



# ANALYSIS OF PERFECTIONS

by  
Ven. Rerukane  
Chandavimala Mahathera

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**Ven. Rerukane  
Chandavimala Thera**

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**VEN. RERUKĀNE CANDAVIMALA MAHĀTHERA**

(English translation of *Pāramitā Prakaraṇaya*)

English translation from the Sinhala

by

**A.G.S. KARIYAWASAM**

Buddhist Publication Society  
Kandy \* Sri Lanka

## Translator's Preface

Perfections or *pāramitās* (with the cognate *pāramī*) constitute the ethical qualities by perfecting which Buddhahood can be attained. A Buddha-to-be, who is known as the Bodhisatta, is expected to develop and bring into maturity these qualities as a mandatory requirement for the achievement of enlightenment.

A unique position as that of a Buddha cannot be achieved overnight. Wisdom, compassion, purity of character etc. that distinguish the character of a Bodhisatta have to be achieved by cultivating them for an endlessly prolonged period as “four incalculables of hundred thousand aeons” (*Vism.* ix,26).

Around the 1st century A.D., when the first signs of the Mahāyāna appeared with the emergence of the Mahā-sāṅghikas and the Sarvāstivādins, the figure of the Buddha began to be treated as the ultimate culmination of a prolonged preparatory period of self-edification extending over several aeons as shown by the *Visuddhimagga* quotation just cited. This is based on the principle of kamma and rebirth taught in Buddhism. Perfections serve as ‘building blocks’ for the formation of the Bodhisatta career.

In the Pali tradition these perfections are ten in number which are liberality, virtue, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness and equanimity, while the early Sanskrit tradition gives only six as liberality, virtue, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom. The ultimate purpose of their cultivation is ethical and intellectual perfection leading to Buddhahood. Even the Pacceka-buddhas and Arhat disciples have to cultivate them to a lesser degree than a Buddha, depending on the vehicle chosen. Details are given in the Introduction.

The Sinhala original of this translation, *Pāramitā Prakaraṇaya*, is a work written in simple Sinhala, containing a lucid and a detailed account of the ten Theravada perfections. The venerable au-

thor is one of the most eminent monks of Sri Lanka, who passed away a few years back. A short biographical sketch is given below.

In preparing the English translation every care was taken to convey the original sense of the text as faithfully as possible. However, the long stories were dropped without any prejudice to the sense intended.

As the translator I have to be apologetic to the reader for the absence of some of the references because this exactitude has not been observed by the venerable author himself. References have been given wherever possible.

### **About the Author**

The Venerable author of the Sinhala original of this work, Aggamahāpaṇḍita Rerukāne Candavimala Mahāthera, was a leading member of the Buddhist clergy of Sri Lanka during the 20th century. He had a well-earned reputation both in piety and scholarship. Through his pious living and high-calibered scholarship he catered to both the ordinary and the intellectual Sinhala reading milieu of his times.

Born on the 19th of July 1897, he passed away on the 04th of July 1997, fifteen days prior to his 100th birth anniversary. His native village was Rerukāna, a hamlet within the Baṇḍāragama electorate in the Kalutara district. He was the eldest of a family of six siblings.

After passing standard II in the village school he entered the Buddhist Order on the 08th of January 1906 at the age of nine years, with 26 other boys, under the Burmese monk Vinayālaṅkāra, who was in Sri Lanka at the time. The venue was the Vinayālaṅkārarāmaya temple at Pokuṇuviṭa, close to his native village.

As his Burmese teacher was not well-versed in Sinhala, he improved his basic education as a monk at the feet of Ven. Baṭuviṭa Susīma Thera. Two years later in 1908 he proceeded to Myanmar for further studies.

Having studied the Burmese language first, he continued his academic studies in several educational institutions in Mynamar for another eight years and received his *upasampadā* in 1917 at the Dhammikārāma temple in Myanmar.

In the following year he returned to Sri Lanka and took his residence at the Visuddhārāmaya at Demaṭagoḍa in Colombo. From here he later moved into ‘Vellaboda Pansala’ at Panadura, where he began his writing career with his maiden work *Nirvāṇa Viniṣcaya*. Later he moved into his permanent place of residence, the Vinayālaṅkāārāmaya at Pokunuviṭa, where the later books, numbering about thirty, were published. These deal with all the aspects of Buddha Dhamma and contain faithful interpretations of and extensive information on Buddhist matters.

The service he has rendered to the Buddha Sāsana through these writings made him fully qualified for a wide range of academic honours he was later showered with from very different academic centres functioning at the time. Beginning with the Aggamahāpaṇḍita award from Myanmar he was made a Professor of Abhidhamma by the Vidyālaṅkāra University, followed by Sāhitya Cakravarti award from the same university. He was the Mahānāyake of the Svejin Nikāya in Sri Lanka and was also the recipient of Mahopādhyāya and Sāsanasobhana awards from the Amarapura Nikāya as was the Pravacanavisārada award from the Anurādhapura Bhikkhu University.

Towards the latter part of his life he lost his eyesight.

He was so frugal and unobstantious that he had instructed his devotees to perform his funeral as follows:

- i. Not to use a coffin but to take his body to the pyre as soon it is constructed in his usual bed as he would normally lie down: no special dress was to be put on.
- ii. No decorations: not even a flag was to be hoisted.
- iii. No death notices to be printed.
- iv. A simple funeral pyre was to be constructed in a corner of the temple garden: as soon as it is done the body was to be removed there and set fire.

These instructions were duly carried out on the 05th of July 1997, the day following his death.

**A.G.S. Kariyawasam**  
(Translator)

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## INTRODUCTION

None can achieve liberation from the round of birth and death and realize Nibbāna without attaining to one of the three forms of enlightenment or *bodhi*: perfect enlightenment (*sammā-sambodhi*), private enlightenment (*pacceka-bodhi*) and disciple enlightenment (*sāvaka bodhi*). None can realize any of these forms of enlightenment unless perfections relevant to each form of *bodhi* are fulfilled.

“Are there or are there not arahants in the world today? Is it possible or not to realize arahantship today?” Presently these questions are being raised by many people the world over. As long as the Buddha’s pure teachings indicating the path to arahantship are preserved, the availability of arahants, or the possibility of achieving arahantship cannot be denied. It is possible only to state that presently the arahants are not as common as they were in the past. Also, they never openly proclaim their arahantship to the public and in the absence of any visible characteristic distinctive to them, it is impossible to identify one even if confronted.

Once the conditions necessary for the realization of arahantship are fulfilled, one attains it regardless of the time in which one lives. It is inexpedient to assert that this realization is not possible at certain times despite the fulfilment of the requisites. Such an assertion would mean that the Buddha’s teaching is invalid at certain times.

Out of those good people who attempt to attain arahantship, some achieve their aim merely by listening to a brief sermon, while some do so by listening to a long one; some at the tonsure, some after a few days of monkhood, some after an attempt lasting several months, some after several years, while some meet with failure even after lifelong perseverance.

These temporal variations involved in the attainment of arahantship indicate not only the necessity of performing wholesome activities during this life but also the fulfilment of perfections (*pāramī-pāramitā*)

in earlier lives. Those who, in their past lives, have fulfilled the perfections to the degree requisite for arahantship attain it easily merely by listening to a single stanza. Those lacking in this qualification fail to do so in the present life despite their perseverance. This is comparable to the planting of an immature seed and trying to germinate it by continual watering and manuring.

When a Buddha appears in the world those who are qualified for arahantship through the practice of perfections realise Nibbāna either by listening to his discourses or by becoming monks and following the required course of training. As more and more people continue to realize arahantship in this manner their numbers will diminish with the passage of time. In the Gautama Buddha's dispensation this diminution had set in during the Buddha's own life-time (*S.* ii, 192-225; *M.* i, 437ff.). In this context Venerable Mahākassapa questions the Buddha thus: "Venerable sir, what is the cause, what is the reason that there were formerly fewer rules of discipline but more monks realized the saving knowledge? There are more rules of discipline but fewer monks realise it now"?

The multiplication of disciplinary rules indicates not a relaxation but an intensification of the disciplinary conduct of monks. The diminution of arahants despite this intensification convinces us that the available talent was in need of supplementation in some other respect, which is the fulfilment of perfections in former births. While this explains the gradual numerical reduction of arahants during the time of the Buddha, the explanation for the contemporary situation has to begin with the long duration of this dispensation. In its early stages those qualified for arahantship attained it singly as well as in groups. Such qualified people are now few and far between.

It is not correct to state that today there is none with the requisite merits who could realize arahantship if the necessary effort is made. Very often it is those who have at least a certain degree of past perfections to their credit that become inspired to make the effort.

Whether they succeed or not, those who exert themselves to attain arahantship are not totally non-existent even today. If there are any among them with the required qualifications they can realize Nibbāna if they meditate systematically. Even if they fail to achieve the ideal in this life, their efforts would not be fruitless for they would serve as perfections for future attainments.

Those who are desirous of arahantship should exert themselves hopefully in this life itself without deferring it for a future life or a dispensation of a future Buddha. Even as a mature and a germinative seed would decompose in the absence of water, in like manner those qualified for Nibbāna here and now would miss the great opportunity of realizing it if they fail to put up the necessary exertion.

Those lacking in the mental resolve to work for arahantship in the present existence but are hopeful of doing so in a future life must of necessity fulfil the perfections pertinent to the *bodhi* they have chosen. For this they should be equipped with a knowledge of the perfections. The relevant familiarity with the subject can be acquired by reading this book.

When perfections are discussed it is generally those pertaining to perfect enlightenment (*sammā-sambodhi*) that receive attention. But the aspirants for this *bodhi* are a rarity, for the majority realize and aspire for Nibbāna through the disciple-enlightenment (*sāvaka-bodhi*). As such, this book will discuss the perfections in relation to all the three classes of enlightenment.

In preparing this book every effort was made to make it simple and free from wearisome details and also to be succinct to the extent allowable. One may find at random certain useful doctrinal judgements such as the account of the meditation on loving-kindness in the story pertaining to the perfection of loving-kindness.

Even among the learned there are only a few who have correctly understood the meditation of loving-kindness, which is a fundamental aspect in Buddhist practice. Therefore, we would request our readers to read and re-read and practise this meditation in a way beneficial to oneself and to others.

Rerukāne Candawimala Mahāthera,

2498

1954 06-28,

Śrī Vinayālaṅkārarāmaya,

Pokunuwiṭa,

Sri Lanka.

## ANALYSIS OF PERFECTIONS

Homage to the Blessed One, the Accomplished One, the fully Enlightened One.

### I

The greatest expectation of the followers of the teachings of the all-compassionate Buddha, who sojourned in *saüsāra* fulfilling the perfections for an inordinately long period of time, is the realisation of Nibbāna through one of the three forms of enlightenment (*bodhi*).

The term *bodhi* in the context of the three-fold classification of full enlightenment, private enlightenment and disciple-enlightenment, refers to the supra-mundane noble path and omniscience. Those saintly beings who perform meritorious deeds with the hope of attaining to any one of these forms of *bodhi* are styled *bodhisattas*. Accordingly, in keeping with this triple division of *bodhi*, those beings also become threefold as *mahā-bodhisatta*, *pacceka-bodhisatta* and *sāvaka-bodhisatta* respectively.

### Perfections (*pāramī*, *pāramitā*)

The term *pāramī* or *pāramitā* signifies the meritorious deeds performed for the purpose of attaining one of these three forms of enlightenment or Nibbāna as the condition of liberation from the round of birth and death. These perfections are styled vehicles (*yāna*) in the sense that they convey the practiser to the chosen *bodhi*. *Mahābodhi-yāna* or *Mahāyāna* designates the course of perfections practised for perfect enlightenment, while the other two vehicles, *pacceka-bodhi-yāna* and *sāvaka-bodhi-yāna*, respectively imply the development of the perfections for those two categories of *bodhi*.

Many practitioners perform meritorious deeds with a wish for the

pleasures and comforts of the heavenly and human realms. Such exercises, based on craving, can be fruitful only regarding such aspirations but are not able to convey the follower to enlightenment and Nibbāna. Hence, they cannot be classified as perfections as they lengthen *sañsāric* existence instead of leading to Nibbāna. There are yet others who perform them expecting fame and praise as rewards. Such practices too have no power to produce even worldly comforts adequately let alone to lead the practitioner to Nibbāna. Accordingly, they too cannot be designated “perfections.”

There are some others who perform meritorious deeds to show off their wealth, power, virtues etc., or even to outdo others in these respects. This type of competitive and exhibitionistic activity could cover various acts of generosity, observation of precepts, putting up religious buildings etc.. As these are based on ‘egoism’ and ‘pride’ they too do not come under perfections and do not qualify the performers for Nibbāna, and are hence extremely weak even for obtaining worldly gains.

Some devotees, disregarding the paths and fruits of insight meditation, perform such activities believing them to be solely and entirely sufficient for the purification of beings. As such undertakings are based on views (*ditṭhi*), they too are not counted as perfections. Although it is mainly the non-Buddhists who engage in such activities, certain Buddhists also resort to them. They can be described as ‘gropings in the dark.’

Nowadays, many such performers of merit generally wish for both material gains and Nibbāna. Can such acts with a twofold objective be reckoned as perfections? This problem deserves careful consideration. Here, as Nibbāna is also an objective, one cannot answer in the negative. But, as the aspiration has become contaminated by the wish for mundane profit, its efficacy as a means to Nibbāna has become weakened. The story of the two brothers who offered sugar-cane treacle to a private (*pacceka*) Buddha can be cited as illustrating this point.

One of the two brothers offered sugar-cane treacle to a private Buddha directly wishing for Nibbāna while the other aspired first for material prosperity in the heavenly worlds and then to realize

Nibbāna. Consequently, the latter had to attain Nibbāna ninety “aeons later than the former, although he met and listened to a good number of Buddhas during his long *saiisāric* sojourn” (*DhpA*.iv, pp.201ff.).

This anecdote illustrates how the *saiisāric* journey of one who aspires material benefits to precede the attainment of Nibbāna becomes thereby extended owing to his merits becoming weakened through craving. His mentality is not powerful enough to let go desires even after meeting and listening to a Buddha. But, what is remarkable here is that an aspirant for *bodhi* or Nibbāna obtains material prosperity in full measure even though he does not wish for them specifically. Yet, there is a difference in that he is not attached to them like the one making a specific wish for them. The latter’s attachments are stronger while the former can renounce his possessions with ease. Consequently, owing to his generous nature, he obtains such gains easily and sufficiently and when the opportune moment comes he is able to renounce them easily which makes his realization of Nibbāna less cumbersome.

After performing meritorious deeds many present-day Buddhists are in the habit of wishing for material prosperity first and then for Nibbāna to be attained by meeting the future Buddha Metteyya. They also mistakenly believe that every aspiration wished for after a meritorious act ends in fulfilment. Such an aspiration materializes only if the merits earned are powerful enough for the purpose. It is not fitting for one to make a major wish after performing a minor act of merit. For instance, a bullock-cart cannot be driven at the same velocity as a motor-car. Hence, it is noteworthy that one cannot meet the Buddha Metteyya and realize Nibbāna merely by wishing for it.

After performing a meritorious deed, if the resolve is made to meet the future Buddha Metteyya and if this wish is denied realization owing to the insufficiency of merit for the desired purpose or due to some other intervening obstruction, then there is the possibility of that merit becoming a spent force and hence ineffective in conveying one to the goal of Nibbāna. Therefore it would be more advisable to make a general aspiration for the realization of Nibbāna without delimiting it to any particular Buddha. It is not admissible that there are no individuals with sufficing qualifications for arahantship even

at present, perhaps there may be many. Complete reliance on the prospective Buddha Metteyya can have a nullifying effect on such qualifying merits presently available. However, even the presence of such merit cannot assure success in realizing Nibbāna unless a concerted effort is made for that end. Positive hope and targeted exertion are mandatory.

Even Bodhisatta Gotama, who had spent four incalculable aeons perfecting himself for Buddhahood, had to practise severe austerities for six years before he could achieve his goal. What to speak of others? The qualifying merit of one who remains pessimistic and lethargic would become fruitless as in the case of the millionaire's son who was reduced to beggary owing to his failure to use the opportunities that came his way (*DhpA.* iii, 129 ff.). Here, the Buddha highlights the fact that had he made the required effort he would have even become an arahant whereas he ended up as a stupid beggar owing to his lack of diligence. Circumstances being such, if a person with the required qualifying merit to realise Nibbāna in the current dispensation keeps on wishing for it prospectively under the Buddha Metteyya, his resourcefulness for its realization would be reduced to nought.

It is not impossible that even during the dispensation of the Buddha Metteyya he would decide to enter Nibbāna in yet another future Buddha's time. Under this type of procrastination one cannot be certain as to when he would achieve his freedom of Nibbāna. The dispensation of the Buddha wherein we presently live is not totally unproductive of Nibbāna and this productivity would remain functional for a long time to come. A discourse significant and relevant in this context is the Pabbayogāvacara Sutta preached to Ānanda as an introduction to the Khaggavisāṇa Sutta (*SnA.i,47*).

According to this sermon one who has practised meditations thoroughly in one's earlier lives becomes heir to five advantages in consequence thereof. These are: he realizes the Truth (i) in this very life, (ii) at the time of his death, (iii) after being born as some deity, (iv) by meeting a Buddha or (v) by becoming a Pacceka Buddha. As such, those wishing for *bodhi* should aim at realizing it in the present life itself. Or else they should try to do so as a deity in a subsequent birth.

When one considers the circumstances obtaining in the world today it appears that the heavenly world would be an easier place for working towards Nibbāna. Now it is more than 2500 years since the passing away of the Buddha and there is none among us who has either seen him or heard from him. We have only a long-standing tradition. Also, there is no path-fruit winner from whom advice may be sought.

As the life-expectancy of deities is considerably long, there are many of them who have seen and listened to the Buddha still living. Also, there are many among them who have attained to different stages of the Path and fruits. The majority of those who had listened to him and realized various stages of sainthood are deities and *brahmas*. For instance, it is on record that at the Buddha's first preaching there were only five humans while eighteen crores of (180 million) beings realized the Truth and became *sotāpannas* and only one human being achieved this here. All the non-humans were deities and *brahmas*, (*deva-brahma*). This phenomenon is applicable to many other preachings of the Buddha as well. Most of those saints are still alive in celestial realms where guidance from them is still available.

It is also indisputable that the Dhamma in vogue among the deities is much more chaste than what has come down to us traditionally through many generations. Further, the Dhamma preached by a Path-fruit attainer is purer than that preached by a worldling and as such their directions along the path to Nibbāna would be more accurate. Under such circumstances the best and the easiest place to attain Nibbāna today would be the heavenly world. Those who are living presently during the dispensation of a Buddha should explore the possibilities of their realizing the Truth here and now without deferring it for the time of another Buddha in the remote future. That would amount to letting go a priceless opportunity.

An act of merit assumes the status of a perfection dependent on the resolution made. As such, the resolution of the merit-maker is an important element in merit-acquisition. Making a resolution over-commensurate with the meritorious act performed can stand on the way of obtaining one's due measure of merit. An improper kind of resolution can not only be such an obstruction but can even be harmful in many ways.

In the story of the beauty queen *Svarṇatilakā*, (as related in the Pali work *Rasavāhinī*), this woman in a previous existence is said to have offered flowers and made the wish that she be reborn with such physical looks that men who see her should go mad with passion! It was such an unwise resolve that it brought tragedy to a number of kings and to a reputed teacher as well. As such, one should consider carefully and make a faultless wish when doing so. The fruits of a meritorious act accrue to the performer even without wishing for them specifically. This is beyond any doubt.

However, *Nibbāna* cannot be realized through an ordinary meritorious act without wishing for it specifically. Even if the wish is made, merit-making acts comprising generosity, observation of precepts etc. cannot convey one to *Nibbāna* directly, for such acts play only a contributory role towards the main goal. Merit-acquiring acts in themselves also have the power to confer material rewards on the performer and accordingly material rewards accrue to the performer even in the absence of a specific wish for them. However, the effect of wishing for such rewards is merely an enfeeblement of the merit's contributive power towards *Nibbāna*. Therefore, one should aspire for *bodhi* or *Nibbāna* after performing a meritorious act. By attaining to *bodhi* one attains to *Nibbāna* as well.

A wish for material gains should not be made in a way that weakens the wish for *Nibbāna*. One may safely wish them for the purpose of performing further merit-making acts, aimed at the goal of *Nibbāna*. Or one may wish for health, intelligence, general efficiency, sensual satisfaction and such other qualities that would enable one to further the cause of *Nibbānic* freedom. Wishes for material and such other benefits should never take precedence over this main goal of *Nibbāna*. Only then do they count as perfections.

If one does not wish specifically for Buddhahood, *paccekabuddhahood*, chief discipleship or great discipleship, it is proper to make the wish, "let me attain *Nibbāna* without delay," disregarding the time-factor (i.e. times wherein one lives presently).

The triple classification of meritorious deeds as low, middling and excellent should also be taken into account. To the first category belong those acts of merit performed with a view to winning fame and praise.

Such acts have no power even to confer material gains, let alone to be counted as perfections. Those acts performed for the acquisition of the fruits of merit pertain to the second classification. For instance, one who tries to improve the quality of one's acts of generosity by searching for suitable recipients and items for offering as well as a method of offering superior to the normal, falls into this category. Merits acquired therefrom are capable of conferring material benefits on a superior scale but not of conveying the performer to *bodhi*. As such, they cannot be categorised as perfections.

It is the meritorious acts performed through the compelling force of one's intrinsic noble nature that are treated as excellent (*pañīta*).

It is a characteristic trait of noble people that they share their material possessions with others, whereas many ignorant people either selfishly enjoy or hoard their wealth hiding them away from others. Such people are like lakes inhabited by demons. With the determination to abandon the ways of the ignorant and follow the ways of the nobles, one should practise generosity according to one's capacity without caring whether the recipient is worthy or not, and also without expecting any rewards such as praise and fame or material gains. Observing the precepts too has to be done with the same attitude. It is the performances of this nature that can be designated as excellent, and accordingly as perfections. They confer material gains as well as Nibbāna.

Yet another triple classification of practice based on a different system is also in vogue: here those aimed at gaining material rewards are regarded as low, those directed at one's own emancipation (as an *arahant* or a *pacceka-buddha*) are middling, and those targeting supreme enlightenment belong to the excellent category, as their goal is the emancipation of all beings.

The commentary to the *Cariyāpiṭaka* defines the perfections as "those acts of merit such as generosity (*dāna*), motivated totally (*pariggahita*) by compassion and skilful means, and also undefiled by craving and conceit.<sup>17</sup>" These two characteristics are shared by all the perfections. It is a special trait of Mahābodhisattas that the practice of their perfections is motivated by compassion. *Pacceka-*  
1. *taṅhāmānadiṭṭhīhi anupahatā karuṇāpāyakosallapariggahitā dānādayo guṇā pāramiyo.*

*bodhisattas* and disciple-bodhisattas fulfil perfections for their personal liberation and as such their perfections are not saturated with compassion. As the *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary is a work delineating the perfections of a *Mahāsatta*, it can be safely presumed that the distinctive features of perfections as recounted there are in accordance with the requirements of this category.

### **Duration of practice**

Venerable Ānanda once questioned the Buddha about the duration of time required for fulfilling the perfections and the Buddha replied that the minimum period required was four incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons (*cattāri asaṅkheyyāni kappa-satasahassāni*); the middling period was eight incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons; the maximum period was sixteen incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons.

Besides this temporal classification, there is another qualitative kind of categorisation bearing on the fulfilment of Buddhahood. This is the degree of the presence of wisdom (*paññā*), confidence (*saddhā*) and effort (*virīya*) in a Bodhisatta. Accordingly, there are three divisions of Bodhisattas as those in whom wisdom or confidence or effort becomes predominant. When one of these qualities predominates the other two become weak. In keeping with this phenomenon, those bodhisattas in whom wisdom is predominant attain enlightenment in four incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons; those with a predominance of effort take twice as much as this latter.

An aeon (*kappa*) is also threefold; as intermediary, incalculable and great (*antara-asaṅkhyā-mahā*). The time-period required for the fulfilment of perfections is reckoned in great aeons. This is an excessively long period, expressible not in words but through similes. If a single mustard seed is to be removed centennially from an enclosure one *yojana* (about seven miles) cubic and brimful of mustard seeds, the time needed to empty it would be shorter than the great aeon. This definition was given by the Buddha himself.

*Asaṅkheyya* (incalculable) is the highest number numerically expressible. In the phrase “four incalculables” the reckoning is from the moment of the great resolve (*abhinīhāra*).

*Abhinīhāra*

This is the original firm resolve or the great aspiration made in the presence of a Buddha to the effect that one would attain Buddhahood one day and help many beings to cross over from the cycle of existence (*saiisāra*) as was done by ascetic Sumedha at the feet of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara. Eight qualifications are necessary for one to make this resolve: one should (i) be a human being, (ii) be a male, (iii) be able to attain arahantship in that life itself, (iv) meet a Buddha personally, (v) be one who has renounced the household life, (vi) have attained to *jhāna*, (vii) be self-sacrificing in dedication and (viii) be of great determination to become a Buddha.

- (i) No *deva* or a *brahma* can become a Buddha, but only a human being is capable of this achievement. As such, for the resolve to be successful, it should be initially made as a human being.
- (ii) It is always a male and never a female that becomes a Buddha. A resolution made by a female, an eunuch or a hermaphrodite does not bear fruit. A non-male wishing to be a Buddha should first perform merit and achieve masculinity.
- (iii) One should have enough merit to become an *arahant* in that life itself.
- (iv) The resolution has to be made in the presence of a perfectly enlightened Buddha.
- (v) One should be a member of the Buddhist or of any ascetic Order and have renounced the world believing in the truth of moral causation.
- (vi) He should be an attainer of absorptions (*jhāna*).
- (vii) Dedication qualified by a highly elevated degree of self-sacrifice as was done by ascetic Sumedha when he invited the Buddha Dīpaṅkara to tread over him to cross over a muddy pool.
- (viii) Zeal for the objective, which is vigorous to the extent that he is prepared to suffer four incalculable *kappas* in hell if

that becomes necessary to realize his objective. Lukewarm interest will not bring success.

If one is not endowed with these eight conditions, one's aspiration to become a Buddha will not be confirmed. In their absence the resolve for Buddhahood can become ineffective in the journey through *saiisāra*. As such, fully enlightened Buddhas refuse to grant them the definite assurance of prospective Buddhahood (*niyata-vivaraṇa*), which is an assurance marked by predicting the time, the name and the *bodhi* tree of the would-be Buddha. With the generation of the skilful mental factor of the *abhinīhāra* the Bodhisatta, endowed with these eight qualifications, proceeds hopefully and assuredly towards the goal till he achieves his ideal. His progress is irreversible as he has mounted the *Mahābodhi* vehicle qualifying himself for the epithet *Mahābodhisatta*. It is only to such *bodhisattas* that the Buddhas grant the assurance of future Buddhahood.

Once attained to this position, the Bodhisatta will be free from eighteen weaknesses in his future births till he realises Buddhahood. These are: he is never born i. blind ii. deaf iii. insane iv. garrulous v. crippled vi. among savages vii. in the womb of a slave or viii. a heretic ix. subject to sex-change x. with a proneness to commit any of the five heinous crimes xi subject to dermatological disorders xii. as an animal smaller than the quail or larger than the elephant xiii. as a departed spirit (*peta*). xiv. as an *asura* xv. in the Lokāntarika or the Avīci hells xvi as a Māra. xvii in the fine-material worlds where there is no perception (*asañña*) or in Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsa*) xiii. in the formless worlds (*arūpa*). xviii. in other world-systems (*cakkavāla*). [Note: This information is based on the commentaries to the *Suttanipāta* and to the *Apadāna*].

### *Buddha-bhūmi*

He also develops the four bases of Buddhahood which are zealotness (*ussāha*), wisdom (*ummagga*), resolution (*avatthāna*) and compassionate behaviour (*hitacariyā*). *Ussāha* here refers to the relentlessly persevering nature in one's march towards the goal. *Ummagga* implies the keen wisdom capable of identifying the correct

techniques for fulfilling the perfections. *Avatthāna* means the unshakeability of one's policy in relation to the path of merit-making one has chosen to follow. *Hitacariyā* signifies the policy of showing loving-kindness and compassion universally—to both friend and foe. It is a Herculean task to earn a stock of merit that will suffice for the realisation of Buddhahood. Those incapable of establishing themselves in the afore-mentioned four bases cannot fulfil the perfections. Owing to the extensive support they provide for the practice of perfections they are designated as *Buddha-bhūmi*.

### **Six intentions (*ajjhāsaya*)**

These are renunciation (*nekkhamma*), solitude (*paviveka*), greedlessness (*alobha*), wrathlessness (*adosa*), freedom from delusion (*amoha*) and the inclination towards emancipation (*nissaraṇa*). Just as the core parts of trees are essential for their maintenance, the Bodhisattas also invariably need these six intentions as core elements to establish themselves firmly in the career meant for them. Just as a coreless tree gets easily uprooted when hit by a storm, a Bodhisatta devoid of the core of these intentions will fall off from the path of the Bodhisatta at some time or other as he does not possess the strength to proceed steadfastly towards the goal of enlightenment.

'Intention of renunciation' is the desire for the homeless life. Mahābodhisattas are by nature turned away from sensual desires or the household life, which appears to them as defective. They are comparable to empty vessels tethered and forcibly retained in deep waters for they are all the time bent upwards and are shot up to the surface no sooner the tether is loosened. In like manner those of them who enjoy the pleasures of the household life give up wealth and family and even kingship as soon as the occasion demands it.

'Desire for solitude' is perennially present in Mahābodhisattas. They see disadvantage in a life surrounded all the time by wife and children, relatives, friends etc. Those devoid of this essential quality and bent on living amidst such company find it impossible to live without them. Whenever they are solitary that desire reverses their mind and puts them back amidst the crowd. Not finding any delight in solitude, they find it as a prison. Mahābodhisattas are capable of leaving their

kith and kin and living alone under trees in forests owing to the inherent presence of the primary element of this intention in them. When a prisoner breaks out the jailers would apprehend and re-incarcerate him at their earliest. In like manner, whenever such a Bodhisatta is forced into the midst of society, this element would put him back into the track.

The ‘intention of greedlessness’ is in the very nature of Mahābodhisattas, who see evil in greediness. He who is devoid of the basic essence of greedlessness in him finds it quite difficult to give away something worth, even a few cents. But he in whom it is present can give away his wealth, kingdom, wife and children, physical limbs and even his own life. Their problem is not liberality but its absence.

Similarly they are ‘of the nature of wrathlessness’ as they are well aware of the evil inherent in wrathfulness. Those lacking in this quality become full of anger at the slightest provocation, while those endowed with it do not get angered even against those who come to harm their lives. This is the ‘intention of wrathlessness.’

‘Freedom of delusion’ as an ‘intention’ is also of the nature of Mahābodhisattas as they see danger in it. Those without this quality find it difficult to distinguish between right and wrong. They fail to comprehend the teachings concerning the Aggregates (*khandha*) when taught by others.

‘Inclination towards emancipation’ as the next ‘intention’ is also implicit in Mahābodhisattas who see the dangers involved in existential life. Craving for becoming is quite strong in those who lack this quality and this prevents them from practising insight meditation and such other Nibbāna-oriented exercises. They thus perform only such meritorious actions that prolong *saüsāra* and these do not become perfections as they are contaminated by the craving for becoming.

#### **Four excellences (*sampatti*)**

These constitute the excellencies of faculties (*indriya*), behaviour (*paṭipatti*), proficiency (*kosalla*) and intention (*ajjhāsa*). These four qualities distinguish the Sammā-sambuddhas from both Paccekka and

Sāvaka bodhisattas, creating a very wide divergence between the former and the latter.

### **Faculties**

This refers to the full maturity (excellence) of the five spiritual faculties of confidence (*saddhā*), effort (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). Only the Mahābodhisattas have the specific ability to call forth and utilize to the maximum any one of them whenever the occasion demands it.

### **Behaviour**

This refers to full-scale altruism. The two lower classes of Bodhisattas do not practise altruism on the same high scale as Mahābodhisattas, for the latter engage in it solely for the sake of others, leaving the self out and while doing so too they expect nothing in return, not even acknowledgement. They go to the extent of helping even wicked people at times while being harassed by them. Instead of wishing for Nibbāna personally, they aim at full enlightenment so that they can help others through *saṁsāra*. This briefly is the excellence of behaviour in the great Bodhisatta.

### **Proficiency**

This refers to the presence of mind. They know how to face even the worst of straits or to achieve any Herculean task that is at hand.

### **Intention**

This is the strong will to fulfil the perfections. They practise each perfection accurately to the minutest detail. For instance, in the practice of generosity (*dāna*), they find joy in giving anything that is asked for as their aim is to satisfy the applicant's wish at whatever cost to themselves.

As these excellences are the distinctive characteristics of Mahābodhisattas they are referred to as *Mahābodhisatta-liṅga*.

**Four miraculous attributes of Mahābodhisattas**

When a Mahābodhisatta becomes qualified with the eight-fold *abhinīhāra* with their high potential of rewards and special attributes, he comes to possess four miraculous attributes. These are: (i.) He regards all human beings as his children (ii.) This thought remains undefiled by the personalised possessive attitude of ordinary parents towards their children. (iii.) This altruistic mentality becomes so extensive that it contributes for the enrichment of all the perfections. (iv.) Accumulated merit to his credit becomes so immense that he is transformed into an incomparable field of merit worthy of honour and respect from others.

## 2

### THE TEN PERFECTIONS

1 Liberality (*dāna*) 2 Morality (*sīla*) 3 Renunciation (*nekkhamma*)  
4 Wisdom (*paññā*) 5 Energy (*virīya*) 6 Forbearance (*khanti*)  
7 Truthfulness (*sacca*) 8 Resolution (*adiṭṭhāna*) 9 Loving-kindness  
(*mettā*) 10 Equanimity (*upekkhā*). These are the ten perfections each  
of which is subdivided into three aspects as basic, intermediate and  
ultimate (*pāramī*, *upa-pāramī* and *paramattha-p.*), thereby making  
perfections altogether thirty in number.

#### Methods of perfecting

The technique of fulfilling the perfections need not be uniform with  
all the categories of aspirants. The Mahābodhisattas, Paccekabodhi-  
sattas and the Sāvakabodhisattas differ from one another regarding  
the *modus operandi* of practising them.

In the case of the Mahābodhisattas four preconditions have to be  
satisfied as follows:

- i. All the ten perfections without exception should be fulfilled.
- ii. They should be practised with perfect application and devotion on one's own initiative without any slackness or external compulsion.
- iii. The practice should be continuous without intermittant stoppages as in the case of a journey of an invalid.
- iv. The performance should not be abandoned half-way but must be continued until the final goal of Buddhahood is attained.

Further, the aspirant should initially perform self-abnegation with the thought “I am offering myself to all the Buddhas; whatever property that accrues to me or that I myself acquire I shall give away in charity so long as mendicants are there. I shall be utilizing for myself only whatever is left over.”

One should also eliminate the following four impediments to the practice of generosity:

- i. Inexperience in the practice of generosity is the first of these hindrances. If, despite the availability of material to be offered as well as supplicants, one is lacking in the initiative in the practice, this is due to lack of experience. The great Bodhisatta realizes this fact and rectifies himself by dwelling on the subject even before he obtains the donations.
- ii. Poverty or the scarcity of material for offering is the second impediment. When the Bodhisatta is in such circumstances he considers that his poverty is due to his not having practised liberality in previous lives. Therefore he concludes that he must begin the practice within the means available without further delay. Thus he gradually surmounts this obstacle.
- iii. When hundreds and thousands of things are demanded it is not easy to make up one’s mind to be generous to that extent. This is specially so when the articles asked for are highly valuable. In such situations the Bodhisatta thinks “the full enlightenment I aim at far exceeds all these articles in value: it is priceless: one cannot attain to a condition like Buddhahood without offering many items of value. Therefore, in order that I may attain to that exalted condition, I must satisfy both these aspects of liberality—value and extent.
- iv. Continuous giving diminishes one’s wealth leading the giver to poverty gradually. As poverty is a miserable condition the thought of one’s wealth getting diminished

is an impediment to the practice of liberality. In such a situation the Bodhisatta contemplates on the impermanence of wealth and also on the fact that his present poverty is due to his not having practised this virtue sufficiently in previous lives. Thus he subdues this obstruction and engages in it according to the resources available.

These observations regarding the fulfilment of the Perfection of Generosity are applicable in like manner to the other perfections as well.

The self-abnegation performed initially by the Bodhisatta would furnish him with the required vigour to remain steadfast in his commitment to fulfil the perfections amidst losses of wealth, wife and children or even life and limb. Hence, this self-sacrifice is a means for the fulfilment of all the perfections.

Mitigating one's self-attachment in the light of the essencelessness of the five aggregates that compose the self and the development of thoughts of loving-kindness towards others are two other ways helpful in the fulfilment of perfections. This weakening of narcissism enables the Bodhisatta to endure the tribulations and privations he has to encounter in the achievement of this ideal. Development of compassion towards others enables him to undergo any pain or loss for their sake. As such, these two qualities serve as means for the fulfilment of perfections.

### 3

## PERFECTION OF GENEROSITY

(*dāna-pāramitā*)

Generosity (*dāna*) in this sense can be defined as the donation of something that belongs to a person out of an attitude of either devotional respect or altruistic helpfulness with the belief in the fruits of *kamma*. In the Abhidhamma terminology it would be the volition (*cetanā*) of giving something that belongs to the giver. Items of offering such as food, drinks, raiment etc. are also designated as *dāna*. However, the intention here is different. What is offered respectfully to an ethically superior person comes under *pūjā* or worship, while an offering made to a person similar or lower in status with feelings of love and compassion comes under assistance or helpfulness (*anuggaha*). When an offering of *pūjā* or of *anuggaha* category is made with the specific intention of attaining one of the triple forms of *bodhi*, it comes under the category of perfections.

The *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary defines this perfection as “the volition of generosity in giving away one’s belongings with compassion and proficiency of means” (*karuṇāpāya-kosalla-pariggahitā attūpakaraṇa-pariccāga-cetanā dānapāramitā*). This refers to the *dāna-pāramī* of the Mahābodhisatta.

After obtaining the assurance of prospective Buddhahood, the Mahābodhisattas, on that very day, wisely enquire “what is the path to Buddhahood? What things have to be performed for its attainment?” In this inquiry what he first sees and takes upon himself is the Perfection of Generosity. This is expressed in the *Buddhavaūsa* in the following manner: “Well then, I am searching all over the universe, in all the ten directions, for the factors of enlightenment; in this search I beheld first the Perfection of Generosity, the great

highway trodden by the sages of yore; if I am intending to achieve Buddhahood, first and foremost, I have to take it up steadfast.”

Generosity cannot be easily practised by all and sundry. Poverty is not its only hindrance. Although anyone is capable of giving away a trifle, only those with an advanced mentality can bear up the loss of gifting something useful and of real value while the Perfection of Generosity cannot be fulfilled without giving away costly and valuable possessions. The difficulty of making such acts of generosity is admitted by the phrase, “both generosity and war are said to be equally difficult”. (*dānañca yuddhañca samānamāhu*). A story illustrating this fact is the Dasannaka Jātaka (No. 401).

However much difficult the practice of generosity be, it is a must for the aspirant of Buddhahood. By developing the motivation for as well as knowledge and practice regarding the performance of this perfection, one can attain to the status of the giver of excellent donations. He who is unable to develop this perfection will be incapable of developing the other perfections as well. The degree to which one can progress in this perfection will decide the extent to which one can advance in the others, as it is the foundation of all virtue. Noble qualities do not find a footing in the ungenerous individual.

Those who disparage generosity do so owing to ignorance or to craftiness. Generosity is the criterion of a person’s ethical worth, for all virtues have liberality as their source. The person who can face gain and loss correctly can follow the rules of discipline more easily than others.

Liberality is the criterion of virtue in general. The observance of the eight precepts by a person who cannot bear up the loss of a single rupee is not worth a twopence. Safeguarding the precepts first at the expense of a thing of meagre value and then proceeding in an ascending order, without violating the observation undertaken even at the cost of one’s most valued possession, the life itself, the performer would acquire merit in proportion to the sacrifice made. For instance, the non-violation of a precept at the expense of one’s life would be more meritorious than one observed at the expense of a physical limb. In this sense, as generosity is the yardstick of virtue as a whole, the Perfection of Generosity takes precedence over all

the other perfections. This is the reason why the great Bodhisatta inaugurates his career with this perfection.

Although generosity is the king of perfections and that all the Buddhists wish for Nibbāna, its practice among the majority of today's Buddhists is at a very low ebb. Let alone the predilection for its practice, many Buddhists do not like even to listen to explanations about this subject. Some of them would even find fault with the preacher for dealing with the topic. Although the tradition has been to preach sermons initially with stories about generosity, heavens etc., the modern preachers are compelled to leave out these subjects owing to this attitude of the listeners. In this respect even the condition of the clergy is deplorable for some of the modern day monks do not even know that generosity is a quality mandatory to them also, as it is to the laymen. They are under the false impression that it is meant only for the lay people. As long as they do not free themselves from this false notion they cannot make progress towards Nibbāna.

### **Method of practice**

Broadly speaking, this perfection can be practised by gifting the requisites needed for comfortable living, one's physical limbs, the life itself, by removing fears of others and by giving instructions in the Dhamma.

The practice of generosity should be done wisely and carefully. A wide knowledge becomes necessary for its correct execution. Generosity practised just for the sake of giving without following the proper procedure is of no value. Such acts of generosity not safeguarded by prudence do not come under perfections. As the merits accruing from the practice of perfections need the protective wall of wisdom around them, the practiser of generosity as a perfection has to perform it with full knowledge of the correct procedure of its practice.

The giver should choose as his recipients those who are superior to him in virtue and make the offerings as items of worship. In the case of altruistic offering too, the recipient should be selected to suit this type of generosity.

To whichever of these two types an offering made pertains, the

donor should not allow the least amount of attachment to it to remain with him. This too is not easy and it is not easy either for the donor to realize that such attachments have been retained by him. Although many donors retain attachments to what they have offered, they hardly know that it is so. Sometimes we hear laymen finding fault with the monks in statements like “I have given so much to such and such a temple or monk, I have done so much work for them: but they did not give me this or did not do this favour for me.” They give vent to such feelings because attachment to or some hopeful desire regarding their donations has remained with them.

On account of such misunderstandings some people cease practising generosity. This indicates that in no way are they prepared to renounce their attachment completely. To this same category also belong those who keep on inquiring about the fate of the items offered under generosity. It is not possible to know whether such attachments were present or not at the moment the offering was made. That can be ascertained only through subsequent events like the aforesaid instance of inquiring about the offerings made. Let the practisers of generosity attempt to realize this subtle point. Acts of generosity are not of high quality if attachments to the offerings made are retained.

Giving in generosity is a service and a favour done towards the recipients. Yet, all such acts of giving do not become services to the recipients because sometimes, they may turn out to be losses and worries to them, as in the case of giving an unwholesome food or medicine to a patient or a razor to a small child. Such acts of generosity are also of no value. Giving in the true sense should be a service and not a worry, a damage or a loss to the recipients. This latter type of *dāna* should never be practised.

Some Buddhists are in the habit of taking a monk away from his temple to a distant place thereby preventing him from taking his normal meal and tiring him and offering him a normal meal thinking that he is entertaining him abundantly. Such *dānas* are only a vexation to the recipient. By responding to such invitations, although one receives some food and an article of little value, the invitee would incur a bigger loss by losing his working hours for a day or two.

This kind of giving is tantamount to doing harm to the person concerned.

It would be worth tiring a monk by taking him to a distant place if it is to entertain him lavishly so that his loss of working hours becomes adequately compensated thereby. It is pointless giving something which the recipient is having abundantly. It is not a *dāna* to give a thing which is of no use to the recipient like a coat to a monk, a begging bowl or a yellow robe to a layman etc. It is also not advisable to give the very same thing to a large number or to give insufficiently to a single person so that the recipient's requirements are not fulfilled. If food is given it must satisfy the recipient's hunger, if a cloth is given he must be able to wear it or to cover himself with it etc. Whether the recipient is a monk, layman, man, woman, child, or even an animal these requirements have to be satisfied.

One should not offer weapons, poisons etc. used to slaughter animals, liquor and sports goods that can lead to harmful consequences. Regarding sick people, while no unwholesome food should be given, even wholesome food should be given only in prescribed quantities. Animals like cattle should not be given to those who do not treat them with kindness. In general, any form of *dāna* should be practised kindly and compassionately with the idea of doing some service to the recipient and not unkindly as if throwing away something that is worn out and useless.

Both in preparing and offering a *dāna* the giver should be happy and confident and should remain so even after the performance. After offering, the donor should not inquire about as to what happened to the items offered. While one should not tire the recipients in the process of giving he should also not expect words of praise from them. Nothing should also be expected in return. No reward other than enlightenment or Nibbāna should be expected from the merits. When monks are the recipients the giver should entertain the wish that through the *dāna* they have received they should safeguard their health and be able to realise their aims easily. When giving to laymen the monks should wish that by means of the *dāna* they have received the former become happy.

### Qualifications of the recipient

The virtuous nature of the recipients also contributes for the increase of the value of a *dāna*, and conversely the *dāna* offered to a person of poor virtue is of little value. Yet, if the donor is a person of virtue, he or she receives the full benefits irrespective of the recipient's moral worth. Accordingly, it is stated in the Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta:

“When a virtuous person to an immoral person gives  
With trusting heart a gift righteously obtained,  
Placing faith that the fruit of action is great  
The giver's virtue purifies the offering” — (*M.iii*, 257).

Altruism is a great virtue. All the major unwholesome actions are crimes perpetrated against others and as such an altruistic person is a non-tormentor of others. Accordingly, such a person remains virtuous whether he or she takes up the observation of the precepts or not. As great Bodhisattas are altruistic by nature, they are virtuous at all times, which means that the *dānas* they offer are highly meritorious irrespective of the character of the recipients. For instance, the *dāna* given by king Vessantara to highly immoral Jūjaka produced high merit capable of causing an earthquake. The Mahābodhisatta's Perfection of Generosity is so exalted that it is almost without comparison.

It is accordingly stated that his donations of blood exceeded the waters of the oceans, of flesh exceeded the earth's soil, of crowned heads when heaped exceeded the height of the Mahāmeru mountain and of eyes exceeded the stars of the sky.

An important point that emerges here is that the Bodhisattas would be unable to donate these body parts to virtuous people because those who ask for these are generally low in the scale of their virtue. As such, in order that they carry their perfection to a successful conclusion and realise Buddhahood, they make these offerings without discriminating about the moral worth of the recipients. Yet, if and when they meet morally worthy recipients, they can make the donations with greater devotion.

### Giving to immoral people

Nowadays many vociferous clamours are made against practising generosity towards immoral people saying that such donations are result-wise unwholesome (*akusala*). In the Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta the Buddha has categorised the recipients of a *dāna* on the basis of the degree of merits accruing to the giver. But he has made no mention there or elsewhere of any category of persons to whom no *dāna* should be given on the grounds that by donating to them the giver earns demerit. Accordingly, the Buddha says that anyone instructing others that any particular type of person should not be given any *dāna* earns demerit in three ways as by depriving the donor of his merit, the recipient his donation and he himself becoming poor in character (A.I, 161).

Concerning this subject the story of the treasurer Ugga of the Vajji country can be cited as an illustration (AA. II, 214 ff). He was originally a hedonist who, after meeting the Buddha, changed his ways completely ending up as an *anāgāmin*. He had eight special qualities one of which was that on whatsoever monk he waited upon and gave alms, he did so with wholeheartedness, with the same attitude of devotion irrespective of the monk's virtue.

As the treasurer Ugga was a person who had attained to the third stage of sainthood (*anāgāmin*) and, if giving to a virtueless man is demeritorious, he would not have behaved that way. If, as some people maintain, it is unwholesome to offer *dāna* to corrupt recipients despite the donor's knowing that they are devoid of virtue, the Buddha would not have highlighted that particular virtue of Ugga as ancient and praiseworthy. The case here pinpoints that it is superior to give *dānas* to all with the same attitude without being selective on grounds of the moral worth of the recipients. Those who maintain that it is unwholesome to give to corrupt recipients do so either owing to their ignorance of religious values, jealousy or vested interests.

The more cunning and scheming a person is the more sanctimonious he or she can be. As such it is not easy to ascertain for certain whether one is genuine or hypocritical in one's moral behaviour. There may be black sheep among those held as paragons

of virtue by the public and conversely too, there can be people of high integrity among those held as moral hypocrites. It is only after prolonged and close association that one can ascertain whether a person is a pretender or not. Even then it can be found out only by those highly alert and intelligent people who know what is really right and wrong. Thus the Buddha once addressed King Pasenadi in the following manner:

“Great king, it is through association that one learns about another’s moral character and that too after a long association and not a short one: and that too if one is heedful and not heedless, if one is intelligent and not unintelligent?” (S.I, 78). As finding information about others is not an easy task, the practiser of the Perfection of Generosity has to get his aim fulfilled by giving to whomsoever is available. Many people fail to become motivated for *dāna* owing to their accustomed habit of finding others’ faults. One should try to become not a seeker of others’ defects but of their plus points. It is impossible to find anywhere in the world one who is totally bad for he or she will possess at least a single good quality. The giver should avoid seeing into the recipient’s unwelcome qualities but be pleased with at least a single good quality found in him.

For instance, if the recipient is a butcher he should be regarded as better than a murderer. And if he is a murderer he should be treated as better than a parricide or a matricide. In this manner the Perfection of *dāna* becomes easier if the practiser cultivates the habit of seeing the good in others. When the *dāna* is motivated by compassion it becomes easier to give to a corrupt recipient because such a one is more deserving of compassion than a virtuous person.

In this world the virtueless person deteriorates owing to his evil ways and even after death he is reborn in hell. As such he deserves our sympathy and we can give to such a person with the wish that he may obtain, through the *dāna* given, some mitigation of suffering to which he is destined after death in hell. Let us wish that donors do not become misguided by those who maintain that it is demeritorious (*akusala*) to give to corrupt people and waste their time in searching for virtuous recipients. Instead, they should try to fulfil the perfection by giving to whomsoever is available as so far explained.

### Classification of *dāna*

*Dāna* can be classified into a threefold division as material gifts, gift of fearlessness and the gift of the Dhamma. The definition of material gifts would be ‘the gifts of food and drink that bring happiness to man and animal when offered with the belief in the fruits of *kamma*.’ The items of *dāna*, which can either be animate or inanimate, should be justly obtained and be capable of making the recipients happy. Hence these items could be many and varied.

Material *dāna* can be again broadly classified into two classes as external and internal. Inanimate items such as food, drinks, clothing, medicine, fields, gardens, gold, silver, pearls, gems, cash, houses, beds, chairs, tables, mats, pillows, knives, mammoties, ploughs, axes, adzes, flowers, incense and unguents as well as animate items such as elephants, horses, cattle, buffaloes etc., comprise the external items. Donation of the parts of one’s physical body such as eyes, head, flesh, blood etc., as well as offering oneself completely as a slave, come under internal *dāna*.

The gift of fearlessness is rescuing others from the dangers and fears arising from the state, thieves, enemies, ferocious animals like lions and tigers, evil spirits, fire, water or wind. This also includes making arrangements for future safety from these sources of danger.

*Dhamma-dāna*, consists of teaching the Buddha Dhamma to others, getting good preachers to deliver sermons, production and distribution of Dhamma books, assisting Dhamma teachers as well as students, establishing Dhamma schools and libraries etc..

Converting non-Buddhists into Buddhism by explaining the Dhamma to them, generating confidence in the Dhamma in those who lack in it, guiding the Buddhists in the correct path, getting the non-observants of precepts to observe them, getting new admissions into the Saṅgha, helping the monks to improve themselves spiritually and realize *jhānas* and higher-knowledges (*abhiññā*), motivating them to realize the paths and fruits, giving them instructions and encouragement etc. constitute the main aspects in which *Dhamma-dāna* can be practised.

### Fourfold *dāna*

The Vinaya tradition enumerates four kinds of *dāna* as that of robes, (*cīvara*), almsfood (*piṇḍapāta*), dwelling places (*senāsana*) and medicinal requirements (*gilāna-paccaya*). The Buddha has permitted the acceptance and utilization of these four items for the convenience of his disciples comprising monks, nuns and their novice counterparts. Here *cīvara* is a term used in the Buddhist context to identify all items of clothing allowed to the Buddhist clergy. The term *piṇḍapāta* implies all items of food and drink allowed for them to be consumed from sunrise till noon. *Senāsana* refers to dwelling-houses and items of furniture such as chairs, beds etc. Their medicinal needs are designated by the term *gilāna-paccaya*. The *piṇḍapāta* category can also comprise some items that can be taken as medicine but they do not fall under the *gilāna-paccaya* classification, which category comprises only those items which do not violate the mid-day rule regarding food and drink.

### Six-fold *dāna*

In the Abhidhamma tradition *dāna* is sixfold as comprising the objective aspects of six sense-organs which are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Accordingly, these six are designated as the giving of *rūpa*, *sadda*, *gandha*, *rasa*, *phoṭṭhabba* and *dhamma*.

Herein *rūpa-dāna* is the giving of beauty or complexion. These items of *dāna* comprise flowers, clothes etc.

*Sadda-dāna* is the giving of sound. This implies the sounding of bells, drums etc. as a form of worshipping the Three Gems, employing professionals to do it for payment; construction of belfries at suitable places; offering of medicines to improve the voice of Dhamma-preachers; chanting aloud of *suttas* etc.

*Gandha-dāna* is the offering of fragrance which cannot be offered from hand to hand as such. This means the offerings of sweet-smelling flowers for the Three Gems and other suitable recipients with the intention of fulfilling this aspect of *dāna*.

*Rasa-dāna* is the offering of different kinds of food and drink mindful of their taste as the *dāna*-element.

*Phoṭṭhabba* refers to articles which give pleasant or unpleasant feeling on contact. As the same article gives both comfort and discomfort to the body tactually, there are no objects that afford comfort alone in this respect. Therefore, articles such as clothes, beds, chairs, cushions, seat-covers, pillows, mattresses etc. should be offered as covering this aspect of *dāna*.

Everything that is external to the preceding five sensual objects can be designated as *dhamma-dāna* which, however, should not be confused with the *dhamma-dāna* explained earlier under the three-fold classification of *dāna*. But certain material gifts, the gift of fearlessness and the *dhamma-dāna* as explained there can also come under this Abhidhammic classification of *dhamma-dāna* (i.e. *dāna* items based on the mental objects) done according to the objectivity of the sense-organs.

### **The principle**

The principle behind the Perfection of Generosity is altruism through giving. This altruism is multi-faceted as shown by the various classifications of *dāna* given above. The Bodhisatta is prepared to give whatever is desired by the supplicant while being always careful enough not to give anything the latter does not wish for or need. In the act of giving too he is fully disinterested as for any kind of returns for himself. As long as resources are available he would continue giving until the supplicant is fully satisfied once his requirements are saturated. Even when the resources are meagre he would follow this policy.

He never gives anything that can cause loss or harm to the recipient. Accordingly, he refrains from giving intoxicants, firearms or even sports gear that can cause heedlessness in the recipient. His principle is to give in consonance with the needs of the recipient—to a patient he gives what is beneficial to him and in like manner to laymen, the clergy, parents, wife, friends, servants, beggars etc. He never promises a valuable gift and later gives something of a lesser value nor does he promise much and gives a little later. He never expects eulogies or fame for his generosity, not even gratitude, nor does he ever despise the item of *dāna* or the recipient. His sole aim is enlightenment and nothing else.

Even to those indisciplined and ungrateful supplicants who cause him loss and calumny, he gives not non-chalantly but lovingly, confidence in kammic causation being his sole criterion. If and when the supplicants are brought from afar, he sees to it that the *dāna* is given without causing any undue delay and annoyance. By not resorting to deception and causing dissension among recipients in practising his generosity, he jealously safeguards the philanthropic basis of his virtue and thereby the purity of his motivation.

If the Bodhisatta discovers that his attachment to a particular object is strong, he makes no delay in finding out a recipient and disposing of it at his earliest convenience. He never allows his craving to develop. Even when he has precious little, if a beggar were to come and ask for it he would give it with maximum disinterestedness by taking upon himself the beggar's suffering and making him happy and comfortable after the manner of Akitti in the Akitti Jātaka (No. 480).

When cattle and such other animals are given away as *dāna*, he takes special care not to hand them over to sadistic kind of people who neglect and harass these animals but to those who make use of them with kindness. In the case of giving away slaves, workers, wife and children he always informs them and obtains their prior consent. He never knowingly gifts them to evil people or to non-humans such as *yakkhas*. When donating a kingdom he is particular that the recipient is not an inhuman oppressor of his subjects but a man of virtue and wisdom capable of administering it righteously. These are the main criteria governed by which a Bodhisatta performs *dāna* in external objects.

In the case of donating internal objects there are two aspects to it as becoming someone's slave or giving away one's physical parts like blood, hands, feet, flesh etc. Here the Bodhisatta takes care that such *dāna*-items never go waste, and he gives them only if he knows for certain that the recipient utilizes them and fulfils his or her need. He also refrains from giving them to *Mārakāyika* devas (followers of Māra), or to those who solicit them for ulterior purposes or through insanity or folly. When a genuine supplicant is available he gives to him unhesitatingly and promptly because such recipients are hard to come by.

### **Fruits expected from *dāna***

When giving food as *dāna* the Bodhisatta wishes for long life, good health, happiness, strength and arahantship to the recipients in general and in giving drinks he wishes for them a weakening of their craving. The giving of different items as *dāna* has as its aim the acquirement of specific advantages as follows: clothing is given for the acquisition of a good complexion and of the two moral ornaments of fear and shame to do evil, vehicles for psychic power and the bliss of Nibbāna, incense for the fragrance of virtue, sweet-smelling flowers for the beauty of the virtues of a Buddha, seats for the seat of Enlightenment (*bodhi-maṇḍala*), beds for the bed of Tathāgataship, houses for the ability to practise philanthropy, lamps for the fivefold eyesight of a Buddha, images for the halo around the body, sounds for a sweet voice, tastes for alround popularity, tactually pleasant things for the refined delicateness of a Buddha, medicinal items for deathlessness, freedom to slaves for release from bondage to defilements, certain justified kinds of sports gear for enjoyment of the Dhamma, children for converting all living beings to the status of his own offspring, wife for attaining the lordship of the entire world, valuables like gold, silver, gems etc., for the characteristics of a great man and different kinds of ornaments for the minor characteristics of the same kind, royal treasures for the treasury of the Dhamma, kingdoms for the kingdom of Dhamma, legs for obtaining legs endowed with auspicious marks, hands for crossing over the four-fold flood (four *āsavas* as *ogha*) and also to give the helping hand of the Dhamma to people, ears and noses for the five spiritual faculties, eyes for the eye of omniscience (or the all-seeing eye) and blood and flesh for the Buddha-body—all for the benefit of his devotees.

The Bodhisatta never resorts to any impropriety in the practice of *dāna*. Accordingly, he never gives with the aim of hurting others nor out of fear or shame and nor out of anger towards the recipient: he never gives tasteless things keeping the dainties for himself nor does he give for showing off or for ridiculing others: he never expects anything in return nor does he despise the beggars who come to him: he gives personally with his own hands with love and respect at the proper time without any discrimination, willingly at all times. When

giving food he couples it with clothing and when clothes are offered food is also added. When the *dāna* item is a vehicle or vehicles the relevant auxiliaries are also included. When objects of the sense-organs are given he caters to all the sense-organs without confining to one or a few.

### **Contemplating the Perfection of *dāna***

The practice of this perfection is a Herculean task. As such, in order to facilitate its correct performance, the practiser should contemplate systematically on its proper procedure in the following manner:

A single person's accumulated wealth is open to the danger of many outsiders desiring an opportunity to appropriate it even by killing the owner. If a favourable occasion affords itself they would do so. This shows that such wealth poses a danger to its owner because there are many who do not tolerate another person possessing big wealth. Thus, wealth is a breeding ground for enemies. Many strifes occurring in the world are mainly due to wealth, for it is a major source of hatred as well. One has to undergo much hardship to obtain and safeguard this commodity needing at times to resort to even oppressive measures in the process.

Even the institution of maximum security measures is not a full guarantee against one's wealth being taken away by the state or robbers or against natural calamities like floods, fires, gales etc. Such losses bring great sorrow to its possessor. Avariciously guarded hoarded wealth brings no reward to its owner whose only reward would be the suffering he undergoes in defending it. Excessive attachment to such hoarded wealth is a cause for future rebirth in woeful states like hells. The expenditure of one's hard-earned wealth is also a source of grief to its owner. All this shows that in the ultimate sense every facet of wealth such as its acquisition, protection, expenditure, dispensing, ruin etc., becomes a source of grief to its possessor.

Because of wealth people kill their own relatives as brothers killing brothers, children killing parents, wives their husbands, husbands their wives and so on and so forth. The only way to achieve freedom from this source of sorrow which brings pain in its beginning, middle and

end, which makes one commit evil actions, which is highly unreliable and destructive is its renunciation. Its best investment is to give in *dāna* and, as such, one should seek that avenue as the most profitable.

The supplicants in this context should be regarded as teachers showing its owner the way to utilize profitably his wealth which has to be left behind or as helpers assisting him to save his true wealth from a world afire with the fire of death or as safe havens where his real wealth can be safely deposited or as genuine friends helping him to achieve enlightenment.

The wealth that has certainly to be left behind (at death) should be disposed of even before asked for; oneself should be regarded as fortunate in that instead of painstakingly searching for recipients they have come to him on their own accord; by disposing of wealth to such supplicants one is helping oneself; one should also contemplate that if not for those beggars one would not be able to practise the perfection and as such one should patronize them to the maximum possible, while at the same time seeking further wealth to be given to them. Accordingly, his deliberations should be on the following lines: “When would the beggars come and take away my wealth without asking me? How can I become pleasant to them and they become pleasant to me? When shall I be happy in giving and also after giving? How can I get beggars come to me so that thoughts on generosity are generated in good measure? While calling myself a Bodhisatta, if I fail to give while both wealth and beggars are available, would it not amount to fraudulance on a major level?”

As regards *dāna* in internal items the Bodhisatta should contemplate as follows: “Even if maximum precautions are taken, this life will come to an end on some day or other; the physical body also will end up either in decay and putrefaction or in becoming food for some animals or in decaying and becoming mixed with the soil of the earth. The way to take the only possible advantage from it prior to such an end is to donate one’s flesh, blood and other organs as well as the life itself to anybody on request.” Then he should contemplate that if he obtains a suitable recipient he should donate his blood, flesh and other organs as well as life itself.

It is possible that the Bodhisatta might generate some anger towards

the supplicant when he requests for his flesh and blood or life. In order to avoid such a possibility he should contemplate as follows: “The noble-minded Bodhisattas do not allow this physical body, which on some day ends up in putrefaction, loathsomeness and sure death to go waste and therefore he would find a suitable recipient, even with difficulty, and donate it. As even supplicants are not easily available, I am fortunate that such a person has come to me on his own: he has come to lead me towards enlightenment. Therefore, I must reciprocate his gesture by complying with his request.”

As avarice has not been extirpated in a Bodhisatta, it might rise up even in his mind and if such a thought were to detract from his intention of *dāna*, his contemplation should be as follows: “Oh worthy one, as a performer of merit for the attainment of Buddhahood you have given in *dāna* your physical body and life along with the merits accruing therefrom for the welfare of all beings. As such, any avaricious attachment to your external possessions is like donating the cow and keeping its tether with attachment to it. You should contemplate on this impropriety.”

Like a mighty medicinal tree remaining indifferent when its sprouts, leaves, branches, barks, roots etc., are being removed by people for their medicinal needs, you too, working for the welfare of the entire world, should refrain from entertaining any unbecoming thought when utilizing for altruistic purposes this physical body with oozing impurities and a source of diverse sufferings.

There is not the least difference between other external objects and this body which is only a conglomeration of elements bound to break up, decay and disintegrate. It is only a delusion to treat this body as “mine” or “my self.” As such, just as it is in the case of external objects, all attachment to flesh, blood, hands, legs, eyes, ears etc., also has to be renounced. The correct line of thinking should be to develop the attitude that one’s external possessions as well as flesh, blood etc. also can be removed by anyone wishing for them. This is how the Perfection of *dāna* should be contemplated upon.

In this manner the Bodhisatta’s mind, repeatedly engaged in this contemplation and oriented towards full enlightenment, becomes purged of defilements. Their desire for wealth, physical body and life

becomes diminished. Consequently, their recourse to this principle of purification makes them more and more capable of further fulfilment of the Perfection of *dāna* through bigger sacrifices of wealth, granting of fearlessness, of Dhamma, philanthropic activity etc..

### Three stages

Although the Perfection of *dāna* is a single concept it has three stages as primary, secondary and ultimate (*dāna-pāramī*, *d-upa-pāramī* and *d-paramattha-pāramī*). Giving of external objects like wealth, wife, children etc. is the primary stage, that of one's bodily parts is the secondary stage and that of one's life itself is the ultimate stage. This triple classification represents the threefold *bodhi*: those Bodhisattas aspiring for full enlightenment should complete all the three stages, those aiming at *pacceka-bodhi* have to practise only the first two stages while those desiring disciple *bodhi* have to fulfil only the first stage. This classification applies in like manner to the other nine perfections as well.

In the case of the Bodhisatta Gotama the following Jātaka stories are instances for the first stage - Visayha (340), Akitti (480), Saṅkha (442), Nimi (541), Vessantara (547), Kurudhamma (276), Mahāsudassana (95), Mahāgovinda's career as recounted in the sutta by that name (D.ii, 220-51), etc.. Instances for the second stage are the Jātaka stories of Sivi (499), Cullapaduma (193), Chaddanta (514), Sīlavanāga (72) etc. For the third stage the following Jātaka stories can be cited: Sasa (316), Nigrodhamiga (12), Khadiraṅgāra (40), Mahākapi (407), Jayaddisa (513) etc.

### Hypothetical *dāna* of the world-ruler Tilokavijaya

Merit and demerit mean the states of consciousness in which one performs various actions. If a person is capable of generating a mentality similar in quality to that at the performance of a real *dāna* and perform a hypothetical *dāna* with *dāna*-items and recipients mentally visualised, such a state of mentality also can become as wholesome as that at the performance of an actual *dāna*. But it is extremely difficult to generate such a genuine mental condition in a

hypothetical context as intended here. However, the Buddha *Apadāna* refers to such a high-calibred *dāna* given by the Bodhisatta Gotama in a former existence as a world-ruler named Tilokavijaya.

Briefly described, this amounts to getting into a *jhanic* state of concentration and staying in that state continuously visualising how one acquires all the valuables like gold, silver, gems etc. of the entire universe and puts up a magnificent palace with them; next he furnishes it with every item a house needs utilizing the most valuable of such items: now he invites all the past and present Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas and Arahants after which he offers them the most valuable and diverse almsfood and robes covering every possible aspect in them: next he visualises how those assembled noble ones in sitting and lying down postures in the precious chairs and beds provided deliver sermons, do meditations, discuss the Dhamma, answer queries etc. etc.: he also imagines a beautiful garden surrounding the palace with flowering trees, flowing streams, humming birds etc. and also how vocal and instrumental music is being played all around as an offering: witnessing all this he becomes thoroughly delighted and transfers the merit earned to the entire living world.

This account shows that this kind of *dāna* can be given only by a highly devoted person who has developed his mind to a very high level of concentrative power. A person who cannot renounce his attachment to his possessions and give them away can never perform this hypothetical *dāna*. The person who undertakes this feat must be able to develop such thoughts of generosity as if he really possesses the *dāna*-items he imagines as giving away. As such, its performance is as arduous as fully renouncing all attachment to one's valuables. Thus, one needs an excellent level of spiritual development to perform it. Consequently, one should not become misguided that this is an easy method of giving a *dāna*. However, attempting to achieve this feat can train and make one's mind oriented towards true generosity, because such an effort can remove the fear for generous giving inherent in the human mind.

### ***Dāna* items and their individual fruits**

In one of his previous lives during the time of the Buddha Padumuttara, Arahant Piṇḍavaccha, the chief among Buddha Gotama's disciples dear to the *devas*, had held a great almsgiving of unparalleled splendour with all requisites (*sabba-parikhāra*) for seven days to a hundred thousand monks headed by the Buddha Padumuttara. An interesting list of the articles offered and the fruits obtained from each of them is found in the *Apadāna* (in the form of a soliloquy by Piṇḍavaccha) and this list may be given here as it would be of interest to the Buddhists, specially when they have to decide on what to offer at a *dāna*, and also for them to know the respective fruits of the things they offer (as given against each item):

**Umbrellas:** non-harassment from cold, from heat; dirt not getting attached to the body; freedom from accidents, from obstacles; being honoured by all; having a delicate skin; purity of mind.

**Robes:** golden complexion; dirt-free skin; lustrous body, majesty; soft physique; perennial availability of a stock of one hundred thousand clothes of the three colours white, yellow and red.

**Bowls:** coming to possess and use perennially bowls made of gold, gems, silver; freedom from accidents, from obstacles; being honoured at all times; never having a dearth of food, drinks, clothes or dwellings; non-diminishing of possessions; firmness of mind; being a lover of the Dhamma at all times; being of little defilements; freedom from the defiling influences called *āsava*; whether in heaven or on earth these fortunes never desert him.

**Razors (with decorated handles):** cleverness at all times; non-diffusiveness of mind; complete self-confidence; steadfast character; perseverance; excellent self-application and having a subtle, incomparable and a pure mind capable of destroying defilements.

**Knives (well-sharpened and of high quality):** morally blameless mentality; energy; patience; loving-kindness and a diamond-like incisive mind.

**Needles:** freedom from doubt; ability to remove others' doubts; handsome figure; material prosperity and acute intelligence.

**Nail-cutters:** receiving everywhere and at all times both male and female servants, cattle, horses, bodyguards and hair-dressers.

**Fans (including those from fan-palm tree, peacock tails and chowries):** non-harassment from cold and heat; freedom from feverish sensations, from the fevers of lust, hatred, delusion, pride and views.

**Strainers:** longevity; freedom from harm by enemies and thieves, weapons, poisons and from premature death.

**Containers for oil:** pleasing figure; pleasant speech; noble mentality; mind free from confusion and complete protection.

**Needle-casings:** mental peace; physical comfort and the comfort derived from different postures of the body.

**Vests:** ability to read others' minds; knowledge of the next birth and having a lovely skin.

**Belts:** firmness in and acclimatization with concentration; having a permanent retinue; acceptability in speech and presence of mind at all times; fearlessness and the possession of these qualities both in the human and the heavenly worlds.

**Supports or stands to keep various items like bowls, plates etc:** unshakeable retentive power of whatever good things one hears.

**Vessels:** receiving vessels made of gold, gems, crystal and ruby; chaste wives; male and female servants; the fourfold army consisting of elephants, horses, chariots and soldiers; ability to master various sciences, incantations, religious systems and crafts.

**Plates and dishes:** receiving plates and dishes made of gold, gems, crystal and ruby; also those on which figures of the leaves of the bodhi-tree are engraved and those turned out from the shells of various nuts and fruits and also those as flat as the lotus-leaf along with conch-shells used as vessels; ability to stick to one's principles and good manners.

**Medicine:** long life, strength, energy, good complexion, fame, comforts, freedom from dangers and from obstacles, respect from others and freedom from suffering due to separations.

**Footwear:** receiving conveyances in the form of elephants, horses, palanquins etc; receiving slippers made of gems, of wool, of gold and of silver.

**Towels:** golden complexion, passionlessness, lustrous body, majesty, smooth skin and freedom from dirt sticking to the body.

**Walking sticks:** having many sons, freedom from anxiety, total immunity from external harassment, complete security from error, unperturbed mentality.

**Collyrium for the eyes:** large and unstained bright eyes; the white, yellow and red colours of the eye are clearly marked; freedom from illness; clairvoyance and eye of wisdom.

**Keys:** the eye of wisdom to unlock the door to Dhamma.

**Key-tags:** mitigation of anger and fatigue.

**Smoke inhalers:** upright mindfulness; a well-knit nervous system and clairvoyance.

**Lamps and accessories needed for lighting lamps:** noble birth; freedom from any physical deformity; social acceptance as a person of wisdom.

**Water-pots and caskets:** complete security at all times; well-being; widespread fame; freedom from misfortune; delicate constitution; freedom from all fears; moral excellence; fearlessness; receiving attractively coloured vessels and vases; elephants, conveyances yoked with horses; non-diminishing of possessions.

**Collyrium boxes:** having a body endowed with auspicious signs; longevity; wisdom and freedom from every form of fatigue.

**Pen-knives and hair-removers:** clarity of thinking; ability to extirpate defilements.

**Equipment necessary for nasal treatment:** confidence, morality, shame to do evil, fear to do evil; wide learning; liberality; forbearance and wisdom.

**Chairs:** birth in noble families; prosperity; commanding respect; fame; abundance of chairs for immensely long periods; habit of sharing with others.

**Mattresses:** symmetrical body; respect; flexible physique; handsomeness; wisdom and retinues; receiving bed-spreads embroidered with figures of lions and tigers and those woven with a mixture of gold and silver threads; blankets; cloaks soft to the touch; black antelope skins; ample supply of cereals.

**Pillows:** sleeping at all times on pillows made of wool, on lotus-shaped pillows and on those made of red sandalwood; having the attention always fixed on the Noble Eightfold Path, on the four fruits of the Path, on generosity, sense-control, concentration, four sublime states, *jhānas*, duties to be performed, virtues to be practised, proper behaviour, good manners and postures in the practice of the factors of Enlightenment, moral behaviour and ultimate freedom.

**Straw-stools:** receiving foot-stools made of gold, gems and ivory.

**Foot-stools:** receiving many conveyances; loyal service from male and female servants, wives and all the dependents.

**Unguents:** good health; comeliness; quick understanding of the Dhamma; plentiness of food and drink and longevity.

**Ghee and sesamum oil:** stamina; handsomeness; happy children; good health and cleanliness.

**Mouth-cleaning substances:** clean throat; sweet voice; freedom from cough and asthma and a pleasant-smelling mouth.

**Curd and bees' honey:** mindfulness regarding the body, which is a form of great wealth and the bliss of freedom.

**Food and drink:** long life; stamina; energy; complexion; fame and comfort; receiving enough food and drink; cleverness and wisdom.

**Incense:** pleasant-smelling body; fame; quick wit; sharp wit; wide and deep wisdom and alert intellection.

## 4

### PERFECTION OF MORALITY (*sīla-pāramitā*)

Wholesome morality untainted by craving, views or pride and observed with the aim of attaining one of the three forms of *bodhi* or Nibbāna is designated as the Perfection of Morality.

Morality observed for the sake of pleasurable objectives like becoming a millionaire, a king or a god does not come under perfections because such morality is oppressed and enfeebled by craving for such mundane objectives. Morality, observed as the sole means to purification as an end in itself bypassing its utilization for insight and *jhānic* attainments, also fails to qualify as a perfection as it has become enfeebled, weighed down and as such tainted by views (*diṭṭhi*). Similarly, enfeebled and failing to become a perfection is the morality of the person who thinks exaltingly of himself and contemptibly of others on account of his *sīla*, which accordingly has become tainted by pride (*māna*). This criterion is applicable to the incoming perfections as well. The *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary defines this perfection as follows: “Physical and verbal morality circumscribed by compassion and the proficiency in means along with volitional thoughts refraining meaningfully from the moral don’ts and performing the do’s can be described as the Perfection of Morality.”

*Sīla* is nothing but the tendencies naturally found in various beings. Thus it is multi-faceted as those of animals and of human beings. For instance, the natural traits like walking in all fours, grazing, dumbness, sleeping on the floor etc. comprise the *sīla* of cattle (*go-sīla*). Sleeping curled up, digging holes on the ground and sleeping in them, barking, wagging the tail, lowering the tail etc. are the natural traits of dogs comprising canine morality (*kukkura-sīla*). The innate

nature of the Buddhas, Pacceka-buddhas and Arahants is referred to as noble morality (*ariya-sīla*).

It is this noble morality that is relevant in this discussion of perfections. It is multi-faceted comprising such aspects as abstention from killing, stealing, sexual enjoyment, lying and consumption of intoxicants. The observance of these precepts to the best of one's ability is what comprises *sīla* in the present context. This is the simplest definition that can be given of *sīla*.

Never giving a chance to the physical and verbal agencies to do anything unwholesome but guiding them and helping them to perform wholesome things only comprise the characteristics of *sīla*. The proper observance of *sīla* never permits the commission of any evil through body and word. As such, *sīla* is a guardian regulating and protecting the physical and verbal agents of human activity. Hence, the person endowed with *sīla* possesses and improves on everything that is wholesome. This shows that *sīla* is a support and a ground for all wholesome activity. Further details are found in the *Visuddhimagga* and similar works.

### **Basic principles of *sīla* as a perfection**

Although *sīla* is a single concept it is bifurcated as that of the layman (*gahaṭṭha*) and of the monk (*pabbajita*). The Bodhisatta perfecting his *sīla* does so either as a layman or as a monk. In either case he perfects the *sīla* that belongs to the selected medium, layman's or monk's. The *sīla* of both categories has another two-fold division as morality comprising performance (*cāritta-sīla*) and that comprising avoidance (*vāritta-s.*) referring respectively to what should be performed and what should be avoided in the ethical sense. Of these two the former, the positive aspect, is more important than the latter.

### **Principles underlying *vāritta-sīla***

The Mahābodhisatta has to practise loving-kindness and compassion towards others developing it to the extent that no anger is generated in him even in a dream. In that condition the taking of others' lives will cease in him spontaneously. Having oneself firmly established on philanthropic activity he quite greedlessly regards others' property

as a venomous serpent or as rubble. Through altruism and greedlessness he spontaneously becomes free from thievery.

The Bodhisatta living as a layman should treat others' wives as his own mothers and sisters and refrain from adultery and when living as a monk should consider the physical body as loathsome and refrain from the seven-fold sexual enjoyment<sup>1</sup> and unchastity. In speech he should speak only truthful, useful and pleasant words and that too in correct measure. This would result in the involuntary avoidance of uttering falsehood, slander and harsh words. He should always be oriented towards generosity and altruism and not towards acquisition and harmfulness. He should be a believer in the fruits of *kamma* and a popular mixer among the virtuous. In such a person's case who, in this manner, avoids the path of the ten unwholesome actions (*dasa-akusala—kamma-patha*) leading to birth in the four lower realms of existence<sup>2</sup> and follows the opposite path of ten wholesome actions leading to heavenly birth and final release, he will have his perfections fulfilled spontaneously.

In the case of the person who is devoid of such qualities the attempt at bringing about the spontaneous fulfilment of perfections becomes a much painful activity and he finds his discipline as an incarceration. His strained observance of *sīla* thus becomes feeble and it is a general rule that such forced practices are unsteady and liable to fall through. On the other hand, the person who practises the aforementioned opposite qualities of loving-kindness, compassion etc., finds no difficulty in the observance of *sīla*. He finds delight in its observation and pain in its violation. Hence his *sīla* is firmly established and its proper observation is spontaneous to him and it is such a person's *sīla* that is treated as excellent.

1. These seven in the descending order of gravity are i. enjoying rubbing, massaging, bathing, shampooing by a woman ii. joking, jesting, making merry with a woman iii. exchanging passionate looks with one iv. enjoy overhearing a woman's laughter, talk, singing, weeping etc. v. enjoy recalling such past experiences vi. enjoy as a peeping Tom (furtive voyeur) vii. living the religious life wishing to be born as a deity (not free from passion: A.iv, pp. 53f.).

2. *Dasa-akusala-kamma-patha*: the ten-fold unwholesome courses of action: bodily actions of killing, stealing, unlawful sexual intercourse; verbal actions of lying, slandering, rude speech, foolish babble; mental actions of covetousness, ill-will, evil views.

The Mahābodhisattas desirous of embellishing their amenable disciples with the ornaments of *sīla* as well as the Pacceka and *sāvaka* Bodhisattas desirous of achieving the highest purity, both should have their *sīla* well-purified at the very outset. For it is said how jealously one should guard one's *sīla*:

As a hen guards her eggs  
Or as a yak her tail  
Or a mother an only child  
Or a man his only eye  
So you who are engaged  
Your *sīla* to protect  
Be prudent at all times  
And ever scrupulous (*Vism.i*, 98).

In the case of the layman if any lapse were to occur he should at once make a fresh determination not to allow it to recur and in the case of the monk he should get his *sīla* renewed through a suitable disciplinary act.

*Sīla* is categorised into four divisions on its qualitative nature as that which is deteriorating (*hāna-bhāgiya*), stationary or not progressing (*thiti-b-*), progressing (*visesa-b-*) and leading to insight (*nibbedha-b-*).

“The person who keeps company with the corrupt and not with the virtuous and who fails to see the fault of transgressing his precepts, who is unintelligent, full of wrong views and fails to guard his sense-faculties is the one deteriorating in *sīla*.”

“He who is complacent with his attainments of *sīla*, who does not give himself up to meditation remaining content with his earned laurels, who perseveres not for further spiritual progress is the one whose *sīla* remains stationary.”

“He who is fully endowed with *sīla* and is making the necessary effort for full concentration (*samādhi*) is the one whose *sīla* is advancing forward.”

“He who does not remain complacent with his attainments in the field of *sīla* but is applying himself for insight meditation on revulsion is the one whose *sīla* is oriented towards insight.”

The Bodhisatta who undertakes the Perfection of *sīla* should give thought to this four-fold classification and act befittingly.

### **Principles underlying *cāritta-sīla***

In order to perfect the performing or the positive side of *sīla*, the Bodhisatta should show respect suitably as befitting the occasion by respectfully saluting, getting up from the seat, worshipping with folded hands, washing the feet, fanning etc. to those benevolent friends who are superior to him in virtue and in age. Occasionally he should seek their company as well.

The Bodhisatta should perform the following meritorious activities to the best of his ability: attending on the sick, speaking approvingly of good things he hears about, speaking well and praisingly of the virtuous, tolerating and forgiving others' criminal activities, showing gratitude, partaking of others' merits, orienting his merits towards the realization of Nibbāna, being diligent in performing meritorious activities, admitting one's faults and confessing them to a suitable person, resolving not to repeat such mistakes and strictly keeping to that resolution, helping unhesitatingly and in keeping with one's position the good activities of others, attempting to cure the sick by whatever possible means, bringing succour to those stricken with grief through loss of relatives etc., ridiculing those deserving such treatment through the Dhamma itself with a view to establishing them on the path of the Dhamma, patronising those deserving such patronage on the same principle, never encouraging criminal activities of any nature.

After hearing about the well-nigh impossible Herculean tasks performed by the past Bodhisattas and also about their ennobling life-stories, the genuine Bodhisatta should become motivated to follow in their footsteps and practise the Perfection of *sīla* with renewed vigour and confidence without becoming discouraged by thinking such tasks as beyond achievement by him.

He should not be boastful or exhibitory about his various highly demanding acts in the fields of *sīla*-observation, philanthropy, going through fire-baptisms etc. He should neither publicise his virtues nor cover up his criminal activities. He should be one who has abandoned avarice and cultivated contentment, a lover of solitude not given to

mixing with the maddening crowd, indefatigable, not itching for this and that, unconfused, unassuming, not fickle, not garrulous but of measured words, restrained in the senses, sedate, not given to fraudulance and such other wrong kind of living, excellent in conduct, fearing even the minutest moral lapse, very strict in the observances, energetic, oriented towards Nibbānic enlightenment, indifferent to life and limb and never entertaining the idea of saving one's life at the expense of an observance undertaken.

He should not be satisfied with a minor spiritual gain but should strive on indefatigably with great diligence for the attainment of *jhānas* and such other special accomplishments.

The Bodhisatta fulfilling his perfections should also engage in meritorious deeds like leading the blind, helping the deaf and the dumb through their sign languages and the crippled by providing for their transport etc. He also should try to instil confidence in the Dhamma in those lacking in it, to make the lazy energetic and the unconscious conscious. Making the confused concentrated, the foolish wise and removing lust and such other mental hindrances from those subject to them also come under such meritorious undertakings.

He should be a practiser of gratitude who first talks pleasantly to the friend whenever he meets him and also one who returns the help equalling or exceeding what he has received. While being a good Samaritan to all he should be able to judge and deal with others without error. His sole purpose of associating with others should be to ameliorate their condition by withdrawing them from evil and establishing in virtue. Acting disinterestedly in this manner by safeguarding and leading others on the correct path is a sure way of merit-acquisition for the Bodhisatta.

Even with the best of intentions he should not harass others or hurt their feelings or leave room for them to suspect him of any wrong-doing. Accusing others in a defamatory manner, behaving haughtily towards those respectful towards him, going to extremes or totally avoiding social intercourse and associating others at the wrong time also should be avoided. While keeping company with others in a way befitting time and place, he should be wary neither to belittle their friends nor to praise their antagonists. While not

seeking the company of the unreliable, he should also not refuse any wholesome companionship when available. While not making requests to others to make offerings to him, extremes should be avoided even in the acceptance of things offered by them.

In the case of the pious, the learned, the generous and the wise he should gladden the minds of each of these categories of people by extolling the excellence inherent in each of their attainments. If the Bodhisatta is an attainer of higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) he should instil fear into the ghosts (*peta*) and the inhabitants of hells, wean them away from unwholesome activity and establish them on the path of wholesome activity. He must work for the further improvement of confidence (*saddhā*) and such other qualities in the already pious followers and also for the re-establishment of those taken to wrong views on the correct path. Such activities add to the merit-store of perfections.

### **Method of contemplating the *sīla-pāramitā***

The profane person's mind, not freed from defilements like covetousness, is inclined towards the enjoyment of sensual pleasures and thereby towards unwholesome activity. To him the observance of *sīla* is an annoyance and as such people in general do not engage in it notwithstanding the immense advantages available from its observance. The worldling's mind has to be cultivated before it becomes capable of practising *sīla* and for this one should contemplate on the blessings of *sīla* and the evils of *dussīla* (immorality) and also on the life-stories of those who have practised *sīla* to high levels. With this end in view one may contemplate on the following advantages of *sīla*:

1. This *sīla* is a kind of water which can wash away one's sins which cannot be washed away even by the waters of the Ganges.
2. This is a medicine which can extinguish the fever of defilements not extinguishable by the cooling agencies like ghee or sandalwood.
3. It is an ornament far superior to strings of pearls, royal crowns etc.
4. It is a fragrance befitting all seasons, travelling even against the wind and even without the support of the wind.

5. It is a noble charm which can captivate others and receive honour even from royalty.
6. It is a flight of steps leading to heavenly worlds such as the Cātummahārājika heaven.
7. It is a very successful means of generating trances and higher knowledges.
8. It is a highway leading to the great metropolis of Nibbāna.
9. It is a suitable ground (*bhūmi*) for the threefold *bodhi* of a disciple, a *pacceka-buddha* and of the perfectly enlightened Buddha.
10. As the expedient of obtaining all one's wishes fulfilled it far exceeds the wish-conferring gem and the tree in this respect.
11. After doing a meritorious deed one can experience an immense joy with a thought like "I have performed a service to a virtuous person and thereby obtained some support in facing *saiisāric* fears."
12. The man of virtue needs not accuse himself by statements like "I have committed such a heinous deed and such other unwholesome actions."
13. Knowledgeable outside people also do not lay blame on him saying "he has committed such and such a crime."
14. He will not be subjected to punishments from the state for crimes perpetrated against the virtuous.
15. As a non-committer of unwholesome actions he entertains no fears about being born in hells.
16. The wise praise him for being virtuous.
17. He remains free from the repentance that harasses the evil-doer.
18. *Sīla* becomes a cause for happiness because it promotes diligence which prevents losses like that of wealth thereby promoting prosperity.
19. As the man of virtue, although of low birth, is worshipped even by the royalty, *sīla* is something that supersedes lineage.
20. *Sīla* stands superseding external wealth as it cannot be taken away by thieves and enemies, accompanies the doer from this world to the next and is always contributory towards benign qualities like serenity.
21. As leading to the highest supremacy, *sīla* supersedes the greatness of kings. It is through *sīla* that beings attain to sovereignty

among their species.

22. The person devoid of *sīla* is like unto the dead. As such it is superior even to one's own life.

23. It is superior to physical beauty because even one's enemies become pleased through it and also it does not undergo change through decay and disease.

24. Physically it is superior to palatial buildings and positionally to kings and heir-apparents.

25. It is far more faithful than relatives as it is instrumental in bringing in many forms of happiness and also as it ever remains faithful.

26. It is superior to an army or to a protective rune because it protects one's life which is difficult to be protected.

### **Classifications of the Perfection of *sīla***

As in the case of all perfections, *sīla* is also classified as primary, secondary and ultimate. Some people commit evil deeds like killing for various purposes such as sport, showing off their skill, anger or even jealousy. But those who observe *sīla* do not commit evil deeds for such puerile purposes. Sometimes people are forced to commit unwholesome actions depending on certain situations like protecting one's preproperties or wife and children etc. from a threatening danger. This can be compared to killing flies and mice to protect one's stores of grains or plants in the paddy-field respectively. Also, in the same vein, certain evil deeds are perpetrated when certain wants cannot be obtained without doing so.

The *sīla* which gets violated in this manner when under pressure and thereby becomes diminished in quality, although identifiable nominally as *sīla*, fails to come within the purview of a perfection. There are some who do not commit evil under this or any type of pressure and instead sacrifice their properties and families for the sake of the *sīla* they have undertaken to observe. It is such type of *sīla* that comes under the category of perfections in the primary stage.

Even those who do not violate their *sīla* under such pressing circumstances like the two dangers aforementioned, if the impending danger is the loss of a physical organ they might violate it in order

to protect it. Yet, there are some among them who stick to their *sīla* regarding it as more valuable than a physical organ and allow themselves to be deprived of it for the sake of the *sīla* undertaken. It is such type of *sīla* that becomes a perfection in its secondary stage.

Those belonging to the second category are also liable to violate their *sīla* in the face of a danger threatening their lives. As such, the *sīla* of those who go a step further and safeguard it at the cost of their lives belongs to the ultimate category of the Perfection of *sīla*.

Every practiser of *sīla* would not face a situation where one's property and family have to be sacrificed to safeguard the observance. Also, it is not absolutely essential that for its proper observance in any of its threefold categories one should meet with such a situation. If the practiser has the strong will-power to avoid violating the *sīla* on account of property or the family it becomes a perfection in its primary stage.

If the practiser has the strong resolve to avoid violating the *sīla* even at the risk of limb, notwithstanding his non-access to a situation demanding such sacrifice, his *sīla* qualifies for the secondary stage of the perfection.

He who has the strong resolve to safeguard the *sīla* even at the cost of his life, even though an occasion for such sacrifice were not to afford itself, will have his *sīla* categorised as belonging to the ultimate category of the perfection. The strength of his resolve can be judged if he obtains an opportunity of confronting a test-case.

The life-stories of the elephant Mātuposaka, the *nāga* kings Bhūridatta and Campeyya, the ascetic Cūlabodhi, the buffalo Mahisarāja, the deer Rūrumiga, Mātāṅga-paṇḍita, Dharmadevaputta, Alīnasattu, Saṅkhapāla etc. are instances from the Bodhisatta Gotama's *saiisāric* life exemplifying the Perfection of *sīla*. The *Buddhavaiisa* and the Jātaka Book show how he perfected his *sīla* in various previous births both as a monk under different Buddhas and also as a self-ordained ascetic. Both the Pacceka and the Sāvaka bodhisattas also are recorded as having perfected this *sīla-pāramitā* as monks in their previous existences. This goes to establish the point that it is not sufficient for the aspirants for the three forms of Bodhi

(as Buddhas, Pacceka-buddhas and Arahants) to fulfil the Perfection of *sīla* merely as laymen.

Those who aspire for such great heights have to fulfil the Perfection of *sīla* in the role of renounced monks. Although strong evidence is not available to maintain that those who innately follow the path of the disciple (Sinh: *prakṛti śrāvaka*) also should necessarily perfect their *sīla* as renounced monks, it would be well and good if they too can do so.

### **Benefits of *sīla***

The beneficial results of *sīla* are manifold, which fact is amply demonstrated by the numerous discourses in the Nikāyas extolling its virtues. The two suttas Ākaṅkheyya and Visākhūposatha of the Majjhima Nikāya can be cited as specially significant in this respect. Here follows a translation of the Silavā Theragāthā wherein the virtues of *sīla* are enthusiastically praised: (Tr. by K.R. Norman: *Elders' Verses* I, PTS, stzs. 608-619):

1. In this world one should solely train oneself carefully in virtue, for virtue when cultivated brings all success near at hand.
2. A prudent man should protect virtue, desiring the three forms of happiness consisting of praise, gaining of wealth and rejoicing in heaven after death.
3. The virtuous man acquires many friends by his self-restraint; but the unvirtuous man, practising evil, is estranged from his friends.
4. The unvirtuous man gains ill-repute and ill-fame; the virtuous one always gains reputation, fame and praise.
5. Virtue is the beginning, the support and the foremost cause of all good things; therefore one should make one's virtue pure.
6. Virtue is also the control, the restraint and the delight of the mind and the ford of the Buddhas; therefore one should make one's virtue pure.
7. Virtue is an incomparable power, the supreme weapon, the best ornament and a wonderful coat of mail.
8. Virtue is a mighty bridge, an unsurpassed perfume, the best ointment whereby one sends a sweet odour in all directions.

9. Virtue is the foremost provision, the supreme food for the journey and the best vehicle, whereby one travels in all directions.

10. A fool obtains blame in this world and after death is unhappy in hell; he is unhappy everywhere for failing to concentrate upon virtue.

11. A wise man obtains fame in this world and after death is happy in heaven; he is happy everywhere, being well-concentrated upon virtue.

12. Virtue is indeed foremost here and the wise man is supreme, achieving victory among men and *devas* through his virtue and wisdom.

### ***Dāna and sīla***

According to the Velāma Sutta (A.iv, 392ff.), once the chaplain of the king of Benares was the Bodhisatta by the name Velāma. He was exceedingly wealthy and held great almsgivings but not to Buddhist saints as it was a time without a Buddha's dispensation. Hence, in this *sutta*, the Buddha says that feeding a single *sotāpanna* is more meritorious than spending 84,000 in giving alms to ordinary beings. The Buddha then goes on to say how the merits of a *dāna* keep on increasing in an ascending order in proportion to the spiritual attainments of the recipients in the Buddhist sense of the Paths and Fruits. For example, feeding a *sakadāgāmin* is more meritorious than feeding a *sotāpanna* and so on.

The series accommodates the Paccekabuddhas as the next category higher in importance to the Arahants followed by the perfectly enlightened Buddhas. Greater than a *dāna* to a Buddha would be one given to Buddha along with his retinue of the Sangha, while putting up a monastery for the Sangha of the four quarters is deemed a merit greater than the preceding case. Taking refuge in the Three Gems with confidence is the next step followed by the next higher act of merit of taking upon the observance of the Five Precepts. Its correct observance is regarded as much more meritorious than the lavish almsgivings given to the different saints of the path as mentioned earlier. Accordingly, how much more meritorious would be the correct observance of a *sīla* higher than the Five Precepts?

The ritual of taking refuge in the Three Gems just mentioned is not the ordinary commonplace ‘taking’ of it but the supra-mundane engaging in it with no possibility of any violation later. The moral commitment itself to the observance of the Five Precepts implies supra-mundane detachment (*virati*). Modern Buddhists are in the habit of reciting the Five Precepts in the name of undertaking their observance at alms givings, preaching of sermons, rituals of worship etc. What is done here is only “reciting” the precepts but not a practical observance of *sīla* as such.

As the Pali term used to mean the undertaking the observance of *sīla* is *samādāna*, meaning ‘taking up’, ‘undertaking’ etc., ‘taking up’ the Five Precepts implies that from the time of this undertaking one promises and resolves to refrain from killing, stealing etc. Mere recital of the precepts without that specific determination to observe them is meaningless as it implies no practice of *sīla*. Let alone two such recitals a day but even a hundred per day would be of no value. Of course, there are some who sincerely do the undertaking but fall on the way due to lack of mental strength to hold on to the promise. Such weak undertakings also are of little value. It is the firm and inviolate undertakings which can be described as of sterling quality and are referred to in the Velāma Sutta as ‘sublime’ in the aforementioned reference.

### **Five Precepts as five great *dānas***

In one of the several Abhisanda Suttas of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (iv, 245), the Buddha equates the meticulous observance of the Five Precepts to the giving of five great gifts (*mahā-dāna*) which are “originally recognised as such, known for a long time, traditionally recognised, ancient, unconfounded and not scorned by the wise.”

By refraining from taking life (first precept) one gifts fearlessness, non-hatred and sorrowlessness to many beings: by doing so one becomes heir to those beneficial conditions: this is described as “a field of merit and happiness, food of happiness, which is heavenly and resulting in happiness, leading heavenwards and conducive to what is pleasing, lovely, precious and beneficial.”

This is repeated verbatim for the other four precepts as well. This

*sutta* shows how the Buddha regards the Five Precepts as five forms of a great *dāna*. When a person refrains from taking life such refrainment amounts to granting fearlessness to all living beings: this is granting freedom to them. Refrainment from theft is making the same gift to the owners of wealth. Avoidance of adultery grants same to the wives and their husbands concerned. An alcoholic is a nuisance to many people and accordingly abstinence from the consumption of intoxicating liquor and drugs is tantamount to granting freedom to them. This shows that the person who observes the Five Precepts can delight himself with the thought that he is giving five great *dānas*, in giving which no financial loss is incurred or any physical energy dissipated.

Even the beneficial results of offering alms food accrues in full measure only to the man of virtue. When a virtueless person gives a *dāna* the ill-effects of his evil deeds can intervene and delay the fruition of his acts of generosity. Even when they come to fruition later, here again, the results of his evil acts can interfere intermittently and weaken and damage the fruition of his good *kamma*.

One may be born in a prosperous family in consequence of the merits of *dāna* activity and yet be deprived of that wealth completely owing to the intervention of the evil *kamma* resulting from a previous act of thievery. As a result of taking life in a previous existence he may be subjected to various forms of suffering like disease. On the other hand the virtuous man who has practised generosity will enjoy the beneficial results of his meritorious acts in full measure without any such let or hindrance.

The Buddha himself has stated that it is only the virtuous and not the virtueless person that obtains merit in full measure by giving a *dāna*. Thus he says: “Herein monks, a person gives a *dāna* to a recluse or a brahmin, a *dāna* of food, drinks, raiment, flowers, scents, ointments, beddings, dwellings and lamps. After death he will be reborn as a wealthy noble, a brahmin or a house-holder only if he is virtuous and not virtueless” (A.iv, 238). The traditional practice of taking upon the Five Precepts when a *dāna* is given is due to this tenet taught in the quotation cited above. The momentary *sīla* just taken upon at the time of a *dāna* and violated at the next moment is

not valid. Consequently, let those who are anxious in obtaining the full benefits of their meritorious deeds remain virtuous at all times.

## 5

### PERFECTION OF RENUNCIATION

(*nekkhamma-pāramitā*)

As a result of comprehending the dangers involved in sensual desires and the states of existence brought about by them, there is generated a wholesome state of mind designated as the Perfection of Renunciation, which is bent on renouncing them, is enlightenment-oriented and dominated by non-greed. The term renunciation here implies abandonment by eliminating attachment. It is distancing oneself from sensual desires and resultant becoming. The giving up of attachment itself is abandoning sensual desires and distancing oneself away from them. The *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary (*Paramattha-dīpanī*) explains a Buddha's Perfection of Renunciation thus: "In consequence of seeing the dangers involved in sense-desires and the resultant states of existence, an intention, well-guarded by compassion and expedient, is generated for their renunciation: this is called the Perfection of Renunciation."

The Pali term *kāma* implies two aspects of sensual desires as i. desire for sensual enjoyment (*kilesa-kāma*: subjective *kāma*) and ii. objects of such sensual desire (*vatthu-kāma*: objective *kāma*). All objects of sensual enjoyment covered by the six sense-organs of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind come under the second category. Accordingly, all pleasing sights (*rūpa*), sounds (*sadda*), smells (*gandha*), tastes (*rasa*), contacts (*phoṭṭhabba*) and mental objects (*dhamma*) comprise this classification of *vatthu-kāma*.

It may be further defined briefly as follows: *Rūpa-kāma*: all animate and inanimate visible objects considered as 'good' by the world, which are pleasing to the eyes and generate a sense of enjoyment to the onlooker. *Sadda-k-*: all sounds pleasant to the ear and the mind generating a sense of enjoyment on hearing and giving

rise to further longing. *Gandha-k-*: pleasant smells commonly considered as good, sweet to the nose, pleasant to the mind, enjoyable and producing further longing. *Rasa-k-*: enjoyable tastes sweet to the tongue and pleasing to the mind. *Phoṭṭhabba-k-*: animate and inanimate objects producing a pleasant feeling on coming into contact with the body.

As it is more the animate objects which generate such feelings, people are in the habit of sleeping placing their heads on their own hands in the absence of an alternative contact object. It is when animate objects are contacted that intense feeling is produced. *Dhamma-k-*: all desire-generating mental objects outside this five-fold classification come under this category. Compassion, loving-kindness, love, knowledge, effort, mindfulness etc., are all objects of mental desire. Merit also falls into this category.

Stated otherwise this means that all things commonly considered as good and admirable—things such as food and drink, clothes and ornaments, vehicles and conveyances, houses, gardens and fields, beds and chairs, vessels, gold and silver, pearls and gems, money and property etc. etc., as well as wives and children, relatives and friends—all these come under *vatthu-kāma*. The desire for these is *kilesa-kāma*.

### **Contemplating on the Perfection of Renunciation**

As long as beings remain attached to sensual desires and resultant becoming, so long do they continue to stay in suffering. The only possible way of escape from this suffering is through renunciation of greed. The person ignorant of the Four Noble Truths sees sensual existence as the most desirable and the loftiest resort as well as the safest refuge available to him. Consequently, sensual craving goes on gathering momentum in beings for inordinately long periods in *saiisāra* and become ingrained in them. People generally regard it as their worst calamity and state of alarm if there is some threat to deprive them of the enjoyments and the forms of existence they are attempting to attain. Notwithstanding the fact that craving happens to be a major cause of human suffering, people are reluctant to let go sensual becomings in the form of repeated birth.

As a result the person who fails to see the Noble Truths finds it hardly possible to abandon them. The ability to do so at least up to a certain extent can be attained by learning and practising the contemplation of this perfection. To contemplate is to meditate or to think about. Sensual desires are inherent with both enjoyment and suffering. Enjoyment is the temporary pleasures and feelings of happiness produced by them while suffering implies the painful and grievous feelings resulting from them subsequently. It is owing to the people's habit of thinking only of their joyful and not of the painful aspects that they find it impossible to abandon them and eliminate sensual desire. Although sensual gratification is characteristic of both pleasure and pain, people see only the pleasurable side as it is the one they pursue. They are blind to their major aspect which is suffering.

As in the case of a poisoned piece of cake, in sensual enjoyment too the poisonous element is latent while the pleasurable aspect is manifest. This is one reason why people fail to see the suffering involved in sensual gratification. By perusing the Buddha's teaching one can ascertain the major dangers lying hidden in all forms of sensual gratification. These dangers are very often highlighted in various discourses occurring in the Tripitaka. It is intended hereafter to present them faithfully as recorded there. In order to eradicate craving one should commit them to memory and meditate on them repeatedly, which is the exercise referred to as the contemplation (*pratyavekṣā*) of the Perfection of Renunciation.

When a hungry dog is given a dry piece of bone devoid of flesh and blood, it will end up in suffering by biting it to exhaustion or by breaking its teeth and injuring the mouth, never satisfying its hunger in the process. In like manner, whatever objects of sensual pleasure are accumulated and enjoyed by people, it only leads to suffering and exhaustion instead of satisfying their sensual desires. As such, objects of sensual enjoyment are comparable to bloodless and fleshless dry bones.

If a bird of prey like a crow, a vulture or a hawk were to fly with a lump of flesh in its beak, other birds of these species would try to wrest it from that bird by pursuing and attacking it. If the carrier of

the lump of flesh refuses to let go its booty, it will either come to death-like suffering or even to death. Similarly, if anyone were to accumulate the objects of sensual enjoyment which are very much loved and desired by the majority, there are thousands of others biding their time to seize them or to rob them even by killing the owner. Accordingly, objects of sensual enjoyment are like a lump of flesh carried by a vulture.

Like a man holding a sheaf of dry grass burning at one end without dropping it gets his hand burnt, even so the person who holds on to his accumulated objects of sensual enjoyment will come to grief through them. Thus it is seen that objects of sensual enjoyment are like a burning sheaf of dry grass in one's hand.

Just like a person thrown into a pit of burning charcoal undergoes severe suffering, even so one who accumulates and wallows in objects of sensual enjoyment will experience much torment. Therefore, objects of sensual enjoyment are comparable to pits of burning charcoal.

One who dreams beautiful houses and parks in the night will see none of them when one wakes up in the morning. In like manner, the accumulator of diverse objects of sensual gratification will cease to see all that if they get lost by some means or when he or she dies resulting in their total loss. Similarly, the enjoyment derived from them is also only ephemeral.

One who goes on a journey in a luxurious vehicle borrowed from another and dressed in an expensive suit similarly borrowed can utilize them only during the stipulated period after which they have to be returned to the owner. Even so, the possessor of many objects of sensual gratification can enjoy them only for a short duration. Accordingly, objects of sensual enjoyment are only borrowed plumes.

Suppose there is an ownerless tree laden with sweet fruits in a jungle. A certain person climbs it and starts eating the fruits while another who cannot climb trees also sees this tree and decides to cut it down and enjoy the fruits. As the latter cuts down the tree, if the former were to remain on the tree for the love of its fruits, he will either face death or experience pains close upon death. In like fashion, one who remains attached to sensual enjoyments will suffer immensely. Therefore, such enjoyments can be compared to a fruit-laden tree open to danger.

The accumulator of objects of sensual enjoyment as well as the seeker after them both are open to the dangers of grief through frequent flogging and even death. Consequently, they both now and then become the victims of attacks, abuses and mortal injuries through weapons. This shows that such objects of enjoyment are comparable to the butchers' chopping log (on which fish and meat are chopped), his chopper or to a kris knife.

The head of the cobra is a dreadful source of danger as its bite is either fatal or near-fatal. Similarly, objects of sensual gratification are also like the cobra's head as their possessor is open to dread through them. The cobra, when its head is seized, will coil itself around the seizer's body and if dropped will turn back and bite. In like manner, a sensual object like a woman, once taken into possession, will tighten the grip disallowing the seizer to escape. If released with difficulty she will do some harm. Accordingly, these sensual objects are like the cobra's head.

For the sensually impassioned people both the absence of objects of enjoyment as well as the search for them involve suffering. In the same way, when once obtained, their protection as well as exhaustion through use, wear and tear, decay, loss, robbery etc., also bring them suffering. As the person fond of them is being perennially burnt and tormented by them, they are comparable to a mass of fire.

So far we have been highlighting the suffering involved in sensual enjoyment only from one angle. Here is another angle to view them: the person who is looking for sensual enjoyment will have to undergo difficulties in learning some science or a craft for several years for attaining to a position that enables one to obtain such enjoyment. Having undergone such suffering, even after obtaining a job, one will have to face other forms of pain and grief such as from natural elements like sun, rain and wind, from hunger and thirst, mosquitoes and such other insects, rebukes and insults from the employer and many other forms of painful experiences from one's enemies. Thus, this is a mass of suffering resulting from sensual enjoyment.

At times such a pursuer of gratification might obtain the expected results from his toils and labours while at times such efforts might end up as a wild-goose chase. In the latter case it might be a major

worry for one to see that one's labours have proved futile. This is yet another danger involved in sensual enjoyments, another mass of suffering to be faced in this very life.

Even if one becomes successful in obtaining the property for which one toiled for, one has to undergo much suffering in order to safeguard them from the state, robbers, enemies, fire, water and also from undesirable heirs. Hence he has to live in constant fear and suspicion. Even after mounting guard over them with so much of trouble and discomfort, one might lose them to the state or to robbers resulting in oneself being dragged into a condition of intense sorrow and pain. This is yet another mass of suffering one has to experience in this life itself.

Another grievous consequence resulting from the objects of sensual gratification is the internecine quarrels and wars that take place between kings and kings, among citizens, brothers and sisters, friends, members of the clergy and also between parents and children, husbands and wives, teachers and pupils etc.. In the course of such fights they often come to blows sometimes with clubs and weapons resulting in near-fatal injuries or in death itself. Some go behind prison bars while some march to the gallows. Hence, this is yet another unpleasant consequence of them visible in this life itself.

It is primarily owing to these sense-desires that people join armies and fight in war-fronts with diverse types of fire-arms engaging in air-bombardments or even in germ warfare. These result in all kinds of miseries such as near-fatal injuries, loss of limb and life, instantaneous as well as lingering deaths etc..

Sometimes these cravings provoke people to resort to thefts, robberies, misappropriations, adultery etc. They get caught in the process and become condemned and unwelcome in society as thieves and scoundrels. When caught as criminals they are manacled, beaten and incarcerated. Another aspect of suffering here comprises the tortures inflicted on the victims in hells by the servants of Yama, the god of Death. These consist of throwing the victims on to the floors where fires are raging, cutting their bodies into pieces with saws, forcing molten lava down their throats etc. Then there are the ghost realms whose dwellers suffer severe pangs of hunger and thirst.

With nothing to cover their bodies they never get a seat or a place to rest their limbs or bodies. Next come the animal realms where beings live in constant fear absolutely helpless and eating one another's flesh when hungry. All these forms of suffering are dangers involved in gratification of sense desires.

A sixteen-year old young girl, neither too tall nor too short, neither too fat nor too lean, neither too white nor too dark, soft of touch with a proportionate body and physical features is an object of sensual enjoyment. But, with the lapse of time when she is seen with grey hair, protruding sinews and bones, wrinkled skin, broken teeth, with eyes full of impurities and bent down with ageing, she presents a picture nauseating in every aspect. This too is a danger involved in sensual passion.

That very young woman much liked by many to feed their eyes on, to have a *tete-a-tete* with, looked up to as a gem of a flower fit to be embraced, when taken ill with ageing can be seen asleep in a condition in which she is unable to rise from her bed, fed by others, with her clothes soiled with her own urine and excrements and unreachable owing to stench. This is another danger present in sensual enjoyment.

With the passage of some more time this very same woman whom many regarded as pretty, soft of touch, enchanting, highly desirable and competed among themselves to possess and to fondle, to embrace and to kiss, can be seen lying dead, swollen, turned blue, oozing out impurities from all bodily outlets, full of stench and unreachable. This is yet another such major danger.

Still another such danger is when subsequently, as people cannot live in the house with the dead body of this once-pretty woman, they remove it to a cemetery and bury it.

Innumerable are the dangers involved in sensual desires and what was shown above is only the tip of the iceberg. Contemplation on the dangers involved in sensual desires, in the way so far indicated, will make one's mind oriented towards renunciation, for it is said: "Full of obstacles and cumbersome is the household life while the life of homelessness is as free as the open air" (*D. I*, 63; 250). By contemplating on the dangers of household life and the blessings of

homelessness one will develop a desire for renunciation.

Another approach to the successful practice of renunciation is to study and contemplate on the life-stories of those who have performed it successfully in the past. The following Jātaka stories are relevant in this respect: Mahājanaka, Soṇaka, Cūlasutasoma, Hatthipāla, Ayoghara, Bhisā and Somanassa.

(Here follows the story of Raṭṭhapāla Thera who is the chief in the Buddha Gotama's dispensation of those who had left the world through confidence (this story occurs in *M.II*, 54ff; *MA.II*, 722; *ThagA.* II, 30ff.; *AA.I*, 144ff.).

Raṭṭhapāla Thera was the chief of those who had renounced the world through confidence (*saddhā-pabbajita*: A.I,24). Being the only son of some wealthy parents in the Kuru country, he lived in great luxury as a married householder. After listening to the Buddha once, he decided to leave the world: but his parents were adamant not to give their consent till he decided to starve himself to death. Ultimately the parents agreed, although quite unwillingly. He attained arahantship within a short time and with the Buddha's permission visited his home-town. When he came to the parental house on his begging round he was recognized by the servant girl. Under the Buddha's permission he came there for the following day's meal, when the parents and the former wives tried their utmost to get him back to the lay life. The stanzas he preached in response to their insinuating conduct are worth quoting here (as translated by Mrs. Rhys Davids in *Psalm of the Early Buddhists* (PTS), p. 303):

1. Behold the tricked-out puppet image, a mass  
Of sores, a congeries diseased, and full  
Of many purposes and plans, and yet  
In whom there is no power to persist!
2. Behold the tricked-out form, bejewelled, ringed  
Sheathed in bones and skinny envelope,  
By help of gear made fine and fair to see!
3. Feet dyed with lac, with rouge the lips besmeared:  
All good enough for dull wit of a fool,  
But not for him who seeketh the Beyond!

4. The locks in delightful plait, eyes fringed with black:  
All good enough for dull wit of a fool,  
But not for him who seeketh the Beyond!
5. Like a collyrium pot brand new, embossed,  
The body foul within is bravely decked:  
All good enough for dull wit of a fool,  
But not for him who seeketh the Beyond.
6. The trapper set his snare. The deer came not  
Against the net. We've eaten of the bait—  
Let's go! The while deer-trappers make lament.

The other part of the story worth quoting here is the conversation between the Thera and the Kuru king. This is the theme of the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (no. 82) which, briefly reproduced, is as follows: The king questions Raṭṭhapāla as to why he has renounced the home-life when he suffers neither from old age, failing health or poverty nor from loss of relatives and friends resulting in loneliness, which are very often the reasons that prompt men to take to robes. The *thera* answers that the reason for his leaving was none of these but his personal conviction of the four propositions propounded by the Buddha which are that the world is (i) in a state of continuous state of flux and transformation leading beings inevitably to decay, disease, death etc. (ii) without a protector or a preserver on whom one can fall upon and escape the sufferings involved in life (iii) without anything that can be called one's own as one has to leave behind every possession at death (iv) deficient and incomplete: ever insatiate and enslaved by craving. The *thera* explains these statements in detail to the entire satisfaction of the king summarising the contents in a set of stanzas (*M.II*, 54-74).

The thoughts of renunciation expressed by king Mahājanaka in the Jātaka by the same name (No. 539) illustrating this perfection are worth quoting here: (E.B. Cowell's translation: *The Jātaka*, Eng. Tr. Vol. vi, p.30):

When shall I leave this Mithilā, spacious and splendid though  
it be,  
By architects with rule and line laid out in order fair to see,  
With walls and gates and battlements—traversed by streets  
on every side,  
With horses, cows and chariots thronged, with tanks and  
gardens beautified,  
Videha's far-famed capital, gay with its knights and warrior  
swarms,  
Clad in their robes of tiger-skins, with banners spread and  
flashing arms,

Its brahmins dressed in Kāsi-clothes, perfumed with sandal,  
decked with gems—  
Its palaces and all their queens with robes of state and  
diadems;  
When shall I leave them and go forth, the ascetic's lonely  
bliss to win  
Carrying my rags and water-pot—when will that happy life  
begin?  
When shall I wander through the woods, eating their  
hospitable fruit  
Tuning my heart in solitude as one might tune a seven-  
stringed lute,  
Cutting my spirit free from hope of present or of future gain,  
As the cobbler when he shapes his shoe cuts off rough ends  
and leaves it plain.

### **Principles underlying the Perfection of Renunciation**

As has been so far indicated, one should recall to mind the dangers involved in sensual enjoyment and the advantages of renunciation and motivate oneself for the proper practice of this perfection. As this is a perfection based on going forth from home to homelessness, it is specially linked to the Perfection of *sīla*. Laymen too can practise it upto a point. For instance, a precept like the observance of chastity which keeps one at least temporarily aloof from one form of sensual

enjoyment, involves renunciation. Even the other precepts like the non-consumption of food after midday, not going for dancing shows, the non-use of comfortable and high seats etc., are also different forms of renunciation. As such, laymen should observe the eight precepts and engage in meditation as a form of the practice of the Perfection of Renunciation.

### **Perfection of Renunciation and the ascetics**

The person who is anxious to practise this perfection assiduously must of necessity become a monk whose life represents the highest form of renunciation. For such a person the most desirable institution is the Order of Buddhist monks (*bhikkhu-saṅgha*). But there is a drawback in the sense that a Buddha's dispensation is not available at all times in which case one is advised to join ascetic organisations that believe in the law of *kamma*.

The Noble Eightfold Path and the four classes of noble disciples (*ariya-puggala* or *samaṇa*) are found only in a Buddha's dispensation and so are the threefold forms of *bodhi* as full enlightenment, *pacceka-buddha* enlightenment and the *sāvaka*-enlightenment. This is why the great Bodhisattas join the Buddhist Order. The ascetics do not belong to this Buddhist dispensation, the comprehensive division of which is the four-fold one of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. Accordingly, there is no fifth division in the form of ascetics. Nevertheless, it is not disallowed for anyone to live as a Buddhist ascetic, who of course, does not fall into the category of the Buddhist Saṅgha. As they have taken the three Refuges they belong to the *upāsaka* (laymen) category aforementioned. While there is no particular prescribed mode of dress, the monks and nuns are debarred from wearing any other form of dress other than the one prescribed by the Vinaya rules and this is a dress which is not suitable for ascetics and lay devotees.

Accordingly, the mode of dress proper for a monk is one and for the ascetic is another. The robes and other items of dress duly prescribed by the Vinaya rules for monks are proper only for monks and not for ascetics, who have their own modes of dress (*tāpasa-pariṣkāra*). As such, ascetics should not adopt the dress of the

Buddhist monks. Nowadays ascetics seem to go about in the guise of Buddhist monks. However, it is a grave offence on the part of these ascetics to adopt the requisites and the garb of *bhikkhus*.

Just as it is a punishable offence for an outsider to wear the official uniform meant for a particular office of the state, it is of the same seriousness for ascetics who have not obtained official ordination to take over the requisites and the mode of dress of the genuine Buddhist monk. This amounts to a misappropriation and is referred to as such in the Vinaya under the term *liṅgatthenaka*. As it is a grave offence, those ascetics who are anxious to practise the Perfection of Renunciation should avoid it by all means and do the practice while remaining as genuine ascetics.

Those who renounce household life do so by renouncing their parents and the other circle of relatives as well as every type of wealth, big or small. It is well-known that it is quite difficult for some people even to spend a single night in the absence of their accustomed circle of friends and relatives. Therefore, he who goes from home to homelessness by giving up both home and all one's company, performs a great feat which can be referred to as a great renunciation (*mahā-abhinikkhamana*). Such a person's observance of the four-fold morality of purification (*catu-pārisuddhi-sīla*)<sup>1</sup>, ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*), meditations of serenity as well as of insight etc, all come under *nekkhamma*. Those entering monkhood, without remaining complacent with the mere act of renunciation, should cultivate this perfection by such means as observance of the different *sīlas*, ascetic practices, meditations, *jhāna* development etc.

There are many who enter the monkhood and then develop a craving and attachment for a different category of objects of sensual desire. These mainly consist of temples, pupils, followers etc. which hence become the objects of sensuality of the clergy. Those who

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1. These are: i. *pātimokkha-saūvara-sīla* (restraint with regard to the Disciplinary Code of Buddhist monks), ii. *indriya-saūvara-sīla* (restraint of the senses), iii. *ājīva-pārisuddha-sīla* (restraint regarding the purity of livelihood) and iv. *paccaya-sannissita-sīla* (restraint regarding the four requisites of life).

possess such property and are living with attachment to them, accordingly, have to do a second renunciation in abandoning them and practising meditation in a secluded environment. Even those monks who live in temples in the centre of towns and villages, if they have no attachment to these dwellings and their connected properties, have no need for such a second renunciation.

It is such renunciation that is excellent. Whether such people live in villages or towns or in palaces made of silver and gold, they are the genuine performers of renunciation as they are free from attachment.

### **Classifications of the *nekkhamma-pāramī***

The Perfection of Renunciation in its primary stage is the abandoning of wife, children, relatives, friends, wealth and property. If a renouncer of all this, through the inability to bear up the rigours arising from the scarcity of sensual objects like food, drink, raiment etc., were to re-start seeking them he falls from true *nekkhamma*. But, those wise ones with grit and determination, do not allow this relapse to occur even at the loss of their physical limbs, let alone through minor problems like hunger and thirst. It is the perfection of such practisers, who do not seek sensual gratifications and remain faithful to their undertaking even at the expense of their physical organs, that fall into the secondary stage of the practice (*upa-pāramī*).

Even if there is a threat to one's life in remaining aloof from sensual gratifications, if the practiser remains unmoved with determination defending his undertaking even at the loss of his life, it is such a person's practice of the perfection that belongs to the ultimate category (*paramattha-pāramī*).

## 6

### PERFECTION OF WISDOM (*paññā-pāramitā*)

Living beings in this world come to know of other beings and things through the eyes, of sounds through the ears, smells through the nose, tastes through the tongue, and heat and cold, hunger and thirst, physical pain and pleasure etc. through the body. When they see a thing for a second time they recollect that they had seen it earlier too. Similarly, when they see something similar to a thing seen earlier, that fact too they recollect.

They come to know of concepts through words: thus after seeing objects they learn their designations; having seen water wetting something they come to know that it is the nature of water to wet things; similarly having seen fire burning something they gain the knowledge that the nature of fire is to burn; in like manner they become aware of their friends and enemies, relatives and non-relatives; they come to know of medicine, of food and drink. However, there is a knowledge that is superior to this field of ordinary knowledge, which is common even to the animals. It is this superior class of knowledge that is called WISDOM.

It is through this wisdom that the following type of knowledge represented by the accompanying statements is obtained: “This is merit, this is demerit; this is good, this is bad; this person deserves respect, this person does not deserve; such and such a cause brings about such and such a result; this has come to pass owing to such and such a cause.” It is also through this wisdom that one understands the profound tenets about the aggregates (*khandha*), elements (*dhātu*), truths (*sacca*) etc. In religious literature it is this wisdom that is referred to by such terms as *ñāna*, *paññā*, *vijjā*, *sammā-ditṭhi* etc.

In this world wisdom occupies the highest place of value. Both

mundane and supra-mundane human objectives can be attained through wisdom. People seek this wisdom through many avenues such as the study of arts and sciences, of Buddhism, keeping company with the wise, engaging in meditation etc. Through the wisdom so obtained they engage in welfare activities such as those aimed at fostering the Buddha's teaching, teaching the Dhamma through sermons and writings, helping people in their difficulties as instanced by the Senaka Bodhisatta who saved a brahmin from his suffering by showing the serpent inside his bag (*Jātaka* no. 402). All these activities come within the practice of this perfection.

The *Cariyāpiṭaka* Commentary defines the Perfection of Wisdom of the great Bodhisatta as the comprehension of the ordinary as well as the special characteristics of phenomena graced with compassion and efficiency in means<sup>1</sup>. The term phenomena (*dhamma*) here refers to the ultimate categories of existence such as mind (*citta*), contact (*sparśa*), feeling (*vedanā*) etc. Their general characteristics are the triple qualities of impermanence, suffering and non-self, which are invariably present in all of them without distinction.

Special characteristics are those distinguishing features which are particular to each of these phenomena but differing from one another. The wisdom that comprehends both categories of ordinary and special characteristics is called Insight Wisdom (*vidarśanā jñāna*). Amongst the many types of wisdom this is the type which is of immediate and of maximal assistance for full enlightenment. It was this category of wisdom that the great Bodhisatta developed on the night of his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and it was through it that he achieved his goal of full enlightenment. Hence in the Perfection of Wisdom, insight wisdom forms the core element which then ramifies into divers forms in practice as exemplified in the case of finding the serpent in the barhamin's bag in the *Jātaka* no. 402. These ramifications are also referred to as aspects of this perfection.

It is true that one needs a subtle ingenuity to engage in as well as to escape from the consequences of such foul deeds like murder, theft, sexual misconduct, waging war, committing fraudulent activities

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1. *Karuṇā-upāyakosallapariggahito dhammānū sāmāñña-visesalak-khaṇāvabodho paññā-pāramitā.*

etc., all of which are unwholesome (*akusala*). Whatever be the subtle means adopted for their commission, delusion (*moha*) is also a necessary element in the mental structure that perpetrates them, for, any unwholesome mentality is accompanied by delusion, which is diametrically opposed to wisdom. These two will never combine, never occurring together in the same consciousness. As such, it should be specially noted that ingeniousness in the perpetration of unwholesome activities is not wisdom.

In the profane world, skilfulness in the perpetration of unwholesome activities is also regarded as wisdom. The adage in common parlance that “the thief has a greater wisdom than even Jupiter”<sup>1</sup> is a result of this attitude. The mental factors of greed (*lobha*), wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), delusion (*moha*), applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*) and their associated consciousnesses are all treated as wisdom in the unwholesome (*akusala*) sense in books. It is these factors that become operative in the commission of evil deeds in their subtle planning, execution etc. It is these factors like greed that the perpetrators of evil regard as wisdom.

In this sense the ignorant consider all their fooleries as wisdom. To the ordinary worldling also all his or her similar mistaken attitudes appear as wisdom. To all of us our notions such as delusions appear more or less as wisdom. In such a situation very often it becomes difficult to identify what genuine wisdom is. Therefore, one who fulfils this perfection should, as the first priority, clearly identify its real nature.

In the majority of cases people commit evil to overcome their difficulties whereas the correct conduct would be not to give in to such behaviour when in dire straits. None would perpetrate evil unless there is some necessity. Refraining from evil because there is no necessity for such action does not qualify one for moral excellence, which condition has to be attained by remaining firm in virtue in the face of compelling tendencies for its violation. As such, it is not tenable to commit evil first to get over a difficulty and then to follow up with virtue later. The touchstone of a person’s virtue is when a

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1. The planet Jupiter symbolises Bṛhaspati who is regarded as the god of wisdom and eloquence in Indian astrology.

person remains firmly faithful to the chosen ideal enduring difficulties that prompt its violation.

A few characteristics of true wisdom comprise the ability to know things unmistakably in their true nature and to know them comprehensively, both inside and outside, even upto their minutest details.

### **Classifications of wisdom**

It is imperative that one should know about the different classifications of wisdom in order to identify it correctly and also to evaluate its excellence. Its ramifications are very many as shown in the *Paṭisambhidhīmagga* and in the *Abhidhammavibhaṅga-prakaraṇa* under *Ñāṇa-vibhaṅga*. A few important ones are given below.

Primarily it is two-fold as mundane and supra-mundane. Wisdom of beings in the material, fine-material and immaterial planes is mundane while that pertaining to the four paths and the four fruits is supra-mundane. The perfect enlightenment attained through the fulfilment of perfections is also supra-mundane. The supra-mundane wisdom belonging to the four paths and the four fruits of the Buddha's disciples is designated as *sāvaka-bodhi-paññā* while the same wisdom of the Pacceka-buddhas and perfectly enlightened Buddhas can be designated respectively as *pacceka-bodhi-paññā* and *sammā-sambodhi-paññā*. It is mundane wisdom that comprises the development of the Perfection of Wisdom and this too is two-fold as wholesome (*kusala*) and indeterminate (*avyākṛta*) of which it is the former variety that pertains to the Perfection of Wisdom.

Another three-fold division of wisdom is that into wisdom based on thinking (*cintāmaya*), on learning (*sutamaya*) and on meditation (*bhāvanāmaya*: D.III, p. 220). Knowledge obtained through one's own thinking without the help of others on such subjects as agriculture, architecture, ship-building, vehicle manufacture, machine-manufacture, producing food, medicine, clothing and such other utility articles, medical science, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, ethics, impermanence of aggregates and such other legitimate subjects come under the first category. Such knowledge obtained from others directly and through their guidance comes under the second category.

Wisdom obtained through meditation is covered by the third classification.

Another classification of wisdom is into three divisions as three proficiencies (*kosalla*) which are proficiency as to progress (*āya*), regress (*apāya*) and means of success (*upāya*). The first variety is again two-fold as the correct knowledge about (i) spiritual and material decline and about (ii) their prevention. The former refers to the aspect of wisdom comprising the realistic knowledge about one's material and spiritual decline. Material degeneration leading to poverty makes it impossible for one to perform meritorious activities such as giving of alms while spiritual decline makes one a lower being. One is expected to be wise enough to arrest and reverse both these aspects of one's decline if and when they set in.

The second category, that of regress, is also two-fold as wisdom regarding the (i) aforementioned type of material and spiritual decline and (ii) causes that bring about various dangers to one's progress, both material and spiritual. One has to be wise enough to prevent both these aspects of downfall. The third classification refers to the wisdom that enables one to do the needful in the face of unforeseen dangers.

### **Factors bringing about wisdom**

In order to attain wisdom or in other words to fulfil the Perfection of Wisdom, it would be advantageous to know about the factors that generate wisdom. Such factors are very many, some of which are listed below: having a birth with three root-conditions (*tīhetu-paṭisandhi*); having meritorious actions performed in previous existences for the purpose of attaining wisdom; having a well-developed body free from deformities; possessing good health; absence of past demeritorious actions counteracting wisdom; proficiency in arts and crafts; knowing the Dhamma; an inquiring disposition; engaging in one's activities intelligently; occupying oneself with scholarly activities; teaching the Dhamma; listening to the Dhamma; contemplating on the profound teachings of the Dhamma; having discussions with learned men; association with the wise; disassociation with fools; cultivating concentration (*samādhi*):

extenuating defilements; cleanliness regarding the dwelling place, one's person, clothes etc.; consumption of food and medicine that promote wisdom etc.

### **Obstacles to wisdom**

One who fulfils the Perfection of Wisdom should know also about the factors that stand on the way of its fulfilment. These are primarily the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) which, as obstacles to the development of the mind, blind our mental vision. These are sensuous desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and scruples (*uddhaccakukkucca*) and sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*). Each of these is defined as an impediment, a hindrance, an overgrowth of the mind that stultifies insight (*āvaraṇo nīvaraṇo cetaso upakkilesa paññāya dubbalīkaraṇo: S.V, 94*).

Out of these five hindrances sensual desire and ill-will are by far the most detrimental to wisdom and accordingly many are those who come to grief in this life and also find rebirth in hells in the future through them. The *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary lists many factors that hinder wisdom and promote delusion: aversion (*arati*), sloth (*tandī*), drowsiness (*vijambhikā*: yawning nature), idleness (*ālasya*), finding delight in company (*gaṇasaṅgāṅkārāmatā*), fondness for sleep (*niddāsīlatā*), indecisive nature (*anicchayasīlatā*), lack of desire for knowledge (*ñāṇasmīū akutūhalatā*), wrong opinion of oneself (*micchā-māna*), lack of inquiry (*aparipucchātā*), non-use of concentration (*asamāhita-cittatā*), association with the unwise (*duppaññānāū puggalānāū sevanatā*), lack of association with the wise (*paññāvantaṅnāū apayirupāsanā*), self-condemnation (*attaparibhava*), resorting to wrong alternatives (*micchā vikappā*), adherence to perverted views (*viparīta-abhinivesa*), excess of bodily vigour (*kāyadaḥhi-bahulatā*), lack of religious emotion (*asaūvega-sīlatā*) and five hindrances (*pañca-nīvaraṇāni*).

### **Contemplation of the Perfection of Wisdom**

One should contemplate on the virtues of wisdom in order that one may generate the motivation for its perfection. Many and varied are

its excellences and capacities. The enlightenments of disciples, Pacceka-buddhas and perfect Buddhas represent three levels of supra-mundane wisdom. It is in no way possible to generate this level of wisdom without developing its mundane aspect, for it is the latter that gradually develops into the former. Consequently, the complete development of wisdom along this path is highly contributory for the achievement of full enlightenment.

As the physical body without the life-principle is incapable of performing any function or as the eyes and other sense-organs cannot perform their functions without consciousness, even so, qualities like confidence (*saddhā*) cannot perform such meritorious and devotional activities like giving alms (*dāna*) or any other act of generosity properly without wisdom. Therefore, in the practice of perfections, wisdom alone plays the leading role.

An act of generosity executed without wisdom turns out to be weak in merit and incapable of generating results and profits in abundance (*mahapphala-mahānisaiisa*). It is the volition of giving endowed with wisdom that qualifies to be the Perfection of Generosity. It is only the man of wisdom who can make up his mind to the extent of giving away not only wealth and property but also wife and children, physical limbs and even life itself. Those who are deficient in wisdom would find it impossible to remain unrepentant after giving away possessions like one's physical organs.

The generosity of the giver who thinks disparagingly of his recipients in such terms as 'I am a generous giver,' 'my recipients live dependent on me' or who thinks that the recipients should acquiesce in to all his ideas or that they should be at his beck and call, becomes sullied through pride. The volitions of the giver who expects future prosperity and enjoyment in return for his generosity also becomes sullied through craving. Hence, it is only the man of wisdom who can practise giving immaculately, as a perfection unsullied by any defilement.

Even the morality (*sīla*) of the person deficient in wisdom very often becomes contaminated through craving and pride. The morality of those vigorous practisers who think in terms such as "it is we who are really virtuous: others are virtueless," becomes contaminated

through pride despite their keenness in practice.

This fact should receive the special attention of those genuine practisers who panistakingly engage in the genuine kind of practice in remote sylvan hermitages and such other localities. Also, it is only the wise man who can practise *sīla* without allowing it to become defiled by unwholesome qualities such as self-exaltation, condemnation of others, craving etc. Discipline in the field of sensual enjoyment, which people generally crave for and rate highly, is also possible only to the wise person. Energy devoid of wisdom is fruitless. Successful performance of everything is possible only through energy coupled with wisdom, through which even perfect enlightenment is attainable.

In the practice of the Perfection of Forbearance (*khanti*) it is only the wise who can profitably exploit the defamatory and such other enemical actions of one's opponents. The person deficient in wisdom would become angry at them and take steps harmful to oneself. It is only the wise man who also can practise the Perfection of Truthfulness at all times and places managing his affairs honestly in such a way that maximum good and least harm would come upon oneself and others. At times the imprudent person can even get into trouble through truthfulness.

Also it is only the wise man who can continuously stick to such practices as perfections without abandoning them on the way. The man of lesser wisdom cannot remain faithful to the practice steadfastly. Even the practice of loving-kindness (*mettā*) commonly towards all beings comprising one's friends, enemies and intermediaries is possible only to the wise man. The unwise man will become confused and bewildered in the face of worldly conditions like loss, gain etc. It is also only the former that can remain level-headed without becoming proud or depressed when confronted with such worldly conditions. In this manner the virtues of wisdom should be contemplated in many alternative ways.

### **Principles underlying the Perfection of Wisdom**

Those who are anxious to practise the Perfection of Wisdom should relieve themselves as far as possible from the aforementioned

impediments that hinder and bewilder the attainment of wisdom. They should adopt such practices as that would promote wisdom. Also they should familiarise themselves with salutary arts, sciences and crafts that would be conducive to the good and happiness of beings. They should also study the various languages, the five aggregates (*khandha*), the twelve bases (*āyatana*), eighteen elements (*dhātu*), twenty-two faculties, (*indriya*), the four Noble Truths, dependent arising, stations of mindfulness and the other requisites of enlightenment. They should master the Tripiṭaka to the best of their ability.

They should engage in meditation and develop at least preparatory (*parikamma*) concentration. They should also generate material and immaterial absorptions (*jhāna*) and the five higher knowledges (*abhiññā*). They should attain the purification of views (*ditṭhi-visuddhi*) by realising the presence of psycho-physical matter only without the presence of a 'being' as such. They should develop the purification of overcoming doubt (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-v.*) which enables them to see that the psycho-physical phenomena are brought about by causes, that they were non-existent before that and also that such conditionally produced phenomena are only ephemeral. They should thus generate the knowledge about the three characteristics of impermanence, pain and non-self (*tilakkhaṇa*). They should also bring about the ten insight knowledges of comprehension, of arising and passing away of phenomena, of contemplations of dissolution, of appearance as terror, of contemplation of danger, of contemplation of revulsion, of desire for deliverance, of contemplation of reflection, of equanimity about formations and of insight knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Those Mahābodhisattas, Pacceka-bodhisattas and Sāvaka-bodhisattas who do not expect to go through the path-fruit and attain Nibbāna in this life, should cease their insight pursuit at the stage of purification by knowledge and vision of the way for, if they proceed further, they might reach the path of stream-entry and would thereby fail to attain the *bodhi* attainments for which they had been aspiring.

1. The corresponding Pāli terms of these are i. *sammasana* ii. *udayabbayānupassanā* iii. *bhaṅgānupassanā* iv. *bhayatupaṭṭhāna*, v. *ādīnavānupassanā* vi. *nibbidānupassanā* vii. *muñcītukamyatā* viii. *paṭisaṅkhānupassanā* ix. *saṅkhārupekkhā* x. *saccānulomika*

The Mahābodhisattas should utilise their attainments in arts and crafts and engage in philanthropic activities motivated through kindness. They should impart those forms of knowledge to their beneficiaries and provide facilities to get them trained in such work and also provide them with proper guidance and help them to attain higher and insight knowledges. This applies to both the Pacceka and Sāvaka bodhisattas.

### **Classifications of the Perfection of Wisdom**

The development of wisdom by eliminating one's craving for wealth and property, for wife and children etc., and the performance of philanthropic activities through that wisdom is the primary level of this perfection. The same type of activity by eliminating the love for one's physical organs like hands and feet is its secondary level (*upa-pāramitā*) while the performance of the very same activities even at the expense of one's own life is its ultimate aspect (*paramattha-p.*). In like manner, protecting others' wealth and property, their physical organs and similarly their lives themselves respectively also would be tantamount to practising this perfection.

Also the mission of the person that resorts to a sylvan hermitage and engage in meditations with the aim of attaining wisdom without caring for his property, friends and relatives, physical organs or even the life itself also constitute the Perfection of Wisdom in all these degrees.

Saving the life of a brahmin by the king's counsellor Senaka in the Sattubhastā Jātaka (No. 402), saving the life of king Vedeha, without caring even for his own life by Mahosadha in the Mahāummagga Jātaka ( No. 546) and the self-immolation of king Dhammasoṇḍa for the sake of the Dhamma are all stories exemplifying the ultimate level (*paramattha*) of the Perfection of Wisdom. The Jātaka stories of Sambhava (No. 515), Mahābodhi (No. 528), Vidhusa (No. 545) and Mahāgovinda of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (D. II, 220ff), also illustrate this perfection.

## 7

### PERFECTION OF ENERGY (*virīya-pāramitā*)

The intelligently applied wholesome type of energy comprising such activities as giving of alms, observation of moral precepts, practice of ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*), philanthropic activity etc. for the purpose of attaining any one of the three forms of *bodhi* (explained earlier), is the Perfection of Energy.

Although there are different varieties of energy such as unwholesome (*akusala*), indeterminate (*avyākata*), disconnected with knowledge (*ñāna-vippayutta*) etc., none of them come within the perfection. Energy becomes profitable only when it is accompanied by wisdom without which it is of little value or is very often totally valueless. It is this same type of profitable energy that is identified among the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment as right exertion (*sammappadhāna*), as also energy as a road to power (*virīya-iddhipāda*), as a spiritual faculty (*v-indriya*), as a spiritual power (*v-bala*), as a factor of enlightenment (*v-sambojjhaṅga*) and as right effort (*sammā vāyāma*). Energy as a supra-mundane requisite of enlightenment (*lokuttara-bodhipakkhiya-virīya*), along with ordinary physical energy, although designated as *virīya*, are alien to the perfection.

In the regular performance of meritorious activity many difficulties and obstructions would crop up on the way impeding its progressive correct performance. Many people do not even initiate such activity as they become hesitant owing to various weaknesses inherent within themselves. Accordingly, there are some who make belated beginnings while others fall on the way. Only a very few apply themselves continuously till the goal of *bodhi* is attained. The kind of energy intended here is the mental stamina endowed with which one makes

an early beginning undaunted by the difficulties encountered and continues with perseverance till the ultimate goal is attained. *Viriya* is a mental factor (*cetasika*) as well.

The *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary defines the Mahābodhisatta's Perfection of Energy as follows: "It is the comprehensively philanthropic kind of energy endowed with compassion and efficiency of means" (*karuṇā-upāya-kosalla-pariggahito kāyacittehi parahitārambho viriya-pāramitā*:). This statement, however, fails to define this multifaceted perfection fully. Its most excellent variety would be the one undertaken with the following thought: "Let me be reduced to skin, sinews and bones and let my flesh and blood dry up but my energy shall not cease without attaining to that condition possible to be attained by human strength and human striving." This category of energy has a four-fold classification as follows: i. avoiding the arising of evil and unskilled states of mind that have not yet arisen ii. abandoning those that have already arisen iii. production of good and wholesome states of mind not yet arisen and iv. developing and bringing into perfection the good and wholesome states already arisen.

Lukewarm efforts and energy can produce only trivial results. For nobler gains higher efforts commensurate with the goal should be applied. For instance, full enlightenment is the highest possible attainment and accordingly it needs a very high degree of energy.

It is said that "better than absolute sovereignty over the earth, better than going to heaven, better than even lordship over all the worlds is the fruit of the stream-winner (*Dhp. stz. 178*). If the fruit of stream-entry is so noble what to speak of the nobility of Arahantship and Pacceka-bodhiship?" An extremely high degree of energy would be required to attain these forms of *bodhi*.

The practisers of this perfection should be conversant with the eleven factors that bring about energy, eight states of laziness, eight states of energy-inception and the various factors that counteract energy.

The eleven factors that generate energy as a requisite of enlightenment: i. Reflecting on the fear of being born in hells ii. Becoming aware of the benefits and advantages of energy without which nothing noteworthy can be achieved. iii. Reflecting on the

path of energy trodden by the earlier Buddhas, Pacceka-buddhas and Arahants. iv. Reflecting on the fact that one should not waste time unenergetically after consuming the food provided by the faithful (specifically for monks but applicable to laymen as well). v. Reflecting on the priceless spiritual heritage (treasures) inherited from the long line of Buddhas as one's teachers. vi. Reflecting on the greatness and incomparability of the Buddha as one's teacher. vii. Reflecting on the rare opportunity one has been blessed with by being born as a human being capable of putting forth energy as demanded by the Dhamma. viii. Reflecting on the careers and achievements of great disciples like Sāriputta, Moggalāna, Ānanda etc.. ix. Complete avoidance of association with the lazy and the indolent. x. Constant association with the active and the energetic. xi. Being endowed with a predilection for putting forth energy as required in the Buddhist practice.

These eleven factors are given in the commentaries as circumstances productive of energy as a requisite of enlightenment.

### **Eight bases of indolence (*kusīta-vatthu*)**

There are these eight bases of indolence or slackness: i. A monk has to do some work. He thinks: here is the work I have to do: in doing it I will tire myself: therefore I shall lie down: by so doing he fails to stir up any energy for the attainment of the unattained, for the realization of the unrealized or for the accomplishment of the unaccomplished. ii. Or he has finished some work: now it occurs to him that he is tired by doing that work and therefore he should lie down and he does so whereby he fails to ..... iii. Or he has to go on a journey and as earlier he thinks it will tire him and lies down and he fails to..... iv. Or he has gone on a journey and thinking that he is tired thereby he lies down and he..... v. Or he goes for alms in villages and failing in his tours to obtain sufficient alms he assumes that he is tired and lies down and he..... vi. Or he obtains sufficient food, consumes it and thinks that his body is heavy and unpliant and lies down and he..... vii. Or he becomes indisposed and thinking that it might become worse and as such preferring to lie down he does so and he ..... viii. Or just after recovering from an illness he

thinks that as he has just recovered his body is weak and unpliant and he lies down and he .....

### **Eight grounds of earnestness (*ārambha-vatthu*)**

i. When there is some work to do he thinks “I have some work to do and if I attend to that it will not be easy for me to fix my mind on the Buddha’s message and therefore I should not lose time in applying myself for the attainment of the unattained paths and fruits.”  
 ii. Or he has finished some work and thinks that while he was doing that work he could not fix his mind on the Buddha’s message and therefore he should stir himself now. iii. Or he has to make a journey and thinking in like manner he bestirs himself iv. Or he has finished a journey and thinking ..... v. Or wandering for alms through villages and towns he finds no time and thinking ..... vi. Or after obtaining enough food and partaking of it he thinks that his body has become strong and pliant and as such he should stir himself up and thinking ..... vii. Or becoming indisposed he thinks that if it becomes worse he will not be able to put forth effort and therefore he should apply himself without any delay and does so viii. Or just after recovering from an illness he thinks that as he could not apply himself during the course of that illness he should not lose any more time and so he stirs himself up.

### **Factors that counteract energy and their causes**

The two factors diametrically opposed to energy are sloth (*thīna*) and drowsiness (*middha*). When these two conditions crop up in a person’s mind energy disappears. The origination and development of these two factors are attributed to the unsystematic or the wrong kind of attention given to such conditions as aversion towards good work, weariness, drowsiness, surfeit resulting from meals and torpidity of mind that prevents one from engaging in wholesome activities (*S.V*, 64).

### **Factors preventing sloth and torpor**

These are the i. Element of energy initially applied when undertaking a difficult task (*ārambha-dhātu*) ii. Element of perseverance that prompts one to continue with the task undertaken (*nikkama-dhātu*) and iii. Element of enduring energy applied in continuing with the task till the goal is attained (*parakkama-dhātu*). These three factors can be adduced as those contributing to the arising and development of energy as well.

### **Factors eliminating sloth and torpor**

These are i. Avoidance of overeating ii. Change of postures iii. Contemplation of light iv. Living in open air v. Association with faithful friends vi. Beneficial kind of discussions. Regarding overeating it is said that while it is a contributory factor for developing various illnesses the correct measure of eating given is to cease eating leaving room for four or five morsels and drinking water to cover up that deficit. Such a habit contributes to good health and comfortable living.

### **Reflecting on the Perfection of Energy**

Even leading the normal good life by earning the ordinary requisites of life like food and clothing by the sweat of one's own brow and thereby not resorting to theft or beggary is not possible for him who is devoid of energy. There is nothing unattainable to those indefatigable heroic men who strive on with grit and perseverance.

People elude acute forms of suffering and major calamities through their energy. Also it is energy which transforms paupers into millionaires and the uninformed into great men of letters. Through it some become kings, some ministers while some others become army commanders. There are lofty positions such as the states of gods and of *brahmas* attained by men of great energy. Also it is through energy alone that ordinary worldlings attain Arahantship, Pacceka-buddhahood and even perfect Buddhahood. Just as it is only a royal prince and never an untouchable boy who will aspire for kingship, even so it is only the energetic and not the indolent that aspire for any one of these three lofty positions of *bodhi*.

How can a lazy person who fails to think of achieving his own freedom from suffering by attaining Nibbāna think of himself as attaining Buddhahood and helping others also to free themselves from suffering? That is an impossibility. Laziness is a major danger, for those subject to it never achieve any kind of greatness. They merely degenerate themselves from whatever positions they already have attained.

The mind of man is such that passions like lust emerge and become active like elephants in rut. Those who go under their sway commit divers evil deeds. Man is surrounded by hordes of evil companions who wean the virtuous people away from their paths of virtue, aggravate their passions and get them to commit evil. Energy is the only defence and the weapon to escape and subdue them in our journey towards Nibbāna. In this manner one should contemplate on the benefits of energy and the evils of laziness from different angles. Such a contemplation should include the many different aspects of energy as delineated above and also the life-stories of heroic men who have exhibited energy in its true form through their performances such as the arahants Mahāsiva, Pītimalla, Cakkhupāla etc. who had put forth a tremendous degree of perseverance in attaining arahantship.

### **Principles underlying the Perfection of Energy**

There is no method of practice special to this perfection. It is simply the energetic fulfilment of the other perfections—fulfilling them comprehensively with love, respect and application continuously till the goal is reached. The Mahābodhisattas aspiring for perfect enlightenment should be extra-vigilant in this respect. With an honestly compassionate mind towards all beings he should practise philanthropy without reservations—to the extent of sacrificing even his own life for the sake of the priceless goal he has undertaken to reach. Every word spoken, act performed or idea thought by him should be oriented towards perfect enlightenment. It may be stated here that for the Pacceka—and Sāvaka-bodhisattas, philanthropic activity is not of paramount importance as it is to the Mahābodhisattas.

**Classifications of the Perfection of Energy**

Energy which does not become slackened due to wife and children, wealth or any individual and which is practised for the sake of perfect enlightenment is the true Perfection of Energy. The three-fold division as shown in the case of the earlier perfections is applicable here too.

A few examples of Jātaka stories for this perfection are Vaṇṇupatha (No. 2), Mahāsīlava (No. 51), Pañcāvudha (No. 55), Vānarinda (No. 57) and Mahājanaka (No.539).

## 8

### PERFECTION OF PATIENCE (*khanti-pāramitā*)

It is the calm endurance (*khanti*) of oppressions from cold and heat, sufferings originating from hunger, thirst and illnesses, various painful experiences coming from the behaviour and actions of men and animals that is called the Perfection of Patience.

Such patient forbearance of pain and suffering can take place due to many reasons. It may be due to folly, lack of courage, passion, hypocrisy or desire for wealth and possessions. That is not the type of patience intended here. The quality of patience implied in the field of perfections is one which serves as a vehicle conveying the practiser towards one of the forms of three-fold *bodhi*. In other words, the patience practised for the purpose of attaining one of the triple *bodhis* is the Perfection of Patience.

The *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary defines this perfection as follows: “It is the mentality dominated by non-hatred, tolerant of the crimes committed by human beings and softened with an encompassing attitude of compassion and efficiency in means.”

Patience is an excellent quality praised by the Buddhas and other great beings. It is not the quality of suffering complacently in silence without attempting to extricate oneself from one’s difficulties. What patience implies as a virtue and a *pāramitā* is not becoming confounded and perplexed in the face of difficulties and obstructions. There are some who, failing to do the needful in the face of a problem, adopt wrong measures resulting in confusion and chaos. Patience as a virtue and a *pāramitā* comprises refraining from abandoning the practice of one’s accustomed good deeds in the face of difficulties and problems as also refraining from becoming angry and resorting to acts of vengeance.

The Buddha once defined it as follows: “He who patiently puts up with cold and heat, hunger and thirst, sun and wind, attacks of gnats and mosquitoes, bites of serpents, unpleasant talk, physical pain etc. is said to be a patient person.” Some practisers abandon their religious engagements leading to enlightenment such as the study of the Dhamma, listening to it and preaching it, waiting upon those who deserve it, meditations etc. in the face of difficulties like heat, cold etc.. At times they commit evil in taking preventive measures against such difficulties. Here, we should follow the example of the ancient Sri Lankan monk Lomasanaāga who lived in the Padhānaghara on Cetiyaṭṭabbata and did not abandon his meditations in spite of extreme cold and heat (*MA.I,65*).

A meditator not obtaining sufficient food and drink should not become discouraged through such a drawback and abandon the responsibility he has undertaken. Neither should he resort to unwholesome means to obtain them. This dual avoidance constitutes the practice of patience regarding hunger and thirst.

In like manner, in the face of attacks from mosquitoes, gnats etc. too, either the abandonment of one’s efforts or resorting to some means of destroying those insects amounts to negating the practice as a perfection. Here too, one should follow the example of Piṇḍapātika Thera of ancient Sri Lanka who went on listening to the Ariyavaūsa sermon despite his being bitten by a viper. His patience paid him ample dividends as he attained to the first three paths and fruits at the end of the sermon. Here too, there is a dual aspect in this patience as in the earlier case.

The story of another eminent Sri Lankan monk of early times, Dīghabhāṇaka Abhaya Thera, can be cited as a glaring example for the practice of patience in the face of a prolonged verbal attack of jealousy from a rival monk. When questioned at the end of the abuse Dīghabhāṇaka Abhaya replied that his duty was the practice of patience and not that of impatience and as such at no state of the barrage was his concentration dislodged from the subject of his meditation.

Patience in relation to physical pain is also necessary. This too is tantamount to not abandoning one’s efforts towards the goal of

enlightenment in the face of physical pains as also not resorting to any unskilful action like killing in order to overcome the difficulty. The story of the meditating monk at Cittalappabbata in ancient Sri Lanka may be cited as an instance for this virtue. In the course of his meditations he developed a severe neurotic pain within his stomach, most probably as a side-effect of his meditative exercises, and he began to writhe in pain. A fellow-monk reminded him that the duty of a monk is to put up with such conditions and continue the exercise. He did so and the condition became so severe that his stomach burst. Still he persevered and died after attaining to the position of a non-returner (*anāgāmin*).

The most excellent characteristic of the *khanti-pāramitā* is the toleration of the losses caused by others to one's wealth and property and the crimes perpetrated by them against oneself, one's wife, children, friends and relatives. If one becomes angry and tries to wreak vengeance instead, it will bring about harm to both parties. It can cause suffering even after death.

### **Method of reflecting on the Perfection of Patience**

One should contemplate on the benign qualities of patience on the following lines: in the hands of good people it is a weapon banishing away anger, which is a destroyer of all virtue; it is an ornament for men of authority, a tool of great power for ascetics and monks, a flow of water extinguishing the fire of rage, a birthplace of good fame, a medicine counteracting the poisonous words of evil men, a noble quality of the tamed, shore for the ocean of hatred, a cover blocking the opening to the hells, a ladder leading to heavenly realms, a haven for all virtues, an excellent condition of purity of word, deed and thought.

The practiser of this perfection, when wronged by others, should reflect thus: "None in this world, including even the Buddhas, are free from enemies: it is the way of the world: now I have become a victim of these enigmatical activities because in the past I must have accumulated such *kamma* as befitting such a situation and as such I am also partly responsible for this condition and my adversary cannot be held solely responsible." He also should contemplate that in the

absence of enmity activities he would not get an opportunity to practise this perfection and as such his enemies are indirectly helpful to him in providing this opportunity.

The Mahābodhisattas should consider themselves as paternal figures to the inhabitants of all the worlds, treating them compassionately as their own children. When they make mistakes the Bodhisattas should think thus: “they are like my children: it is I who am committed to free them from suffering: no father shall become angry with his children: I should simply tolerate the errors committed: being a father to them, how can I become angry with them?”

### **Advice on the simile of the saw**

All Bodhisattas should contemplate on the advice on the simile of the saw in order to be able to remain angerless. This is as follows: “even if robbers were to cut you with a double saw, if anyone were to develop anger, such a one fails to follow my advice.” Such is the advice of the Buddhas.

### **Advice to Puṇṇa**

One evening venerable Puṇṇa visited the Buddha and the following dialogue took place between the Buddha and the *thera*:

**Puṇṇa:** Venerable sir, I like to lead the ascetic life alone. Please give me a brief advice.

**Buddha:** Puṇṇa, where are you going to live after obtaining this brief advice from me.

**P:** It is the district of Sunāparanta.

**B:** People of Sunāparanta are cruel. What would you do if they abuse you?

**P:** They are good people, for they only abuse but do not assault me.

**B:** If they assault you with hands?

**P:** They are good people, for they assault me with their hands but do not do so with stones.

**B:** If they assault you with stones?

**P:** They are good people for they assault me with stones but not with clubs.

**B:** If they assault you with clubs?

**P:** They are good people, for they assault me with clubs but not with knives and such other weapons.

**B:** But if they do so?

**P:** Venerable sir, there are certain followers of yours who, holding both life and body in condemnation, look for someone to kill them. Here I will be getting a killer without any effort on my part.

**B:** Very well Puṇṇa: endowed with this kind of discipline you will be able to live in Sunāparanta. Proceed with your plans.

Venerable Puṇṇa proceeded to Sunāparanta and having made a following of five hundred male and five hundred female followers, passed away after attaining arahantship.

The following Jātaka stories are quoted as instances for this *pāramitā*: Mahāsīlava (51), Khantivādī (313), Chaddanta (514) and Mahākapi (516).

The threefold division of this perfection too is taught as in the case of the other *pāramitās*.

**PERFECTION OF TRUTH**  
(*saccapāramitā*)

The observance of truthfulness for the purpose of realising one of the three forms of *bodhi* is the Perfection of Truth. The *Cariyāpīṭaka* commentary defines it as follows: “it is the policy of non-deception accompanied with compassion and proficiency of means and comprising such characteristics as non-attachment.”

Truthfulness is part and parcel of *sīla* itself. But it has a basic value for virtues in their entirety, which is the reason why it is treated as a separate *pāramitā*. However virtuous a person may be, he is not regarded really so if he lacks this one virtue. He who is truthful and not given to breaking promises will be blessed with several additional virtues by virtue of this virtue. Accordingly, truthfulness becomes a nursery for other virtues. It is a noble quality held in high esteem by the Mahābodhisattas.

“Occasionally the precepts about killing, stealing, unchastity and consumption of liquor have been violated by the Mahābodhisatta, but never the one concerning the utterance of falsehood causing harm to another” says the Hārīta Jātaka (431).

This perfection has to be understood in three aspects as speaking truthfully at all times for the sake of avoiding evil speech, not breaking promises and speaking the truth for the sake of one’s own as well as others’ welfare. There are some who make promises honestly with no intention of breaking them but break them through the force of circumstances. Although such people do not commit the evil of uttering falsehood, they cannot be referred to as perfectly truthful.

Establishing oneself in truthfulness is also a Bodhisatta virtue as noble as speaking the truth. As such, it could also be treated as a component of the Perfection of Truth and make asserverations of

truth through it based on a virtue inherent in oneself or of another. This is called the Act of Truth, for which *pirith*-chanting is also an instance. What happens in *pirith*-chanting is mainly the asserveration of truth through the power of the Triple Gem. What is found in the majority of the Bodhisatta's birth-stories to illustrate the Perfection of Truth are also such asserverations performed through one of his many virtues.

It has been proved that an asserveration of truth performed through a virtuous quality practised and developed by oneself is more fruitful than one done through another's virtue. Even in a situation of minor significance an act of truth done through one's own virtues confers immediate results as illustrated by the Kaṇhadīpāyana Jātaka (No. 444) wherein several asserverations of truth became consecutively successful.

### **Method of contemplation**

In order that one may become successful in the practice of this perfection one should first contemplate on the evil consequences of uttering falsehood and on the benefits of truthfulness. Another suitable subject of contemplation comprises the careers and achievements of those who have served themselves and others through truthfulness.

### **Evils of uttering falsehood**

Lying is a base act. Noble people never utter a falsehood even for the sake of their lives. Society at large condemns liars as base people. Even their truthful utterances are not accepted as true. They cannot obtain others' help which is customarily offered through mutual faith. It is accordingly said in the *Dhammapada* (stz.176):

“There is no evil that cannot be done by the liar, who has transgressed the one law of truthfulness and who has abandoned interest in the world beyond.”

Utterers of falsehood will be reborn in hells after their death. Even when they come back to the human world, on account of a single lie uttered in the past, they suffer punishment and ridicule as scapegoats for others' misdoings, sometimes in hundreds of births.

They become foolish, low-born, dumb, stammering, of hoarse voice, of bad breath, of bad teeth, full of oral diseases, childless or obtain only daughters and even the children they obtain refuse to listen to them.

### **Lying and monkhood**

It is highly improper for a monk to utter falsehood, for monks should be truthful up to the hilt. The quality of the vocation of the monk who is shameless enough to utter lies is described by the Buddha in the *Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda* sutta as ‘trifling and something caste away’ comparing him to a vessel turned upside down or as empty as the same vessel turned upwards.

Many are the benefits of truthfulness. It is said “out of all the pleasing savours inherent in the earth’s essence, truthfulness is the best: monks and brahmins who are well-established in truthfulness cross over to the further shore free from birth and death.”

Lovers of truth achieve fame and trustworthiness while becoming capable of serving both oneself and others through this virtue.

The Jātaka stories Hārīta, (No. 431), Maccha (No. 75) and Vaṭṭaka (No.35) are quoted as illustrations for this perfection.

### **Principles underlying the perfection**

Avoidance of lying, speaking the truth and also establishing oneself in truthfulness by never breaking a promise constitute the core principles underlying this perfection. If a person is not truthful and is not established in truthfulness, whatever other virtues he has also will lose their value. Other virtues assume validity only if the basic virtue of truthfulness is present. Without this singular virtue one cannot attain to any of the triple forms of enlightenment, let alone attaining Buddhahood.

Although truthfulness is a noble virtue and establishing oneself in it simple, the truthful person very often incurs losses as also he makes enemies through it. His life itself may be placed in danger. Remaining dedicated to truthfulness throughout is possible only to that superior type of person who is endowed with a strong self-confidence and

noble intentions resolute enough to withstand such reactions and pressures from one's opponents. Those aiming at full enlightenment (*sambodhi*) should be people of excellent character with lofty ideals and unassailable nobility, for it is such a high-calibred achievement not capable of being attained by weaklings with second-rate mentalities.

Breaking promises is in the nature of only mean people lacking in virtue and Bodhisattas should never stoop to it. They should regard breaking a promise as tantamount to taking one's own life. Impossible promises should never be made by carefully considering the possibility or the impossibility of their fulfilment beforehand. It is owing to the absence of this precaution that many people become liars through breaking promises.

Unintelligent truthfulness also can become quite harmful to oneself as well as to others. It does not follow from this that one should resort to lying in such situations. The ideal should be to establish oneself in truthfulness in such a way that no harm comes upon anyone.

The threefold classification of this perfection too is taught as in the case of the other perfections.

## 10

### PERFECTION OF RESOLUTION (*aditṭhāna-pāramitā*)

This comprises establishing oneself in the resolution that one would continue unswervingly with whatever wholesome activity one has undertaken. The *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary defines it as follows: “it is the unshakeable mental condition of resolution accompanied with compassion and proficiency of means.”

One must have a great degree of merit for one to attain to any of the three forms of *bodhi*. People’s predilection is to do the unwholesome rather than the wholesome. Consequently, the person devoid of the required degree of resolute strength might become slack in the face of a difficult wholesome activity and avoid it altogether or perform it below par.

For instance, one may reduce one’s original intention of making a donation of rupees one thousand to half that amount due to such slackening or one may shelve the original plan of observing the precepts from one month to one week or one may cut short one’s idea of remaining as a monk for life to a shorter period. As such, the presence of resolute power is necessary for one to stick to the original plan and continue the task at hand to a successful conclusion.

Although resolution alone is not highly meritorious, it is impossible to practise the perfections without it. It is owing to this reason that it is treated as a separate *pāramitā*. Its practice is always related to all the other perfections.

#### **Method of contemplating**

In order that one may succeed in fulfilling this perfection one should contemplate on the imbecility of those lacking in it, advantages of

its presence and on the achievements of those who are endowed with it. The life-stories of Thera Gaṅgātīriya (*ThagA.195f.*), King Sivi (Jātaka No. 499), Nāga king Saṅkhapāla (J. No. 524) and prince Temiya (J. No. 538) are quoted as instances for this *pāramitā*.

### **Principles underlying the perfection**

Absence of the power of resolution is a drawback even for mundane undertakings like education let alone for the attainment of enlightenment. A difficult objective can be attained only by the person who establishes oneself in it with the firm determination 'I shall do it.' A student who keeps on shifting from one subject to another saying that the chosen subjects are too difficult or are of no use, will never achieve success in education. In like manner, the same will be the fate of the student who keeps on changing his places of education on the same argument. This same theory is applicable to one's employment as well. As such, each one of us must have the power of resolution to realize our objectives. Those who aim at enlightenment (*sambodhi*) should develop this strong power of determination through gradual practice.

It is on the basis of the cultivation of moral qualities that this resolute power for the sake of *sambodhi* be built up. Those who have not cultivated any such quality should begin with the practice of the Five Precepts. Mere recitation of the precepts, without a clear resolve to practise them, as is usually done by the majority, is of no use. The meticulous observation of the Five Precepts for a long period is a difficult task. However, the value of these precepts lies in such observation, which when done only for a few minutes or hours has no moral value.

In order that one may come to possess this resoluteness one should initially observe the Five Precepts meticulously for one week. After repeating such weekly practices for some time one should extend the practice to periods of months and years. In like manner, one should practise the Eight Precepts as well. One who undertakes this

resolve thus “I shall observe the Eight Precepts for all the four *Poyas*<sup>1</sup> of the month” should remain faithful to the promise. Regarding the twelve full moon *Poyas* of the year also he should make the same promise to himself and fulfil it.

A beginning can be made as a determined one day’s practice and then gradually extend the duration. One’s accustomed habits like smoking, taking a snack or even the demands of hunger and thirst should not be an excuse to break a session once started.

The monks also should follow this same principle by making a resolution not to commit a single ecclesiastical offence for a limited period initially and then gradually extend the duration of the observance. The ascetic practices known as *dhutaṅga* also serve as a suitable launching pad for the practice of this perfection. The person who cultivates this practice with small beginnings can gradually build up the required resoluteness to make and keep any kind of resolve.

The three-fold classification common to all perfections is applied here too.

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1. *Poya*: The Sinhala word for the full moon day, the new moon day and the two days of the first and last moon-quarters. The Buddhists regard these as the four fasting days of the month in their religious observances. The term is derived from the Pāli term *uposatha*, ‘fasting day.’

# 11

## PERFECTION OF LOVING-KINDNESS (*mettā-pāramitā*)

Everyone in this world wishes for his or her happiness, gain and progress. The extended application of this wish, as a characteristic feature of those aiming at one of the triple forms of *bodhi*, and in relation to all alike, irrespective of their being friends, enemies or neutral acquaintances, is the Perfection of Loving-kindness. In other words it is the threefold philanthropic activities of working, speaking and thinking for the welfare of others. In yet another sense it is the friendship, which is the meaning of the corresponding Sanskrit term *maitree*, maintained with the aforementioned three categories of people for the sake of full enlightenment. The *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary definition runs thus “it is the hatelessness (*avyāpajātā*) accompanied with compassion and proficiency of means, directed at the good and happiness of the world.”

*Rāga*, translatable as ‘lust,’ ‘greed,’ ‘passion’ etc., is a defilement having an external resemblance to *mettā*. Therefore the practiser of this *pāramī* should clearly distinguish between *rāga* and *mettā* for there is the possibility that one becomes misled to treat one’s *rāga* as *mettā*.

A handsome toddler spick and span and well-dressed will be a cynosure of all eyes with people wishing to talk to, to clasp, caress and feed him etc. On the other hand, an unattractive and a shabbily dressed toddler would not attract any attention and would be an unwelcome guest. Out of these two cases it is the latter who should be the object of loving-kindness and compassion. This loving-kindness and compassion, generated in many hearts at the sight of the handsome but not the ugly child, are not genuine but only apparent. They comprise a variety of delightful cravings in the guise of the

genuine qualities of compassion and loving-kindness and is the same as lust or passion. It is this same counterfeit loving-kindness that is felt towards one's wife, children, husband, pets etc.. It is lust in the ultimate sense.

Genuine loving-kindness is the mental attitude wherein one wishes the well-being of others just as one wishes it for oneself. In doing so no discrimination is made on grounds of beauty and ugliness, prosperity and poverty or ignorance and learning etc. Here the practiser thinks thus "just as I do not like suffering so are the others: like myself they too are afraid of suffering and search for happiness" etc..

The person endowed with loving-kindness of this sterling quality speaks and acts accordingly. He wishes for the happiness and well-being of others. On the other hand, the afore-mentioned lust in the guise of loving-kindness is an unwholesome mentality bringing about rebirth in lower realms (*peta-loka*). Many people obtain such rebirth owing to their lustful dying thoughts towards their wives, children, property etc..

### **Method of contemplation**

The practice of loving-kindness towards the friendly and the indifferent is not difficult. It is its practice towards one's enemies that needs much more effort. To make it feasible one should follow the method of contemplation recommended earlier under the *khanti-pāramitā*. One who is established in patience can practise loving-kindness to both friend and foe alike. Studying the benefits of loving-kindness and the careers of the noble ones who had practised it correctly also would be helpful in this regard.

If this noble virtue of loving-kindness is practised by all, this world would be a very much happier place. A major part of the burdens oppressively weighing down many people could be reduced if loving-kindness is practised. The one devoid of it inflicts pain on others, robs their justly earned possessions, kills and eats their flesh and so on. Consequently, many are the living beings who are forced to live in hiding for fear of their lives.

One who earns something by the sweat of one's brow during daytime is forced to break rest during the night to safeguard it from

robbers. There are many others who undergo much suffering owing to their inability to leave home seeking employment as that would threaten the safety of their homes, lives of their wives and children, property etc. If all are endowed with loving-kindness there would be no need for courts, police forces, armed forces etc. Owing to the absence of this virtue everyone lives in fear of one another. Consequently, a good portion of man's hard-earned wealth has to be spent on the maintenance of courts, police forces, armed forces, manufacture of fire-arms etc.. If everyone in this world is endowed with loving-kindness, the universal problem of defence would be solved thereby bringing immense relief and ease to the whole world.

The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* chapter on 'elevens' enumerates eleven benefits accruing from the practice of the absorption of loving-kindness (*mettā-cetovimutti*):

- (i) He sleeps happily (*sukhaü supati*): many people have an uneasy sleep as they are in the habit of snoring, murmuring and rolling in bed. But the person endowed with loving-kindness sleeps happily as if he were in a trance.
- (ii) He wakes up happily (*sukhaü paṭibujjhati*): many people wake up lifelessly and absent-mindedly, yawning and murmuring. This is an unpleasant experience for them. But the person practising loving-kindness rises up from sleep happily like a blossoming lotus without any disorder.
- (iii) He does not see unpleasant dreams (*na pāpakāü supinaü passati*): there are many who dream robbers, serpents, wild buffaloes and similar frightening sights. Sometimes they cry aloud or scream in fear in their dreams. But the practiser of loving-kindness sees not such visions but temples, *cetiyas*, religious processions, preaching of sermons, *pirit* chantings and such other pleasant sights.
- (iv) He is pleasant to the humans (*manussānaü piyo hoti*): wicked people devoid of any kindness or compassion have their wickedness writ large on their countenances. As such they are unpleasant to the people. In like manner, the pleasantness of the kind-hearted people is also apparent in their faces and as such they are pleasant to the people like a bouquet of

roses, a lotus or a necklace of pearls.

- (v) He is pleasant to the non-humans (*amanussānaü piyo hoti*): (The story of Visākha Thera is quoted here as an illustration: *Vism.* (PTS), 1, pp.312f.). He was a Pāṭaliputta resident who came to Sri Lanka and attained Arahantship at Sittalapabbata where he stayed for a long time out of loving-kindness to an ascetic living there to safeguard him from the troubles coming from non-humans.
- (vi) Deities protect him: (*devatā rakkhanti*): here too a story is quoted wherein five-hundred monks who were practising the meditation on loving-kindness on a mountain were well looked after by the deities living there.
- (vii) Fire, poison or weapons cannot harm him (*nāssa aggi vā visaii vā satthaii vā kamati*); here too three stories are quoted in illustration. It is also stated that fire, poison or weapons cannot harm not all those who habitually develop loving-kindness but those whose thoughts of loving-kindness are exceptionally strong.
- (viii) He achieves mental composure quickly (*tuvaṭam cittaii samādhīyati*). A mind endowed with loving-kindness is placid, lofty and sweet. The mental derivatives of such a mind also have these same qualities. When such gentle thoughts pervade the body, its elemental disturbances become alloyed making it buoyant and cheerful. This brings about physical comfort to the individual. The cumulative effect of all these will be that the mind will achieve concentration with ease.
- (ix) His physical features become bright (*mukhavaṇṇo vipasīdati*): mind is born in association with the “material element” inherent in the blood within the heart (*leyehi pavatnā vastu rūpaya āsuru koṭa*). When fully placid thoughts of loving-kindness are generated there, the blood in the heart becomes purified. When that blood spreads in the body along with the gentle mental formations of loving-kindness, the individual’s face brightens up and becomes cheerful and pleasant.
- (x) He passes away unbewildered (*asammūlho kālaii karoti*):

many people are made to die bewildered. As a result it becomes impossible for them even to recollect a meritorious act they had performed. This makes even those with merit to their credit to take birth in lower realms. On the other hand, the person who has a preponderance of thoughts of loving-kindness is able to breathe his last mindfully, free from any confusion.

- (xi) If he fails to acquire any higher degree of comprehension, he will be reborn in a brahma-world (*uttariü appaṭivijjhanto brahmalokūpago hoti*): if the person who has developed the absorption of loving-kindness fails to attain Arahantship on that basis, his attainments would qualify him for birth in a *brahma*-world.

Next follows a statement (*Aṅguttara, sattaka nipāta*) made by the Buddha to the *bhikkhus* wherein he claims that by developing the contemplation of loving-kindness for seven years he became the king of the gods for thirty-seven terms followed by becoming a world-ruler (*cakkavatti-rājā*) possessing the seven treasures pertaining to this exalted position.

### ***Mettā superior to dāna and sīla***

In illustration of this superiority, a passage is quoted from the Velāma Sutta (A. iv, pp. 392 ff.) wherein it is stated that a single moment's practice of loving-kindness is more meritorious than the most expensive *dāna* given to ordinary supplicants or the *dāna* given to one hundred saints from each of the four categories of saints (*sotāpannas, sakadāgāmins, anāgāmins* and *arahants*), or to one hundred Pacceka-Buddhas, or to a fully enlightened Buddha, or to the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha or to constructing a residence for the Saṅgha of the four quarters or to taking refuge in the Triple Gem or to the taking up the observing of the Five Precepts.

The Ekarāja Jātaka (No. 303) is quoted as another story illustrating this perfection.

### **Principles of practice**

The Bodhisatta fulfilling this perfection must resolve himself thus: “I shall not be enemical to anyone in this world: I shall be friendly, faithful and helpful to all.” Casting himself in the role of others he should consider the calumnies, losses, damages, sufferings, distresses etc. that come upon others as coming upon himself. He should refrain from committing anything that causes loss, damage, ignominy or anguish to others and practise forbearance at all times. Both in public and in private life he should practise loving-kindness in word, thought and deed towards his associates.

### **Physical activities of loving-kindness**

Performance of the following activities for others as befits the occasion comes under this category: physical ablutions, laundering, cleaning the living quarters, supplying of food, drinks and medicine, channelling physicians, helping the old, the feeble, the weak and refugees, cleaning religious sites like *cetiyas*, image-houses and *bodhi*-compounds, washing and dyeing robes for the monks, supplying bathing water and alms-food etc. for them, preparing seats and residences for them, cleaning their utensils like the bowl, getting image-houses and *cetiyas* constructed with the wish that people would earn merit by worshipping at them, planting *bodhi*-trees, getting preaching halls and schools constructed, getting wells dug and ponds constructed for the public, planting trees, constructing roads and rest houses for the public, helping others in their activities such as constructing and repairing of houses, agricultural activities, weddings and funeral activities etc. etc..

### **Verbal activities**

When speaking to others one should do so in a pleasant manner so that their feelings are not hurt. In this regard one should be specially wary to address others according to their rank and position. This should be so even when speaking about others in their absence. Whatever Dhamma he knows he should preach to others with the wish that it would benefit the listeners. When others make mistakes

he should tell them how to avoid them and respectfully acknowledge the virtues of others. He should highlight the efficiency of medical practitioners, industrialists, businessmen and such other useful citizens for the good of the society. Similarly, he should help identify racketeers and fraudulent men in society. Other verbal activities of loving-kindness include philanthropic pursuits such as acting as peace-makers, public health workers, economic advisers, religious instructors and general social workers.

### **Mental activities**

If a person can be pleasant, genial and friendly towards his fellow-beings with thoughts of good wishes for them, both individually and collectively, that would comprise the mental activities of loving-kindness in general. Letting off good wishes repeatedly towards others is the contemplation of loving-kindness, which is regarded as an elite meditation in Buddhism.

### **Meditation on loving-kindness**

As explained in the preceding pages the meditation on loving-kindness comprises the physical, verbal and mental activities of loving-kindness performed for the sake of others. The minds of those meditators who have developed *jhānas* and attained higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) are endowed with special faculties capable of achieving unusual feats. On the other hand, undeveloped ordinary minds cannot do even a minor act like blowing off a lamp or moving a piece of cotton-wool without some physical movement. Merely wishing good to others by repeating the meditation formula endlessly is of no value if the exercise fails to benefit them in a practical sense. For this meditation to be really valuable it has to be done in such a way that it genuinely benefits others. Although an ordinary mind cannot bring consolation to others on a major scale, it can be done in certain aspects and up to a certain degree. This could be done only by the devotee who is aware of the kind of succour that can be rendered and also of the way of doing it and who can then act systematically as befits the case at hand.

Human happiness is of diverse types. Wealth, public esteem, praise, seeing pleasant objects, hearing sweet voices, smelling sweet scents, relishing tasty food and drink, enjoying things pleasant to the touch, having good friends and relatives, good health, non-hatred, absence of enemies and of enemical activities etc. are all various aspects of human happiness.

None of these forms of happiness are transferable. Even if one continues to wish for several years that a particular poor man should become rich, it would never succeed. Hence, the majority of these forms of human happiness cannot be rendered to a second party by a mere mental wish. One can convey to others the trio of non-hatred, absence of enemies and of enemical activities to a certain degree by one's mental activity. Also, those with spiritually developed minds can bring certain forms of succour such as good health to others through their mental powers.

Although it is impossible for a human mind to effect changes in things like trees and creepers, the plausibility of one person affecting such an influence in another's mind becomes apparent under close study of such instances. If the majority of people living in a particular area have a special kind of mentality those outsiders who visit that locality also will develop a similar kind of mentality. If the residents of a particular area regard something as good or bad, beautiful or ugly etc., a subsequent visitor to this locality would gradually develop a similar attitude. This is due to the diffusive influence of thought-generation. This indicates that the mind has a certain power of communicating particular forms of thinking to others as well.

When a particular frame of mind occurs strongly and extensively to any individual, his immediate associates also will acquire it contagiously. As such, it is possible for one person to develop some strong mental condition and transfer it to others. Just as physical diseases are infectious the contagiousness of mental conditions also has to be conceded. It is through thought-diffusion that meditation on loving-kindness becomes beneficial to others.

The meditation in loving-kindness of the person who is motivated by the thought that it is a highly meritorious mental exercise well-praised by the Buddhas and the like, although identifiable as based

on loving-kindness, is not altruistic but selfish. As such it is not genuine and is ineffective. The genuine type of loving-kindness belongs to the practiser whose honest intention is to do some good to others even mentally without the least self-interest. Then only it becomes truly altruistic as this meditation demands from its practisers.

Many people practise this meditation by continuously repeating the statement “may all beings be happy, free from illness and free from worry” with the intention of acquiring merit and other benefits obtainable from this meditation for themselves. If, in reality, these benefits do accrue to the beneficiaries as intended, these do-gooders would not engage in such an exercise unless they get paid for it. They do it free not with the intention of benefiting others but themselves. However, such a practice of selfish loving-kindness is of little value. This meditation acquires quality and becomes beneficial to others only if it is performed without the least self-interest.

The practiser of this meditation should begin the practice with a thought like this: “I must make others happy: as I am unable to do so by supplying them with food, clothing, shelter etc., I shall do so by wishing them well.” The meditation can be explained as positive when one wishes others well and as negative when one wishes that no evil should befall them.

Wishing others well is tantamount to the desire that others should be happy. Here it becomes necessary that the practiser of the meditation should be aware as to how this wished for happiness would accrue to his beneficiaries. It would not be the case that when one targets a particular group of people and keeps in showering them with good wishes that they should receive endless riches or high satisfaction spontaneously. What really happens here is that when the meditator’s benevolent thoughts come into contact with the thoughts of his intended beneficiaries, these latter also unintentionally develop similar thoughts of loving-kindness thereby they too becoming involuntary practisers of the meditation.

This not only brings about a mitigation of their thoughts of jealousy or ill-will but certain forms of hatred may disappear altogether. To be free from jealousy and hatred is to become happy. This shows that the happiness that this meditator can confer on others is that of

freedom from hatred, ill-will and jealousy. It is also necessary that the meditator should, without indiscriminately wishing every kind of or any unspecified kind of happiness, aim at bringing about in them freedom from these three evil thoughts, for it is impossible to keep on wishing anything that fails to materialise because when such an exercise fails to make others happy it fails to qualify as genuine loving-kindness. Through the meditation on loving-kindness one cannot save others from the sufferings involved in birth, decay, death etc.. When one wishes others to be ‘free from suffering’ this phrase has to be understood accordingly.

The phrase ‘free from illness’ also becomes fruitless when it encompasses a large number of beings. It becomes fruitful only when it refers to a single individual or a small group of beings, in which case the possibility is there for an illness to disappear completely. It is owing to this reason that this phrase has been excluded from the purview of the meditation of loving-kindness towards all beings as delineated in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and the *Visuddhimagga*.

In the Metta Sutta the meditation on loving-kindness has been taught on the basis of the phrase may all beings “be happy and safe” (*sukhino vā khemino hontu*) whereas in the *Visuddhimagga* it is taught under the statement may beings “be free from hatred” (*averā hontu*). Viewed from the point of view of achieving practical benevolence to others, the latter phrase is preferable. Nevertheless, the majority prefer the phrase “may all beings be happy.” This seems to explain why the Metta Sutta bases itself on that phrase.

Although this meditation is popularly practised nowadays with the phrase “may all beings be free from suffering, free from disease and be happy,” this method is neither mentioned in any discourse of the Buddha nor referred to in any book like the *Visuddhimagga*. We are unable to say how it has come into vogue.

As many people prefer this method we will be presenting here a system based on it by following which one can practise the meditation on loving-kindness successfully.

### **A formula**

“May all beings be happy and free from ill-will, free from dangers: let none be enemical to another: let none despise another: let none wish to do harm to another: let all practise sympathetic joy regarding the welfare of others.”

This is a method of meditation capable of bringing comfort to others through introducing loving-kindness into their minds. One should engage in this meditation with the honest intention of making others happy. As there is the possibility of one’s developing an attitude of lethargy when thinking and repeating the same thing continuously, one should, as a remedial measure, practise the meditation by changing the areas and the people after classifying them in some convenient manner. For example, this break-down can be made by applying the following three divisions: residents of one’s own village or town, of one’s country and those living abroad; another triple unit as those living above, below and across; a third twofold unit as those living afar and near; another unit as those visible and invisible; yet another triple division as small, middling and large beings. The number of such units can vary according to the meditator’s conscience.

In practising the meditation the formula given above has to be applied to each category of beings in full and continue to do so repeatedly.

### **“Like a mother looking after her only child”**

When one engages in this meditation practising loving-kindness comparable to the above statement of the Metta Sutta, the intended beneficiaries would come into contact with the meditator’s mind thereby producing that same mentality of loving-kindness in them too. In consequence, various forms of hatred and illwill in them would become mitigated or even entirely eradicated. The resultant state of happiness in them is the philanthropic good achievable through this meditation. This kind of practical benevolence percolates through quicker and better, specially to those living in close proximity to the meditator. This explains why even the animals living in forests

frequented by certain ascetics practising this meditation live in amity with one another. In the presence of such meditators, genetically antagonistic animals such as the cobra and the mongoose also become friendly.

It was on this basis that prince Sāma lived amicably with wild animals and the spirits living close to Venerable Visākha Thera at Cittalapabbata lived in friendship. The two factors of distance from the meditator and the strength of his meditative mentality decide the degree of the effectiveness of his meditation towards his intended beneficiaries. If any country can boast of a large number of genuine meditators of loving-kindness, it will be a factor bringing about immense succour to that country.

This perfection too has the usual three-fold division as in the others.

## 12

### PERFECTION OF EQUANIMITY (*upekkhā pāramitā*)

In Buddhism the term *upekkhā*—equanimity—is used in many connotations. Entertaining an attitude of equanimity towards all beings and things of the world, without becoming enemical towards one’s tormentors or attached towards friends and also without developing attachment to things commonly held as good and welcome or loathsomeness towards those things regarded a bad and unwelcome, is the quality of equanimity expected regarding this perfection of the Mahābodhisatta.

The *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary defines it in the following terms: “it is the equanimous attitude towards all good and bad worldly phenomena, events, beings etc., encompassed by compassion and skilful means: this attitude eliminates both attachment and revulsion.”

Although the sublime state (*brahma-vihāra*) of equanimity is also a practice pertaining to the career of the Bodhisatta, it is not trantamount to this perfection. While the former comprises the attempt of making people happy and freeing them from suffering coupled with having an attitude of equanimity towards all beings as a part of the meditation of loving-kindness, the latter amounts to entertaining an equanimous attitude towards all beings, avoiding the extremes of attachment and aversion to them.

#### **Method of contemplation**

In order that one may become motivated for the practice of this perfection one should contemplate that it is the way with the ordinary run of people that they love and attach themselves to those who are thankful, respectful and helpful towards them, while becoming angry

and hateful towards those who are disrespectful and troublesome. Or, in other words, it is the way of the world that people love the desirable and hate the undesirable.

This is a quality that is not noble but ignoble. Those who hold this attitude cannot escape the sufferings of *saüsāra* so long as they maintain this mentality. The maintenance of an equanimous attitude towards both the desirable and the undesirable beings and things is an excellent quality.

This perfection is very much similar to the two Arahant qualities of *ṣaḍṅga-upekṣā* and *tādī*. It is helpful for the perfection of all the other nine perfections.

One who is not well-established in this perfection cannot fulfil the other perfections well. To the person who loves one section of beings and hates another it is difficult to practise charity with a pure heart. He practises charity towards the former because he loves them and to the latter he refuses to be charitable because he hates and condemns them. Attachment to desirable objects is an impediment to *dāna* as well.

How can a person devoid of equanimity give away his wife and children for the sake of future Buddhahood? It is an impossibility. As practising charity towards those who are dear to the giver is prompted by craving, the merit accruing therefrom cannot possess sufficient power to lead the giver to full enlightenment. An exalted level of virtue is hard to be practised by one who is devoid of an equanimous attitude towards the world. That is because attraction and repulsion can bring about an enfeeblement or even a total violation of the observance of the precepts of virtue. Without equanimity and with attachment to property, wife and children etc., one is incapable of practising renunciation. The virtue of equanimity is a *sine qua non* for the cultivation of the ability to judge correctly truth and error, good and bad etc..

Truth and error, good and bad etc., become concealed to the person with attachment to one party and revulsion to another. His friend as a person along with all his activities, opinions etc., appears to him as good and truthful while his attitude to his opponent, whom he looks down upon and dislikes, becomes just the opposite. This is a

delusion standing on the way of the Perfection of Wisdom. An attitude of equanimity is a pre-requisite for the generation of wisdom, which is the doctrine of Truth. Accordingly, equanimity remains an extremely supportive quality for the Perfection of Wisdom.

While performing a meritorious philanthropic activity one can become angry when an opponent obstructs it and as a result the act of merit becomes mitigated in its value. Similarly, an act of merit can lose its weight when the performer's attachment is directed towards a thing or a person after his or her heart. This establishes the fact that for the correct performanse of the Perfection of Effort also the Perfection of Equanimity is a must as a supporting booster. The two Perfections of Patience and of Equanimity are mutually supportive and complementary perfections. To be equanimous one has to be patient and *vice versa*.

Hence the last-mentioned pair of perfections act like parents for the remaining eight. Establishing oneself in truthfulness becomes difficult for the person who loves one party and hates another. Even the practice of Determination (*adiṭṭhāna*) is not easy for him. When one loves one party and hates another, very often it so happens that one is forced to become untruthful by breaking promises and also to deviate from one's Determination. This shows that for the accurate practice of Truthfulness and Determination also Equanimity is absolutely essential.

If the beneficiary of a person's philanthropy were to act treacherously towards the benefactor, that would produce deep anger and disgust in the latter. It is in such a situation that Equanimity comes to play its part. This is exeplified in the Mahākapi Jātaka (No. 407) where the Bodhisatta, born as a monkey-king, goes through the harrowing experience of the treachery of a human beneficiary of his but still keeps his cool and continues helping him by practising equanimity as a perfection.

Requesting a king to give away his children for slavery angers even those who hear about it. Yet, king Vessantara, (*J.* 547) renouncing all attachment to his children, performed this feat of giving away his children to Jūjaka, who made this unusual request. Instead of assaulting and driving away the stranger, the king could perform this feat because he had reached the acme of the Perfection of Equanimity.

### **Principles of the perfection**

The three Perfections of Renunciation, Loving-kindness and Patience are specially supportive of that of Equanimity. The person who has a predilection for renunciation can become equanimous by eliminating the special attachment that is generally generated towards one's gains and supporters. When one is endowed with patience and loving-kindness one can remain equanimous towards criminals without generating anger towards them. This shows that one should practise the Perfection of Equanimity along with those of Renunciation, Patience and Loving-kindness. Here, the practiser should view with equanimity both do-gooders and evil-doers in society by regarding both these types as merely acting according to an inborn instinct in beings.

When partaking of food the practiser should be mindful not of its taste but of its utilitarian value. This same principle should be applied to clothing and shelter as well. When gains come they too should be treated as something natural without becoming elated or developing an attachment to them. Same equanimity should be displayed at the losses as well. In the face of popularity and unpopularity also one should maintain the same attitude. If, in the latter case, one becomes entirely isolated one should contemplate on the fact that in this world all unions end up in separations. Praise and humiliation, prosperity and adversity are two other sets of such worldly conditions wherein one has to maintain equanimity. When seeing passion-generating objects like the female form also one should contemplate on their impermanent and impure nature and become equanimous. In the face of repulsive sights like decrepit old people or those suffering from highly dangerous diseases also one should develop equanimity by understanding such conditions to be the way of the world.

The story of the ascetic Bodhisatta Lomahaüsa (as recorded in the *Cariyāpiṭaka*.) is given as an example for the Perfection of Equanimity.

## Classifications

The equanimous attitude towards one's wealth, wife and children as well as towards those who are friendly or enemical towards these two possessions, is the ordinary Perfection of Equanimity. Its next higher level (*upa-pāramitā*) is the maintenance of the same attitude towards those who harm one's physical limbs as well as towards those who help to safeguard them. The highest level (*paramattha*) of the perfection is the maintenance of the same attitude towards both those who come to harm one's life as well as towards those who come to safeguard it.

## Characteristics of perfections

The characteristics of the ten perfections have been analysed on the basis of a four-fold traditional system as follows: Its i. Particular characteristic (*lakkhāṇa*) ii. Purpose (*kiicca-sampatti*) iii. Distinguishing feature (*paccupaṭṭhāna*) iv. Immediate cause (*padaṭṭhāna*). These are applied to each of the ten perfections as follows:

**Dāna:** i. Generosity ii. Elimination of covetousness iii. Non-attachment to the object of giving iv. The object of giving (the article).

**Sīla:** i. Disciplining of word and deed ii. Elimination of unwholesome habits iii. Purity of character iv. Shame and fear of unwholesome activity.

**Nekkhamma:** i. Renunciation of sensual pleasures and saūsāric becoming ii. Revelation of the miseries of those two iii. Not viewing these two with craving iv. Religious emotion (caused by meditating on them).

**Paññā:** i. Seeing the true nature of things ii. Clarification or the enlightening of the things to be seen in that manner. iii. Freedom from delusion regarding them iv. Concentration.

**Viriya:** i. Effort ii. Support iii. Absence of retrogression iv. Religious emotion.

**Patience:** i. Forbearance ii. Equanimity in both prosperity and adversity iii. Remaining free from collision courses in the face of opposition iv. Knowledge of things in their true nature.

**Truthfulness:** i. Not misleading others ii. Revealing the true state of things iii. Pleasantness of speech iv. Avoidance of wrong-doing.

**Resolution:** i. Firm resolution in the fulfilment of the conditions necessary for *bodhi* ii. Overcoming opposition to their fulfilment iii. Steadfastness in their fulfilment iv. Those conditions themselves.

**Loving-kindness:** i. Helpful attitude towards all beings ii. Philanthropy and elimination of hatred iii. Mildness in dealing with others iv. Enjoying the pleasantness of others.

**Equanimity:** i. Ability to stay equanimous ii. Ability to treat faithful and unfaithful as well as pleasant and unpleasant things with equanimity iii. Overcoming anger and attachment iv. Contemplating on the people's subordination to their *kamma*.

**Corruption of perfections:** Just as certain objects become depreciated in value through exposure to elements like sun, rain, wind etc., the perfections too become soiled and depreciated in quality through the operation of defilements among which craving leads the way (*taṇhādīhi parāmaṭṭhabhāvo pāramīnāū saūkilesa.*) Before, during or after performing an act of merit as part of a perfection, if the performer wishes that through its merit he would achieve prosperity or receive praise, fame or respect or subdue others etc., that would amount to polluting the perfection. It only weakens the power of its merits, but does not negate the perfection completely.

The way in which a perfection becomes befouled is when a practiser of generosity discriminates regarding the objects to be given as well as regarding the recipients by thinking "I'll give this but not this. I'll give to him but not to this person" etc..

The Perfection of *sīla* becomes devalued when the practiser discriminates people-wise, time-wise or object-wise in the following manner: "I'll get such and such people killed and such and such people spared: I'll do so at such and such a time and not at such and such a time."

The defiling of the Perfection of Renunciation occurs when one discriminates regarding the sensual objects and the states of becoming thus: "Such an such a sensual object should be enjoyed, sought after and retained while such and such a sensual object should be avoided and not enjoyed: rebirth should be sought after in such and such a

state and not in such and such a state.”

The Perfection of Wisdom becomes defiled when one distinguishes oneself and others as “I” “he,” “my,” “his” etc..

The Perfection of Effort becomes defiled when one discriminates between inactivity and activity thus: “here I would not make any effort, while here I should work in a great hurry.”

The Perfection of Patience becomes defiled when one discriminates between one’s own people and outsiders in the following manner: “so and so is a member of our family, a relative, a villager of mine, a compatriot and therefore his wrong-doings should be tolerated: but I cannot do the same regarding outsiders.”

The Perfection of Truth becomes corrupted when one considers things unseen as seen, unheard as heard and unspoken as spoken etc. and also in the two situations where if, by speaking the truth if there is a disadvantage, then one speaks the untruth or if, by speaking the untruth some good were to happen, then also one speaks the untruth.

Contemplating on the drawbacks of the requisites of enlightenment and also on teachings opposed to these requisites constitute the corruption of the Perfection of Resolution.

Discriminating between one’s friends and enemies in practising the Perfection of Loving-kindness comprises its corruption.

Special discrimination between what is welcome and unwelcome (*iṭṭha-anīṭṭha*) comprises the corruption of the Perfection of Equanimity.

### **Purity of perfections**

Here ‘purity’ implies that the perfections practised are powerful enough to convey the practiser to the goal of perfect enlightenment. It also implies that they have not become enfeebled by defilements such as craving, views, pride, anger, ill-will, rage, malice, envy, jealousy, deceit, treachery, selfishness, quarrelsomeness, mental intoxication, indolence and also that they are not defiled by the diverse forms of discrimination listed above.

### **Advisory stanzas**

“Viewing indolence as something frightful, as the root of all defilements and the destroyer of all good, treat effort, its opposite, as the remover of all dangers and be energetic at all times—this is the advice of the Buddhas.

“Viewing disputing (confrontation) as something frightful and treating its opposite, non-confrontation, as a haven, seek peace at all times—this is the advice of the Buddhas.

“Viewing negligence as something frightful, and diligence, its opposite as a haven, practise the Noble Eightfold Path—this is the advice of the Buddhas.”

*(Cariyāpiṭaka)*

END





