

Triratna Dharma Training Course for Mitras

Year Three

Module 1: “Letters of Gold, Letters of Fire” – Living with the Dhammapada

“The teachings contained in the Dhammapada are literal truth, and deserve to be engraved on our hearts in letters of gold – or fire.”

Sangharakshita

Introduction

The purpose of this module is threefold:

1. To provide an overview of the earliest strata of the Buddhist texts that have come down to us; i.e. the Pāli Canon.
2. To explore in more depth the teachings contained in one section of those texts; i.e. the *Dhammapada*.
3. To open our hearts to the words of the Buddha contained in the *Dhammapada* and live with them for the next eight weeks.

You will need a copy of The *Dhammapada* and we will be using Sangharakshita's translation (ISBN 1899579354), available from Windhorse Publications:

<http://www.windhorsepublications.com/CartV2/Details.asp?ProductID=493>

We will also be listening to a series of five talks by Padmavajra on the *Dhammapada* which you will need to access via Free Buddhist Audio:

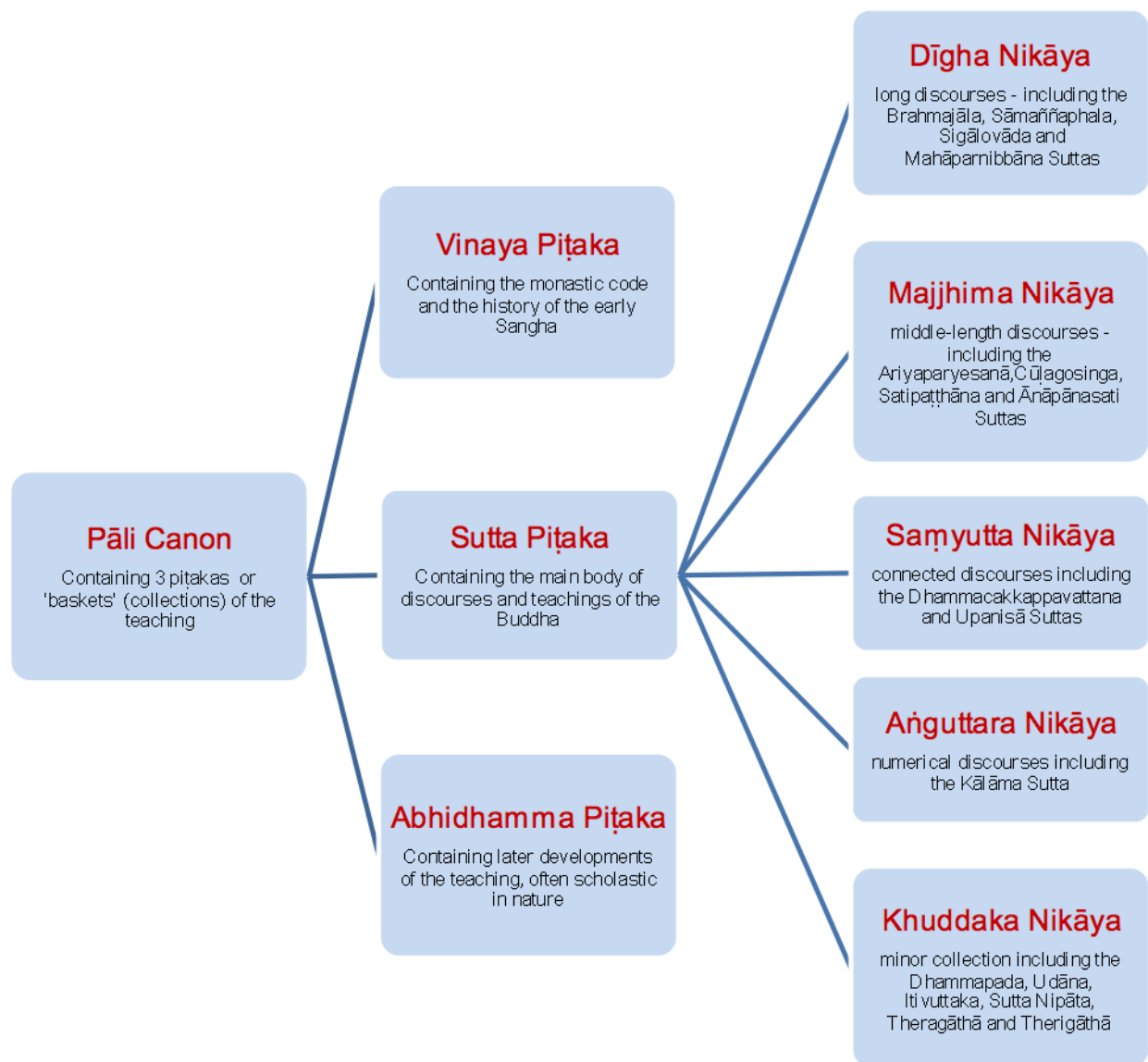
<http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X37>

An overview of the Pāli Canon

You will already have met some of the Buddha's teachings from the Pāli Canon earlier in the course. The *Sāmaññaphala* and *Meghiya* suttas along with Piṅgiya's *Praises to the Way to the Beyond* were included in the Foundation Year material and the story of the Anuruddhas (from the *Cūḷagosinga Sutta*) was also referred to there. Other suttas are included in various modules of the course, including the *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Ānāpānasati* suttas in ‘The Way of Mindfulness’ module, various suttas on conditionality in ‘The Nature of Existence 1’, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* in ‘Vision and Transformation’, etc. But before we proceed to explore the teachings of the *Dhammapada* in more depth, it may be helpful to have an overview of this very important strata of the Buddhist texts in order to place them in a broader context.

The Pāli Canon, as it is called, contains all the texts written in Pāli, the language that comes closest to that which the Buddha himself would have spoken. It contains the earliest known records of the Buddha's teaching which were originally preserved as an oral tradition and only written down several centuries after the Buddha's Parinibbāna. It consists of three 'baskets' (*piṭakas*) or collections:

1. The ***Vinaya Piṭaka*** which contains the monastic code.
2. The ***Abhidhamma Piṭaka*** which consists of the 'further' teachings or later developments of the Buddha's teaching, mainly scholastic in character.
3. The ***Sutta Piṭaka*** which contains the main body of the Buddha's teaching. Spiritually speaking, this is by far the most important of the three baskets. It is further subdivided into 5 sections as follows:
 - i. The ***Dīgha Nikāya*** or 'long discourses'. This includes the *Brahmajāla*, *Sāmaññaphala*, *Sigālovāda* and *Mahāparinibbāna* suttas.
 - ii. The ***Majjhima Nikāya*** or 'middle length discourses'. This includes the *Ariyapariyesanā*, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, *Cūḷagosinga*, *Kosambiya*, *Angulimāla* and *Ānāpānasati* suttas.
 - iii. The ***Samyutta Nikāya*** or the 'Connected discourses'. This includes the *Dhammacakkappavattana* and *Upanisā* suttas and approximately 2889 others!
 - iv. The ***Aṅguttara Nikāya*** or the 'Numerical discourses'. This includes the *Kālāma* sutta and approx 2300 others.
 - v. The ***Khuddaka Nikāya*** or 'Minor collection'. This includes 15 independent works, the main ones being:
 - The ***Dhammapada***.
 - The ***Udāna*** – including the *Bāhiya* and *Meghiya* suttas.
 - The ***Itivuttaka***.
 - The ***Sutta Nipāta*** – including the *Mettā*, *Mangala* and *Ratana* suttas and *Piṅgiya's Praises of the Way to the Beyond*.
 - The ***Theragāthā***, verses of the elder monks.
 - The ***Therīgāthā***, verses of the elder nuns.



The importance of the Dhammapada

The *Dhammapada* has been translated into English more times than any other Buddhist text with at least 30 versions having appeared over the last 150 years. It is often the one canonical text that non-Buddhists may have read and is considered a classic not only of Buddhist but of world literature. But its significance for practising Buddhists is not just its literary merit but its very clear and direct expression of what Sangharakshita calls, “Basic Buddhism.”

In ‘Part Five’ of the Foundation Year, we looked at what provides the unity of Buddhism and one answer to that, in terms of doctrinal unity, is the core of basic teachings that are recognised by all schools, such as the Four Noble Truths, the Three Lakṣaṇas, karma and its consequences etc. The *Dhammapada* explores these teachings, as well as many others, in a memorable, easy-to-comprehend and direct way. So in looking at the *Dhammapada* over the next 8 weeks, we have the chance

to hear directly from the Buddha some of his central teachings about how to practice the Dharma and free ourselves from suffering.

Format for the next eight weeks

Whilst the *Dhammapada* is not a long text by Buddhist standards, we will not have time to study it all during the next eight weeks. Instead, we will be using a series of five talks given by Padmavajra on a men's retreat at Padmaloka in the summer of 2007. These explore some of the key teachings and verses of the *Dhammapada* in some depth and place them clearly in the context of spiritual practice. We will then look at some written excerpts from a seminar by Sangharakshita on the Buddhavagga section of the *Dhammapada*. Finally, we will conclude with a close reading of chapters five and six: 'The Spiritually Mature' and 'The Spiritually Immature'.

However, I hope that there will be time to read the whole text aloud, and in a meditative context, during your group meetings over the next eight weeks so that you at least become familiar with the complete text. I also want to encourage you to 'live' with the *Dhammapada* much more closely over the next eight weeks. By that, I mean reading sections of it before or after your morning meditation, or before going to bed, or on your journey to work, or whenever you can find time. It may be helpful to keep the text with you all the time so that you can dip in and out of it. In this way, I hope that some of the words of the Buddha will begin to touch your heart and affect you more deeply. My own experience of reading the *Dhammapada* is often that an image or a phrase or a verse from whatever section I am reading will hit home or speak to me directly or challenge me. It very rarely seems irrelevant to my life or concerns.

Other suggestions of things you could do to enter more fully into the world of the *Dhammapada* over the next six weeks are:

- Illuminate your favourite verses or sections of the text; i.e. write them out in a beautiful way.
- Memorise certain verses.
- Have a copy of the text on your shrine.
- Treat your copy of the text with reverence and respect.

Perhaps you can think of other things to do as well, or you could come up with other ideas in your group.

Study guide and suggested questions

As usual, it would be helpful if you can take some notes as you work your way through Padmavajra's talks. This helps both with absorbing the material and avoids any tendency to go in one ear and out the other! It also gives you a summary to refer to in the group and in the future.

The following questions are here to help you to engage with the various topics covered in this module. They highlight some of the key themes in each unit and particularly focus on things that aren't raised elsewhere in the course. If you have time, you may wish to write some notes to one or more of the questions before attending your group or you may just wish to reflect on one or two of them throughout the week. If there is a topic that is not covered by the questions that you wish to discuss in the group then do of course raise that too.

Week One: The Essential Revolution

You will need to listen to the first talk in Padmavajra's series entitled: '*The Essential Revolution – Verses 1 and 2*' before the group. This gives a general introduction to the *Dhammapada* and places it in its traditional spiritual context before going on to look at the opening two verses of the whole work.

Suggested questions

1. What are the implications of accepting the Buddha's teaching on the centrality of mind?
2. To what extent do you attribute your unhappiness and happiness to external circumstances?
3. Have you had a, "Wonderfully liberating moment," as Padmavajra describes in the talk? If so, describe it or talk about it with your group.
4. Padmavajra mentions the phrase, "Ecology of mind or consciousness." What do you make of this phrase and his comments about looking at what we put in to our mind?
5. What are your associations with the terms, 'purity' and 'impurity'?
6. "Like a shadow that never departs." Have you had an experience like this in relation to happiness?

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Week Two: Changing Hatred into Love

You will need to listen to the second talk in Padmavajra's series entitled: '*Changing Hatred into Love – Verses 3 to 6*' before the group.

Suggested questions

1. Do you have a tendency towards blame and resentment in your life? If so, who or what do you tend to blame and what are the effects of that for you? How can you begin to move away from such blame and resentment?
2. If you have expressed anger or hatred in your life, what have been the consequences of that for you and others?
3. Padmavajra uses the term, "Tough Dharma." What do you think he means by that? How do you respond to the more uncompromising aspects of the Dharma?
4. In what way are blame and resentment passive?

5. How can you bring about a deeper, “Activation of your heart?” What has already helped you to do this?
6. What is your own experience of forgiveness?
7. Have you suffered from a sense of disconnection and deadness? If so, how have you worked to overcome that?
8. Does reflection on the inevitability of death give you a sense of urgency in your practice? If so, how has this manifested?

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Week Three: Mindfulness is the Way to the Deathless

You will need to listen to the third talk in Padmavajra's series entitled: ‘*Mindfulness is the Way to the Deathless – Verses 7, 8, 21, 23*’ before the group.

Suggested questions

1. “Laziness is not living meaningfully.” What are the implications of this statement for you?
2. Make a list of some of your own *māras*.
3. What is meant by the term *amata* (deathless or immortal)? How do you respond to this term?
4. Describe an experience of unmindfulness in your own life and an experience of mindfulness. In your own words, what is the difference between the two?
5. How can you, “Turn up for life.” more fully?
6. What can you do to strengthen your overall sense of purpose?
7. Integration, inspiration, permeation and radiation. Can you relate to these terms in your own experience? If so, can you identify what conditions have supported them?

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Week Four: Seeing with Insight

You will need to listen to the fourth talk in Padmavajra's series entitled: 'Seeing with Insight – Verses 277 to 279' before the group.

Suggested questions

These questions are more specifically about reflecting on the three *lakṣaṇas*, as I presume you are at least familiar with them as ideas from earlier in the course (they feature in 'Part 4, Week 5' of the Foundation Year as well as in other parts of the course). You may wish to share your examples with the group.

1. Write about the following three types of experience of impermanence, describing how you know it is impermanent, what the effects of its impermanence are, and how you feel about its impermanence:
 - i. An experience you are currently having.
 - ii. An experience from your past.
 - iii. An experience from the world around you.
2. Write about a particular example from your own experience of each of the three kinds of suffering:
 - i. The suffering of suffering.
 - ii. The suffering of change.
 - iii. The suffering of conditioned existence; or existential suffering.
3. Write about an experience of happiness you have had, describing the conditions that gave rise to it.
4. Write about an experience of aesthetic appreciation you have had. How might it conduce to seeing not-self?

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Week Five: Flowers

You will need to listen to the fifth talk in Padmavajra's series entitled: 'Flowers – Verses 44 to 59' before the group.

Suggested questions

1. What is your response to the imagery of flowers? Do you respond to beauty as a means of communication? Where do you experience beauty in your world?

2. What might you need to do to become the ‘ideal student’?
3. What has been your own experience of falling in love; the ‘flower-tipped arrows of Māra’? In what ways has it helped or hindered your spiritual practice?
4. “Wisdom comes through deep silence.” Do you agree? If so, how might you experience this silence more?
5. “Mind your own business.” What is the relevance of this statement for you?
6. “Talking about the Dharma is a practice.” How is this so?
7. Describe an experience from your own life where your, or others’ ethical actions have perfumed the world around you.

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Week Six: Chapter 14, ‘The Enlightened One’, Verses 179 – 187

This week, we move from studying the text via Padmavajra's talks to looking at an edited version of a seminar given by Sangharakshita at Vinehall in 1981. This gives us both the opportunity of looking at a very important section of the *Dhammapada* not covered by Padmavajra but also a chance to experience Sangharakshita's way of approaching the Pāli texts. He has given a wide range of seminars on Pāli material, including sections of the *Udāna* and *Sutta Nipāta* as well as important individual suttas such as the *Mahāparinibbāna*, the *Sigālovāda* and the *Sāmaññaphala*. His seminars on the *Mettā Sutta* and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* have already been published by Windhorse. At some point, I hope you will have the time to follow up some of these other Pāli texts via Sangharakshita's seminars as he has a distinctive and imaginative way of making them relevant to our own times and practice. In the meantime, we have the opportunity of looking at what he has to say about the Buddhavagga section of the *Dhammapada*. The whole chapter is divided over the next two weeks but please read the following extract before your group meeting this week:

N.B. This edited version was produced by Vajrapriya and further edited by Vidyadevi. Sangharakshita’s own translation of the text, published by Windhorse Publications in 2001, has been used as the basis for this version; this has necessitated a little (but not much) adjustment of the commentary.

Beginning of extract

179

*That Enlightened One whose sphere is endless,
whose victory is irreversible, and after whose
victory no (defilements) remain (to be conquered),
by what track will you lead him (astray), the
Trackless One?*

The Pāli word translated here as ‘defilements’ is ‘*assa*’, which literally means hope, expectations and therefore desire. This is not quite desire in the straightforward sense, more looking forward to the next thing because you're not satisfied with what you've got. *Assa* comes very close in meaning to *taṇhā* (Pāli) or *trṣṇā* (Sanskrit); thirst or craving. This verse speaks of the Buddha as having conquered yearning and therefore craving, thirst, hope and neurotic desire. Desire is not always neurotic, as we shall see in discussing the next verse. The verse makes the further statement that the Buddha's victory is irreversible, which raises the question of the difference between ‘*dhyāna*’ and Insight. The *dhyāna* experience, the *śamatha* experience, is not enough. In that experience, cravings and negative emotions of any kind are suspended; you're free from them for the time being. But it is only by virtue of some genuine insight into the nature of these states, into your own mind, that they are finally and permanently transcended.

The word translated as ‘whose sphere is endless’ is ‘*anantagocaram*’. ‘*Gocaran*’ means pasture or field (‘*go*’ is ‘cow’, ‘*caran*’ is ‘to go’ so ‘*gocaran*’ is literally ‘where the cow goes’). Here the meaning is extended to refer to a whole sphere of operations, and the Buddha, the Enlightened One, is described as one whose sphere, whose field of operations, is endless, ‘*ananta*’. In as much as the Buddha is the Buddha, in as much as he has realized the state of Enlightenment, in as much as he is one with the Unconditioned, his whole method of operation is Unconditioned, and therefore without any limits. As the verse goes on to say, it is not possible to fully understand the way in which he operates because one understands with concepts, with categories, and these impose limitations.

The Buddha is called ‘*apadam*’, the trackless one. Somewhere else in the *Dhammapada* it is said that the Buddhas, the Enlightened ones, pass through the world just as birds pass through the sky. Birds flying through the sky leave no track or mark, and likewise the Buddha, by virtue of the fact that he has conquered all the passions, leaves behind no track, no karma. He cannot be traced. There is nothing you can get hold of, nothing he can be caught by.

To put it another way, he is creative. A habit is a regular way of doing things which is in consonance with your limited condition of being and almost compulsive. You don't want to change a habit, and this is an aspect of reactivity, suggesting a certain lack of creativity, a lack of adaptability or flexibility. But a Buddha is free from such compulsive patterns of behaviour and thought and being. He cannot be tracked; neither can he be defined. He is beyond thought, beyond understanding.

The apparently simple statements made in this verse about the Buddha mean quite a lot. It is salutary to bear in mind that the Buddha cannot be traced even by the words that he himself is recorded in the scriptures as speaking, taken just as words or ideas. You have to place yourself in harmony with what the Buddha says and try to feel your way through to its inner meaning through personal experience. Otherwise, you may think that by reading the words of the Buddha you know all about him, but in all likelihood you are as far away as ever.

The impression of Buddhahood this gives is that it is something glorious that soars way beyond. It gives a strong impression of the person who composed the verse too, an impression of an inspired devotion.

180

*That Enlightened One in whom there is not
that ensnaring, entangling craving to lead anywhere
(in conditioned existence), and whose sphere is
endless, by what track will you lead him (astray),
the Trackless One?*

In Pāli, the third and fourth lines of this verse are the same as the third and fourth of the previous verse, but the first two lines are different. Here, *taṇhā* rather than *assa* is used, suggesting that the two terms are really synonymous. *Taṇhā*, literally ‘thirst’, can be translated less literally as ‘craving’, but not as desire, because while craving is invariably unskilful, desire may be skilful or unskilful. There is a Pāli term ‘*chanda*’, which means ‘urge’ or ‘desire’, and this can be either positive or negative. The Buddha distinguishes, for instance, between ‘*kāmachanda*’ and ‘*dhammachanda*’; *kāmachanda* being the desire for sensuous pleasure while *dhammachanda* is the desire for the spiritual life itself. Likewise, you can speak of the desire for nirvana. But *taṇhā* is always unskilful, and it indicates a very powerful or primordial drive. If you were dying of thirst, you'd do anything to get water, and if you were in the sort of mental or emotional state described by *taṇhā*, you'd do absolutely anything to get whatever it is that you want. This thirst is essentially for continued conditioned existence, continued personal existence itself. You just want to go on being you. You cannot bear any threats to your so-called individuality. That's why, perhaps, you don't want to change, why you want to go on keeping up the same reactive pattern that you are at present. This can also be described as ‘*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*’, self-view; that's the more intellectual way of looking at it.

In this verse, *taṇhā* is accompanied by two epithets: ensnaring and entangling. ‘*Jāla*’ is a net, so ‘*jalini*’, the words translated as ‘ensnaring’, is one who possesses or who is equipped with a net. The point is that the nature of craving is to capture you, to entangle you just as if it were equipped with a net. You will know from your own experience that if you get into any situation in which craving starts operating powerfully, you really do get entangled. The second epithet, ‘*visattikā*’, means ‘adhering to’, ‘being attached to’, or ‘entangling’. So in the Buddha there is no trace of that sort of craving which ensnares and entangles ‘to

lead anywhere in conditioned existence’; that is, to lead one into a further state of conditioned existence or, in terms of karma and rebirth, into a future life.

Looking at it in very general terms, it is a state in which you don't make things more entangled or confused than they already are. You don't contribute to further conditionality. In a confused, turbulent situation, perhaps involving a number of people, if another person comes into that situation from the outside, very often they'll make things worse, even if they're trying to help. Because of the presence of craving in us we are likely to make the situation worse for ourselves and for others. But the Buddha doesn't do that. Because there is no craving, no thirst, no taṇhā, in him, he will clarify the situation, make it better and better, and will not store up any sort of conditioned existence for himself in the future.

181

*Those wise ones who are intent on absorption
(in higher meditative states) and who delight in the
calm of renunciation, even the gods love them,
those thoroughly enlightened and mindful ones.*

“Those wise ones”, (‘*dhīrā*’); in other words those who have attained insight, ‘*vipassanā*’, can be considered to be synonymous with Awakened or Enlightened ones, and it is interesting to notice that they are intent on absorption, ‘*jhāna*’, given that some people speak in terms of ‘dry’ insight, insight attained without a basis of ‘*jhānic*’ (Sanskrit: ‘*dhyānic*’) experience. Here, wisdom and meditation go very much hand in hand.

The Pāli word translated as ‘delight’ is ‘*rati*’, another term that can be used both in a negative and a positive sense. It is often used in the sense of craving. Rati is one of Māra's three daughters, for instance, and very often it is delight in worldly, sensuous things. But there is also ‘*dharmarati*’, delight in the Dharma, and here we have those, “Who delight in the calm of renunciation.” ‘*Nekkhamma*’ is usually translated as ‘giving up’ or ‘renunciation’, as here. It's the natural disinterest you feel in worldly things when you start becoming interested in spiritual matters. It's not a forcible giving up or tearing yourself away; you're just not interested any more. The text speaks of, “Delighting in the calm of renunciation”, and that includes delighting in the calm of disinterestedness. If you've got all sorts of worldly interests your mind can be really agitated, but when you no longer have those worldly interests your mind becomes calm and the wise person described here takes delight in that calm state of mind.

In the case of a lot of people, when they don't have anything in particular to do, their minds become calm in the sense that they don't have anything with which to occupy their minds, but they don't enjoy that calm state. They experience it as rather unpleasant and look around for something to do. Some people have this experience on solitary retreat. So it is not enough just to have a calm state of mind (which in any case has got to go far beyond the ordinary calm state); you've got to take delight in that calm state and really enjoy it. Enjoy the fact that you've got no

work, no responsibilities and no worldly interests of any kind, not even of a skilful nature, not to speak of an unskilful nature.

The word translated here as ‘mindful’ is ‘*sati*’, which literally means recollection. The English word ‘recollect’ has its own significance here; sometimes the etymology of words can give us a clue to their real meaning. Usually the contents of the mind are in a scattered state and need to be recollected. Mindfulness is a further stage of development in the same direction. When you are mindful – ‘mind full’ – everything you do is imbued with mind, full of awareness, not as something superimposed upon what you do, but permeating it wholly. Mindfulness doesn’t mean standing aside from yourself and watching yourself. You are in yourself and with yourself while you’re doing something. The mindfulness is not an extra quality. It saturates the whole of what you do and is indistinguishable from it, or rather distinguishable from it only in thought. If it is distinguishable from it in fact, you are alienated from your experience. True mindfulness fills what you are doing from within; it doesn’t look at it or onto it from outside. It saturates the flow of experience, like a colour being given to the flow.

182

*Difficult is the attainment of the human state.
Difficult is the life of mortals. Difficult is the
hearing of the Real Truth (saddhamma). Difficult is
the appearance of the Enlightened Ones.*

It is difficult to be a human being: whether we see this within the context of karma and rebirth or within the context simply of this life, it is true. Before we start thinking in terms of spiritual life we must think in terms of being a healthy, happy human being, if that is at all possible.

‘*Maccāna*’, here translated ‘mortals’, literally means ‘Those who die’, and the word translated as ‘life’ is ‘*jīvatam*’, which refers to livelihood. So the life of mortals is hard. Survival isn’t easy, and the things we need aren’t easy to get. Food and drink don’t just appear. Clothing doesn’t grow on trees. Houses are needed. Life can be difficult, especially in a country with a cold, wet climate. There are all sorts of obstacles. The suggestion is that to maintain your human state, or to maintain the conditions necessary for the realization of your human state, is also difficult. It isn’t easy to live in a way which is appropriate to a human being, because you need all sorts of facilities which Nature doesn’t provide; you have to provide them for yourself.

And it is also difficult to hear the ‘*saddhamma*’, the Real Truth. In a literal sense it is less difficult now perhaps than it used to be because there are so many translations of the Buddha’s teachings in so many languages; but to hear it in the sense of being receptive to it is quite another matter. Two points come to mind in this connection. One is that Triratna generally needs to make much more effort to make itself known and available. We shouldn’t just wait for people to come along; we need to make ourselves known because there are many, many people who haven’t heard of Triratna, but who would really benefit from it. The second point

is that it doesn't matter what someone's starting point is. No one who walks into a Buddhist centre will be perfect, and they may not even be very positive, but if they hear the Dharma, they can change.

As for the last line of the verse, "Difficult is the appearance of the Enlightened Ones," what it really means is that it is difficult to become Awakened. This clearly follows from the previous lines. If it is difficult even to be a human being, difficult to live, difficult to hear the Dharma, how much more difficult it will be to become Enlightened. It stands to reason. That is why I sometimes say, "Let people aim for Stream-entry." That is an intelligible goal, something one can really aim for. The rest is probably just words. It is difficult for many people to form an idea of what a human being is like, not to speak of a Stream-entrant, or a Buddha.

183

The not doing of anything evil, undertaking to do what is (ethically) skilful (kusala), (and) complete purification of the mind – this is the ordinance (sasana) of the Enlightened Ones.

If you know any verse of the *Dhammapada* by heart, it may be this one: "*sabbāpapassa akaraṇaṃ, kusalassa upasampadā, sacittapariyodapanam, etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ. Sabbāpapassa akaraṇaṃ*" – the non-doing of evil is quite straightforward. Usually it is said that it refers to the observance of 'śīla', ethics. Then '*kusalassa upasampadā*': the cultivation of good; or even more literally, the acceptance of all that is skilful, the making one's own of all that is skilful, '*kusala*'. It's becoming an embodiment of skilful states of mind, skilful emotions, the transformation of oneself into a more skilled individual. '*Sacittapariyodapanam*' is the purification of one's thoughts – from all unskilful mental states, one could say, although that has already been covered by the previous verse.

'*Etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ*' is the teaching of the Buddhas. The word '*sāsana*' is interesting. It means more than just teaching; it is in a way quite untranslatable. *Sāsana* in both Pāli and Sanskrit is also the word for government. It is in a way, 'The order of the Buddhas', but it is not an order emanating from a power base. Sometimes it is translated as 'message', but it is more powerful than that; it is irresistible. If you are really open you just have to accept it. The Buddha is sometimes referred to as the '*Dharmaraja*', the King of the Dharma, and just as an ordinary king issues orders, the Buddha issues his orders, and those orders are the Dharma. But of course he is a king in a quite different way from the way in which an ordinary king is a king. His kingship is based not upon power, but upon love. Although it is rather a contradictory expression, the Buddha's orders are 'love orders'. Perhaps the best word in English is 'ordinance'.

184

*Patient endurance is the best form of penance.
'Nirvana is the Highest,' say the Enlightened Ones.
No (true) goer forth (from the household life) is he*

who injures another, nor is he a true ascetic who persecutes others.

The word translated here as penance is ‘*tapo*’. *Tapo* is connected with heat. The idea seems to have been that by the practice of meditation, as well as by the practice of asceticism in the sense of self-torture (I am referring to the pre-Buddhistic period here) you could generate a sort of psychic heat, a heat that could under certain circumstances even be physically perceptible. In pre-Buddhist times they came to think of the spiritual life itself, so far as they understood it then, as a process of generating a psychic heat, even a spiritual heat, metaphorically speaking, in which all one's impurities would be burned up. Asceticism for the ancient Indians was thus the generation of this psychic heat in one way or another.

The word was adopted by Buddhists, and sometimes it is used in Pāli fairly literally or not quite literally but metaphorically in a rather simple and obvious way. It has the meaning of engaging in some kind of spiritual practice of an intensive nature, such as the ancient Indians believed resulted in the generation of what I've called psychic heat. You get the same way of looking at things later on in the Vajrayana, where there is the conception of the fiery energy, the ‘*caṇḍālī*’, which blazes up in the lower psychic centre, ascends and unties all the knots and finally ascends into the thousand petalled lotus at the top. All this is associative symbolism. So in Buddhism *tapo* or ‘*tapas*’ came to mean the burning up of all mental impurities through intensive spiritual effort, especially meditation.

The Buddha took a number of terms from the previously existing Indian spiritual tradition. This was inevitable; he had to use the language that was current at the time. Sometimes he used the old words in a new way, sometimes in the old way, and sometimes he hovered in between. Here he is hovering in between. In this verse he says, “Patient endurance is the best form of penance.” It is as though he is talking to people who believe very much in ‘*tapasya*’ in the sense of self-torture, of inflicting penances upon oneself in order to generate this psychic heat and perhaps gain psychic power. The Buddha was saying to them, “Well, if you really want to torture yourself, if you want to give yourself something really difficult to do, just practise patience and forbearance. That is the best *tapasya*.”

In other words, you don't have to devise any special methods of self-torture. If you just lead your ordinary daily life, that will give you plenty of opportunities for self-mortification. If you are just patient and forbearing in the ordinary relationships of life, in the course of which you are going to come into contact with so many sorts of difficult people, that will be *tapasya* enough.

There is a certain irony, a certain humour here. If you read it seriously, as though somebody is saying, straight-faced, “Patient endurance is the best form of penance,” that is a meaningless platitude. But it isn't like that. It's as though the Buddha was saying with a little smile, “Look, if you want to go in for that sort of thing, if a spot of self-torture is your cup of tea, just be patient and forbearing when you meet people, however difficult they are. That is all you have to do. That is the best kind of *tapasya*, if that is what you are interested in.” You see? That is quite a different approach, isn't it? This is one of the things that we get a sense of

if we go through the Pāli texts and look at the Pāli itself, not the English translations, which can be rather straight sometimes. The Buddha definitely had a sense of humour and it more often than not took the form of irony.

Irony, at least from one point of view, is an expression of proportion. When Socrates says, “A wise man like you would certainly know the answer to this,” he is really showing the man that he isn't wise at all, without actually saying so. So the Buddha doesn't attack self-mortification. He doesn't say, “It's a stupid, foolish, dangerous thing to do.” He just says, “Well, if you want to go in for that sort of thing, why not just be patient and forbearing?” and thus reduces the importance of that very one-sidedly extreme so-called religious practice, exposing it for what it is, showing up its emptiness.

Patience implies a certain amount of understanding. If you can understand why the other person is behaving as he is, that helps you not to react. Another factor is of course your normal, standard mood of mettā. People can be very irritating, but you have to maintain your mettā under all such circumstances, and that requires patience. Of course, that doesn't mean saying angrily, “Ah! That's stupid. Just forget about it.” That is *impatience*. Sometimes people behave like forces of nature, like the wind blowing or a tree crashing down across your path. It is not as though they are aware individuals deliberately behaving as they are. Carried along by their instincts or their feelings, they don't know what they are doing and they just happen to blunder into you. There is no point in getting angry with them. It is just unmindfulness on their part; they are not truly human beings when they behave in that way. What is the point of getting angry with them?

The verse goes on to say, “ ‘Nirvana is the Highest,’ say the Enlightened Ones.” Nirvana is the aim. One mustn't forget the goal, or lose sight of the end on account of the means. Perhaps the people who were engaged in tapasya had forgotten that if such practices were useful at all, they were useful only as a means to an end. Perhaps the second line is to be seen against the background of the first. Again, the Buddha is restoring a sense of proportion. He is saying, “Asceticism is all very well, patience and endurance are all very well, but they are only means to an end. It is Nirvana that is supreme.” But perhaps it goes even further than that. Perhaps the Buddha is reminding us to get our priorities right. It isn't work that is supreme. It is not even meditation that is supreme. It is not going on retreat that is supreme. It is not communication that is supreme. It is Nirvana that is supreme. Put first things first. We very often sacrifice what is of more importance to what is of less importance, but the basic principle is that Nirvana is supreme and everything has to be organised in accordance with that fact. Of course it is not really possible to put energy directly into Nirvana, because Nirvana is the culmination of a whole sequence of experiences. You can't skip any of them, you have to follow the path step by step. But you don't linger over any of the stages, or wander off in the opposite direction altogether.

It isn't easy to establish one's order of priorities. The hill immediately before you looms very large and it's easy to forget the mountains that lie beyond it. You may even wander around that hill for a while, completely forgetting the mountains. Again, it is a question of what you take seriously. We should take most seriously

that which is of the greatest importance – easy to say, but very difficult to do. For instance, you may decide that communication is your weak point, so you may decide to work on that in particular. You don't think that communication is the most important thing in life; it is just the most important thing for you for the time being. Taking a longer view, you may see that communication is not so very important, but for the time being it is important for you. Even if you are giving more time or attention to something for the time being, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have altered your order of priorities.

“No (true) goer forth (from the household life) is he who injures another.” ‘*Pabbajito*’ means ‘One who has gone forth’; that is one who has gone forth from worldly life but has not yet necessarily found the Buddha. In the India of the Buddha's time there was a class of people called ‘*parivajikka*’ (that's the Sanskrit form of *pabbajito*). They had left secular life, family life usually, but not always, and dropped out of all society. They had cut loose from the existing society, they had gone forth, but they had not yet been accepted into the spiritual community. Going forth is not the same thing as Going for Refuge. It is what you have to do before you go for Refuge. You have to go forth, if not literally at least mentally, from all worldly ties and conditioning, and then you go for Refuge. You cannot go for Refuge without having left home in the true sense.

And you have not truly even gone forth if you injure others. When you harm or try to harm another you are caught up in the power mode. To go forth means not just going forth from home in the sense of the parental roof, but going forth from all existing power structures. Nirvana is supreme, *karuṇā* is supreme, *mettā* is supreme – not force, not violence – so operate according to the love mode as much as you possibly can. Never try to invoke power to do work which can only be done by love.

“Nor is he a true ascetic who persecutes others.” The word translated as ‘ascetic’ is not *pabbajito*, the one who has gone forth, but ‘*samano*’, more familiar in its Sanskrit form, ‘*śramaṇa*’. Two explanations for the term are given. Some say that a *śramaṇa* is one who is washed, one who is pure; others say that it is connected with another word meaning one who makes an effort, one who strives for spiritual development. In the Buddha's day, there was a distinction between the *śramaṇas* and the ‘*brāhmaṇas*’. The *brāhmaṇas* were the priestly caste, those who believed in the Vedas, the caste system and so on. They were usually householders with wives and children, and they performed ceremonies, invoked the gods and so on. They were quite conservative, one could say. The *śramaṇas*, by contrast, rejected the Vedas and the caste system, and were very often wanderers. They rejected the household life and the traditional religion, as well as the claims of the *brāhmaṇas* to be superior, and the claims of the Vedas to be a religious authority, and the Buddha recruited his followers mainly from among them. They had rejected not only the household life but the religious establishment. They were not usually theists; the Jains were *śramaṇas*, and there were many other *śramaṇa* groups. In the eyes of his contemporaries, the Buddha was the leader of the biggest and most popular *śramaṇa* movement. The word is broadly equivalent to ‘*bhikkhu*’, and the two are sometimes used interchangeably. *Bhikkhu* is the more Buddhistic term in a way, suggesting more one who depends upon alms and observes certain rules,

while śramaṇa makes the contrast with the brāhmaṇa. He is the ‘non-orthodox’ religious aspirant, the freelance, if you like. When a lot of these freelance people joined up together, they made a Sangha. The śramaṇa represent the spiritual ideal of giving up the whole of worldly life: family, religious establishment and all. And as this verse makes clear, a śramaṇa is also one who operates according to the love mode, not the power mode.

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*Not to speak evil, not to injure, to exercise
restraint through the observance of the (almsman’s)
code of conduct, to be moderate in diet,
to live alone in a secluded abode,
and to occupy oneself with higher mental states – this is
the ordinance (sasana) of the Enlightened Ones.*

Obviously, not to speak ill of others or harm them is an essential part of the Buddha’s teaching. ‘Pāṭimokkha’ (translated here as ‘code of conduct’) is what eventually became the Vinaya rules followed by bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs. The word ‘pāṭimokkha’ (Sanskrit ‘prātimokṣa’) literally means a releasing or unbinding. Why exactly the list of the fundamental precepts was termed prātimokṣa nobody really knows, and there is quite a discussion amongst scholars about it. It seems that during the Buddha’s own lifetime, the list of precepts was rather short, but later on, especially after the Buddha’s Parinibbāna, the list grew longer and longer, until eventually in the Theravada there were 227 precepts to be observed by the bhikkhus, 220 to be observed individually, and the remaining seven (they were rules of procedure) to be observed collectively. In the Sarvāstivāda there were 250 of these precepts altogether. Sometimes the prātimokṣa is referred to as a list of 150 or 152 precepts, the rest being more rules of etiquette than ethical precepts. But anyway, one had this list of fundamental precepts and the Buddha says here that restraint is to be exercised by means of observing them.

Usually the texts speak in terms of restraint of the senses, the mind being included as a sense. There is a natural tendency for each of the senses to seek out its appropriate object: the eye goes towards forms, the ear as it were goes towards sounds, the mind goes towards mental objects, and so on. The senses automatically tend to go towards their appropriate objects, whether skilful or unskilful. ‘Sanvaro’, ‘restraint’, is checking the senses until you have ascertained whether the movement of the sense organ towards the sense object is skilful or unskilful; that is, conducive to your spiritual development or not. An example often given nowadays is of the eye automatically moving towards advertisements in the underground railway or subway. When you are sitting in the train, and as you go up the escalators and walk down the passageways, you are bombarded with advertisements for all sorts of things. Usually the appropriate sense organ, in this case the eye, automatically directs itself towards its appropriate object, in this case the advertisements. But what one is supposed to do from the Buddhist point of view is to check the organ in question, in this case the eye. You ask yourself, “Is it

going to help me, is it a skilful thing to do, to gaze at these advertisements as I am sitting here or as I am walking along?”

So restraint is the checking of conditioned reflexes. We have got into the habit of allowing the senses to go where they want to go, without consideration of whether that is skilful or unskilful. The restraint doesn't represent any force of repression or crushing of the senses but only a checking from time to time as to whether or not the activity of the senses as they pursue or attend to certain objects is conducive to our development as individuals. Sometimes this is called, “Guarding the gates of the senses.” Here the senses are conceived of as passive. The psycho-physical organism is imagined like a medieval city with gates, and guards to see who is coming in. You set guards, as it were, at the gates of the senses, and watch impressions come in. Some impressions will give rise to skilful mental states and others will give rise to unskilful mental states, and you don't allow through the gates of the senses those impressions which are likely to give rise to unskilful mental states – this is another way of putting the matter.

The Buddha apparently attached great importance to this, and the monks were always being advised to guard the gates of the senses. This was easier then, because life was so much simpler. The Buddha usually gave just one example: that of a bhikkhu going to the village for alms in the morning, passing a pond in which village maidens are bathing, and allowing his mind to direct itself, through the eyes, to that particular sight, upon which there arise in him various unskilful mental states. The Buddha's advice to the monk would be that as soon as he becomes aware that through the eyes the mind is allowing in impressions which are likely to give rise to unskilful mental states he should take steps to divert his eyes from those objects and become very recollected.

But in modern times, life is much more complicated. We are bombarded by impressions all the time from all directions. It is extremely difficult to practise mindfulness and guard the gates of the senses if you literally live in a city of the modern sort. In the old days, in a walled city with gates, if there was a guard at the gate and an old woman came in, he would have a look at her and let her come in. Then if a cart came, he would stop it, look at it, and let it in. But suppose you had just one guard and tens of thousands of people clamouring to get in at the same time. Could one guard possibly deal with them all? But that is how it is if you live in a city nowadays. There are thousands of impressions clamouring, giving rise to all sorts of mental states, one after another, so quickly that you cannot keep track of them. If you want to practise in a more intensive way, really guard the gates of the senses, you have to go away into a retreat centre, or at least live in the country where the flow of impressions is restricted and you can deal with them one at a time.

The modern idea is that you shouldn't have any guards on the gates of the senses at all, that you should just let everything in or let everything hang out, as the case may be. But what the Buddha is saying is, “Don't allow yourself to react to impressions instinctively and without proper thought. Don't be merely reactive.” If a biscuit is put in front of your nose, you don't have to start salivating, not if you are a human being.

You experience the impression – you are not blocking off the experience – but you are not allowing any mental state of an unskilful nature to arise in dependence upon it. You are between the result process of the mind and the action process of the mind. According to the teaching of the nidāna chain, in dependence upon contact with the external world there arise feelings: pleasant, painful or neutral; and in dependence on feeling, especially pleasant feeling, there arises craving. So that is the gap in which you are sitting, as it were; that is where the result process terminating in feeling and sensation gives rise to the action process beginning with craving. You sit at that point, just like the guard sitting at the gate, and scrutinize the impressions that you receive, especially noticing the feelings that arise in response to them. Instead of automatically grabbing hold of pleasant experiences and automatically thrusting away painful experiences, you consider them more widely, allowing your responses to be determined by considerations of skilfulness and unskilfulness. Those impressions which are likely to give rise to unskilful states you don't encourage, and those which are likely to give rise to skilful states you do encourage. Another way to put this is that faith is the positive emotional counterpart of *trṣṇā* or craving; it is the seed of creativity just as the craving is the seed of reactivity.

From one point of view, the precepts are a check list. Take the first of the ten precepts, that one should refrain from attacking or harming living beings. We have an instinct to harm other living beings, if they try to interfere with us or harm us; it's our natural animal reaction. But here is a precept which says: when you experience that natural urge to retaliate, that is a situation in which you have got to check yourself. Of course, one has to be careful not to think of ethical life simply in terms of observing lists of rules. This has happened to some extent in the case of the Theravada. These rules, if one uses that term at all, are simply helpful, or potentially helpful, as reminders of the sort of thing that one is supposed to be doing – or not doing.

The advice to be moderate in diet in this verse exemplifies this point. After all, food is one of those things that produces sense impressions. Food appeals to four senses at the same time: taste, touch, smell and sight. The obvious question is, “Is eating this skilful or unskilful?” and the answer won't be a straightforward yes or no; it is also a question of how much, and this is where moderation comes in. People's needs differ, so there can't be hard and fast rules about food. That is why the rule is left as moderation in eating. Moderation is the principle. There is no point in mentioning any specific quantity, because it will be too little for one person and too much for another.

As for the next line of the verse ‘To live alone in a secluded abode’ is not quite an accurate translation. Although the Pāli words literally mean ‘lying’ and ‘sitting’, the Pāli word ‘*panta*’ is apparently equivalent to the Sanskrit ‘*pranta*’, which means ‘the edge’ or ‘the border’, the edge of things; so the verse literally refers to having one's bed and one's seat on the edge of things. Since your home is where you sleep and sit, what it really means is living on the edge of things. It is living on the periphery of the group, so you are not affected by the gravitational pull of the group, even the positive group.

In the days of the Buddha, the bhikkhu subsisted on alms; that is, he had to collect food from the nearest village. He had to live far enough away from the village to be able to practise meditation in quiet, but near enough to be able to collect alms each day. It was considered that two to three miles was about right. When lay supporters offered to build a Vihāra for the Buddha, one of the points he made was that it should be near enough for people to be able to visit him and hear the Dharma. If the Buddha had made a habit of living in the midst of the jungle, he would not have been accessible to people who wanted to hear his Teaching. So to live on the periphery of things is a middle way between living right in the middle of it all and cutting off your connection with other people completely – if it would really be possible to do that.

To consider our own version of this, our Buddhist centres and Right Livelihood businesses are often physically located in the midst of the city; but psychologically and spiritually we should be on the edge of things – separate enough to be able to follow our own way of life, our own ideals, but near enough to be able to keep in touch with people and encourage them to join us, so to speak.

The last ‘ordinance’ of this verse is that one should, “Occupy oneself with higher mental states.” The word translated as ‘higher mental states’ is ‘*adhicitta*’. ‘*Citta*’ means ‘mind’ or ‘consciousness’ and ‘*adhi*’ means ‘higher’. (There are various terms with this prefix used in Buddhism – the ‘*adhisīla*’, the ‘*adhicitta*’, the ‘*adhiprajñā*’ and so on.) *Adhicitta* is not just the painstaking practice of meditation or concentration exercises, it is not just the effort to develop those higher states; it is the enjoyment of them, the experience of the *dhyānas* which is what meditation is all about.

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*Not (even) in a shower of money is satisfaction
of desires to be found. ‘Worldly pleasures are of
little relish, (indeed) painful.’ Thus understanding,
the spiritually mature person*

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*takes no delight even in heavenly pleasures.
The disciple of the Fully, Perfectly Enlightened
One takes delight (only) in the destruction of
craving.*

The ‘*kahāpaṇa*’ is an ancient Indian coin said by some to be of Greek origin, and ‘*vassena*’ is a shower of rain, or even the rainy season; hence ‘shower of money’. But even if it showers gold coins, even if you're able to satisfy all your desires, buy everything you want, there's still no real satisfaction.

The word translated ‘of little relish’ is ‘*appassādā*’, quite a difficult word to translate. It means something like satisfaction, delight, and it is sensuous rather than sensual; the Buddha is referring to any pleasure coming about as a result of

contact between the six sense organs and their respective objects. The expression ‘of little relish’ suggests that it is not that there is no pleasure in the contact of sense organ with sense object. It would be unrealistic to say that. But there isn’t much pleasure, especially when one compares it with the pleasures of the dhyānas or of developing insight.

Indeed, worldly pleasures are painful, or potentially so, because even genuine pleasure must pass away, and one mustn’t think it is going to last forever. Furthermore, even at the time pleasure is limited and relative, because it derives from limited relative conditioned objects. So this is the gist of the text here: sensuous pleasures, even if they are pleasurable, have their limitations, and if you become attached to them, thinking that they are going to last forever, then the pleasure can turn into pain.

“Thus understanding, the spiritually mature person takes no delight even in heavenly pleasures.” What are these ‘heavenly pleasures’? The suggestion is not of gross, brutal pleasures but of very refined, aesthetic pleasures, the pleasures of culture. But even these more refined enjoyments are also transitory. They also are not the absolute and unconditioned happiness of Nirvana.

This is not to advocate a negatively ascetic attitude to life. We could hardly exist without pleasure. The body, the whole psycho-physical organism, enjoys breathing, feeling the air, feeling cold and heat (though not to extremes). It enjoys just experiencing itself being alive. All this is pleasure, and probably the psycho-physical organism could not go on existing without at least some experience of it; and the psycho-physical organism is the basis for our development as individuals, the basis for our attainment of Enlightenment, even. So it is not that Buddhism has a completely negative attitude towards pleasure. Buddhism does not say that all pleasure is wrong, or that you should try to eliminate it from your life. What it does say is that pleasure, which is a sense impression, should not be allowed to become the basis of unskilful mental activities, especially craving and grasping. A simple example is food. Enjoy food, but don’t overeat because you want more of that enjoyment. Pleasure in itself is neither skilful nor unskilful. The sense or mind experience of pleasure is ‘vipāka’; it is the end result of the result process, it doesn’t belong to the action process. It is your attitude towards pleasure which is either skilful or unskilful. And it is a mistake to try to guard against craving by eliminating pleasure. That just doesn’t work, you can still be hankering after it in the depths of your being.

The spiral process towards Enlightenment is more and more pleasurable, but at each stage you must not, “Allow the pleasurable to lay hold of your mind.”

This is the phrase the Buddha used in describing his own experience of the path to Enlightenment. So one must have a healthy attitude towards pleasure. Let pleasure come, experience it, enjoy it, whether of the senses or of the mind, but do not allow it to lay hold of your mind. Of course, that’s a dangerous thing to say, because it can be misunderstood, or used as an excuse for running after pleasure, which is completely wrong, neurotic and compulsive. If you go outside in the morning and enjoy the sunshine and the fresh air, there is nothing unskilful about

that; but if as a result of that pleasurable experience, craving and clinging arise, that is completely undesirable. It is very important to understand this rightly.

We are almost always in too much of a hurry to get on to the next thing, so that we are prevented from enjoying what we are doing. You see people doing this on retreat. There's the getting up bell, and then the morning meditation ... well, perhaps you want to finish the meditation quickly so you can get on with breakfast. You want to finish breakfast quickly so you can get on to the study session. You want to finish the study quickly so you can go out for a walk. You are always hurrying to the next thing. But if you are fully absorbed in what is happening and enjoying it, when you wake up in the morning, you enjoy waking up. Enjoy just lying there for a few minutes. Enjoy the sound of the bell. Enjoy brushing your teeth and washing your face. Enjoy walking down the stairs, enjoy the meditation. Enjoy your breakfast. Then a certain timeless quality will attach itself to the day. You won't be hankering after the passage of time or to get things over so that you can do something else. And in a way, you won't feel the passage of time. Time will be passing but you won't feel it passing in the negative way you usually do. Everything is happening but in a sense nothing is happening. There is time but there is also timelessness. You experience both whereas very often you experience neither.

In hurrying on the next thing you are alienated from the present experience. You may think that you'll go on to experience the next thing fully, but of course the same thing will happen again. The negative potentiality of our self-awareness is that we can detach our awareness from the present situation and imagine other situations in the future. Thus the very faculty that contains the seed of our higher evolution also contains the seed of a sort of fall – or at least of a very negative development in the form of alienation. Animals aren't alienated. Only human beings can be alienated.

The verse goes on to say, “The disciple of the Fully, Perfectly Enlightened One takes delight (only) in the destruction of craving.”

The word for disciple is '*savako*', 'one who hears', 'one who is receptive'. Destruction of craving is '*tanhakkhaya*', 'destruction or cessation of craving'. And '*rato*', 'delight', is quite a strong word. Again, it is emphasized that it is not pleasure but craving that is destroyed. The fact that you enjoy even the bliss of Nirvana doesn't mean that you cease to enjoy the pleasures of the senses, but you give them their right place. Presumably even the Buddha will enjoy his food. He'll be aware of the pleasurable sensations arising in dependence on the contact of the tongue with, say, curry. The fact that he is at the same time enjoying the bliss of Nirvana will not preclude the possibility of his enjoying that pleasurable organic sensation.

It is said that the Buddha did experience painful sensations, but that his mind was not affected by them. From time to time, if the pain became really severe, he was able to withdraw, so to speak, into the higher dhyānas where he was no longer conscious of the body and therefore no longer conscious of the pain. He could do that to give his body a rest so that it could go on functioning a bit longer and he

could continue his work in the world. If he hadn't done that, perhaps the body would not have lasted so long.

This raises the whole question of the relationship between the mind and the body. The Buddha said on one occasion that he does not say whether rūpa and jīva, that is to say the body and vitality, are the same or different. He left the connection between the two a mystery – or, you could say, he refused to think or speak in terms of an ultimate dualism. But if the physical body is undergoing suffering and you are conscious of that, that seems to intensify the suffering even on the physical level. So if you stop the consciousness of the suffering, even though you are ill, the suffering that you experience and the strain on the physical body is reduced at the same time. It is as though the fact that you are conscious of the suffering sets up an extra tension.

End of extract

Suggested questions

1. What is your response to the description of the Buddha as 'The Trackless One'?
2. What is the importance of the distinction between kamachanda and dhammachanda? How can you cultivate dhammachanda in your own practice?
3. “Mindfulness doesn't mean standing aside from yourself and watching yourself. You are in yourself and with yourself while you're doing something. The mindfulness is not an extra quality. It saturates the whole of what you do and is indistinguishable from it, or rather distinguishable from it only in thought. If it is distinguishable from it in fact, you are alienated from your experience. True mindfulness fills what you are doing from within; it doesn't look at it or onto it from outside. It saturates the flow of experience, like a colour being given to the flow.” Can you distinguish in your own experience the difference between alienated awareness and integrated awareness as Sangharakshita describes them here? If so, share an example of each with your group.
4. “Patient endurance is the best form of penance.” Give some examples from your own life of situations that require you to practice patience in the way Sangharakshita describes it.
5. “One mustn't forget the goal, or lose sight of the end on account of the means.” How do you keep alive a sense of the goal – of nirvana – in your own practise?
6. How can you ‘Guard the gates of the senses’, in your day-to-day life?

Week Seven: Chapter 14, 'The Enlightened One', Verses 188 – 196

This week we will look at the concluding verses of the Buddhavagga, so please read the following seminar extract before the group meeting:

188

*Many people, out of fear, flee for refuge to
(sacred) hills, woods, groves, trees, and shrines.*

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*In reality this is not a safe refuge. In reality this
is not the best refuge. Fleeing to such a refuge one
is not released from all suffering.*

A more literal translation of the Pāli would be, 'Many resort for refuge to hills, woods, groves, trees and shrines. Many men might feel tormented'.

You get a definite feeling of actually being tormented by fear coming over at the end. The verse refers to nature worship in various forms, such as you still find going on in India: a holy hill, a sacred grove, a sacred tree, a shrine. The word translated as shrine, 'caitya', is just a heap of stones or a little improvised shrine of some kind. In Buddhist terminology caitya meant a stūpa, but its pre-Buddhistic usage is a mound or heap, very often of stones, which is an object or at least a focus of worship. One can imagine this nature worship, in a way it's a natural response. But in this verse, the Buddha is not speaking just in terms of nature worship. He's speaking of people tormented by fear resorting for refuge to these natural objects.

A large part of animism is empathy with other natural things. The basic sentiment is that of feeling yourself alive, animated, and feeling the life in other living things. If they are greater than you in some respect, whether they are bigger, stronger or whatever, you look up to that, you worship that. But subsequently, when you recognize yourself as a human being, as an individual, even though on a certain level you retain that feeling towards the tree or rock or fire, at the same time you recognize that there are specifically human qualities which you possess but they do not, which formerly you projected on to them. If you are a healthy human being and don't 'throw away' your paganism, you end up with the same feeling for Nature, the same empathy, the same animistic attitude, but also something more than that.

This is what we find in the Pāli Buddhist scriptures. Some of these texts come very close to the actual conditions under which the Buddha taught, and on many of their pages there are references to tree spirits and fairy-like creatures living in flowers, as though the whole of Nature is animated. That is the background of the Buddha's teaching. It was given not in cities, but in parks and groves and forests, on mountainsides and in caves, and we mustn't forget that. It wasn't an urban industrial background, or even an agricultural background. You get the murmur of Nature in the background all the time when the Buddha is speaking: the trees

rustling, the peacocks screaming, the tigers roaring in the distance. Animism is thus almost, on a certain level, an essential part of Buddhism.

But if you go for refuge to natural objects, expecting them to give you what they cannot, if you expect them to solve the problems of life for you, that is a terrible mistake. If you are searching for the Unconditioned, Nature will not give you that, so Nature cannot be a refuge. If you want to transcend the conditioned, Nature cannot help you to do that because Nature itself is conditioned. In the same way Buddhists don't believe that it is wrong to worship the gods of the round. They are more powerful beings existing on higher, more subtle planes and they can perhaps help you in worldly matters – they can give you good luck, wealth, success, prosperity – but they cannot help you on the path to Enlightenment. You do not take refuge in them, you do not go for refuge to them; you merely worship them.

There are two forms of fear: a positive fear and a negative fear. There is a rational kind of fear when you see quite objectively that something is dangerous and needs to be avoided. Tigers are dangerous, lightning is dangerous, and primitive man was very aware of all such things. This is positive, healthy fear; recognizing as dangerous things which really are dangerous. Then there is negative fear; neurotic fear which sees as dangerous things that are not dangerous at all. Some people are terrified of mice, for example.

One can subdivide positive fear into two kinds. The first is the natural, objective, even necessary fear of things that threaten life. But it is possible to go further than that. You can fear life itself, conditioned existence itself, in a healthy and objective way, because you can see that conditioned existence itself is a potential source of pain and suffering. And if you have a objective healthy fear of conditioned existence, you look for a refuge from it that can only really be found beyond it. If you look for a refuge from conditioned existence within conditioned existence – the hill or the grove – that is completely futile. A conditioned thing cannot give you refuge from the conditioned; only the Unconditioned can give you refuge from the conditioned – so sacred hills, woods, groves, trees, and shrines are, “Not a safe refuge, not the best refuge. Fleeing to such a refuge, one is not released from all suffering.” That is to say, from the suffering, ultimately, of conditioned existence itself. A tree or a hill or an unenlightened human teacher cannot give you refuge from the conditioned; only the Unconditioned can do that.

It is true that the Mahayana maintains that both the conditioned and the Unconditioned are ‘*śūnyatā*’, that there is one ultimate reality which is *śūnyatā*. But it might not be very helpful to be told at the beginning of your spiritual life that everything is *śūnyatā*. You might draw from that the conclusion that it isn't really necessary to give up anything, because it's all *śūnyatā*. In the Theravada, however, it is quite impossible to make that mistake. From the Theravādin point of view, here is the conditioned and there is the Unconditioned, and the spiritual life consists in making the transition from the one to the other. That is a good practical basis. Perhaps when you have made the transition or you are well on your way you can start reflecting that conditioned and Unconditioned are ultimately *śūnyatā*, but if you start thinking that too early on in your spiritual career, you may not make any progress at all. I mean, are conditioned and Unconditioned non-dual for you?

That is why I sometimes say that in Triratna we follow the Mahayana in principle but in practice more often than not we are down-to-earth Theravada.

If you think that you are going for Refuge to the Three Jewels, but you are in fact taking refuge in something that is not a refuge, you are closing the door to any future development, and what could be more dangerous than that? You are in a much worse position than the ordinary person who isn't going for refuge to anyone or anything. Nāgārjuna says something like this, “The teaching of śūnyatā is the antidote to all delusions and all wrong views, but if you make the teaching of śūnyatā itself into a wrong view, what will be the antidote to that?”

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*He who goes for refuge to the Enlightened
One, to the Truth, and to the Spiritual Community,
and who sees with perfect wisdom the Four Ariyan
Truths –*

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*namely, suffering, the origin of suffering, the
passing beyond suffering, and the Ariyan Eightfold
Way leading to the pacification of suffering –*

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*(for him) this is a safe refuge, (for him) this is
the best refuge. Having gone to such a refuge, one
is released from all suffering.*

Here going for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the true Refuges, is contrasted with the false refuges of the previous verses. It is very important to understand what the Buddha is saying here. It is not a question of sectarianism; it is not a question of my group being better than his group. It is really a question of seeing the difference between the conditioned and the Unconditioned, seeing the difference between the object or figure that represents the conditioned and the object or figure that represents or embodies the Unconditioned. This is the crux of the matter.

The text says ‘Sangha’, ‘spiritual community’, not ‘bhikkhus’. That has some significance. In the Theravada, they take the Sangha to mean the bhikkhus, but in fact the object of refuge, according to the Theravada tradition itself, is the ‘Ārya Sangha’, and the Ārya Sangha can include those who are lay people as well as those who are bhikkhus. In the Pāli Canon there are instances of lay people becoming Stream-entrants and therefore ‘āryas’.

The Pāli word translated as ‘perfect wisdom’ is ‘*sammāpaññā*’; so the text refers to one who sees not only with wisdom but with perfect wisdom; what the Mahayanists would later call Transcendental Wisdom. In the Pāli tradition there are three grades of ‘*paññā*’: ‘*suttamāyāpaññā*’, ‘*cintāmāyāpaññā*’ and

‘*bhāvanāmāyāpaññā*’. *Suttamāyāpaññā* is the wisdom, knowledge or understanding that comes from hearing or reading somebody else's exposition. For instance, if you read these verses of the *Dhammapada* and understand them, that understanding is *suttamāyāpaññā*. Then there is *cintāmāyāpaññā*, the wisdom, the understanding, that arises as a result of your own independent thought and investigation. This is a more developed form of *paññā*. You have heard something, you have understood it, but you don't let it rest there. You turn it over in your mind, look at it from different points of view, investigate it and even develop your own approach to that topic. You understand it on your own terms, you relate it to your life as a result of your independent reflection. For instance, if you read these verses of the *Dhammapada*, you can understand them at once, but that is only *suttamāyāpaññā*. The process of reflecting on them may go on for years, and as a result of that you get a deeper and deeper understanding. You can always tell whether someone is giving a lecture on the basis of just the first kind of wisdom or on the basis of the second. The difference is very obvious.

Cintāmāyāpaññā is a natural process if you are interested in the subject to which it relates. If you are interested in it you won't be satisfied with merely hearing or reading about it and understanding it superficially. You will retain it in your mind and keep thinking about it. You don't have to resolve to think about it at a specific time, though some people can do that. You don't have to have thinking sessions in the way you have meditation sessions. If you are interested in the subject you will turn it over in your mind, think about it from time to time and it will keep coming back to you and in this way you will develop your understanding of it.

It is possible, in fact, to develop a capacity to think when you want to. In the course of many years I have read quite a lot about the Dharma and other things, and sometimes I am too busy to think about what I have read, but then I say to myself, “All right, in a few weeks time when I have a free afternoon, I am going to think about that.” And I set aside that afternoon and think about it. This requires a bit of practice, though; usually you have to take advantage of the times when you feel like thinking about whatever it is. Some people find it easier to reflect when they are engaged in some simple activity like walking up and down, while others find it easier to reflect when they are sitting down somewhere or maybe even lying down (though then there is an obvious danger). Writing on a subject helps to concentrate the mind as well.

Then there is *bhāvanāmāyāpaññā*. *Bhavana* literally means ‘becoming’ or ‘making to become’, ‘developing’, ‘cultivating’, and it is used to refer to meditation, so *bhāvanāmāyāpaññā* is the knowledge or wisdom or understanding that arises as a result of meditation; it is transcendental insight. It is this third kind of wisdom to which the Buddha is referring here. In other words, an intellectual understanding of the Four Noble Truths is not enough. There must be a realization of those Four Noble Truths. But what does insight into the truth of suffering mean? It is fundamentally a heartfelt, total conviction that nothing conditioned is really going to give you any happiness. You are convinced that however much sense pleasure you have, however much wealth or fame or intellectual knowledge you acquire, none of that is going to give you deep-down lasting satisfaction, and therefore you are not bothered about these things. If they come, you don't mind enjoying them;

you might enjoy a glass of wine, but you don't think that ultimate happiness is to be found in the bottom of the glass. You are convinced that true happiness is to be found in only the Unconditioned. If you have this kind of insight into the truth of dukkha, this affects your whole outlook, your whole way of life. For you there is no mad rush after conditioned things; you don't try to grab them because you know that they cannot give you what you really want.

Verse 191 makes use of a formula often repeated in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, “The passing beyond suffering, and the Ariyan Eightfold Way leading to the pacification of suffering.”

Usually, though, the words used are not – as here – ‘*dukkha atikkama*’, translated as ‘the passing beyond suffering’, but ‘*dukkha nirodha*’. The word ‘*nirodha*’, meaning ‘cessation’, is quite an important word in Pāli, and in Theravada Buddhism it is considered to be equivalent to Nirvana. The cessation of all suffering is Nirvana; or Nirvana is the cessation of all suffering. Nirvana is very often defined in the Theravada as the complete cessation of everything that has arisen because only that which had a beginning can have an end, and usually the Theravada leaves it at that. Because the whole ambience of the spiritual life, the attitude of people towards it and the implications of so many other teachings, suggest something positive beyond the cessation, the Theravada evidently doesn't feel any need to dwell too much upon what that might be. Theravādins would probably maintain that we are very well acquainted with the conditioned, and what we have to do is to get beyond it. We have to bring about an entire cessation, subjectively of thirst or craving, and objectively of mundane existence itself. What is left after that, if anything is left, we shall see, and in the meantime there is no point in speculating. Other passages of the scriptures make it clear, however, that there is an Unconditioned reality behind the conditioned reality, though the Theravada doesn't use that expression. The Mahayana, possibly aware of the dangers of interpreting nirodha as the whole truth about Nirvana, goes into the positive residuum in much greater detail. It speaks in terms of śūnyatā, Absolute Consciousness (the ‘*ālaya*’), the Dharmakāya, the Dharmadhātu, though admittedly the Mahayana gets itself into difficulties if it starts taking its own philosophical formulations of the Unconditioned too literally.

You have to maintain a fine balance between the two: not say so little about the positive nature of the Unconditioned that you give the impression that there isn't an Unconditioned and that on the cessation of the conditioned you are just left with a blank; and on the other hand not say so much about the Unconditioned that you virtually turn it into a more refined form of the conditioned, as though with your mundane mind you could already understand exactly what the Unconditioned is, as though it were possible to formulate it in conceptual rational terms.

But the *Dhammapada* uses the expression ‘*atikkama*’, literally ‘going over or further, passing beyond, traversing, overcoming or overstepping’. We have to remember that even though certain wordings of the best known formulations are familiar to us, there are others. Usually any elementary book on Buddhism based on Pāli sources will refer to dukkha nirodha, not atikkama, but here we have the Buddha using that expression. We are therefore not obliged to speak in terms of

the cessation of suffering as the third noble truth; it is just as valid to refer to it as the transcending of suffering. Certainly it is possible to transcend suffering without suffering actually having ceased, as in the case of the Buddha. He sometimes experienced pain, but he had transcended it in the sense that his mind was not disturbed by the experience.

The verse goes on to refer to the Eightfold Way leading to the pacification of suffering; so here is another expression – not the cessation of suffering but ‘*dukkha pasana*’, the calming down of suffering, again quite an expressive way of putting it.

There are two points to be made here, one about the distribution of the Four Truths over the two processes and the other about their being called Aryan or noble. How do the reactive process and the creative process tie up with the Four Noble Truths? I've spelled this out in the ‘*Survey of Buddhism*’, and it's something that one should be very clear about. In the case of dukkha, you've got first cause and then effect. In the sequence of the *nidānas* we usually put the cause first and then the effect, but here in the Four Noble Truths we have the effect; suffering, and then the cause; craving. In other words, you encounter the suffering first, and then you start looking around for the cause. If your approach is empirical and pragmatic, you will put the effect first and the cause second, but if your approach is deductive and philosophical, you will put the cause first and then the effect, because in time the cause does come first and the effect afterwards. And when we speak of the reactive process we put the cause first and the effect afterwards.

In the case of the second two truths you've got the effect followed by the cause, the effect, so to speak, being Nirvana, and the cause, the means by which we reach Nirvana, the following of the Noble Eightfold Path. But if you are thinking in terms of the creative process, the spiral, you must put the path first and the goal after the path. If you reverse the order from inductive to deductive, the Four Noble Truths encapsulate and summarize the reactive process and the creative process, the first and second truths being concerned with the ‘round’ and the third and fourth with the spiral path and the goal. Thus the whole of the Dharma is encapsulated within this formula. As presented and expounded, the Four Noble Truths may seem dull and rigid, but if that is your impression you haven't understood them properly. After all, these formulae are just aides memoires from the days when there were no books, and people would have filled in the outline when they started talking about them.

These truths are called ‘noble’, ‘*ariyan*’, because they are the truths of the Aryans; the truth as disclosed to the vision of the Aryans (Stream-entrants). You can only really see all conditioned things as suffering if you are a Stream-entrant. The Four Noble Truths are thus a presentation in a succinct form of the vision of the Aryans; they represent the way in which someone with Perfect Vision sees existence. He sees all conditioned things as unable to give ultimate satisfaction. In that sense he sees pleasure as pain – not that he doesn't experience pleasurable sensations but he sees quite clearly the limitations of that kind of pleasure. This is not usually explained in books on Buddhism. You get the impression that the Four Noble Truths are so called in order to give an honorific title to the Four Truths out of

reverence. But it is not that at all. The Four Noble Truths are those truths seen by those who are Aryans. They are the way Stream-entrants see the world.

Another misunderstanding is that the more you experience dukkha, the more insight you have into it. This is not the case at all. As a Stream-entrant, you can be surveying the whole of conditioned existence in your meditation and seeing it as dukkha and at the same time your experience may be intensely pleasurable and blissful. On the other hand, you can have an intense experience of suffering but no insight into the truth of suffering whatsoever, and unfortunately this is the situation of most people. One could even say that the more insight you have into the truth of dukkha, the less dukkha you will feel, or the less you will feel it to be dukkha. Whatever dukkha you happen to experience can only be bodily anyway; the mere fact that vision has arisen means that you cannot experience mental dukkha, except in the very subtle way that Stream-entry is 'painful' in comparison with Arhantship, because it is a lesser degree of perfection.

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*Hard to come by is the Ideal Man (purisājañña).
He is not born everywhere. Where such a wise one
is born, that family grows happy.*

'Purisa' means 'man', 'male'. The Ideal Man could mean the Buddha, but it is as though in this verse the terminology isn't yet fully established. The term purisa was quite important in ancient Indian thought. It is not only the man, but the male; it also refers to spirit (purisa) as opposed to matter ('prakrit') – these latter being terms from the Shankya philosophy – so there are those overtones as well. The Buddha is sometimes given the pre-Buddhistic epithet 'Mahapurisa', and described as having the characteristics, the 'lakṣaṇas', of the Great man; there is a whole sutta devoted to that topic in the Pāli Canon. But here the term may or may not refer to the Buddha; the word is not differentiated as that yet.

Another translation might be, 'Hard to find is a True Individual'. But does an individual take birth anyway? Are individuals born? Are Buddhists born? No. They are made; or rather, they make themselves. In order to become an individual you need certain faculties which perhaps you are born with. Perhaps you are bright and energetic right from the beginning. But you cannot strictly speaking be born as an individual (unless you are consciously re-incarnating, so to speak, out of compassion).

And, "Where such a wise one is born, that family grows happy." 'Kula' doesn't mean family in a narrow sense, it is more like clan, or 'ethnic-cum-social group', and this raises the question of the relationship between the individual and the group. You cannot have a positive group without a spiritual community at its heart. The spiritual community sustains the group; the group cannot sustain itself. Even in classical times there were schools of philosophy, the mysteries and the oracles, which provided that kind of element, but we don't have it now; there is no spiritual community in the midst of our social, economic, or cultural group. That is

reflected very clearly in the arts, which are virtually in chaos partly for that reason.

194

Happy is the appearance of the Enlightened Ones. Happy is the teaching of the Real Truth (saddhamma). Happy is the unity of the Spiritual Community. Happy is the spiritual effort of the united.

The word translated here as ‘happy’ is ‘*sukha*’; the arising of the Buddhas is potentially a source of happiness for all living beings, because the Buddhas show the way. And as for the Real Truth, sometimes in Pāli the word ‘*Dhamma*’ is used, sometimes the word ‘*saddhamma*’. Sometimes the choice of word is for the sake of the metre, and sometimes there is a real distinction, because Dhamma was used very commonly in India for any sort of teaching, so sometimes the Buddha’s teaching is especially distinguished as *saddhamma*, the real Dharma.

The Pāli ‘*sāmaggī*’ is a more concrete word than the English word ‘unity’. ‘*Sa*’ is ‘together’ and ‘*maggi*’ pertains to the path, so *sāmaggī* means the togetherness of those who are on the same path. The same-pathedness of the Sangha is a source of happiness; the happiness doesn’t come from enjoying the experience of doing things together in a group sense. You are an individual, others are individuals, and your interaction enhances your enjoyment of your individuality. The same-pathedness of the Sangha is a source of happiness not only to those belonging to that Sangha, but also to those of the group within which the Sangha exists; to see the way in which the members of that spiritual community relate can be a source of inspiration to the group.

The last line of the verse tells us that another source of happiness is the intensive spiritual practice of those who are ‘same-pathers’. I don’t know whether it can be regarded as significant that one line is devoted to the happiness of the arising of the Enlightened Ones, one line to the happiness of the teaching of the Dharma but two lines to the happiness arising from the unity of the Order, the spiritual community.

195

He who reverences those worthy of reverence, whether Enlightened Ones or (their) disciples, (men) who have transcended illusion (papañca), and passed beyond grief and lamentation,

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he who reverences those who are of such a nature, who (moreover) are at peace and without cause for fear, his merit is not to be reckoned as such and such.

If the merit of someone who reverences those worthy of reverence cannot be reckoned, it's as though that kind of reverence has a sort of transcendental quality. If something cannot be reckoned, it is infinite, Unconditioned, Transcendental. Usually one thinks of wisdom as being transcendental, but here reverence is so described. The Pāli word translated as reverence here is '*pūjā*', and perhaps reverence is a rather feeble translation. It is more like devotion, worship; one could also translate it as 'He who worships those worthy of worship', 'He who is devoted to those worthy of devotion'. Or even 'He who has faith in those worthy of faith'.

In my '*Survey of Buddhism*', when discussing the two Pure Land schools, I mentioned that Faith – as they use the term – is the emotional equivalent of Wisdom. One shouldn't think that Insight is necessarily intellectual in nature. It is important to realize that emotion can intuit the Unconditioned, that Insight is as much emotional as intellectual, and can therefore be expressed in terms of emotion as well as in terms of thought, and even in terms of reverence, worship and devotion. Reverence is not just silly sentimental emotionalism; it is a deeply heartfelt attitude which has an almost transcendental quality about it. It is something existential, not something just on the surface.

That is why you cannot just visualize the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as a concentration exercise, and why such practices are only given to those who are effectively committed to the Three Jewels, because it is only then that you have any sense of the Unconditioned at all – and these, after all, are forms of the Unconditioned. You cannot really visualize unless there is devotion there, and you cannot have that devotion unless to some extent you Go for Refuge.

The word translated as 'illusion' is '*papañca*', which means something more like complications, entanglements – in other words, the whole samsaric process. Passed beyond the reach of distress and lamentation, they have transcended suffering. 'Those who are at peace' translates '*nibbute*', which is the verb form of Nirvana. It is often translated literally as 'extinguished' or 'extinct', but the extinction is not of being, but of greed, hatred and delusion.

Merit doesn't seem to be stressed in the Buddha's teachings as far as we can make them out from the Pāli Canon, because the Buddha was concerned with the achievement of Enlightenment here and now in this life, and you are concerned with the accumulation of merit only if you want to be reborn after death in a happy heavenly world or in a prosperous human condition. The Buddha does say that if you follow the spiritual path and you don't manage to reach Enlightenment in this life, when you are reborn that will be to your credit, so to speak, and you will be able to start under better conditions, but the emphasis is not on merit-making for that purpose. A more useful approach might be to consider that you need '*punya*' (merit) in the form of positive, skilful mental states as a foundation for meditation.

Suggested questions

1. Give some examples of healthy and unhealthy fears from your own life.
2. What do you think Sangharakshita means by, “I sometimes say that in Triratna we follow the Mahāyāna in principle but in practice more often than not we are down-to-earth Theravada.”
3. What distinguishes a false refuge from a true refuge?
4. Give some examples of your own false refuges.
5. What are the implications of distinguishing dukkha atikkama from dukkha nirodha?
6. “Faith is the emotional equivalent of wisdom.” What relevance does this have for your own practice?

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Week 8: Chapters 5 and 6, ‘The Spiritually Immature and The Spiritually Mature’

For the last week of our exploration of the *Dhammapada*, we will look more closely at two connected chapters of the text. The terms ‘spiritually immature’ and ‘spiritually mature’ translate the Pāli terms ‘*bāla*’ and ‘*paṇḍita*’, often translated as ‘the fool’ and ‘the wise man’. Sangharakshita explains his translation of the terms in his Preface so it may be worth reading that if you haven’t already done so. The only other preparation before your group is to read the two chapters themselves. Indeed, you may wish to read them a number of times during the week. During the group meeting itself, we will be looking at the verses in more depth and using them as an aid to reflection.

Projects

As with all the modules of the Dharma Training Course, this module concludes with the opportunity to present a project to your group on a topic arising from the material you have been studying. I suggest that, instead of following up one of the Suggested Questions, you take a number of verses from one of the sections of the *Dhammapada* that we haven't studied directly during this module and give a short presentation to your group about them, perhaps saying why those particular verses have struck you and what the images and teachings contained in them communicate to you. This will encourage you to read other parts of the text and it will give the group as a whole a chance to encounter a wider range of the verses contained in the *Dhammapada*. As part of your project, you could also 'illuminate' those verses.

Taking it further

If you have felt inspired or moved to explore any of the themes in this series further, you may find the following resources helpful. They may also be helpful for your project.

Supplementary reading on Pāli Texts

'*The Eternal Legacy by Sangharakshita*' (ISBN 1899579583) gives a thorough and coherent overview of all the different types of Buddhist texts. Available from *Windhorse Publications*:

<http://www.windhorsepublications.com/CartV2/Details.asp?ProductID=712>

'*In the Buddha's Words*', translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi (ISBN 0861714911) is an excellent selection of the Buddha's teachings contained in the Pāli Canon. Available from *Wisdom Publications*:

<http://www.wisdompubs.org/pages/display.lasso?-KeyValue=104>

'*The Life of the Buddha*', translated by Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli (ISBN 9552400635) is a very helpful 'biography' of the Buddha taken solely from Pāli sources. Available from *Wisdom Books*:

<http://www.wisdom-books.com/ProductDetail.asp?PID=13367>

Various seminars on Pāli texts by Sangharakshita are available from *Free Buddhist Audio*:

<http://tinyurl.com/dm3vp7>

Background material for the Dhammapada

There is a free audio version of Sangharakshita's translation of the *Dhammapada*, read by Subhadra, available from *Buddhist Audio Books*:

<http://buddhistaudiobooks.com/download.htm#Dhammapada>

Sangharakshita himself can be heard reading the 'Buddhavaga' section from his translation of the *Dhammapada* on 'Readings from the Pali Canon' from *Free Buddhist Audio*:

<http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=S01>

'*Letters of Gold: Imagery in the Dhammapada*' by Abhaya explores the symbols and images used in the *Dhammapada*. It is in Issue 4 of the *Western Buddhist Review* and is available here:

http://www.westernbuddhistreview.com/vol4/letters_of_gold.html

Surata's talk of the same name is available from *Free Buddhist Audio*:

<http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=OM789>

'*The Living Message of the Dhammapada*' by Bhikkhu Bodhi is a good overview of the teachings of the *Dhammapada* from a Theravādin perspective. It is available from *Access to Insight*:

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bl129.html>