is created by our bad conducts, driven by our greed, hatred and delusion. The opposite is true with heaven. If we let the *kilesas* dominate us then our conducts will be bad. We will not be able to maintain *sīla*; good conducts, such as abstaining from killing, stealing, committing adultery, lying, and drinking alcoholic drinks. If we are not deluded, why then do we spend lots of money on alcoholic drinks, and getting ourselves drunk and out of control? It's a fact that people who drink can misbehave more easily than those who do not drink. People who drink think that drinking can ease their pain, relieve their sorrow and overcome their

weariness. But they don't realize that once alcohol takes control of their mind and body they will be led directly to hell.

The Buddha did not create or invent anything. What he did was to attain enlightenment and acquired the eye of Dhamma that enabled him to see clearly the relationship between causes and effects. These causes are our actions of body, speech and mind, which will affect our body, our mind, and our future lives. When we do bad deeds, our mind will be afflicted with stress and our body will be adversely affected, get sick and die. When we do good deeds, our mind will be happy and our body well because nobody will harm us. When we die, we will reborn again either as celestial beings, human beings, or animals, depending on the *kamma* we have accumulated regardless of whether the Buddha became enlightened and taught about these causes and effects or not because they are an indisputable truth, just like the fact that the world is round. We cannot dispute this fact. But in the past, no one knew this and thought the world to be flat. When people went out to sea, they were afraid that they would fall off its edge. Such was the belief that contradicted the truth that was later proven to be false. Similarly, heaven and hell, good and bad *kamma*, and rebirth are the truth. Whether anyone tells us about it or not, it's still there and nobody can abolish it. Buddhism has lasted more than 2,500 years because its teachings are based on the truth.

Those who have faith in the Buddha will follow his teachings by doing good, avoid doing evil and rid their mind of greed, hatred and delusion that will give them only good consequences, be happy and prosperous. On the other hand, the non-believers will tend to do the opposite. If they were taught to do good, they would not do it. If they were taught to avoid doing evil, they

would do it. If they were taught to rid their mind of greed, hatred and delusion, they would instead accumulate more greed, hatred and delusion. If they continue to do the bad *kamma* they would eventually run into misery and pain, ruin and deprivation such as ending up in jail because they did not believe in the consequences of their bad *kamma*. So if we were to believe, please choose the Buddha, the Dhamma, and his Noble Disciples, which we can totally trust in providing us with the greatest benefits of a happy and prosperous life, free from all kinds of stress and suffering, by doing good, avoiding doing evil and ridding our mind of greed, hatred and delusion.

8 Dhamma for the Laity

When the Buddha taught the Dhamma to his followers, monks or laymen, he would take care to choose the type of Dhamma that was appropriate to each particular listener. Dhamma is like medication that is used to cure the mind from afflictions such as sorrow, restlessness, dissatisfaction, worry or grief that differ from physical ailments like headache, fever or colds. The Buddha would choose the appropriate prescription for each particular listener. For the laity it would be one kind of Dhamma, for monks it would be another. The topics would be chosen to suit the sex, age, and mentality of each person like a physician who prescribes the medication suitable for our illness. If we have a stomach ache and were given pills for a headache, the upset stomach would not go away. Taking that medicine would be useless. It may be even harmful because it is the wrong kind of remedy. We could be adversely affected by it and even die from it.

When the Buddha gave his first discourse it was to the five recluses who had given up worldly pleasures for spiritual bliss. They were looking for peace of mind rather than the sensual gratification of sound, taste, scent, or touch that is sought by laymen. Whether their minds can become calm and peaceful or not would depend on their ability to quell the agitation that is caused by the three kinds of craving namely, craving for sensual pleasure (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*) and craving for not-becoming (*vibhāva-taṇhā*).

Craving for sensual pleasure is craving for sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Craving for becoming is the desire to be something or someone, like being a prime minister or member

of parliament. Craving for not-becoming is wanting not to be old, sick or dead. In other words it is the fear of old age, sickness and death. These three cravings as the Buddha has shown are the causes of stress, restlessness and agitation. If a monk wants to achieve inner peace and the supreme bliss he must relinquish these three cravings.

As for old age, sickness, and death, the Buddha instructed us not to be afraid of them. If we do, we would definitely suffer because old age, sickness, and death are matters of the body, not the mind. The mind does not get old, does not get sick, and does not die with the body. But because the mind mistakenly attached itself to the body, it thought that it would get old, sick, and die with the body. If we can stop this fear, we will live in this world with joy and contentment. This is because we know what gets old, gets sick, and dies, and what does not. We can differentiate between the body and the mind. The body naturally gets old, gets sick, and dies. But the mind will not get old, will not get sick, and will not die. When the body dies, the mind will take up a new body.

On the other hand when the Buddha taught the laity he would teach the Dhamma that deals with worldly possessions, financial matters and social conducts, which differs from the Dhamma for the recluses. In order for a layperson to live a happy and prosperous life and fit in with the natural order of things he should possess the following qualities: 1. Charity (*caga*). 2. Honesty (*sacca*). 3. Forbearance (*khanti*). 4. Restraint (*dama*). He who has these four virtues is like a fully armed warrior capable of stopping his adversary from creating chaos and distress. It is therefore essential for a layperson to

develop these four mental qualities and apply them in his daily activities.

Charity is sharing our happiness and possession with others. If we have plenty, we give a lot. If we don't have much, we give a small amount. Like when we dine together we should share the food, not grabbing all for ourselves. We should think of others who get hungry and have the same need too. If we all get our fair share we will all live peacefully and happily whether we live in a large or a small community.

We should be charitable and caring especially in time of need like when there is a flood that causes a severe shortage of food, shelter, medicine and clothing. We should assist in whatever way we can because when we do we will have accumulated the Dhamma quality that is more valuable than the material assistance that we donated and because fulfillment doesn't come about by the accumulation of wealth but by sharing that wealth with others.

Honesty or truthfulness (*sacca*) means we should be sincere with each other, say what we think, not deceiving each other. Husbands and wives should be faithful to each other, not committing adultery. They should love only their spouse in order for them to be really happy, not being suspicious of each other or wondering whether they have been deceived or not. Similarly, children and parents must also be honest with each other. When children say they are going to school, they must really be in school, not going to pubs or other inappropriate places instead. They should not lie to their parents because it would hurt them.

Corrupt people often do things that are not decent, like liars who are shunned by others for sowing the seed of distrust, suspicion and unease for the community they live in. If we want to live in peace and harmony, we should be honest and sincere. If we cannot tell the truth, we should just keep quiet or talk about something else. There is no need to resort to deception because it only brings trouble. When we lie, we do not have peace of mind because we worry that others may find out that we are not to be trusted.

We need to have forbearance (*khanti*) in order to go through the trials and tribulations of life, like not having enough food to eat or having to eat later than usual or going through hard times. If we can't endure we could get upset or become distraught, which could lead our committing criminal offences like stealing, and then to be caught and eventually put in jail. But if we have endurance we could resist the temptation to steal even if we are very hungry and would wait to obtain food lawfully. If we have forbearance there is little chance that we would act illegally which would lead to punishment.

In order for us to deal with our feelings and emotions we need to have restraint (*dama*) like the times we get angry when we see things not to our liking, or being greedy when we want to possess something. We must restrain our greed and anger and not allow them to lead us to do or say things that transgress the moral or civil law. We shouldn't vent our anger by swearing, hitting, or injuring others because it would cause others to retaliate. Someone could get hurt or die. The dead would then have to be buried and the killer would be sent to jail, all because we don't have the restraint to control our mind, our feelings, and our emotions.

To conquer ourselves is far better than to conquer others, because defeating others causes them to hate us, and if they beat us we would hate them and want to take revenge. This can go on forever. But when we have conquered ourselves, there will be calm and peace. When we can conquer our anger, we shall feel at ease. The person who makes us angry will not have to be miserable from having to hear our telling off. It is good and profitable for a layperson to have restraint to rein in their feelings and emotions when interacting with other people.

If we wish to have a peaceful and happy life, we must develop these four Dhamma virtues as recommended by the Buddha. They are charity (*caga*), honesty (*sacca*), forbearance (*khanti*) and restraint (*dama*).

Biography

Of Phra Ajahn Suchart Abhijāto

Phra Ajahn Suchart Abhijāto was born on 2 November 1947. His father put him under the care of his grandmother, who was living in Suphanburi, when he was two years old due to his father's demanding work schedule.

Phra Ajahn Suchart had an interest in the Dhamma since he was in grade school at the Seventh Day Adventist Ekamai School in Bangkok, which is now Ekamai International School. After graduating high school, he went to study Civil Engineering at California State University, Fresno (USA). He returned to Thailand once he had completed his degree and was running an ice-cream parlour for a short while.

An English Dhamma book on impermanence (anicca)—translated by a foreign monk from the Buddhist Canon (Tipiṭaka)—inspired him to search for a true happiness through ordination. Phra Ajahn Suchart decided to become a monk when he was 27 years of age. He was ordained at Wat Bovornives in Bangkok on 19 February 1975 with Somdet Phra Nāṇasaṅvara—the late Supreme Patriarch (Somdet Phra Saṅgharājā)—as his preceptor. His parents had no objection to his ordination as it was his choice.

About six weeks after ordination, Phra Ajahn Suchart travelled to Wat Pa Baan Taad to stay for the rains retreat with Luangta Mahā Boowa Nāṇasampanno in Udon Thani. He stayed there for nine years from his first to his ninth rains retreat.

After his time at Wat Pa Baan Taad, Phra Ajahn Suchart returned to Pattaya and stayed at Wat Bodhi Sampan, Chonburi, for one year. He then moved to Wat Yansangwararam in 1984 and has resided there until present. Phra Ajahn Suchart was conferred a monastic

Daily Schedule

6:00—7:30

Alms round at Baan Amphur
(approximate time depending on the season).

8:00—10:00

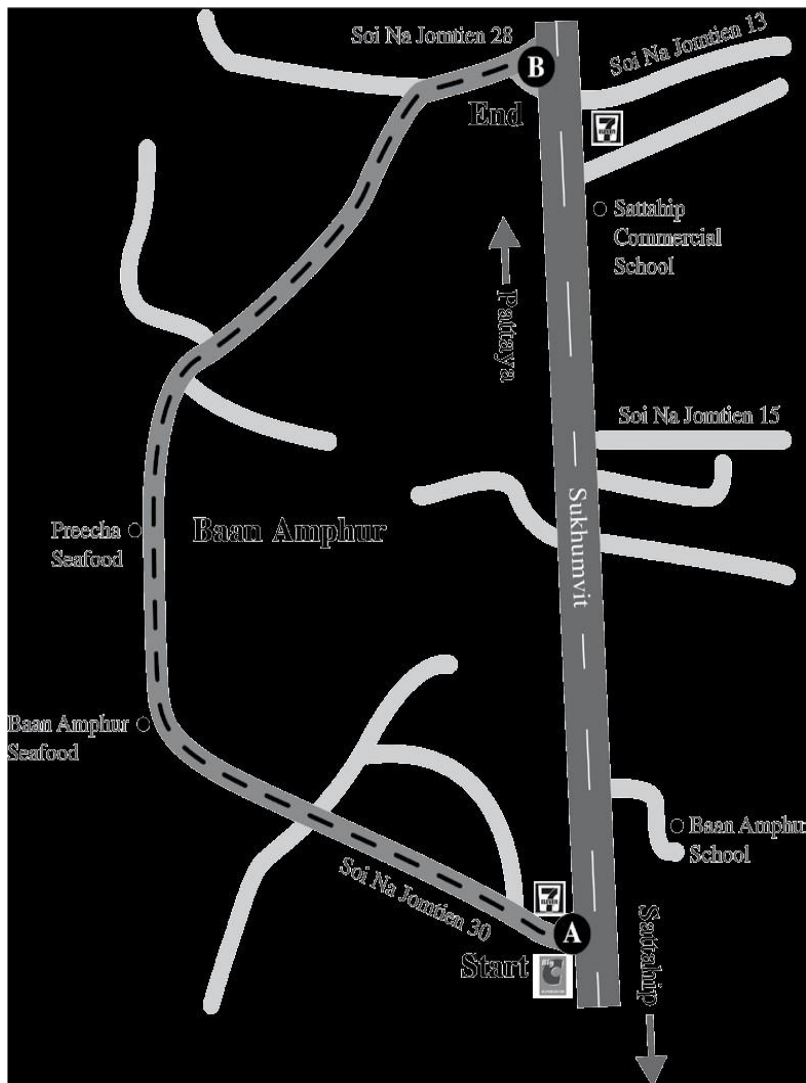
Morning meal and conversation with visitors afterwards at the dining hall (except for Uposatha Days, weekends, and national holidays).

14:00—16:00

Dhamma talk and conversation with visitors at Chula-dhamma Sālā on Khao Chi-On.

Kindly visit Phra Ajahn within the scheduled time only.

Alms Route



Glossary

akusala: Unwholesome, unskillful, demeritorious. See its opposite, *kusala*.

ānāpānasati: Mindfulness of breathing. A meditation practice in which one maintains one's attention and mindfulness on the sensations of breathing. **anattā:** Not-self; ownerless.

anicca: Inconstant; unsteady; impermanent.

apāya-bhūmi: State of deprivation; the four lower levels of existence into which one might be reborn as a result of past unskillful actions (see *kamma*): rebirth in hell, as a hungry ghost (see *peta*), as an angry demon (see *asura*), or as a common animal. None of these states is permanent. Compare *sugati*.

ariya-sacca: Noble Truth. The word "*ariya*" (noble) can also mean ideal or standard, and in this context means "objective" or "universal" truth. There are four: stress, the origin of stress, the disbanding of stress, and the path of practice leading to the disbanding of stress.

āsava: Mental effluent, pollutant, or fermentation. Four qualities — sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance — that "flow out" of the mind and create the flood of the round of death and rebirth.

bhāvanā: Mental cultivation or development; meditation. The third of the three grounds for meritorious action. See also *dāna* and *sīla*.

bhāva-taṇhā: Craving for existence, craving to have or to be. One of the three types of craving (*taṇhā*).

buddho: Awake; enlightened. An epithet for the Buddha.

Buddha: The name given to one who rediscovers for himself the liberating path of Dhamma, after a long period of its having been forgotten by the world. According to tradition, a long line of Buddhas stretches off into the distant past. The most recent Buddha was born Siddhattha Gotama in India in the sixth century BCE. A well-educated and wealthy young man, he relinquished his family and his princely inheritance in the prime of his life to search for true freedom and an end to suffering (*dukkha*). After seven years of austerities in the forest, he rediscovered the "middle way" and achieved his goal, becoming Buddha. **citta:** Mind; heart; state of consciousness.

dāna: Giving, liberality; offering, alms. Specifically, giving of any of the four requisites to the monastic order. More generally, the inclination to give, without expecting any form of repayment from the recipient. *Dana* is the first theme in the Buddha's system of gradual training (see **anupubbī-kathā**), the first of the ten *pāramīs*, one of the seven treasures (see **dhana**), and the first of the three grounds for meritorious action (see **sīla** and **bhāvanā**).

deva; devatā: Literally, "shining one" — an inhabitant of the heavenly realms (see **sagga** and **sugati**). **dukkha:** Stress; suffering; pain; distress; discontent.

kamma [Skt. **karma**]: Intentional acts that result in states of being and birth.

kāma-taṇhā: Craving for sensual pleasures. One of the three types of craving.

khandha: Heap; group; aggregate. Physical and mental components of the personality and of sensory experience in general. The five bases of clinging (see *upadāna*). See: **nāma** (mental phenomenon), **rūpa** (physical phenomenon), **vedanā** (feeling), **saññā** (perception), **saṅkhāra** (mental fashionings), and **viññāṇa** (consciousness).

khanti: Patience; forbearance. One of the ten perfections (*pāramīs*).

kilesa: Defilement — *lobha* (passion), *dosa* (aversion), and *moha* (delusion) in their various forms, which include such things as greed, malevolence, anger, rancor, hypocrisy, arrogance, envy, miserliness, dishonesty, boastfulness, obstinacy, violence, pride, conceit, intoxication, and complacency.

kusala: Wholesome, skillful, good, meritorious. An action characterized by this moral quality (*kusala-kamma*) is bound to result (eventually) in happiness and a favorable outcome. Actions characterized by its opposite (*akusala-kamma*) lead to sorrow. See **kamma**.

magga: Path. Specifically, the path to the cessation of suffering and stress. The four transcendent paths — or rather, one path with four levels of refinement — are the path to stream-entry (entering the stream to nibbāna, which ensures that one will be reborn at most only seven more times), the path to once-returning, the path to non-returning, and the path to *arahantship*. See **phala**.

nekkhamma: Renunciation; literally, "freedom from sensual lust." One of the ten *pāramīs*.

nibbāna [Skt. *nirvāṇa*]: Liberation; literally, the "unbinding" of the mind from the mental effluents (see *āsava*), defilements (see *kilesa*), and the round of rebirth (see *vaṭṭa*), and from all that can be described or defined. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries the connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. (According to the physics taught at the time of the Buddha, a burning fire seizes or adheres to its fuel; when extinguished, it is unbound.) "Total nibbāna" in some contexts denotes the experience of Awakening; in others, the final passing away of an arahant.

pañña: Discernment; insight; wisdom; intelligence; common sense; ingenuity. One of the ten perfections (*pāramīs*).

peta [Skt. *preta*]: A "hungry shade" or "hungry ghost" — one of a class of beings in the lower realms, sometimes capable of appearing to human beings. The *petas* are often depicted in Buddhist art as starving beings with pinhole-sized mouths through which they can never pass enough food to ease their hunger.

phala: Fruition. Specifically, the fruition of any of the four transcendent paths (see *magga*).

puñña: Merit; worth; the inner sense of well-being that comes from having acted rightly or well and that enables one to continue acting well.

puthujjana: One of the many-folk; a "worlding" or run-of-the-mill person. An ordinary person who has not yet realized any of the four stages of Awakening (see *magga*). Compare *ariyapuggala*.

rūpa: Body; physical phenomenon; sense datum. The basic meaning of this word is "appearance" or "form." It is used, however, in a number of different contexts, taking on different shades of meaning in each. In lists of the objects of the senses, it is given as the object of the sense of sight. As one of the khandha, it refers to physical phenomena or sensations (visible appearance or form being the defining characteristics of what is physical). This is also the meaning it carries when opposed to nāma, or mental phenomena.

sacca: Truthfulness. One of the ten perfections (*pāramīs*).

saddhā: Conviction, faith. A confidence in the Buddha that gives one the willingness to put his teachings into practice. Conviction becomes unshakeable upon the attainment of stream-entry (see *sotāpanna*).

samādhi: Concentration; the practice of centering the mind in a single sensation or preoccupation, usually to the point of *jhāna*.

saṃyojana: Fetter that binds the mind to the cycle of rebirth (see **vaṭṭa**) — self-identification views (*sakkāya-diṭṭhī*), uncertainty (*vicikicchā*), grasping at precepts and practices (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*); sensual passion (*kāma-rāga*), resistance (*vyāpāda*); passion for form (*rūpa-rāga*), passion for formless phenomena (*arūpa-rāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and unawareness (*avijjā*). Compare **anusaya**.

saṅkhāra: Formation, compound, fashioning, fabrication — the forces and factors that fashion things (physical or mental), the process of fashioning, and the fashioned things that result. *Saṅkhāra* can refer to anything formed or fashioned by

conditions, or, more specifically, (as one of the five *khandhas*) thought-formations within the mind.

saññā: Label; perception; allusion; act of memory or recognition; interpretation. See **khandha**.

sati: Mindfulness, self-collectedness, powers of reference and retention. In some contexts, the word *sati* when used alone covers alertness (*sampajañña*) as well.

sīla: Virtue, morality. The quality of ethical and moral purity that prevents one from falling away from the eightfold path. Also, the training precepts that restrain one from performing unskillful actions. *Sīla* is the second theme in the gradual training (see **anupubbī-kathā**), one of the ten *pāramīs*, the second of the seven treasures (see **dhana**), and the first of the three grounds for meritorious action (see **bhāvanā**).

sugati: Happy destinations; the two higher levels of existence into which one might be reborn as a result of past skillful actions (see **kamma**): rebirth in the human world or in the heavens (See **sagga**). None of these states is permanent. Compare *apāya-bhūmi*.

sugato: Well-faring; going (or gone) to a good destination. An epithet for the Buddha.

taṇhā: Craving — for sensuality, for becoming, or for not-becoming (see **bhava**). See also **lobha** (greed; passion)

ti-lakkhaṇa: Three characteristics inherent in all conditioned phenomena — being inconstant (*anicca*), stressful (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*).

vaṭṭa: The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. This denotes both the death and rebirth of living beings and the death and rebirth of defilement (*kilesa*) within the mind. See **saṃsāra**.

vedanā: Feeling — pleasure (ease), pain (stress), or neither pleasure nor pain. See **khandha**.

vibhāva-taṇhā: Craving for non-existence; craving not to have or not to be. One of the three types of craving (*taṇhā*).

vimutti: Release; freedom from the fabrications and conventions of the mind. The *suttas* distinguish between two kinds of release. Discernment-release (*paññā-vimutti*) describes the mind of the arahant, which is free of the *āsavas*. Awareness-release (*ceto-vimutti*) is used to describe either the mundane suppression of the *kilesas* during the practice of *jhāna* and the four *brahma-vihāras* [see AN 6.13], or the supramundane state of concentration in the *āsava*-free mind of the arahant.

viññāṇa: Consciousness; cognizance; the act of taking note of sense data and ideas as they occur. There is also a type of consciousness that lies outside of the *khandhas* — called consciousness without feature (*viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ*) — which is not related to the six senses at all. See **khandha**.

vipassanā: Clear intuitive insight into physical and mental phenomena as they arise and disappear, seeing them for what they actually are — in and of themselves — in terms of the three characteristics (see **ti-lakkhaṇa**) and in terms of stress, its origin, its disbanding, and the way leading to its disbanding (see **ariya-sacca**).

virīya: Persistence; energy. One of the ten perfections (*pāramīs*), the five faculties (*bala*; see *bodhi-pakkhiyadhammā*),

and the five strengths/dominant factors (*indriya*; see *bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammā*).