PEACE

IN THE BUDDHA'S DISCOURSES

A Compilation and Discussion by

Dennis Candy

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The Buddha's discourses as recorded in the Pali Canon contain many references to the value of *santi*, or peace, at both the personal and social levels. The most significant of these references have been carefully selected and brought together into this single volume to help those who are interested gain an understanding of the full range and depth of what the Buddha taught about this important subject.

The extracts have been selected with the aim of covering the whole range of references to peace in the Pali discourses, from the individual's inner mental state, through everyday social actions, to the social and governmental levels. The extracts are linked by discussions and comments aimed at clarifying the practical implications of the Buddha's teachings, particularly for lay followers of the Buddha.

These teachings are of universal significance and are as relevant for the world today as they were at the time they were first delivered.

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"People generally find pleasure in a life of excitement, take delight in excitement and enjoy excitement. But when the peaceful Dhamma is taught by the Tathāgata, people wish to listen to it, give ear to it and try to understand it."

Aṅguttara Nikāya, 4:128

Contents

Notes

All quotations from the suttas are from the translations listed in the Bibliography with a few amendments. They are reproduced by permission. Interpolations within square brackets are by the author, those within rounded brakets are by the translator.

References to the male gender ('he,' 'him,' etc.) when referring to the Buddha's disciples, followers and listeners should be taken as applying equally to women, except where the context renders this inappropriate.

ABBREVIATIONS

AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
Cv	Cūḷavagga (Vinaya)
Dhp	Dhammapada
Dhp-a	Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
It	Itivuttaka
J	Jātaka
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
Mv	Mahāvagga (Vinaya)
BPS	Buddhist Publication Society
SN	Saṃyutta Nikāya
Sn	Suttanipāta
Ud	Udāna
Vin	Vinaya

The numbers following the abbreviations at the end of each quoted passage refer to the text numbering system used in the relevant translation listed in the Bibliography.

INTRODUCTION

It can rightly be said that the teachings of the Buddha are so deeply imbued with the spirit of peace (*santi*) that the two cannot be separated. This is true whether we consider the Buddha's teachings at their basic and popular level, at their middle level as practised by more committed followers, and at the level of their fulfilment. To live a life free of violence, fear and hatred is the wish of the vast majority of ordinary people; peaceful ways and intentions characterize the way of life of those aspiring to enlightenment; and the enlightened person is described as "a sage at peace" (*muni santa*) and Nibbāna as "the peaceful state" (*santaṃ padaṃ*).

The Pāli suttas or discourses, the oldest and most complete record that we have of the Buddha's teachings, contain many other terms that refer to states closely related to peace which the Buddha said are worth aspiring to. These terms include: calmness (*sama*), tranquillity (*samatha*), contentment (*santuṭṭhi*), harmlessness (*ahiṃsā*), non-violence (*avihiṃsā*) and peacefulness (*vūpasama*), Many other frequently recurring Pāli terms at the heart of the Buddha's teachings are implicitly and deeply related to peace: *upekkhā* (equanimity), *virāga* (dispassion), *visuddhi* (purity), *nirodha* (cessation), and, above all, the various synonyms of Nibbāna itself: burnt out fire, freedom, the unbound, stillness, the untroubled, the serene, the highest peace, etc.

A number of the Buddha's discourses draw out the close mutual relationship between inner, personal peace and outer, social peace. They tell us, for example, that people with peaceful minds will interact peacefully with others and will encourage others to do likewise. They also tell us that a society not at peace with itself (due, for example, to the existence of widespread poverty) will produce anger and resentment in the minds of its people resulting in theft, crime and other forms of social disruption.

The aim of this study is to bring together in a single collection the most significant teachings by the Buddha on this important topic. To assist the reader in getting a deeper understanding of the profound depths of what the Buddha taught, the full context of the Buddha's words is given, rather than short phrases or extracts. The reader is also encouraged to make an effort to read and to understand the complete discourses themselves, which many more can do thanks to the excellent translations from the Pāli which are now available.

In considering these extracts from the ancient Buddhist texts some readers may find themselves sceptical about accepting the existence of beings such as devas and asuras, and places such as heaven and hell and similar terms referred to in early Buddhist cosmology. If that is the case, it is suggested that you put those doubts to one side and simply pay attention to the spiritual and ethical message underlying the words of the Buddha and the first arahants. You can also use your imagination to 'translate' some of these cosmological terms into types of living beings and mental or physical states that you are familiar with.

It also worth bearing in mind that the Buddha said that he taught the Dhamma not for status, prestige or fame, not for the acquisition of power or influence, not to demonstrate his own superiority, and not for his own benefit or happiness. He taught the Dhamma and established the Sangha of monks and nuns out of compassion for living beings, for the welfare and happiness of all people, and to help us free ourselves from our own self-made misery. It could therefore be said that every word the Buddha and the early arahants uttered had two closely interconnected objectives: to give us advice on reducing the amount of suffering (*dukkha*) that we experience, and to guide us in a way of living that will bring us complete liberation from all suffering.

I

PEACE AND "THE WELFARE AND HAPPINESS OF THE MANY"

> *What is the one thing, O Gotama,*
> *Whose killing you approve?*
>
> *The killing of anger, O devatā, with its poisoned root and honeyed tip; this is the killing the noble ones praise. For having slain that, one does not sorrow.* (SN 1:71)

In the collection of discourses known as the *Dīgha Nikāya* it is recorded that Sakka, the ruler of the gods in the Tāvatiṃsa[1] heaven, once visited the Buddha and asked him the following question:

[I/1] "By what fetters, sir, are beings bound—devas, humans, asuras, nāgas, gandhabbas and whatever other kinds [of beings] there may be—whereby, although they wish to live without hate, harming, hostility or enmity, and in peace, yet they live in hate, harming one another, hostile and malign?" (DN 21.2.1)

The core of this question, expressed in the second half, is simple and straightforward, and many of us will have pondered on it ourselves; yet it is astonishingly difficult to answer, for it is deeply puzzling and disturbing that human beings, capable of doing so much that is good and beneficial, are also capable of doing so much that is destructive and harmful. In his reply to Sakka's question the Buddha first mentioned the bonds of envy and greed as the immediate causes of our hatred and hostility towards others. These, in turn, he traced back to the habits of body and mind which constantly encourage the arising of further unwholesome physical and mental behaviour. This is a deep and complex process which largely takes place beneath the surface of our everyday

1. For information about the terms mentioned here see Glossary.

awareness and is dealt with in more detail in Part II.

In order to understand what the Buddha said about the roots of hatred and enmity and the way of living that we need to follow of we are to live with both internal mental peace and some degree of external social peace it is helpful to start by getting a broader perspective of what he said about mankind's propensity for conflict, strife and violence. Whilst doing this we will also look briefly at some of the practical suggestions the Buddha made to help us restrain our impulses to anger and violence in everyday situations.

THE BACKGROUND

Concern about the issue of conflict and violence and the suffering and distress associated with them may have contributed to Siddhartha Gotama's decision to leave his comfortable life in the palaces which his father had built for him and begin the noble search for "the supreme state of sublime peace." The *Suttanipāta* records that the Buddha once described how mankind's tendency to resort to violence had worried him when he was still striving for enlightenment:

[I/2] Fear results from resorting to violence—just look at how people quarrel and fight! But let me tell you now of the kind of dismay and terror that I have felt.

Seeing people struggling like fish, writhing in shallow water with enmity against one another, I became afraid.

At one time, I had wanted to find some place where I could take shelter, but I never saw any such place. There is nothing in this world that is solid at base and not a part of it that is changeless.

I had seen them all trapped in mutual conflict and that is why I had felt so repelled. But then I noticed something buried deep in their hearts. It was—I could just make it out—a dart. (Sn 935–938)

The immensity of the problem caused by the presence of this "dart" buried deep in the hearts of human beings is shown by the fact that even after his enlightenment the Buddha at first considered it would be fruitless to attempt to teach the Dhamma to others. This

is how he later described to the monks the thoughts that went through his mind at that time about mankind's deep commitment to a way of life that produced so many harmful consequences:

[I/3] "I considered: 'This Dhamma that I have attained is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise. But people delight in worldliness, take delight in worldliness, rejoice in worldliness. It is hard for such people to see this truth, namely, specific conditionality, dependent origination.[2] And it is hard to see this truth, namely, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all attachments, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna. If I were to teach the Dhamma, others would not understand me, and that would be wearying and troublesome for me.' … Considering thus, my mind inclined to inaction rather than to teaching the Dhamma." (MN 26.19)

At this point it is recorded that the Brahmā Sahampati, a powerful and wise god who had been following the newly enlightened Buddha's thoughts with his own mind, decided to intervene. He left the Brahma-world where he resided and appeared before the Buddha saying that the world would be lost and would perish if the Blessed One did not teach the Dhamma to others. Acting on this, the Buddha surveyed the people of the world and realized that though there were many with dust in their eyes and with dull faculties, there were some who saw more clearly and had keen faculties. Reflecting on this he told the Brahmā Sahampati that he would, after all, attempt to teach the Dhamma. As we know, he then spent the rest of his long life doing just that, and also training others to teach the Dhamma, with great success.

However, despite his accomplishment in spreading the Dhamma and the peaceful way of living that was part of it, the Buddha would sometimes acknowledge that mankind's vicious

2. Dependent origination *(paṭiccasamuppāda)* is the Buddha's teaching of the conditionality of all physical and mental phenomena. For more details see: *Buddhist Dictionary,* Nyanatiloka Thera, BPS, 1980, 2007.

behaviour was a deep source of concern and was difficult to change. Pessa, an elephant driver's son who was a lay follower of the Buddha once said to him:

[I/4] "It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous how amid man's tangle, corruption, and deceptions, the Blessed One knows the welfare and harm of beings. For humankind is a tangle but the animal is open enough. Venerable sir, I can drive an elephant to be tamed, and in the time it takes to make a trip back and forth in Campā, that elephant will show every kind of deception, duplicity, crookedness, and fraud. But those who are our slaves, messengers, and servants behave in one way with the body, in another way by speech, while their minds work in still another way. It is wonderful, venerable sir; it is marvellous how amid man's tangle, corruption, and deceptions, the Blessed One knows the welfare and harm of beings. For humankind is a tangle but the animal is open enough."

"So it is, Pessa, so it is! [the Buddha responded] humankind is a tangle but the animal is open enough." (MN 51.4–5)

We know from the next part of the discourse, and many others as well, that the Buddha regarded this "tangled" aspect of mankind's behaviour as true not only of the slaves, messengers and servants mentioned by Pessa, but of people in general, including kings, nobles, householders, merchants and even his own monks[3]. This, after all, is what makes saṃsāra what it is—the everyday world characterized by ever-arising dukkha[4], or suffering, and by ignorance about both the cause of that suffering and its remedy. This is how the Buddha once described it:

[I/5] "Monks, this saṃsāra is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. What do you think, monks,

3. On this last point see MN 40.
4. For further information about the meanings of *saṃsāra* and *dukkha* see Glossary. On most occasions these two Pāli words have been left untranslated, there being no single English words which convey the broad and deep range of their meanings.

which is more: the stream of blood that you have shed when you were beheaded as you roamed and wandered on through this long course—this or the water in the four great oceans?"

"As we understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, venerable sir, the stream of blood that we have shed when our heads were cut off as we roamed and wandered on through this long course—this alone is more than the water in the four great oceans."

"Good, good, monks! It is good that you understand the Dhamma taught by me in such a way. The stream of blood that you have shed as you roamed and wandered on through this long course—this alone is more than the water in the four great oceans. For a long time, monks, you have been cows, and when as cows you were beheaded, the stream of blood that you shed is greater than the waters in the four great oceans. For a long time you have been buffaloes, sheep, goats, deer, chickens, and pigs… and the stream of blood that you shed [as these animals undergoing slaughter] is greater than the waters in the four great oceans.

"For a long time you have been arrested as burglars, highwaymen, and adulterers, and when you were beheaded, the stream of blood that you shed is greater than the water in the four great oceans." (SN 15:13)

Following his enlightenment, it appears that the Buddha at first taught to wandering spiritual seekers, ascetics, brahmin householders and others who were already sincerely trying to follow a spiritual path that they hoped would lead to peace and happiness and the ending of dukkha. Soon there was a Sangha of monks, some of whom had become enlightened and were also teaching the Dhamma. When the total number of enlightened monks, arahants, had reached 61, the Buddha called them together and instructed them as follows:

[I/6] "Go now and wander for the welfare and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare and happiness of gods and men. Teach the Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle and good in the end, with the meaning and the letter. Explain a holy life that is utterly perfect and pure. There are beings with little dust on their eyes who will be lost through not hearing the Dhamma. Some will understand the Dhamma."[5] (Mv I.11)

This instruction to teach the Dhamma "for the welfare and happiness of the many" took place shortly after the conversion of a merchant, known only as "Yasa's father," who "was the first adherent in the world to take the Triple Refuge."[6]

GUIDANCE FOR LAYPEOPLE

From that time onwards the Buddha and the arahants not only continued to convince substantial numbers of other men to 'go forth' under his dispensation but they also began to gain increasing numbers of lay followers. These people included not only 'householders' (male heads of family units) but also their wives, children and other relatives. Later, women were permitted to 'go forth' as bhikkhunīs, or nuns.

As the years went by wealthy and influential individuals, such as kings, members of royal families and other rulers, government officials and merchants, also became devout followers and supporters of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. For more than twenty-five hundred years there have been many thousands of millions of people in South, East and Central Asia who have counted themselves in one form or another as followers of the Buddha and who have tried to adhere to the Buddha's teachings in their daily lives. There are also increasing numbers of people accepting the teachings for the first time in the West, and once again in India where it had almost completely died out.

Over the centuries up until the present there have been ebbs and flows in the extent and depth of this mass adherence to Buddhism. Since Buddhist rulers have, in general, refrained from using the religion as an excuse for warfare or conquest, it would appear that throughout Buddhism's more than two thousand five hundred years of history the vast majority of the religion's new adherents have become so by choice.

The discourses indicate that the Buddha himself refrained from becoming personally involved in matters relating to the

5. Quoted in *The Life of the Buddha*, Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, BPS, 1992, p.52
6. Op.cit. p49

governance of the various states in which he wandered and taught the Dhamma. During his lifetime a number of kings and other powerful people became his followers and sometimes asked him for advice. The Buddha usually responded by giving general guidance, rather than specifying a particular course of action, although at least one discourse states that the Buddha once gave specific political advice to the republican Vajjian confederation (DN 16.1.5).

Moreover, there is no indication from the discourses that the Buddha or any of the leading monks or nuns ever took up any official role outside the Sangha. This is despite the fact that such involvement might seem to be an important way in which a uniquely wise and enlightened teacher, such as the Buddha was, could help to bring about greater harmony and peace amongst people. Once, during the year after his enlightenment when Māra[7] was still following him about and trying to tempt him back to worldly ways, the following event took place:

[I/7] On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Kosalans in a small forest hut in the Himalayan region. Then, when the Blessed One was alone in seclusion, a reflection arose in his mind thus: "Is it possible to exercise rulership righteously: without killing and without instigating others to kill, without confiscating and without instigating others to confiscate, without sorrowing and without instigating others to cause sorrow?"

Then Māra the Evil One, having known with his mind the reflection in the Blessed One's mind, approached the Blessed One and said to him: "Venerable sir, let the Blessed One exercise rulership righteously: without killing and without instigating others to kill, without confiscating and without instigating others to confiscate, without sorrowing and without instigating others to cause sorrow."

7. Māra can be seen as a real being or as the personification of those tendencies that hinder beings in progressing towards enlightenment, or as both. It was Māra who tried to divert the Bodhisatta away from enlightenment when he was seated at the foot of the bodhi tree. For more details about Māra, see Glossary.

"But what do you see, Evil One, that you speak thus to me?"

"Venerable sir, the Blessed One has developed and cultivated the four bases for spiritual power[8], made them a vehicle, made them a basis, stabilized them, exercised himself in them, and fully perfected them. And, venerable sir, if the Blessed One wishes, he need only resolve that the Himalayas, the king of mountains, should become gold, and it could turn to gold."

(The Blessed One)

"If there were a mountain made of gold,
Made entirely of solid gold,
Not double this would suffice for one:
Having known this, fare evenly[9].

"How could a person incline to sensual pleasures
Who has seen the source whence suffering springs?
Having known acquisition as a tie in the world,
A person should train for its removal."

Then Māra the Evil One, realizing, "The Blessed One knows me, the Fortunate One knows me," sad and disappointed, disappeared right there. (SN 4:20)

Here we read of the Buddha consciously and deliberately rejecting Māra's suggestion that he might use his great wisdom as a Buddha to "rule righteously" and to govern a society where there would be no killing and no sorrowing. The fact that the suggestion is recorded as coming from Māra indicates that the Buddha immediately saw that the idea, though inviting, was so full of lurking dangers that it would be unwise to even attempt to put it into practice himself.

So rather than attempting to "rule righteously" from above, the discourses record the Buddha advising lay people in very practical ways how to live peacefully and harmoniously and there is no doubt that the pivotal teaching here was the practice of morality (*sīla*). Once he was passing through a village called

8. *Iddhipāda—s*ee Glossary
9. i.e. "live without preferences"

Bamboo Gate and the villagers went to him and asked for guidance on how to live:

[I/8] "… let Master Gotama teach us the Dhamma in such a way that we might dwell in a home crowded with children! May we enjoy Kāsian sandalwood! May we wear garlands, scents, and unguents! May we receive gold and silver! With the break-up of the body, after death, may we be reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world!"

"I will teach you, householders, a Dhamma exposition applicable to oneself. Listen to that and attend closely, I will speak."

"Yes, sir," those brahmin householders of Bamboo Gate replied. The Blessed One said this:

"What, householders, is the Dhamma exposition applicable to oneself? Here, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: 'I am one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die; I desire happiness and am averse to suffering. Since I am one who wishes to live and does not wish to die, who desires happiness and is averse to suffering, if someone were to take my life, that would not be to my pleasure and agreement. Now if I were to take the life of another—of one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die, who desires happiness and is averse to suffering—that would not be to their pleasure and agreement either. What is displeasing and disagreeable to me is displeasing and disagreeable to the other too. How can I inflict upon another what is displeasing and disagreeable to me?' Having reflected thus, he himself abstains from the destruction of life, exhorts others to abstain from the destruction of life, and speaks in praise of abstinence from the destruction of life. Thus this bodily conduct of his is purified in three respects." (SN 55:7)

The Buddha continues by using the same reasoning in relation to other types of behaviour that tend to give rise to conflicts between people: taking what is not given, committing adultery, speaking falsely about others, dividing people from their friends, speaking harshly to people, and indulging in frivolous and idle chatter. We can note here that these seven guidelines, when followed, all have the effect of encouraging harmonious and peaceful interactions and relationships with others.

Secondly, we can note that the Buddha phrases his arguments to encourage the villagers to put themselves in the shoes of others:

if you wouldn't like these things done to you, you can imagine that others wouldn't like these things done to them, either; therefore let us all refrain from doing these things.

Thirdly, the Buddha is teaching here a simple method for judging whether or not any particular action should be done or not. It is then a straightforward matter to extend this basic principle of not doing to others what we would not like done to ourselves to many other aspects of behaviour between people[10]. For example, because we do not want others to practice bullying, violence or cheating towards ourselves or members of our own family, then we can easily understand why others would not like it if we behave in those ways towards them. Or, on the positive side, just as we appreciate it when others with whom we have dealings are polite or keep their word, so it is easy to understand that they will be pleased when we also act by those standards towards them. It is worth noting that this general principle can also be applied to interactions not just between individuals and families but between communities, governments and even nations.

Fourthly, the Buddha not only encourages the villagers to refrain from doing to others what they would not like done to themselves, but also exhorts them to urge others to likewise refrain and to speak up in praise of such refraining.

In addition he tells them that when a noble disciple also possesses confirmed confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and possesses unblemished virtues dear to the noble ones which lead to concentration of mind, then:

[I/9] "… if he wishes he could by himself declare of himself: 'I am one finished with hell, finished with the animal realm, finished with the domain of ghosts, finished with the plane of misery, the bad destinations, the nether world. I am a stream-enterer[11], no longer bound to the nether world, fixed in destiny, with enlightenment as my

10. In fact, the essence of this teaching is found in most of the world's major religions that have endured and in English speaking countries it is often known as "the Golden Rule."
11. *Sotāpanna*: see Glossary.

destination."' (SN 55:7)

Here, in this wonderfully concise and uplifting discourse, we savour just a small taste of what a consummate teacher to lay people the Buddha must have been. As we have seen, he not only encourages the villagers to live in a harmonious and non-contentious way by appealing to their own experience and self-interest, but he also encourages them to consider that even though they may be people who at present wish to live "in homes crowded with children," and who want to enjoy the pleasures of life, yet the road to enlightenment is open to them as well if they strive to follow his teachings. The discourse concludes by recording that after hearing his talk the Brahmin householders of Bamboo Gate went to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha for refuge as lay followers for life.

There are many other instances in the discourses where the Buddha praises and encourages harmonious and peaceful living. Once he was asked by a Koliyan family man named Dīghajānu to teach the Dhamma to himself and other lay people "in a way that will lead to our welfare and happiness both in the present life and in the future life as well."

In replying the Buddha said that there are eight skills which when thoroughly practised led to the welfare and happiness of a man and his family in this very life. These skills are: persistence in one's work; protection of one's property and wealth righteously gained; good friendship; wisely balanced living; faith in the Blessed One's enlightenment; adherence to the five precepts; generosity; and having wisdom about impermanence. (AN 8:54)

The core of the Buddha's teachings on peaceful and harmonious living was the guidance that he gave on morality. The basic practical form of that, applicable to all people without exception, was the five precepts. In the following passage the Buddha outlines the five precepts to a lay follower and also emphasizes the importance not only of following the teachings oneself, but also encouraging others to follow them by living for the welfare both of oneself and others:

[I/10] On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Kapilavatthu, in the Banyan-tree Monastery. There, Mahānāma the Sakyan approached the Blessed One and, after paying homage to him, sat down at one side. So seated, he addressed the Blessed One and asked: "How, Lord, is one a lay follower?"

"If, Mahānāma, one has gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, one is a lay follower."

"But how, Lord, is a lay follower virtuous?"

"If, Mahānāma, a lay follower abstains from the destruction of life, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from wines, liquors and intoxicants which are the basis for negligence, the lay follower is virtuous."…

"And how, Lord, does a lay follower live for the welfare of both himself and others?"

"If, Mahānāma, a lay follower himself has faith, virtue and generosity, and also encourages others in gaining them; if he himself likes to visit monks and listen to the good Dhamma, and also encourages others to do so; if he himself retains in mind the teachings heard and carefully examines the meaning of those teachings, and also encourages others to do so; if having understood both the letter and the meaning, he himself lives in conformity with the Dhamma, and also encourages others to do so—in such a case, Mahānāma, a lay follower lives for the welfare of both himself and others." (AN 8:25)

Taking Life

To refrain from taking life is the first amongst the basic moral practices conducive to peace and harmony that the Buddha exhorted all people without exception to follow. It is referred to frequently in the Pāli discourses not only as the first of the five precepts but in many other contexts as well:

1 The Buddha tells the brahmins of Sāla that "Abandoning the killing of living beings... with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kind, abiding compassionate to all living beings" is the first of ten types of good conduct which are in accord with Dhamma and lead to rebirth in a happy destination (MN 41.8 & 42).

2 When explaining to Sigālaka, a householder's son, "the right way to pay homage to the six directions according to the Noble discipline," the Buddha puts "the taking of life" as the first of the "four defilements of action that have to be abandoned" (DN 31.3).

3 "Killing living beings, being murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings," is one of three types of bodily conduct (stealing and sexual misconduct being the other two) which cause unwholesome states to increase and wholesome states to decrease (MN 114.5). This discourse is actually a discourse given by the arahant Sāriputta[12], one of the Buddha's chief disciples, which the Buddha listens to and wholeheartedly endorses. At the end of it he points out that if the detailed meaning of what is being said in this connection were properly understood by all noble disciples, brahmins, merchants, workers, as well as gods, nobles and rulers "it would lead to the welfare and happiness of the world for a long time."

4 On another occasion the Buddha describes ten "successes in living caused by wholesome volition, issuing in happiness, resulting in happiness." The first of these refers to "a person who abstains from the destruction of life; with the rod and weapon laid aside, [who] is conscientious and kindly and dwells compassionate towards all living beings." (AN 10:206)

5 "Abandoning the taking of life... without stick or sword, scrupulous, compassionate, trembling for the welfare of all living beings" is one of the elementary and basic matters of morality for which ordinary people praise the Tathāgata (DN 1.1.8).

6 In the group of discourses known as "The Good and the Bad" in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* "abstinence from the destruction of life" is the first of ten personal qualities which the Buddha characterizes as good, noble, wholesome, bright, beneficial, producing happiness, to be pursued and to be realized, as being Dhamma (AN 10:178–197). It is also significant that eight of the remaining nine good qualities are also explicitly concerned with promoting peaceful and harmonious relations with other people

12. For information concerning the arahant Sāriputta see Glossary.

and other beings. These are: to abstain from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false, divisive and harsh speech and from frivolous chatter; to not covet what others have; and to practice goodwill.

The last of the ten good qualities is to have right view, which at the basic level includes recognition that "there is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed, there is fruit and result of good and bad actions" (MN 117.7). Right view (*sammā diṭṭhi*) has a central role in the Buddha's teachings and both understanding and practising it are essential conditions for the development of the other training principles of the Noble Eightfold Path, and for experiencing a happy and peaceful life both now and in the future.

KAMMA—OR ACTIONS WITH INTENTION

Right view concerning actions done with intention gives us essential guidance on how to distinguish between those acts of body speech and mind which will have beneficial results for ourselves and others and those acts which will have harmful results. In fact, this conception that "there is fruit and result of good and bad actions" is a basic principle of life taught by the Buddha that must be understood if we are to have any chance of leading a life that is wholesome and peaceful (MN 60.5–28; Dhp 1 & 2).

This vital teaching that the good and bad actions that we carry out have their appropriate result is implicit in the discourse dealing with the ten acts which lead to success in living referred to earlier. That discourse ends with the Buddha saying the following:

[I/11] "Just as a perfect throw of dice, when thrown upwards will come to rest firmly wherever it falls, similarly, due to success in living caused by wholesome volition, beings will be reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.

"I declare, monks, that actions willed, performed and accumulated will not become extinct as long as their results have not been experienced, be it in this life, in the next life or in subsequent future lives. And as long as these results of actions willed, performed and

accumulated have not been experienced, there will be no end to suffering, I declare." (AN 10.206) [13]

In the Buddha's teachings peace is not only inseparable from morality but is also closely interwoven with the working of *kamma* and *vipāka*. Kamma refers to intentional actions and vipāka to the consequences experienced by the being who does them. They constitute the two principal components of the universal law of kamma which the Buddha discovered at the time of his enlightenment (MN 36.40). It was because of the enormous implications of what he had discovered that the Buddha laid such great emphasis in his teachings on the kammic results of intentionally killing or injuring living beings, particularly the outcome when rebirth takes place. In the next extract the Buddha is asked by Subha, a Brahmin student, the reason why human beings are seen to be inferior and superior, with different life spans, degrees of health or intelligence, and other fortunate or unfortunate characteristics:

[I/12] "Student, [the Buddha said] beings are owners of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior."

"I do not understand in detail the meaning of Master Gotama's statement, which he spoke in brief without expounding the meaning in detail. It would be good if Master Gotama would teach me the Dhamma so that I might understand in detail the meaning of Master Gotama's statement."

"Then, student, listen and attend closely to what I shall say."

"Yes, sir," the brahmin student Subha replied. The Blessed One said this:

13. It should be noted that in other discourse (AN 3:110, 4:232) the Buddha points out that the accumulation of kamma is a very complex process involving the interaction of both wholesome and unwholesome intentional acts. In certain circumstances, negative kamma, for example, can be countered by the performance of actions with wholesome intentions.

"Here, student, some man or woman kills living beings and is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if on the dissolution of the body, after death, he does not reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell, but instead comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is short-lived. This is the way, student, that leads to short life, namely, one kills living beings and is murderous, bloody–handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings.

"But here, student, some man or woman, abandoning the killing of living beings, abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if on the dissolution of the body, after death, he does not reappear in a happy destination, in the heavenly world, but instead comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is long-lived. This is the way, student, that leads to long life, namely abandoning the killing of living beings, one abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, one abides compassionate to all living beings.

"Here, student, some man or woman is given to injuring beings with the hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if on the dissolution of the body, after death, he does not reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell, but instead comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is sickly. This is the way, student that leads to sickliness, namely, one is given to injuring beings with the hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife.

"But here, student, some man or woman is not given to injuring beings with the hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the

body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if instead he comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is healthy. This is the way, student, that leads to health, namely, one is not given to injuring beings with the hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife." (MN 135.4–8)

According to the Buddha's insight into the working of kamma, actions motivated by harmless and beneficial intentions result in pleasant experiences either now or in the future for the person doing them, while those motivated by harmful or malevolent intentions result in unpleasant experiences. From our own experience we know that amongst the most unpleasant and therefore unpeaceful experiences that we can have are those that result from our own folly, our own unwholesome behaviour[14]. These tormenting experiences can take the form of punishments inflicted on us by others or by society's legal institutions, misfortunes experienced in later lives, inner mental anguish and guilt, or torments experienced after death in lower forms of existence such as that of an animal or a being in hell. The kammic consequences of unwholesome behaviour, particularly those acts that affect other people, are described by the Buddha in considerable detail in the *Bālapaṇḍita Sutta* ('Fools and Wise Men') in the *Majjhima Nikāya* from which the following is an extract:

[I/13] "Monks, there are these three characteristics of a fool, signs of a fool. What three? Here a fool is one who thinks bad thoughts, speaks bad words, and does bad deeds. If a fool were not so, how would the wise know him thus: 'This person is a fool, an untrue man'? But because a fool is one who thinks bad thoughts, speaks bad words, and does bad deeds, the wise know him thus: 'This person is a fool, an untrue man.'

"A fool feels pain and grief here and now in three ways. If a fool is seated in an assembly or along a street or in a square and people there are discussing certain pertinent and relevant matters, then, if the fool is one who kills living beings, takes what is not given, misconducts himself in sensual pleasures, speaks falsehood, indulges in wine, liquor,

14. See *The Dhammapada*, Ch.5: 'The Fool' & Ch.6 : 'The Wise Man.'

and intoxicants, which are the basis of negligence, he thinks: 'These people are discussing certain pertinent and relevant matters; these things are found in me, and I am seen engaging in those things.' This is the first kind of pain and grief that a fool feels here and now.

"Again, when a robber culprit is caught, a fool sees kings having many kinds of torture inflicted on him: having him flogged with whips, beaten with canes, [a long list of painful punishments follows] … and having his head cut off with a sword. Then the fool thinks thus: 'Because of such evil actions as those, when a robber culprit is caught, kings have many kinds of torture inflicted on him: they have him flogged with whips… [as above]… and have his head cut off with a sword. Those things are found in me, and I am seen engaging in those things.' This is the second kind of pain and grief that a fool feels here and now.

"Again, when a fool is on his chair or on his bed or resting on the ground, then the evil actions that he did in the past—his bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct—cover him, overspread him, and envelop him. Just as the shadow of a great mountain peak in the evening covers, overspreads, and envelopes the earth, so too, when a fool is on his chair or on his bed or resting on the ground, then the evil actions that he did in the past—his bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct—cover him, overspread him, and envelop him. Then the fool thinks: 'I have not done what is good, I have not done what is wholesome, I have not made myself a shelter from anguish. I have done what is evil, I have done what is cruel, I have done what is wicked. When I pass away, I shall go to the destination of those who have not done what is good… who have done what is wicked.' He sorrows, grieves and laments, he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. This is the third kind of pain and grief that a fool feels here and now.

"A fool who has given himself over to misconduct of body, speech, and mind, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, even in hell. Were it rightly speaking to be said of anything: 'That is utterly unwished for, utterly undesired, utterly disagreeable,' it is of hell that, rightly speaking, this should be said, so much so that it is hard to find a simile for the suffering in hell[15]." (MN 129.3ff)

This principle that intentional killing, whether or not accompanied by hatred, is always unwholesome and must be abandoned is in marked contrast to some of the teachings from texts in other religious traditions.

For example in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which was probably composed in India shortly after the lifetime of the Buddha, we read of the warrior Arjuna being persuaded by the god Krishna that the righteous killing of wrongdoers, when undertaken as part of one's duty to the state, the ruler, and to God or some other accepted higher authority and carried out dispassionately, without any mental state of hatred or ill-will, is not something we should have remorse about, it is not wrong and it will not have unpleasant results for us[16]. It is *dharma yuddhayo* (Skt)—just or righteous war.

In contrast to this the Pāli discourses record a discussion in which Yodhājīva, a professional soldier or mercenary, asks the Buddha about the fate of warriors killed in battle:

[I/14] Then Yodhājīva the professional soldier approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him: "Venerable sir, I have heard it said by mercenaries of old in the lineage of teachers: 'When a mercenary is one who strives and exerts himself in battle, if others slay him and finish him off while he is striving and exerting himself in battle, then with the break-up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the battle-slain devas.' What does the Blessed One say about that?"

"Enough, headman, let it be! Don't ask me that!"

A second time and a third time Yodhājīva the headman said: "Venerable sir, I have hard it said by mercenaries of old in the lineage of teachers: 'When a mercenary is one who strives and exerts himself in battle, if others slay him and finish him off while he is striving and

15. It is interesting that in the English language the word 'hell' can also refer to any unpleasant, unwanted or disturbing event, physical or mental, experienced in this present life, for example, acute feelings of regret, remorse or guilt and the painful 'pangs of conscience.'
16. See *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavad-Gītā*, Kashi Nath Upadhyaya, Motilal Banarsidass, 1971.

exerting himself in battle, then with the break-up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the battle-slain devas.' What does the Blessed One say about that?"

"Surely, headman, I am not getting through to you when I say, 'Enough headman, let it be! Don't ask me that!' But still, I will answer you. When, headman, a mercenary is one who strives and exerts himself in battle, his mind is already low, depraved, misdirected by the thought: 'Let these beings be slain, slaughtered, annihilated, destroyed, or exterminated.' If others then slay him and finish him off while he is striving and exerting himself in battle, then with the break-up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the 'Battle-Slain Hell.' But should he hold such a view as this: 'When a mercenary strives and exerts himself in battle, if others slay him and finish him off while he is striving and exerting himself in battle, then with the break-up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the battle-slain devas'—that is a wrong view on his part. For a person with wrong view, I say, there is one of two destinations: either hell or the animal realm."

When this was said, Yodhājīva the headman cried out and burst into tears. (The Blessed One said:) "So I did not get through to you when I said, 'Enough, headman, let it be! Don't ask me that!'"

"I am not crying, Venerable sir, because of what the Blessed One said to me, but because I have been tricked, cheated, and deceived for a long time by these mercenaries of old in the lineage of teachers who said: 'When a mercenary is one who strives and exerts himself in battle, then with the break-up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the battle-slain devas.' Magnificent, venerable sir!…" From today let the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life. (SN 42:3–5)

As if to emphasize the point being made, the wording of this discourse is repeated in relation to two other soldiers: Hatthāroha the Elephant Warrior and Assāroha the Cavalry Warrior. They ask the same question of the Buddha as did Yodhājīva and receive the same reply. We can note that the Buddha does not even consider the question of whether these soldiers were fighting a 'righteous' war. Simply to be engaged in the act of wanting to kill or harm another person at the moment of their own death seems to be enough to ensure dreadful kammic consequences for these soldiers.

The Question of Suicide

According to the ethical teachings of the Buddha, the same principles, outlined above, which are applicable to taking the life of another being, must also apply in the case of someone who takes, or attempts to take, their own life. In most instances, therefore, suicide will result in painful consequences in a future life or lives and is unwholesome and cannot be approved.

However, in the discourses there are a small number of references to monks who are recorded as taking their own lives and where those acts are not condemned by the Buddha as being unwholesome. Each of the monks concerned have attained very high levels of spiritual development. In two instances (those of Vakkali (SN 22:87) and Channa (SN 35:87) we are told that the monks are gravely ill and experience excruciating pains which are getting worse. In the third instance (that of Godhika [SN 4:23]) we are told that the monk had reached temporary liberation of mind six times, but each time had fallen away from it. On the seventh occasion he took the decision to end his own life while his mind was still liberated.

Vakkali and Godhika are said by the Buddha to have attained final Nibbāna before dying, whilst Channa is described by him as not taking up another body and that he "used the knife blamelessly." Although each of these monks was an arahant at the moment of death it is not unambiguously clear from the wording of the texts whether, in each case, this state was attained before each one took his own life or whether it occurred in the brief period between committing the act and death itself.

These individual cases are extremely rare, however, and in other instances of suicide by those who were not highly developed and were not suffering from tortuously painful fatal illnesses the Buddha immediately took steps to ensure that the circumstances leading to those suicides were not allowed to recur (e.g. SN 54:9).

In considering these extremely rare instances where the Buddha does not condemn the taking of ones own life it is worth reminding ourselves of the Buddha's criteria for what is wholesome and blameless. The Buddha's personal attendant,

Ānanda, was once asked by King Pasenadi what kind of behaviour is uncensured by wise recluses and brahmins. Ānanda's response (which he afterwards reported back to the Buddha and for which he received great praise) could easily serve as a good working description of the characteristics of what is wholesome and therefore righteous in terms of the Dhamma:

[I/15] "Now, venerable Ānanda," [King Pasenadi asked] "what kind of bodily behaviour is uncensored by wise recluses and brahmins?"

"Any bodily behaviour that is wholesome, great king."

"Now, venerable Ānanda, what kind of bodily behaviour is wholesome?"

"Any bodily behaviour that is blameless, great king."

"Now, venerable Ānanda, what kind of bodily behaviour is blameless?"

"Any bodily behaviour that does not bring affliction, great king."

"Now, venerable Ānanda, what kind of bodily behaviour does not bring affliction?"

"Any bodily behaviour that has pleasant results, great king."

"Now, venerable Ānanda, what kind of bodily behaviour has pleasant results?"

"Any bodily behaviour, great king, that does not lead to one's own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both, and on account of which unwholesome states diminish and wholesome states increase. Such bodily behaviour, great king, is uncensored by wise recluses and brahmins." (MN 88.14–16)

Despite all the many references in the Pāli suttas to the importance of refraining from taking life, there is no record of the Buddha explicitly advising lay people not to become soldiers or advising rulers of states not to have armies. It is true that the monks' rules state that a person in government employment, such as a soldier, cannot be ordained as a monk unless they have left that employment in a proper manner (Mv 1.40). However, from the context it seems that this rule was introduced primarily to prevent such people using ordination as a means to escape from carrying out their duties to the ruler, or, in the case of soldiers, to prevent them from using ordination as a means to escape

punishment for deserting from the army.

Considering the large number of occasions in which the Buddha is quoted as pointing out the unwholesome and harmful consequences of using violence and taking life, and considering the reasons which he gives for saying this, it would seem reasonable to conclude that being in the military cannot absolve a person from the law of kamma-vipāka. Some discourses also indicate that it is extremely difficult for someone holding any sort of occupation that involves deliberately injuring other beings to make progress towards enlightenment. In the *Majjhima Nikāya,* for example, the Buddha is recorded as saying the following:

[I/16] "What kind of person, monks, torments others and pursues the practice of torturing others? Here a certain person is a butcher of sheep, a butcher of pigs, a hunter of fowls, a trapper of wild beasts, a hunter, a fisherman, a thief, an executioner, a prison warder, or one who follows any other such bloody occupation. This is called the kind of person who torments others and pursues the practice of torturing others." (MN 51.9)

The Buddha goes on to make it clear that of the various kinds of persons to be found existing in the world, only someone who does not torment or torture either themselves or others can experience the termination of desires and aversion and can abide "experiencing bliss, having himself become holy," viz. can become enlightened.

This does not mean that someone such as a soldier cannot be a committed lay follower of the Buddha's teachings or make some moral or spiritual progress. But if his or her work means involvement in killing living beings, or even indirectly supporting the killing of living beings, it is clear from what the Buddha taught from his own enlightened insight into the workings of kamma and the human mind that the obstacles to any sort of spiritual progress are very great indeed. Nevertheless those obstacles can be mitigated by following certain principles. Some of these are taken up in Part IV.

It is notable that a being a soldier is not included in the list of trades or means of livelihood that the Buddha said lay followers

should not engage in (see, e.g. AN 5:177). One possible reason for this is that simply to be a soldier or warrior does not always entail killing others, as sometimes such jobs have only a ceremonial role or only involve acting as deterrents to others not to engage in violence. However, this argument can barely be sustained as such soldiers would be expected to use violence and even kill if the ruler ordered them to do so.

Perhaps it is more likely that in trying to teach the Middle Way in the social order of the Ganges valley, where the Khattiya or warrior class took the leading role in society (and the Buddha himself came from that class), the Buddha considered it wiser to refrain from specifically stating that soldiering was a wrong means of livelihood which a committed follower of his should not follow. This would fit in with the principle that, as the Tathāgata, he knew the occasions when to use and when not to use speech that was unwelcome and disagreeable to others even though it was true, correct and beneficial (MN 58.8). We see an example of this in the Buddha's reluctance to tell the professional soldiers Yodhājīva, Hatthāroha and Assāroha (Text [I/14]) what their kammic fate would be if they died in battle whilst striving to destroy their enemies.

In the societies of north-east India at that time, where the military way of life was so deeply ingrained and the warrior class was so powerful, perhaps it was more effective to deal with the issue in the way in which he did with these three soldiers, that is, to encourage people to examine and reflect on the Dhamma and the consequences of their actions.

But the situation for Buddhist monks and nuns is very different—anyone who intends to ordain in the Sangha must first give up all activities involving injuring or killing living beings (Mv 1.78.4). Initially this is done by restraining the impulses, as explained in the discourses which outline the circumstances in which a man would decide to go forth from the home life into homelessness. These discourses usually describe how such a person would first shave off his hair and beard and put on the yellow robe; they then invariably continue:

[I/17] "Having thus gone forth and possessing the monks' training and way of life, abandoning the killing of living beings, he abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings." (e.g. MN 27.13; MN 51.14)

There are, in the discourses, a small number of occasions where the Buddha accepts that in order to act rightly or compassionately some pain for oneself or others may be unavoidable. But in such cases it is always clear that the conscious and deliberate infliction of such pain is not the intention. For example, the Buddha recognized that to follow his teaching can be difficult and painful for some people, but he urges them to persist as the eventual reward will be experienced as beneficial and pleasant:

[I/18] "And what, monks, is the way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure? Here, monks, someone by nature has strong lust[17], and he constantly experiences pain and grief born of lust; by nature he has strong hate, and he constantly experiences pain and grief born of hate; by nature he has strong delusion, and he constantly experiences pain and grief born of delusion. Yet in pain and grief, weeping with tearful face, he leads the perfect and pure holy life. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. This is called the way of undertaking things that is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure." (MN 45.6)

This does not mean that the tormenting of one's own mind or body through, for example, the deliberate practice of self-mortification, is spiritually beneficial in itself. On the contrary, in his first teaching to the five ascetics, the newly enlightened Buddha made his first ever reference to the "middle way" which he had discovered. This middle way avoided the two "ignoble and harmful" extremes of, on the one hand, devotion to the pursuit of

17. *Rāga,* here translated as *lust*, refers to the deep-rooted thirst or craving for pleasurable experiences in general, not only for sexual pleasure.

pleasure in sensual desire, and, on the other, devotion to self-mortification. (SN 56:11)

In the *Kandaraka Sutta* (MN 51), which has already been referred to in the context of those who follow occupations which involve injuring living beings or taking life, the Buddha expresses his disapproval of two other ways of living in addition to that of the person who torments others. These are: the way of life of those who, for spiritual reasons, torment and torture themselves (e.g. by the practice of extreme austerities); and those who not only torment and torture themselves for spiritual reasons, but also do the same to other living beings (by, for example, sacrificing living animals or instructing others to do so).

Another instance where doing the right thing may unavoidably cause some pain and distress is referred to in a short discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya:*

[I/19] "Now suppose, monks, there is a tender infant lying on its back. Through the nurse's negligence, the child has put a little stick or a shard into its mouth. Then the nurse very quickly would consider what has happened, and very quickly she would remove the object. But if she is unable to remove it quickly, she would hold the infant's head with her right hand, and crooking a finger, she would extract the object, even if she had to draw blood. And why? Though certainly it hurts the infant—and I do not deny this—yet the nurse had to act like this, wishing the best for the child, being concerned with its welfare, out of pity, for compassion's sake. But when the child has grown up and is sensible enough, the nurse can be unconcerned about the child, knowing that it can watch over itself and will no longer be negligent.

"Similarly, monks, as long as a monk has not yet proved his faith in things wholesome, not yet proved his sense of shame and moral dread, his energy and wisdom as to things wholesome, so long do I have to watch over him. But when he has proved himself in all these things, I can be unconcerned about that monk, knowing that he can now watch over himself and will no longer be negligent." (AN 5:7)

The Buddha uses the same simile on another occasion during a discussion that he is having with a prince who had invited him to accept a meal. After the meal the prince (Abhaya by name) asks the

Buddha whether a Tathāgata would ever utter such speech as would be unwelcome and disagreeable to others. "There is no one-sided answer to that, prince," the Buddha replies and then gives the following explanation:

[I/20] Now on that occasion a young tender infant was lying prone on Prince Abhaya's lap. Then the Blessed One said to Prince Abhaya: "What do you think, prince? If, while you or your nurse were not attending to him, this child were to put a stick or a pebble in his mouth, what would you do to him?"

"Venerable sir, I would take it out. If I could not take it out at once, I would take his head in my left hand, and crooking a finger of my right hand, I would take it out even if it meant drawing blood. Why is that? Because I have compassion for the child."

"So too, prince, such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial, and which is also unwelcome and disagreeable to others: such speech the Tathāgata does not utter. Such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be true and correct but unbeneficial, and which is also unwelcome and disagreeable to others: such speech the Tathāgata does not utter. Such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be true, correct, and beneficial, but which is unwelcome and disagreeable to others: the Tathāgata knows the time to use such speech. Such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial, but which is welcome and agreeable to others: such speech the Tathāgata does not utter. Such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be true and correct but unbeneficial, and which is welcome and agreeable to others: such speech the Tathāgata does not utter. Such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be true, correct, and beneficial, and which is welcome and agreeable to others: the Tathāgata knows the time to use such speech. Why is that? Because the Tathāgata has compassion for beings." (MN 58.7–8)

Can Violence or Killing Be Justified by the Dhamma?

In the context of society and government this raises the question of whether the use of violence, even killing, as in warfare, capital punishment or abortion, can ever be justified in terms of the

Dhamma. There are several important reasons for concluding that the scope for this is extremely limited.

Firstly, we should note the lack of ambiguity in the language which the Buddha is quoted as using when he exhorts people to abstain from taking life, and the fact that there are no exceptions mentioned in these exhortations. It is true that the discourses do cite, as mentioned earlier, a few exceptional cases where the Buddha did not criticize the actions of three highly developed monks who committed suicide and were arahants at the time of dying. But, apart from these, there are no occasions in the entire body of the Pāli discourses where the Buddha could be said to qualify his guidance on refraining from taking life by stating that there are circumstances where it might be regarded as righteous or blameless.

Secondly, we must take account of the sheer frequency with which the Buddha is quoted as urging *all* those who listened to his teaching to desist from injuring or killing living creatures. The exhortation, in its various forms, occurs with great frequency in the discourses, and is always first in the lists of actions which the Buddha urges his listeners to give up. Clearly it is not an optional or marginal matter which the Buddha, and the monks who committed his teachings to memory, thought was simply a matter of opinion.

The third factor we should take account of when considering the question of just or righteous killing is the important matter of kamma—any action with intention—and its fruit. The Buddha tells us that the truth of kamma and its results is not a matter merely of ones point of view , but is akin to a universal law of nature which effects all of us whether we know about it or not and whether we accept it or not.

It's worth noting that insight into the working of the law of kamma is not exclusive to enlightened beings or arahants. Although in its fully developed form it was one of the three "true knowledges" which the Buddha realized on the night of his full enlightenment, the opening of the "divine eye," which is the ability to "see beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior... according to their actions," has been experienced by

large numbers of people over the centuries through the practice of samādhi and the jhānas[18]and still happens to meditators in the present time. In other words, although the full implications of the law of kamma can only be appreciated by an enlightened person, the basic truth of the law has been, and continues to be, confirmed by many practising followers of the Buddha's path.

The fourth factor to consider on this matter of whether taking life can ever be righteous relates to the fact that the Buddha does not simply urge people to refrain from violence and killing so that we are left helpless in the face of aggression. Rather he is concerned to encourage us to develop alternative skilful means to peacefully defuse situations of conflict and contention.

A good doctor giving advice to a patient who has suffered a heart attack will not only advise the patient to give up his unhealthy habits, such as smoking and excessive eating, but will also urge him to take up health promoting habits, such as regular exercise and a healthier diet. In the same way, the Buddha encourages us to develop other peaceful and, in the long run, far more effective ways of dealing with conflict and strife that help us get to their root causes. Therefore in his teachings the Buddha puts enormous emphasis on methods for developing the roots of *wholesome* thinking and behaviour, as, for example, he explains to the brahmins of Sālā (MN 41). These practical methods of promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts not only help lay the foundations for harmonious social relations, but they also bring merit to us and contribute to our own spiritual development.

The methods recommended by the Buddha include the boundless radiation of the four 'divine abidings'—loving-kindness, compassion, joy at the happiness of others and equanimity.[19]He also encourages lay-people, monks and nuns to nurture the growth of many other similar practical ways to mitigate and defuse conflict, such as self-control, reflection on consequences, patience, forbearance and generosity[20]. The effort to develop such

18. See Glossary for further details of these two terms.
19. The four *brahma-vihāra*; for further details see Glossary.

wholesome habits by body, speech and mind not only helps ensure a happy and peaceful life now, but in the future as well.

However, by far the most important reason we have for concluding that the Buddha's teachings severely limit the possibility of righteous killing is that the taking of life is written into the very nature of what is unrighteous as it leads to harm for the victim and his or her relatives and friends and an unpleasant experience for the perpetrator. Or, to put the matter another way, according to the Dhamma, *for an action to be truly righteous it must originate from right view (sammā diṭṭhi) and must be kammically wholesome (kusala)*; that is, the action must spring from at least one of the wholesome roots of absence of greed *(alobha)*, absence of aversion *(adosa)*, or absence of delusion *(amoha)* and be without the motivating power of any of the opposite unwholesome roots of greed *(lobha)*, aversion *(dosa)* and delusion *(moha)*. In MN 41 the Buddha describes to the brahmin householders of Sālā ten types of righteous conduct in accordance with the Dhamma (*dhammacariyā-samacariyā)* and ten types of unrighteous conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma (*adhammacariyā-visamacariyā)*. The latter list includes killing living beings and being violent and merciless towards them. On a separate occasion (MN 9) the arahant Sāriputta explains these same two sets of ten in terms of the wholesome *(kusala)* and the root of the wholesome, and the unwholesome (*akusala*) and the root of the unwholesome.

Is it possible for the taking of life to be kammically wholesome or to be motivated by any of the wholesome roots? This is how the matter was unambiguously put to the early Sangha by the Buddha:

> [I/21] "The destruction of life, monks, I declare to be threefold: as caused by greed, caused by aversion, caused by delusion. So too, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech, divisive speech, harsh speech, frivolous chatter, covetousness, ill-will and wrong view, I declare to be threefold: as caused by greed, caused by hatred and caused by delusion." (AN 10:174)

20. See, for example: AN 4:165; Sn 1.8 (The *Mettā-sutta*).

Undoubtedly this is the general rule applicable in the vast majority of cases where life is taken and certainly applies to the ten unrighteous courses of action mentioned in MN 41. However, the Buddha's remarks in the cases of the three monks referred to earlier who had attained very high levels of spiritual development (Vakkali, Channa and Godhika) who took their own lives but died as enlightened beings, points to the fact that there may be certain exceptional circumstances where the intentional use of force, even taking life, is not motivated by any of the three unwholesome roots—greed, aversion and delusion.

The Buddha indicated that each of the three monks attained final Nibbāna before dying, and this seems to demonstrate that he considered their intentions to be wholesome; that is to say, that each was motivated by non-greed, non-aversion, and non-delusion. The only wholesome mental state that seems to be possible in these circumstances would be compassion arising in response to the extreme physical pain that they were experiencing. Moreover, each must have been certain that the suffering would not end so long as their bodies remained alive and that no harm would be caused to anyone else as a result of committing suicide.

We must also take into consideration the fact that we live in an imperfect world and from time to time encounter extremes of evil as well as of good. Sometimes we may be faced with unprovoked threats or violence from others which, if allowed to go unchecked, will cause great harm and suffering. This seems to have been recognized when the rules governing the conduct of monks and nuns were compiled. Rules 74 and 75 of the Pātimokkha (the monastic code dealing with the conduct of monks and nuns) forbid a monk from striking others when motivated by anger or displeasure. But, "there is no offence if, being in some difficulty, he gives a blow desiring freedom." This appears to indicate that a monk or nun does not commit an offence if appropriate force is used in self-defence, or to escape, when threatened with coercion or violence from others[21]. But this must be done unmotivated by anger or other malicious intentions.

A spiritually highly developed person, and certainly an arahant or Buddha, acquires extraordinary abilities which enable

them to deal with threatening and dangerous situations. The account of the Buddha's meeting with the serial killer Aṅgulimāla and how the Buddha converted him to the Dhamma is well known (MN 86). However, it should also be remembered that even the Buddha was unable to prevent his cousin Devadatta from hating him and trying to kill him (Cv 7:3). But the Buddha never once used force to defend himself from Devadatta or those who aided him and never had an angry thought about them or acted with aversion towards them.

Of course, there may be other criteria of righteousness other than those described by the Buddha which people in good faith and with all honesty may use to guide their lives. Examples of these include national and international laws, principles derived from other religious or ethical traditions, one's own traditional cultural or national practices, codes relating to specific occupations such as the practice of law or medicine, etc. But even with these well-established and customary practices we would still be wise to bear in mind that no man-made law can over-ride the universal law of kamma. An official executioner may carry out his duties legally and dispassionately, but, according to the Buddha's teachings on kamma, he cannot evade painful kammic consequences as a result of his work. However, the painful consequences of harmful actions may be lessened if the person has acquired understanding about right and wrong and has made determined efforts to live a blameless life, and in other counteracting circumstances (AN 3:101).

In fact, when dealing with any rules or guidance to behaviour we are always wise to ask: what are the ethical principles underlying those guidelines? In the *Kālāma Sutta* (AN 3:65) the Buddha outlined some general principles which we can use to assess the moral worth and practical consequences of any guidance or teaching, including, implicitly, his own.[22]

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21. T*he Buddhist Monastic Code*, compiled by Ven. Phra Jeffrey Ṭhānissaro, Mahāmakuṭa Educational Council, Bangkok, Thailand, 1993, p605.
22. See: *How Free is Freedom of Thought,* Bodhi Leaves No. 156, BPS, Kandy, undated.

It should also born in mind that human beings are highly skilled in the art of finding moral justifications for actions that actually are rooted in greed, aversion and delusion. This is not to point an accusatory finger at others, but becomes apparent if we honestly reflect on some of our own selfish or harmful actions which, at the time, we may have rationalized to ourselves as being morally good or deserved. For example, we may have justified an angry reaction as being unavoidable or that it was for the long term good or we may say to ourselves that the other person "asked for it" or "it's the only thing they understand" or use some other kind of self-justification.

The Buddha, however, from his own enlightened insight into the wholesome and the unwholesome, was quite clear that actions motivated by greed, hatred and delusion will not produce wholesome results for the person who carries them out; and, conversely, actions motivated by non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion will not produce unwholesome results for the person who carries them out:

[I/22] "It is not non-greed, monks, that arises from greed; it is greed that arises again from greed. It is not non-hatred that arises from hatred; it is rather hatred that arises again from hatred. It is not non-delusion that arises from delusion; it is rather delusion that arises again from delusion.

"It is not through actions born of greed, hatred and delusion that there is the appearance of devas, of humans or of any other creatures belonging to a good destination; it is rather beings of the hells, of the animal realm, of the sphere of ghosts or any others of a bad destination that appear through actions born of greed, hatred and delusion…

"It is not greed, monks, that arises from non-greed; it is rather non-greed that arises again from non-greed. It is not hatred that arises from non-hatred; it is rather non-hatred that arises again from non-hatred. It is not delusion that arises from non-delusion; it is rather non-delusion that arises again from non-delusion.

"It is not through actions born of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion that there is the appearance of beings of the hells, of the animal realm, of the sphere of ghosts or any others of a bad destination; it is rather devas, humans or any other creatures belonging

to a good destination that appear through actions born of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion." (AN 6:39)

These words from the Buddha clearly rebuff two arguments that are sometimes used to justify the inflicting of harm on others. Firstly, they reject the idea that an unwholesome mental state can be justified if it has the intention of bringing about a beneficial result. Secondly, they reject the argument that an unwholesome state of mind can be justified if it is directed at preventing someone else carrying out a harmful action. In both cases the Buddha argued that actions originating from greed, aversion or delusion will always result in pain for the doer of such deeds—let alone the harm that is done to others. Unwholesome motives and intentions produce unwholesome and unpleasant results. Wholesome motives and intentions produce wholesome and pleasant results. Overcoming our own unwholesome and harmful impulses is, for the Buddha, one of the greatest things any human being could do. In fact, control and conquest of our own unwholesome impulses is of far greater worth than the physical conquest or defeat of others. As he says in the *Dhammapada*: "Though one should conquer a thousand men a thousand times in battle, yet he, indeed, is the noblest victor who has conquered himself." (Dhp 103).

It can be argued that total abstention from unwholesome behaviour may be possible for members of the Sangha, but for ordinary lay people who have to provide for themselves and their families, as well as carry out their duties towards companions and their rulers, such perfection is not possible. This point was once dealt with by the venerable Sāriputta in a discussion with the brahmin Dhānañjāni:

[I/23] "Are you diligent, Dhānañjāni?" [the venerable Sāriputta asks.]

"How can we be diligent, Master Sāriputta, when we have to support our parents, our wife and children, and our slaves, servants, and workers, when we have to do our duty towards our friends and companions, towards our kinsmen and relatives, towards our guests, towards our departed ancestors, towards the deities, and towards the king; and when this body must also be refreshed and nourished?"

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Suppose someone here were to behave contrary to the Dhamma, to behave unrighteously for the sake of his parents, and then because of such behaviour the wardens of hell were to drag him off to hell. Would he be able (to free himself by pleading thus): 'It was for the sake of my parents that I behaved contrary to the Dhamma, that I behaved unrighteously, so let not the wardens of hell (drag me off) to hell'? Or would his parents be able [to free him by pleading thus): 'It was for our sake that he behaved contrary to Dhamma, that he behaved unrighteously, so let not the wardens of hell (drag him off) to hell.'?"

"No, Master Sāriputta. Even while he was crying out, the wardens of hell would fling him into hell." (MN 97.5–6)

[The venerable Sāriputta asks the same question in relation to behaving unrighteously and contrary to the Dhamma for the sake of one's wife and children, one's slaves, servants and workers, one's friends and companions, kinsmen and relatives, for the sake of guests, departed ancestors and the gods, for the sake of the king, and for the sake of refreshing and nourishing the body. In all these cases Dhānañjāni accepts that the person who behaved unrighteously and contrary to the Dhamma would still be dragged off to hell by its wardens. The venerable Sāriputta then asks:]

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better, one who for the sake of his parents behaves contrary to the Dhamma, behaves unrighteously, or one who for the sake of his parents behaves according to the Dhamma, behaves righteously?"

"Master Sāriputta, the one who for the sake of his parents behaves contrary to the Dhamma, behaves unrighteously, is not the better; the one who for the sake of his parents behaves according to Dhamma, behaves righteously, is the better."

"Dhānañjāni, there are other kinds of work, profitable and in accordance with the Dhamma, by means of which one can support one's parents and at the same time both avoid doing evil and practise merit.

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is better, one who for the sake of his wife and children… for the sake of his slaves, servants, and workers… for the sake of his friends and companions… for the sake

of his kinsmen and relatives… for the sake of his guests… for the sake of his departed ancestors… for the sake of the deities… for the sake of the king… for the sake of refreshing and nourishing this body behaves contrary to the Dhamma, behaves unrighteously, or one who for the sake of refreshing and nourishing this body behaves according to the Dhamma, behaves righteously?"

"Master Sāriputta, the one who for the sake of refreshing and nourishing the body behaves contrary to the Dhamma, behaves unrighteously, is not the better; the one who for the sake of refreshing and nourishing this body behaves according to the Dhamma, behaves righteously, is the better."

"Dhānañjāni, there are other kinds of work, profitable and in accordance with the Dhamma, by means of which one can refresh and nourish this body and at the same time both avoid doing evil and practise merit."

Then the brahmin Dhānañjāni, having delighted and rejoiced in the venerable Sāriputta's words, rose from his seat and departed. (MN 97.5–6,16–25)

One does not necessarily have to believe in the literal existence of hell as a place where we are "dragged off to" in order to see two deep insightful truths that the arahant Sāriputta was trying to convey to the brahmin Dhānañjāni. Firstly, none of the attempts put forward by the brahmin to justify acting in an unwholesome way can prevent the coming to fruition of the kammic consequences of those actions. Those fruitless attempts at justifying unwholesome action include having to support our parents, wife, children, and employees, having to do our duty towards friends, companions, relatives, guests, and ancestors, having to do our duty towards gods and towards the government; and having to maintain our body.

Secondly, there are other kinds of work, profitable and in accordance with honesty and harmlessness, that we can do in order to live which, at the same time, enable us to avoid doing evil and bring merit to us.

Ill Will

In his teachings the Buddha made a distinction between deliberate harmful actions by body and speech (*vihiṃsa*) and mental states of having ill will or hatred (*vyāpāda, paṭigha, dosa*)[23]. The two do not always go together. For example, a state executioner or hired assassin may bear no personal ill will against the victim, while an ordinary person bearing a grudge may harbour feelings of hatred against others for years without ever acting on those feelings. Very often, however, the two combine together to produce a lethal mixture of mental hatred and verbal and bodily aggression, as when violent quarrels take place or during wartime.

Whether singly or together, however, the Pāli suttas tell us that the Buddha unambiguously states that the act of deliberately injuring another being and the mental state of ill will are both classed as unwholesome conduct (*akusala*), not in accordance with Dhamma and therefore productive of misery and to be avoided. Both of them lead, he said, to reappearance in states of unhappiness and deprivation (e.g. MN 7, MN 8, MN 60).

In the detailed discourse on right view mentioned above, the venerable Sāriputta includes mental states of ill will, as well as actual physical acts of killing living beings, as amongst the ten unwholesome types of conduct (MN 9). The understanding of this is essential if one is to be "of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma and has arrived at this true Dhamma." Conversely, Sāriputta continues, the opposites of these unwholesome actions and mental states, (i.e. to not harbour ill will and to refrain from deliberately injuring or killing other beings) are righteous and wholesome, productive of peace and conducive to reappearance in states of happiness. Furthermore, to understand this is in accordance with right view and the true Dhamma.

It is often true that the ill will and resentment that we can harbour in our minds against other people for the things we believe they have done to us will last for much longer than the

23. See MN 41.

actual physical or mental injury itself. In the same way others can cling to ill will towards us for the things that they perceive we have done to them, or have failed to do for them, sometimes for many years. The body tends to get over pain far more quickly than does the mind, and forgiveness, or 'letting bygones be bygones,' can be more difficult than climbing Mount Everest. Also, although harm may be inflicted dispassionately, most acts of deliberate physical harm are preceded by some sort of conscious mental state of anger, hatred, desire for revenge, or something similar. For these reasons, and others, ill will and similar mental states tend to be closely linked with both psychological and social unrest and conflict.

Just as the Buddha always described killing and injuring living beings as actions that should be abandoned, so, too, he always described ill will (*vyāpāda*), hate (*dosa*) and similar mental states as ones to be abandoned.

1 To Sigālaka, a householder's son mentioned earlier, the Buddha said ill will is one of "four causes of evil" from which a noble lay disciple should refrain, (the other three being attachment, delusion and fear) (DN 31.5–6).

2 All the various types of emotion or attitude indicating ill will were regarded by the Buddha as being "imperfections that defile the mind." These include anger, revenge, contempt, a domineering attitude, envy, arrogance and many other similar negative mental states and he urged us to abandon them: "when the mind is defiled, an unhappy destination may be expected... when the mind is undefiled, a happy destination may be expected." (MN 7.2–4).

3 In the *Dhammapada* the Buddha tells us: "Hatred is never pacified by hatred in this world; by non-hatred alone is hatred pacified. This is the law, ancient and eternal." (Dhp 5). He urges us to: "Overcome anger by non-anger; overcome the wicked by goodness; overcome the miser by generosity; overcome the liar by truth." (Dhp 223). We can reflect on the fact that this advice from the Buddha applies just as much to overcoming our own inner feelings of anger as it does to overcoming the angry behaviour of others towards us.

4 When the venerable Sāriputta said that ill will and intentions of hate cause unwholesome states to increase and wholesome ones to diminish, the Buddha praised those words and repeated them himself to the listening monks (DN 114.16ff).

5 In the *Suttanipāta* there are many passages dealing with the nature of anger (particularly in relation to views and opinions) the reasons why it arises, the conflicts and disputes that result from it, and the methods by which it is subdued (Sn Chap 4—"The Chapter of the Eights").

For the Buddha it was not enough to point out the harm done by ill will and anger; as mentioned earlier, he described a number of effective antidotes to these corrosive mental states. The most well-known of these is the conscious cultivation of loving-kindness and friendliness towards all beings (*mettā bhāvanā*). Speaking of the enormous benefits of the cultivation of loving-kindness the Buddha once gave this simile:

[I/24] "Monks, if someone were to give away a hundred pots of food as charity in the morning, a hundred pots of food as charity at noon, and a hundred pots of food as charity in the evening, and someone else were to develop a mind of loving-kindness even for the time it takes to pull a cow's udder, either in the morning, at noon, or in the evening, this would be more fruitful than the former.

"Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves thus: 'We will develop and cultivate the liberation of mind by loving-kindness, make it our vehicle, make it our basis, stabilize it, exercise ourselves in it, and fully perfect it.' Thus should you train yourselves." (SN 20:4)

The renowned Mettā-sutta explains that the cultivation and practice of universal loving-kindness is essential for one who wants to know the path of peace:

[I/25] *Who seeks to promote his welfare,*
Having glimpsed the state of perfect peace,
Should be able, honest and upright,
Gentle in speech, meek and not proud.

Contented, he ought to be easy to support,
Not over-busy, and simple in living.
Tranquil his senses, let him be prudent,
And not brazen, nor fawning on families.

Also, he must refrain from any action
That gives the wise reason to reprove him.

(Then let him cultivate the thought:)
"May all be well and secure,
May all beings be happy!

"Whatever living creatures there be
Without exception, weak or strong,
Long, huge or middle-sized,
Or short, minute or bulky,

"Whether visible or invisible,
And those living far or near,
The born and those seeking birth,
May all beings be happy!"

Let none deceive or decry
His fellow anywhere;
Let none wish others harm
In resentment or in hate.

Just as with her own life
A mother shields from hurt her own son, her only child,
Let all-embracing thoughts
For all beings be yours.

Cultivate an all-embracing mind of love
For all throughout the universe,
In all its height, depth and breadth—
Love that is untroubled and beyond hatred or enmity.

As you stand, walk, sit or lie,
So long as you are awake,
Pursue this awareness with your might:
It is deemed the Divine State here.

Holding no more to wrong beliefs,
With virtue and vision of the ultimate,
And having overcome all sensual desire,
Never in a womb is one born again.(Sn 143–152)

The Buddha explained the unpleasant and painful kammic results of ill will on a number of occasions. In the following passage he tells the brahmin student Subha about the unpleasant future results of various negative and hostile emotions and the positive future results of not indulging in them:

[I/26] "Here, student, some man or woman is of an angry and irritable character; even when criticized a little, he is offended, becomes angry, hostile, and resentful, and displays anger, hate, and bitterness. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if on the dissolution of the body, after death, he does not reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell, but instead comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is ugly. This is the way, student, that leads to ugliness, namely, one is of an angry and irritable character; even when criticized a little, he is offended, becomes angry, hostile, and resentful, and displays anger, hate, and bitterness.

"But here, student, some man or woman is not of an angry and irritable character; even when criticized a lot, he is not offended, does not become angry, hostile and resentful, and does not display anger, hate, and bitterness. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But if on the dissolution of the body, after death, he does not reappear in a happy destination, in the heavenly world, but instead comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is beautiful. This is the way, student, that leads to being beautiful, namely, one is not of an angry and irritable character… and does not display anger, hate, and

bitterness." (MN 135.9–10)

One of the ways in which our thoughts and feelings about others can be expressed is in our speech; moreover, the way in which we speak to other people and, particularly, *about* other people can be conducive to harmony or to disharmony. The Buddha recognized the enormous power of words for either good or for harm and always praised speech that was "righteous." This is an extract from the advice the Buddha gave to the people living in Sāla:

[I/27] "And how, householders, are there four kinds of verbal conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct? Here, someone speaks falsehood; when summoned to a court, or to a meeting, or to his relatives' presence, or to his guild, or to the royal family's presence, and questioned as a witness thus: 'so, good man, tell what you know,' not knowing, he says, 'I know,' or knowing, he says, 'I do not know'; not seeing, he says, 'I see,' or seeing, he says, 'I do not see'; in full awareness he speaks falsehood for his own ends, or for another's ends, or for some trifling worldly end. He speaks maliciously; he repeats elsewhere what he has heard here in order to divide (those people) from these, or he repeats to these people what he has heard elsewhere in order to divide (these people) from those; thus he is one who divides those who are united, a creator of divisions, who enjoys discord, rejoices in discord, delights in discord, a speaker of words that create discord. He speaks harshly; he utters such words as are rough, hard, hurtful to others, offensive to others, bordering on anger, unconducive to mental concentration. He is a gossip; he speaks at the wrong time, speaks what is nor fact, speaks what is useless, speaks contrary to the Dhamma and the Discipline; at the wrong time he speaks such words as are worthless, unreasonable, immoderate, and unbeneficial. This is how there are four kinds of verbal conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct… [verses 10–12 omitted].

"And how, householders, are there four kinds of verbal conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct? Here someone, abandoning false speech, abstains from false speech; when summoned to a court, or to a meeting, or to his relatives' presence, or to his guild, or to the royal family's presence, and questioned as a witness thus: 'so

good man, tell what you know,' not knowing, he says, 'I do not know,' or knowing, he says, 'I know'; not seeing, he says, 'I do not see,' or seeing, he says, 'I see'; he does not in full awareness speak falsehood for his own ends, or for another's ends, or for some trifling worldly end. Abandoning malicious speech, he abstains from malicious speech; he does not repeat elsewhere what he has heard here in order to divide (those people) from these, nor does he repeat to these people what he has heard elsewhere in order to divide (these people) from those; thus he is one who reunites those who are divided, a promoter of friendships, who enjoys concord, rejoices in concord, delights in concord. Abandoning harsh speech, he abstains from harsh speech; he speaks such words as are gentle, pleasing to the ear, and loveable, as go to the heart, are courteous, desired by many, and agreeable to many. Abandoning gossip, he abstains from gossip; he speaks at the right time, speaks what is fact, speaks on what is good, speaks on the Dhamma and the Discipline; at the right time he speaks such words as are worth recording, reasonable, moderate, and beneficial. That is how there are four kinds of verbal conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct." (MN 41.9ff)

In praising wholesome and harmonious speech the Buddha and the early arahants emphasized that speaking in this way was not only good in itself, but also that such speech has further beneficial effects on us because it encourages deeper wholesome states to arise.

[I/28] "Monks, verbal conduct is of two kinds, I say: to be cultivated and not to be cultivated. And verbal conduct is either the one or the other.' So it was said by me. And with reference to what was this said?

"Sāriputta, such verbal conduct as causes unwholesome states to increase and wholesome states to diminish in one who cultivates it should not be cultivated. But such verbal conduct as causes unwholesome states to diminish and wholesome states to increase in one who cultivates it should be cultivated.

"And what kind of verbal conduct causes unwholesome states to increase and wholesome states to diminish in one who cultivates it? Here someone speaks falsehood… [as in the preceding quotation]… Such verbal conduct causes unwholesome states to increase and wholesome states to diminish in one who cultivates it.

"And what kind of verbal conduct causes unwholesome states to diminish and wholesome states to increase in one who cultivates it? Here someone abandoning false speech, abstains from false speech… [as in the preceding quotation]… Such verbal conduct causes unwholesome states to diminish and wholesome states to increase in one who cultivates it.

"So it was with reference to this that it was said by me: 'Monks, verbal conduct is of two kinds, I say: to be cultivated and not to be cultivated. And verbal conduct is either the one or the other.'" (MN 114.15)

In the discourse known as "The Simile of the Cloth" the Buddha includes ill will and anger in a list of sixteen "imperfections that defile the mind" that lead to future unpleasant and painful experiences:

[I/29] "Monks, suppose a cloth were defiled and stained, and a dyer dipped it in some dye or other, whether blue or yellow or red or pink; it would look poorly dyed and impure in colour. Why is that? Because of the impurity of the cloth. So too, when the mind is defiled, an unhappy destination may be expected. Monks, suppose a cloth were pure and bright and a dyer dipped it in some dye or other, whether blue or yellow or red or pink; it would look well-dyed and pure in colour. Why is that? Because of the purity of the cloth. So too, when the mind is undefiled, a happy destination may be expected." (MN 7.3)

It's significant that the majority of the imperfections mentioned by the Buddha that defile the mind are concerned with relationships and interactions with other people. Here is the list in full: covetousness and unrighteous greed, ill will, anger, revenge, contempt, a domineering attitude, envy, avarice, deceit, fraud, obstinacy, acting on impulse, conceit, arrogance, vanity and negligence.

The discourse describes the Buddha as going on to explain that just as *possessing* each of these imperfections that defile the mind leads to rebirth in an unhappy destination, so *abandoning* the imperfections leads to the acquisition of perfect confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. This perfect confidence

leads on to the development of such qualities as inspiration, gladness, mental tranquillity and concentration, which in turn lead to the flowering of loving-kindness, compassion, joy at the happiness of others, and equanimity. Eventually, the full development of the powers that overcome the imperfections that defile the mind allows insight to develop which in turn culminates in full enlightenment.

An important ingredient in the development of restraint regarding aggressive and angry behaviour from others is the practice of what is commonly regarded by Buddhists of all traditions as one of the highest virtues: forbearance. This means, when anger is encountered, to patiently wait and even to endure, if necessary, until the anger has subsided and all parties are able to respond with intelligence rather than with emotion. The reasons for this are beautifully explained by the Buddha in the following verses:

> [I/30] *"The fool thinks victory is won*
> *When, by speech, he bellows harshly;*
> *But for one who understands,*
> *Patient endurance is the true victory.*
>
> *"One who repays an angry man with anger*
> *Thereby makes things worse for himself.*
> *Not repaying an angry man with anger,*
> *One wins a battle hard to win.*
>
> *"He practices for the welfare of both—*
> *His own and the other's—*
> *When, knowing that his foe is angry,*
> *He mindfully maintains his peace.*
>
> *"When he achieves the cure of both—*
> *His own and the other's—*
> *The people who consider him a fool*
> *Are unskilled in the Dhamma."*(SN 7:11)

The Buddha encouraged people to train themselves to refrain from acting and thinking in terms of victory and defeat because

that way of living leads to an endless cycle of recrimination and counter-recrimination where each wants to punish or avenge wrongs done to them in the past. Between individuals quarrels of this nature can last for many years; but between nations and ethnic groups such quarrels can continue for many generations, even over centuries, flaring up every now and again into violence and wars. The Buddha taught that thinking in terms of victory and defeat cannot bring about lasting peace: "Victory breeds hatred. The defeated live in pain. Happily the peaceful live, giving up victory and defeat." (Dhp 201).

THE BUDDHA'S ADVICE TO RULERS ON PEACE AND THE PREVENTION OF WARS

On several occasions during the forty-five years in which the Buddha taught the Dhamma it happened that a king or a representative of a king in the region, or a ruler of one of the other realms of existence, would seek the Buddha's advice on aspects of their responsibilities as rulers. The Buddha's advice was always carefully worded so as not to go beyond the sphere of his dispensation, i.e. the way to internal and external peace. In addition, he never expressed an opinion about particular religious or social institutions except insofar as they contributed to or detracted from those peaceful objectives.

Once King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha was planning to attack the Vajjians, a confederation of two small republics. He said to his chief minister:

[I/31] "I will strike the Vajjians who are so powerful and strong, I will cut them off and destroy them, I will bring them to ruin and destruction!"

And King Ajātasattu said to his chief minister the Brahmin Vassakāra: "Brahmin, go to the Blessed Lord, worship him with your head to his feet in my name, ask if he is free from sickness or disease, if he is living at ease, vigorously and comfortably, and then say: 'Lord, King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha wishes to attack the Vajjians and

says: "I will strike the Vajjians who are so powerful and strong, I will cut them off and destroy them, I will bring them to ruin and destruction!" And whatever the Lord declares to you, report that faithfully back to me, for Tathāgatas never lie."

"Very good, Sire," said Vassakāra and, having had the state carriages harnessed, he mounted one of them and drove in state from Rājagaha to Vultures' Peak, riding as far as the ground would allow, then continuing on foot to where the Lord was. He exchanged courtesies with the Lord, then sat down to one side and delivered the King's message.

Now the Venerable Ānanda was standing behind the Lord, fanning him. And the Lord said: "Ānanda, have you heard that the Vajjians hold regular and frequent assemblies?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do."

"Ānanda, as long as the Vajjians hold regular and frequent assemblies, they may be expected to prosper and not decline. Have you heard that the Vajjians meet in harmony, break up in harmony, and carry on their business in harmony?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do."

"Ānanda, as long as the Vajjians meet in harmony, break up in harmony, and carry on their business in harmony, they may be expected to prosper and not decline. Have you heard that the Vajjians do not authorize what has not been authorized already, and do not abolish what has been authorized, but proceed according to what has been authorized according to their ancient tradition?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do."

"Ānanda, as long as the Vajjians do not authorize what has not been authorized already… Have you heard that they honour, respect, revere and salute the elders among them, and consider them worth listening to?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do."

"Ānanda, as long as the Vajjians honour, respect, revere and salute the elders among them… Have you heard that they do not forcibly abduct others' wives and daughters and compel them to live with them?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do."

"Ānanda, as long as the Vajjians do not forcibly abduct others' wives and daughters… Have you heard that they honour, respect, revere and salute the Vajjian shrines at home and abroad, not withdrawing the proper support made and given before?"

"I have heard, lord, that they do."

"Ānanda, as long as they honour, respect, revere and salute the Vajjian shrines at home and abroad… Have you heard that proper provision is made for the safety of arahants, so that such arahants may come in future to live there, and those already there may dwell in comfort?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do."

"Ānanda, so long as such proper provision is made for the safety of arahants, so that such arahants may come in future to live there, and those already there may dwell in comfort, the Vajjians may be expected to prosper and not decline."

Then the Lord said to the Brahmin Vassakāra: "Once, Brahmin, when I was at the Sārandada Shrine in Vesālī, I taught the Vajjians these seven principles for preventing decline, and as long as they keep to these seven principles, as long as these principles remain in force, the Vajjians may be expected to prosper and not decline."

At this, Vassakāra replied: "Reverend Gotama, if the Vajjians keep to even one of these principles, they may be expected to prosper and not decline—far less seven. Certainly the Vajjians will never be conquered by King Ajātasattu by force of arms, but only by means of propaganda and setting them against one another. And now, Reverend Gotama, may I depart? I am busy and have much to do."

"Brahmin, do as you think fit." Then Vassakāra, rejoicing and delighted at the Lord's words, rose from his seat and departed. (DN 16.1.2–1.5)

We know from other discourses that the Buddha was aware that King Ajātasattu had killed his father to gain the throne, so this may have been the reason why the Buddha did not try to use any arguments appealing to this particular ruler's morality. Instead, he uses a very pragmatic argument: the Vajjians are a united and prosperous confederation who have taken advice from me; they will not welcome you entering their territory and you will be taking on a formidable opponent and might well lose if you invade

them! Not only did this accurately reflect the reality of the situation but the objective was unimpeachably moral as well. So the means used were in complete conformity with the first and the fourth precepts: to try to prevent the outbreak of a war that would probably have meant death and destruction on a large scale for both sides and, at the same time, to be totally truthful.

There was another occasion when it is recorded that the Buddha was able to prevent the outbreak of a war. Although not referred to in the discourses, the details are given in one of the Jātaka Stories and in the Dhammapada Commentary[24].

In the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* we read of the Buddha telling a wealthy brahmin called Kūṭadanta about the advice he gave in a former life when he was the Chief Priest and Minister to a powerful king. This occurred when Kūṭadanta went to the Buddha to ask his advice about how to conduct a certain type of mass sacrifice of animals. This is how the Buddha replied:

[I/32] "Brahmin, once upon a time there was a king called Mahāvijita. He was rich, of great wealth and resources, with an abundance of gold and silver, of possessions and requisites, of money and money's worth, with a full treasury and granary. And when King Mahāvijita was musing in private, the thought came to him: 'I have acquired extensive wealth in human terms, I occupy a wide extent of land which I have conquered. Suppose now I were to make a great sacrifice which would be to my benefit and happiness for a long time?' And calling his Chief Priest and Minister, he told him his thought. 'I want to make a big sacrifice. Instruct me, Reverend Sir, how this may be to my lasting benefit and happiness.'

"The Chief Priest and Minister replied: 'Your majesty's country is beset by thieves, it is ravaged, villages and towns are being destroyed, the countryside is infested with brigands. If your majesty were to tax this region, that would be the wrong thing to do. Suppose Your Majesty were to think: "I will get rid of this plague of robbers by execu-

24. J 536, Bk XXI 412–4; Dhp-a, Bk XV, N, 3254–6. A translation of the latter can be found in *A Treasury of Buddhist Stories*, E. W. Burlingame, BPS, 1996.

tions and imprisonment, or by confiscations, threats and banishments," the plague would not be properly ended. Those who survived would later harm Your Majesty's realm. However, with this plan you can completely eliminate the plague. To those in the kingdom who are engaged in cultivating crops and raising cattle, let Your Majesty distribute grain and fodder; to those in trade, give capital; to those in government service proper living wages. Then those people, being intent on their own occupations, will not harm the kingdom. Your Majesty's revenues will be great, the land will be tranquil and not beset by thieves, and the people, with joy in their hearts, will play with their children and dwell in houses with open doors.'

"And saying: 'so be it!,' the king accepted the Chief Priest and Minister's advice: he gave grain and fodder, capital to those in trade,… proper living wages… and the people with joy in their hearts… dwelt in houses with open doors." (DN 5.10–11)

[The Buddha continues by explaining how the Chief Priest and Minister (who, remember, was to become the Buddha in a later life) was then able to convince the king that a sacrifice without the slaughter of any animals would enhance the king's standing with his people even further. Following that advice, a bloodless sacrifice was duly carried out.]

"In this sacrifice, [the Buddha continued to explain to the brahmin] no bulls were slain, no goats or sheep, no cocks and pigs, nor were various living beings subjected to slaughter, nor were trees cut down for sacrificial posts, nor were grasses mown for the sacrificial grass, and those who are called slaves or servants or workmen did not perform their tasks for fear of blows or threats, weeping and in tears. But those who wanted to do something did it, those who did not wish to did not: they did what they wanted to do, and not what they did not want to do. The sacrifice was carried out with ghee, oil, butter, curds, honey and molasses." (DN 5.18).

After hearing this account and asking some further questions the brahmin Kūṭadanta declared himself a lay-follower of the Buddha for the rest of his life and set free the vast number of animals which it had been his intention to sacrifice.

The Wheel-Turning Ruler

Mention was made earlier of the Buddha telling the community of monks how during the first year after his enlightenment he had rejected the suggestion made by Māra[25] to "exercise rulership righteously" (see Text I/7). Although the discourse recounting this incident does not explicitly state the Buddha's reasons for rejecting the suggestion, we can note two important details about what took place. Firstly, the fact that the Buddha tells the monks that the suggestion came from Māra is, alone, sufficient to tell us that the intention of the proposal was to hinder the spreading of the Dhamma, not to facilitate it. For we know that, in the cosmological system of early Buddhism, Māra ruled over the highest heaven of the sensuous sphere and, earlier, had done everything in his power to prevent the Buddha becoming enlightened.

Secondly, we can note that the Buddha's reply refers to the insatiable nature of man's desires, the suffering that ceaseless craving brings to us and that "having known acquisition as a tie in the world," we should "train for its removal." These words seems to indicate that the Buddha thought that to attempt to take the path suggested by Māra would be a diversion away from the true path of the Dhamma which is, as the verses go on to state, to train for the ending of acquisitiveness.

In general, the Buddha guided the monks away from social and political entanglements not only because of the moral dangers involved, but also because he knew that lay people did not approve of their spiritual teachers and guides becoming involved in such matters. The *Brahmajāla Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* contains a long list of "unedifying" and "base arts" which the "ascetic Gotama" refrains from becoming involved in and for which the ordinary people praise him. These elementary matters of moral practice include refraining from conversations "about kings, robbers, ministers, armies, dangers, wars,... villages, towns and cities, countries, women, heroes... speculations about land and sea, talk

25. For more on Māra, see Glossary.

about being and non-being"; refraining from such activities as "running errands and messages... for kings, ministers, nobles, Brahmins, householders" and from "deception, patter, hinting, belittling and always being on the make for further gains"; and refraining from making speculations about what political and military leaders will or will not do, such as predicting "The chiefs will march out—the chiefs will march back,' 'Our chiefs will advance and the other chiefs will retreat,' 'Our chiefs will win and the other chiefs will lose,' 'The other chiefs will win and ours will lose,' 'Thus there will be victory for one side and defeat for the other.'" (DN 1.1.7–28). The monks, too, are urged by the Buddha to refrain from "such base arts and wrong means of livelihood" in order to perfect their morality. (DN 2.64–69)

On another occasion the Buddha tells the monks that so long as they kept the Dhamma as their refuge with no other refuge, adhered to a life of seclusion and committed themselves to the practise of the four foundations of mindfulness[26]they would protect themselves from Māra's temptations:

[I/33] "Keep to your own preserves, monks, to your ancestral haunts. If you do so, then Māra will find no lodgement, no foothold. It is just by the building-up of wholesome states that this merit increases." (DN 26.1)

However, over the years of his teaching, and as his spiritual authority became more widely respected and recognized, from time to time kings, ministers, and other government officials from the various states of north east India came to the Buddha for advice on both spiritual and worldly matters. In recounting the advice which he gave them, and on other occasions as well, the Buddha would sometimes refer to the principles by which a righteous "wheel-turning ruler" (*rājā cakkavatti*) exercised power. As recorded in the discourses, the Buddha's advice was always framed in such a way as to encourage the rulers to act in ways that would promote social harmony and encourage peace between the

26. See Glossary for information about the four foundations of mindfulness.

different states of north-east India.

The Buddha gives the monks a thorough account of the duties of the wheel-turning ruler and the consequences of deviating from those duties immediately after he has instructed them to keep to their own preserves, as just mentioned. He does this by recounting to them the story of King Daḷhanemi and his heirs.

That king is described as "a wheel-turning monarch...a righteous monarch of the law, conqueror of the four quarters who had established the security of his realm...[having conquered it] without stick or sword, by the law." Seeing his death approaching in his old age, he decided to pass on kingship to his eldest son and to devote the remainder of his life to the spiritual path. He would, however, continue to act as adviser to his eldest son.

The symbol of just and noble rulership in this kingdom was the Sacred Wheel-Treasure, a thousand-spoked wheel which would appear and disappear near the royal palace under certain circumstances. After the new king had been ruling for seven days, the Sacred Wheel Treasure disappeared, so he went to the royal sage (his father) and told him what had happened.

The royal sage told his son that in order to bring about the return of the Sacred Wheel-Treasure he would have to become a noble wheel-turning ruler in his turn. The Buddha's story continues:

[I/34] "But what, sire, is the duty of a noble wheel-turning monarch?' 'It is this, my son: Depending on the Dhamma of righteousness and justice[27] yourself, honouring it, revering it, cherishing it, doing homage to it and venerating it, having righteousness and justice as your badge

27. The phrase '*the Dhamma of righteousness and justice*' has been used here as the rendering for the Pāli word *dhamma* in this context. This is to avoid confusion with *Dhamma* meaning the full liberation teachings of a Buddha which lead to enlightenment. There are no indications in the discourses that any of the wheel-tuning monarchs ruled during the time of a Buddha's dispensation; they could not therefore have ruled according to a Buddha's Dhamma of complete liberation. Details of what "righteousness and justice" involved are given later in the discourse.

and banner, acknowledging righteousness and justice as your master, you should establish guard, ward and protection according to righteousness and justice for your own household, your troops, your nobles and vassals, for Brahmins and householders, town and country folk, ascetics and Brahmins, for beasts and birds. Let no crime prevail in your kingdom, and give property to those who are in need. And whatever ascetics and Brahmins in your kingdom have renounced the life of sensual infatuation and are devoted to forbearance and gentleness, each one taming himself, each one calming himself and each one striving for the end of craving, from time to time you should approach them and ask:

"What, venerable sirs, is wholesome and what is unwholesome, what is blameworthy and what is blameless, what is to be followed and what is not to be followed? What action will in the long run lead to harm and sorrow, and what to welfare and happiness?" Having listened to them, you should avoid what is unwholesome and do what is wholesome. That, my son, is the duty of a noble wheel-turning monarch.'

"'Yes, sir,' said the King, and he performed the duties of a noble wheel-turning monarch. And as he did so, on the fast-day of the fifteenth, when he had washed his head and gone up to the veranda on top of his palace for the fast-day, the sacred Wheel-Treasure appeared to him, thousand-spoked, complete with rim, hub and all accessories. Then the King thought: 'I have heard that when a duly anointed Khattiya king sees such a wheel on the fast-day of the fifteenth, he will become a wheel-turning monarch. May I become such a monarch!'

"Then, rising from his seat, covering one shoulder with his robe, the King took a gold vessel in his left hand, sprinkled the Wheel with his right hand, and said: 'May the noble Wheel-Treasure turn, may the noble Wheel-Treasure conquer!' The wheel turned to the east, and the King followed it with his fourfold army. And those who opposed him in the eastern region came and said: 'Come, Your Majesty, welcome! We are yours, Your Majesty. Rule us, Your Majesty.' And the King said: 'Do not take life. Do not take what is not given. Do not engage in sexual misconduct. Do not tell lies. Do not drink strong drink. Be moderate in eating.' And those who had opposed him in the eastern region became his subjects." (DN 26.2–7)

[The Buddha continues by relating how the sacred Wheel-Treasure then turned south, west, and north and each time the king's rule was peacefully accepted by the peoples of each land that the Wheel entered. Then it returned to the capital and stopped in front of the king's palace as if to adorn it. The next five generations of kings after this one also peacefully conquered the entire world in this same manner, the Buddha explained. But after his father had abdicated from the throne and gone forth into homelessness, the king of the seventh generation behaved differently:]

"And seven days after the royal sage had gone forth the Wheel disappeared [as had happened six times previously]. Then a man came to the King and said: 'sire, you should know that the sacred Wheel-Treasure has disappeared.' At this the King was grieved and felt sad. But he did not go to the royal sage [his father] and ask him about the duties of a wheel-turning monarch. Instead, he ruled the people according to his own ideas, and, being so ruled, the people did not prosper so well as they had done under previous kings who had performed the duties of a wheel-turning monarch. Then the ministers, counsellors, treasury officials, guards and doorkeepers, and the chanters of mantras came to the King and said: 'Sire, as long as you rule the people according to your own ideas, and differently from the way they were ruled before under previous wheel-turning monarchs , the people do not prosper so well. Sire, there are ministers, counsellors, treasury officials, guards and doorkeepers, and chanters of mantras in your realm, including ourselves, who have preserved the knowledge of how a wheel-turning monarch should rule. Ask us, Your Majesty, and we will tell you!'

"Then the King ordered all the ministers and others to come together, and he consulted them. And they explained to him the duties of a wheel-turning monarch. And having listened to them, the King established guard and protection, but he did not give property to the needy, and as a result poverty became rife. With the spread of poverty, a man took what was not given, thus committing what was called theft. They arrested him, and brought him before the King, saying: 'Your Majesty, this man took what was not given, which we call theft.' The King said to him: 'Is it true that you took what was not given—which

is called theft?' 'It is, Your Majesty.' 'Why?' 'Your Majesty, I have nothing to live on.' Then the King gave the man some property, saying: 'With this, my good man you can keep yourself, support your mother and father, keep a wife and children, carry on a business and make gifts to ascetics and brahmins, which will promote your spiritual welfare and lead to a happy rebirth with pleasant result in the heavenly sphere.' 'Very good, Your Majesty,' replied the man.

"And exactly the same thing happened with another man.

"Then people heard that the King was giving away property to those who took what was not given, and they thought: 'suppose we were to do likewise!' And then another man took what was not given, and they brought him before the King. The King asked him why he had done this, and he replied: 'Your Majesty, I have nothing to live on.' Then the King thought: 'If I give property to everybody who takes what is not given, this theft will increase more and more. I had better make an end of him, finish him off once for all, and cut his head off.' So he commanded his men: 'Bind this man's arms tightly behind him with a strong rope, shave his head closely, and lead him to the harsh sound of a drum through the streets and squares and out through the southern gate, and there finish by inflicting the capital penalty and cutting off his head!' And they did so.

"Hearing about this, people thought: 'Now let us get sharp swords made for us, and then we can take from anybody what is not given, we will make an end of them, finish them off once for all and cut off their heads.' So, having procured some sharp swords, they launched murderous assaults on villages, towns and cities, and went in for highway-robbery, killing their victims by cutting off their heads.

"Thus, from the not giving of property to the needy, poverty became rife, from the growth of poverty, the taking of what was not given increased, from the increase of theft, the use of weapons increased, from the increased use of weapons, the taking of life increased—and from the increase in the taking of life, people's life-span decreased, their beauty decreased, and as a result of this decrease of life-span and beauty, the children of those whose life-span had been eighty thousand years lived for only forty thousand." (DN 26.9–14)

It is interesting to note here that in this account of the principles by which a wheel-turning ruler governs the Buddha points to the importance of reflecting wisely even in such matters as compassion and generosity: if these qualities are absent in a ruler, people will resort to theft and violence in order to live; if the ruler responds by giving them property, others may resort to crime as a means to benefit from such generosity; if the ruler then suppresses crime too harshly, they may begin to revolt against the ruler in an even more violent way.

The Buddha gives an even more detailed account of a wheel-turning monarch in his account of the life of King Mahāsudassana, which he remembered as being a previous life (DN 17).

In all the references to a wheel-turning monarch in the discourses the king retains his army. For example, in the earlier account of King Daḷhanemi (Text [I/34]), the king's royal sage included the troops when he referred to the sections of society for which the aspiring wheel-turning king should establish "guard, ward and protection according to justice and righteousness." We should also remember that this first royal sage was, in fact, the Buddha-to-be, searching for enlightenment.

In addition, when each king is following the sacred Wheel-Treasure as it leads him into the territory of other states and to peacefully establish rule over them, he is described as following the Wheel-Treasure "with his fourfold army" (elephants, cavalry, infantry and chariots). The fact is, of course, that the army is not used. The conquest is carried out peacefully by adhering to "justice and righteousness," not by using force.

However, can the retention of his army by a wheel-turning just and righteous monarch mean we can conclude that the Buddha was giving his approval to such rulers retaining the right to use force in certain circumstances? If that was the case, in keeping with the Buddha's normal practice of explaining the reasons for his conclusions, we would expect him to give some sort of explanation of what those circumstances were, in the way, for example, that he does when explaining the reasons for the increase in crime when the seventh king fails to give help to the poor.

Instead it is, perhaps, more likely that the Buddha was simply acknowledging the reality that kings were always likely to keep their armies and he was simply using the examples of those ancient monarchs to encourage the local rulers, and others with worldly influence, to use their power in a way that was just, peaceful and least likely to lead to wars and civil strife. Some of the facts in these accounts of wheel-turning monarchs may seem fantastic to our ears today and they have the flavour of legends and allegories current in the Indian sub-continent at that time and later. Perhaps framing these accounts in this way made it more likely that they would be listened to by people from all levels of society, and then be spread as popular stories.

Thus, in listening to these stories and thinking about them, while the powerful might identify with and seek to model themselves on the high moral standards of the leading characters, the ordinary people might use the same standards as a yardstick by which to judge their rulers. In this way kings and other rulers might be influenced to use their powers in a more restrained way, or even in a positively benevolent way.

In this connection it is interesting to note the close similarities between the principles by which the Buddha said the wheel-turning monarch *should* rule and the principles by which the great Indian emperor Aśoka *did* rule after he became a lay-follower *(upāsaka)* of the Buddha[28]two hundred years after the Blessed One's passing away.

Perhaps the inclusion of a four-fold army in each king's retinue was also intended to reflect the limitations of a wheel-turning monarch. For such a person is far inferior to an arahant, let alone a fully-enlightened Buddha. The Buddha once recounted to his personal attendant, Ānanda, details relating to a king called Mahādeva. King Mahādeva ruled by "dhamma"—here meaning justice and righteousness as with King Daḷhanemi (Text [I/34]). He established many good practices, including observance of the Uposatha[29]religious holy days each lunar month, and always

28. See, for example: *King Aśoka and Buddhism*, edited by Anuradha Seneviratna, BPS, Kandy, 1994.

conducted himself according to what was righteous and just. In old age he passed the kingdom on to his eldest son, shaved off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robe and went forth into homelessness. After recounting further details about King Mahādeva's descendents the Buddha said to Ānanda:

[I/35] "I was King Mahādeva on that occasion. I instituted that good practice [of just and righteous rule] and later generations continued that good practice instituted by me. But that kind of good practice does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna, but only to reappearance in the Brahma-world. But there is this kind of good practice that has been instituted by me now, which leads to complete disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. And what is that good practice? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration." (MN 83,21).

It is also significant that becoming a wheel-turning ruler or becoming a Buddha are always presented as *alternative* paths to be followed by an infant born with the "marks of a great man." The one never becomes transformed into the other; and it is clear that choosing the path of the Buddha is far superior to choosing the path of a wheel-turning monarch (DN 14,1.31).

Not only that, even choosing the path to enlightenment as a 'noble disciple' is superior to the path of a wheel-turning monarch. Even though the *rājā cakkavatti* is a boon to the world, he is still bound by the world, unless he renounces his power and becomes a recluse, as the Bodhisatta did when he was king Mahāsudassana. Upon dying, we are told, such rulers are reborn in a heavenly world where they enjoy the five cords of celestial sensual pleasure. However they are not freed from any of the planes of misery including hell because they do not possess "the four things": they do not have confirmed confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma

29. For further details of the Uposatha days in ancient India, see Glossary.

and the Sangha nor do they possess "the virtues dear to the noble ones," that is, faultless and unbroken adherence to the five precepts:

[I/36] "And, monks, between the obtaining of sovereignty over the four continents [i.e. as a wheel-turning monarch] and the obtaining of the four things, the obtaining of sovereignty over the four continents is not worth a sixteenth part of the obtaining of the four things." (SN 55:1).

II
Peace and the Followers and Disciples of the Buddha

> *"One should not neglect wisdom, but should preserve truth, cultivate relinquishment, and train for peace."* (MN 140.29)

The Buddha taught that refraining from actions of body, speech or mind that cause affliction to oneself or to others helps to bring about a calm and settled state of mind and promotes peaceful and harmonious relations between people. That approach is basically one of restraint which involves curbing and reining in the impulses of desire, aversion and aggression which well up within us in certain situations. However, reflection on this leads many people to consider the need to go much deeper and to try to weaken, even to totally uproot, the underlying factors which tend to constantly rise up and impel us into conflicts and undermine the deep inner yearning for peace. In other words, reflection on life's experiences can encourage us to aspire for what the Buddha called "the supreme noble peace" which he said came with the "pacification of greed, hate and delusion." (MN 140.28). To guide and assist us the Buddha provided his followers and disciples—monks, nuns and serious lay followers—with a wealth of advice and guidance.

The following extract from the *Majjhima Nikāya* describes the first part of the gradual training developed by the Buddha for those who had chosen to "go forth" from the home life into homelessness as monks and nuns after hearing the Dhamma, reflecting on it, and then deciding to commit their lives to following the Buddha's path to complete liberation. Although the discourses generally refer to men going forth, the same general principles apply to women and even, with some adaptation, to lay men and women (see MN 73.9–14) who continue to live the household life while following a life of harmlessness, purity and sensual restraint:

[II/1] "Having thus gone forth and possessing the monks' training and way of life, abandoning the killing of living beings, he abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given; taking only what is given, expecting only what is given, by not stealing he abides in purity. Abandoning sexual activity, he observes celibacy, living apart, abstaining from the vulgar practice of sexual intercourse. Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech; he speaks truth, adheres to truth, is trustworthy and reliable, one who is no deceiver of the world. Abandoning malicious speech, he abstains from malicious speech; he does not repeat elsewhere what he has heard here in order to divide [those people] from these, nor does he repeat to these people what he has heard elsewhere in order to divide [these people] from those; thus he is one who reunites those who are divided, a promoter of friendships, who enjoys concord, rejoices in concord, delights in concord, a speaker of words that promote concord. Abandoning harsh speech, he abstains from harsh speech: he speaks such words as are gentle, pleasing to the ear, and loveable, as go to the heart, are courteous, desired by many and agreeable to many. Abandoning gossip, he abstains from gossip; he speaks at the right time, speaks what is fact, speaks on what is good, speaks on the Dhamma and the Discipline; at the right time he speaks such words as are worth recording, reasonable, moderate, and beneficial." (MN 51.14)

A key component of the Buddha's advice to the early Sangha and to the lay disciples who came to listen to him was that he encouraged them to use experience, reflection, analysis and meditation to probe deeper into the causes of both conflict with others and conflict within their own minds. The objective of doing this was practical and ameliorative: if the chain of causative conditions for the arising of anger, ill will and aggression could be laid bare, then there is the possibility of weakening those causes and even of completely uprooting them.

With this in mind we can now take up the Buddha's detailed response to Sakka's question with which Part I commenced. Sakka, the Ruler of the Devas[30], had asked the Buddha: "By what

fetters, sir, are beings bound—devas, humans, asuras, nāgas, gandhabbas and whatever other kinds [of beings] there may be—whereby, although they wish to live without hate, harming, hostility or enmity, and in peace, yet they live in hate, harming one another, hostile and malign?"

[II/2] "Ruler of the Gods, [the Buddha replied], it is the bonds of envy and selfishness that fetter beings so that, though they wish to live without hate, harming, hostility or enmity, and in peace, yet they live in hate, harming one another, hostile and malign." This was the Lord's reply, and Sakka, delighted, exclaimed: "So it is, Lord, so it is, Well-Farer! Through the Lord's answer I have overcome my doubt and done away with uncertainty!"

Then Sakka, having expressed his appreciation, asked another question: "But, sir, what gives rise to envy and selfishness, what is their origin, how are they born, how do they arise? Owing to the presence of what do they arise, owing to the absence of what do they not arise?"

"Envy and selfishness, Ruler of the Gods, originate from liking and disliking, that is their origin, that is how they are born, how they arise. When these are present, they arise; when these are absent, they do not arise."

"But, sir, what gives rise to liking and disliking, what is there origin, how are they born, how do they arise? Owing to the presence of what do they arise, owing to the absence of what do they not arise?"

"They arise, Ruler of the Gods, from desire, that is their origin, that is how they are born, how they arise. Owing to the presence of desire, they arise, owing to the absence of desire, they do not arise."

"But, sir, what gives rise to desire, what is its origin, how is it born, how does it arise? Owing to the presence of what does it arise, owing to the absence of what does it not arise?"

"Desire, Ruler of the Gods, arises from [unwise] thinking, that is its origin, that is how it is born, that is how it arises. When the mind thinks [unwisely] about something, it arises, when the mind does not think [unwisely] about anything, it does not arise."

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30. *Devas* in the following translation is rendered as 'gods.' For further information see under *Tāvatiṃsa Heaven* in the Glossary.

"But, sir, what gives rise to [unwise] thinking, what is its origin, how is it born, how does it arise? Owing to the presence of what does it arise, owing to the absence of what does it not arise?"

"[Unwise] thinking, Ruler of the Gods, arises from the tendency to [mental] proliferation, that is its origin, that is how it is born, that is how it arises. When this tendency is active, [unwise] thinking arises, when it is absent, [unwise] thinking does not arise."

"Well, sir, what practice has that monk undertaken, who has reached the right way which is fitting and leads to the cessation of the tendency to [mental] proliferation?"

"Ruler of the Gods, I declare that there are two kinds of happiness: the kind to be pursued and the kind to be avoided. The same applies to unhappiness and equanimity. Why have I declared this in regard to happiness? This is how I understand happiness: When I observed that in the pursuit of such happiness, unwholesome factors increased and wholesome factors decreased, then that happiness was to be avoided. When I observed that in the pursuit of such happiness unwholesome factors decreased and wholesome ones increased, then that happiness was to be sought after. Now, of such happiness as is accompanied by [unwise] thinking and pondering and of that not so accompanied, the latter is the more excellent. The same applies to unhappiness, and equanimity. And this, Ruler of the Gods, is the practice that monk has undertaken who has reached the right way which is fitting and leads to the cessation of the tendency to [mental] proliferation." And Sakka expressed his delight at the Lord's answer.

Then Sakka, having expressed his appreciation, asked another question: "Well, sir, what practice has that monk undertaken who has acquired the restraint required by the [Sangha] rules?"

"Ruler of the Gods, I declare that there are two kinds of bodily conduct: the kind to be pursued, and the kind to be avoided. The same applies to conduct of speech and to the pursuit of goals. Why have I declared this in regard to bodily conduct? This is how I understood bodily conduct: When I observed that by the performance of certain actions, unwholesome factors increased and wholesome factors decreased, then that form of bodily action was to be avoided. And when I observed that by the performance of such actions

unwholesome factors decreased and wholesome ones increased, then such bodily action was to be followed. That is why I make this distinction. The same applies to conduct of speech and the pursuit of goals. And this, Ruler of the Gods, is the practice that monk has undertaken who has acquired the restraint required by the rules." And Sakka expressed his delight at the Lord's answer.

Then Sakka asked another question: "Well, sir, what practice has that monk undertaken who has acquired control of his sense-faculties?"

"Ruler of the Gods, I declare that things perceived by the eye are of two kinds: the kind to be pursued, and the kind to be avoided. The same applies to things perceived by the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind[31]." At this, Sakka said: "Lord, I understand in full the true meaning of what the Blessed Lord has outlined in brief. Lord, whatever object perceived by the eye, if its pursuit leads to the increase of unwholesome factors and the decrease of wholesome ones, that is not to be sought after; if its pursuit leads to the decrease of unwholesome factors and the increase of wholesome ones, such an object is to be sought after. And the same applies to things perceived by the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Thus I understand in full the true meaning of what the Blessed Lord has outlined in brief, and thus through the Lord's answer I have overcome my doubt and removed uncertainty."

[A little later Sakka is recorded as saying to the Buddha:]

"Excitement, sir, is a disease, a boil, a dart. It seduces a man, drawing him into this or that state of becoming, so that he is reborn in high states or low. Whereas, other ascetics and Brahmins of differing viewpoints gave me no chance to ask these questions, the Lord has instructed me at length, and thus removed the doubt and uncertainty from me."

[Sakka then tells the Buddha that in the past he had visited other ascetics and brahmins for answers to his questions but received no satisfactory replies. In fact, he explains, they asked

31. For more details of the Buddha's advice relating to the two kinds of thought (the kind to be pursued, and the kind to be avoided) see MN 19.

questions of him and he found himself explaining the Dhamma to the very people he had gone to for answers:]

"And they became my pupils instead of my becoming theirs. But I, Lord, am a disciple of the Blessed Lord, a Stream-enterer, not subject to rebirth in states of woe, firmly established and destined for full-enlightenment."

"Ruler of the gods, do you admit to having ever previously experienced rejoicing and happiness such as you experience now?" [the Buddha asked.]

"Yes, Lord."

"What was that about?"

"In the past, Lord, war had broken out between the gods and the asuras, and the gods had defeated the asuras. And after the battle, as victor, I thought: 'Whatever is now the food of the gods, and what is the food of the asuras, henceforth we shall enjoy both.' But, Lord, such happiness and satisfaction, which was due to blows and wounds, does not conduce to dispassion, detachment, cessation, peace, higher knowledge, enlightenment, Nibbāna. But that happiness and satisfaction that is obtained by hearing the Dhamma from the Blessed Lord, which is not due to blows and wounds, does conduce to dispassion, detachment, cessation, peace, higher knowledge, enlightenment, Nibbāna." (DN 21.2.2–2.7)

The Role of Mental Proliferation

A key aspect of the Buddha's explanation of the mental processes that take place 'behind the scenes' when anger or the urge to aggression or harm arises is the role of what is referred to in the discourses as *papañca*—rendered in these extracts as "mental proliferation." The Buddha identified *papañca* as a universal mental tendency common to all unenlightened beings capable of thinking. Briefly, it can be summarized as referring to the propensity for our mental processes to indulge in complex chains of emotionally charged thought patterns triggered by particular sensory or mental experiences.

When events occur which are not to our liking it can manifest as the tendency to 'brood upon' these incidents, to sulk, harbour resentment, and, most dangerously, to plan and scheme how to 'get our own back.' We will often internally rationalize these angry reactions by convincing ourselves that they are self-defence, administering due justice or punishment, or something similar. In the next extract we encounter the Buddha giving a firm and concise statement about his teaching regarding these mental processes, followed by a more detailed explanation from one of his senior disciples, the venerable Mahā Kaccāna, an arahant. The discourse begins with the Buddha being approached by a man named Daṇḍapāni:

[II/3] "What does the recluse assert, what does he proclaim?" [Daṇḍapāni asked the Buddha].

"Friend, I assert and proclaim such that one does not quarrel with anyone in the world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its princes and its people; such that perceptions no more underlie that brahmin[32]who abides detached from sensual pleasures, without perplexity, shorn of worry, free from craving for any kind of being." (MN 18.4)

The discourse records that at this point, Daṇḍapāṇi, shook his head and departed, either not understanding or not agreeing with what the Buddha had said. That evening the Buddha told the monks what had taken place and they asked him to say more about what his statement to Daṇḍapāṇi had meant.

[II/4] "Monks, [the Buddha replied] as to the source through which perceptions and notions characterized by mental proliferation beset a man: if nothing is found there to delight in, welcome and hold to, this is the end of the underlying tendency to lust[33], of the underlying

32. In his discourses the Buddha frequently used the term "brahmin" to refer to an arahant, a person who had succeeded in destroying the taints so that they were incapable of arising in him or her again. See also *arahant* in the Glossary.
33. As in Part 1, *lust* here refers to craving for pleasurable experiences in general, not just sexual pleasure.

tendency to aversion, of the underlying tendency to views, of the underlying tendency to doubt, of the underlying tendency to conceit, of the underlying tendency to desire for being, of the underlying tendency to ignorance; this is the end of resorting to rods and weapons, of quarrels, brawls, disputes, recrimination, malice, and false speech; here these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder." That is what the Blessed One said. Having said this, the Sublime One rose from his seat and went into his dwelling. (MN 18.8)

[The monks, however, still did not understand the detailed meaning of what the Buddha had said and decided to go to the venerable Mahā Kaccāna for a more detailed explanation. Mahā Kaccāna was one of the most senior disciples of the Buddha and was an arahant. He is sometimes referred to as the Master of Teaching the Doctrine, and this is his reply to the monks:]

"I understand the detailed meaning [of what the Buddha said] to be as follows:

"Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one thinks about. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates upon. With what one has mentally proliferated upon as the source, [further] perceptions and notions characterized by mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past, future, and present forms cognizable through the eye.

"Dependent on the ear and sounds… Dependent on the nose and odours… Dependent on the tongue and flavours… Dependent on the body and tangibles… Dependent on the mind and mind-objects, mind consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one thinks about. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates upon. With what one has mentally proliferated upon as the source, [further] perceptions and notions characterized by mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past, future, and present mind-objects cognizable through the mind.

"When there is the eye, a form, and eye-consciousness, it is possible to point out the occurrence of contact. When there is the occurrence of contact, it is possible to point out the occurrence of feeling. When there is the occurrence of feeling, it is possible to point out the occurrence of perception. When there is the occurrence of perception, it is possible to point out the occurrence of thinking. When there is the occurrence of thinking, it is possible to point out the occurrence of being beset by perceptions and notions characterized by mental proliferation.

"When there is the ear, a sound, and ear-consciousness… When there is the nose, an odour, and nose-consciousness… When there is the tongue, a flavour, and tongue-consciousness… When there is the body, a tangible, and body-consciousness… When there is the mind, a mind-object, and mind-consciousness… it is possible to point out the occurrence of being beset by perceptions and notions characterized by mental proliferation."

"When there is no eye, no form, and no eye-consciousness, it is impossible to point out the occurrence of contact. When there is no occurrence of contact, it is impossible to point out the occurrence of feeling. When there is no occurrence of feeling, it is impossible to point out the occurrence of perception. When there is no occurrence of perception, it is impossible to point out the occurrence of thinking. When there is no occurrence of thinking, it is impossible to point out the occurrence of being beset by perceptions and notions characterized by mental proliferation.

"When there is no ear, no sound, and no ear-consciousness… When there is no nose, no odour, and no nose-consciousness… When there is no tongue, no flavour, and no tongue-consciousness… When there is no body, no tangible, and no body-consciousness… When there is no mind, no mind-object, and no mind-consciousness… it is impossible to point out the occurrence of being beset by perceptions and notions characterized by mental proliferation.

"Friends, when the Blessed One rose from his seat and went into his dwelling after giving a summary in brief without expounding the detailed meaning… I understand the detailed meaning to be thus." (MN 18.15–19)

Later the monks went to the Buddha and told him what Mahā Kaccāna had said and the Buddha responded by saying that if they had asked him for an explanation of the detailed meaning of his words he would have explained it to them just as Mahā Kaccāna had.

This key teaching from the Buddha as explained by the arahant Mahā Kaccāna points to the way in which it is our "mentally proliferating" about our various sensory and mental processes which arouses the underlying tendencies. These in turn impel us to struggle to satisfy our own desires and aversions, to argue in favour of our own views and opinions, and to throw ourselves wholeheartedly into the vortex of being or becoming. It is this tenacious clinging to our own sensory experience and the corresponding resistance to considering the experiences of others (both arising from the process of mental proliferation) which eventually leads us into quarrels, disputes, brawls, recrimination, angry and exaggerated speech, and, finally, of course, to fighting and to war itself.[34]

The phrase "when there is no eye..." in this discourse and others might seem puzzling because it appears to imply that in some way we need to live without our sense organs (including mind) if we are to become liberated. One way to interpret this is to see that Mahā Kaccāna is actually pointing out that the sense organs and the sensory processes are the *necessary conditions* for the arising of the whole process of thinking, pondering and mental proliferation. This draws our attention to the whole issue of the manner in which our senses and minds work and the necessity to investigate our mental processes and to retrain our thinking so that we no longer automatically believe and cling to everything that our senses and thoughts appear to be telling us.

Some modern thinkers[35]have criticized the analysis of interpersonal conflicts made by the Buddha and his early followers as amounting to "psychological reductionism," since, taken in

34. For a more detailed explanation of this discourse and the notion of mental proliferation see: *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought* and *The Magic of the Mind*, both by Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda, BPS, 1971 & 1974 respectively.

isolation, these ideas appear to be arguing that quarrels, violence and war have their origins *only* in the psychological states of people with their social and physical conditions being irrelevant. Yet examination of the Buddha's discourses clearly shows that this is not the view he took. In Part I, for example, we read of the Buddha's advice relating to ruling peacefully and preventing wars and there we found him laying great stress on the importance of the social and material conditions in which people live as key factors in maintaining harmony both within a country and between countries.

The Buddha was a master of the analysis of conditional relationships between all things (*idappaccayatā*) and his understanding encompassed the entire range of mental and physical phenomena. At the same time he did not hold to any views about a fixed, one-way relationship between the mental and the material applicable in all circumstances. In his references to the circumstances which can give rise to unrest amongst a country's people the Buddha sometimes drew attention to the importance of the social and material conditions which contribute to producing social harmony or unrest. On other occasions he would draw attention to the mental processes that occur when people experience favourable and unfavourable circumstances.

Human beings have highly developed mental faculties and our relationship, through the senses, with what we call the world is mediated through our mental processes, both conscious and unconscious. As a result we are capable of acting with conscious intentions in order to bring about pre-conceived results. In addition we are capable of perceiving and monitoring our own sensory, emotional and mental states and can therefore restrain and control them and ultimately liberate ourselves totally from their unrestrained domination.

In the above extracts (Texts II/2–II/4) from two important Pāli discourses we read of the Buddha and one of the early arahants

35. E.g. Damien Keown, "*A Response to 'The Place for a Righteous War in Buddhism' by P.D. Premasiri"* in *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, Vol 10, 2003; (www.buddhistethics.org).

explaining the mental processes that take place when the sensory process of perception occurs. Here perception (*saññā*) clearly refers to the entire range of awareness covering the physical and mental modalities, not just perception through the eye. The Buddha in his deeper teachings, which seek to get to the very root of mankind's existential problems and show us how to uproot them totally, points out that the ordinary, untrained person is normally incapable of seeing things "as they are." In our everyday unreflective life we do not see how we are dominated by our own likes and dislikes, desires and aversions, views and opinions, and our craving and clinging in relation to the various aspects of our sensory and mental experience. The Buddha taught that the craving and clinging which keep us in bondage to the mundane world of sensory experience are mediated by patterns of "conceivings" or "concepts" (*maññita*). These are distorted views, beliefs, opinions and suppositions which arise in the mind through the process of "mental proliferation" (*papañca*)—referred to in the two discourses quoted above. But we treat these views, beliefs and opinions as if they were self-evident objective truths inherent in the nature of the world and we cling to them tenaciously. This is how the Buddha encouraged his followers to regard the process of conceiving:

[II/5] "Conceiving is a disease, conceiving is a tumour, conceiving is a dart. By overcoming all conceivings, monk, one is called a sage at peace. And the sage at peace is not born, does not age, does not die; he is not shaken and is not agitated. For there is nothing present in him by which he might be born. Not being born, how could he age? Not ageing, how could he die? Not dying, how could he be shaken? Not being shaken, why should he be agitated?" (MN 140.31)

The Buddha argued that the most basic conceiving of all to which we are attached is the assumption that there is an actual entity we call the 'I,' the 'self,' the 'soul' (Pāli: *attā*) existing within each person. To the unreflecting mind it may seem obvious that there is a real 'self' at the centre of all experience and thought. The Buddha taught that this assumption about a self is, in actuality, a conceiving arising from the process of clinging to the various

aspects of our sensory and mental experience, including mental proliferation. But this adherence to the assumption of a self is not just an error, it is the major obstacle to liberation from dukkha which must be overcome in order to realize the state of permanent inner peace, Nibbāna[36]. It should also be noted that the Buddha argued that clinging to the assumption that "no self exists for me" is also an obstacle to liberation [MN 2.8].

The Buddha encouraged his followers to regard their physical and mental experiences in a detached way, as processes that they could observe as: "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self." That is to say, to regard these experiences as devoid of a self:

[II/6] "When one knows and sees thus… then in regard to this body with consciousness and in regard to all external signs, the mind is rid of I-making, mine-making, and conceit, has transcended discrimination, and is peaceful and well liberated." (SN 18:22).

Through reflection and meditation we can begin to see these processes of conceiving and mental proliferation occurring in our own minds and in the minds of others in a more detached and objective way. This will enable their hold on our mental and physical states to weaken as we begin to penetrate through our everyday distorted way of seeing things to see things as they actually are. This process of penetrative insight (*vipassanā*) leads to purification of the mind (*visuddhi*) and, ultimately, to complete and permanent liberation from all unwholesome thoughts and actions. That is to say, it leads to Nibbāna or enlightenment—referred to in the discourses as "the supreme state of sublime peace." This is why the serious follower of the Buddha must practise insight meditation (*vipassanā).*

Meditative and reflective investigation reveals to us the processes that drive human beings into confused and painful internal mental states as well as conflicts and wars with each other. In addition, meditation and mental investigation show us the

36. For more on the process of conceiving and its pervasive and deceptive nature see: *The Discourse on the Root of Existence*, Bhikkhu Bodhi, BPS, Kandy, 1992.

unpleasant mental and kammic consequences of these conflicts both now and in the future, and, most importantly, the means of release from this seemingly inescapable cycle of painful existence. But this liberation is dependent on our obtaining a much broader perspective on the way in which our actions and thinking are conditioned by our subservience to sense pleasure and displeasure.

This is how the Buddha once described what he called the gratification, the danger and the escape in the case of the unreflective pursuit of sensual pleasures (and, by implication, the unreflective rejection of sensual displeasures):

[II/7] "And what, monks, is the gratification in the case of sensual pleasures? Monks, there are these five cords of sensual pleasure. What are the five? Forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desired, agreeable and likeable, connected with sensual desire, and provocative of lust[37]. Sounds cognizable by the ear… Odours cognizable by the nose… Flavours cognizable by the tongue… Tangibles cognizable by the body that are wished for, desired, agreeable and likeable, connected with sensual desire, and provocative of lust. These are the five cords of sensual pleasure. Now the pleasure and joy that arise dependent on these five cords of sensual pleasure are the gratification in the case of sensual pleasures.

"And what, monks, is the danger in the case of sensual pleasures? Here, monks, on account of the craft by which a person makes a living—whether checking or accounting or calculating or farming or trading or husbandry or archery or the royal service, or whatever craft it may be—he has to face cold, he has to face heat, he is injured by contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, and creeping things; he risks death by hunger and thirst. Now this is the danger in the case of sensual pleasures, a mass of dukkha[38]visible here and now, having sensual pleasures as its cause, sensual pleasures as its source, sensual pleasures as its basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

"If no property comes to the person while he works and strives and makes an effort thus, he sorrows, grieves and laments, he weeps beat-

37. See note 4 in Part I.
38. See note 5 in Part 1 and also the Glossary for more on *dukkha*.

ing his breast and becomes distraught, crying: 'My work is in vain, my effort is fruitless!' Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasures, a mass of dukkha visible here and now, having sensual pleasures as its cause, sensual pleasures as its source, sensual pleasures as its basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

"If property comes to the clansman while he works and strives and makes an effort thus, he experiences pain and grief in protecting it: 'How shall neither kings nor thieves take my property, nor fire burn it, nor water sweep it away, nor hateful heirs make off with it?' And as he guards and protects his property, kings or thieves take it, or fire burns it, or water sweeps it away, or hateful heirs make off with it. And he sorrows, grieves and laments, he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught, crying: 'What I had, I have no longer!' Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasures, a mass of dukkha visible here and now, having sensual pleasures as its cause, sensual pleasures as its source, sensual pleasures as its basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

"Again, with sensual pleasures as the cause, sensual pleasures as the source, sensual pleasures as the basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures, kings quarrel with kings, nobles with nobles, brahmins with brahmins, householders with householders; mother quarrels with child, child with mother, father with child, child with father; brother quarrels with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend. And here in their quarrels, brawls and disputes they attack each other with fists, stones, sticks, or knives, whereby they incur death or deadly suffering. Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasures, a mass of dukkha visible here and now, having sensual pleasures as its cause, sensual pleasures as its source, sensual pleasures as its basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

"Again with sensual pleasures as the cause, sensual pleasures as the source, sensual pleasures as the basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures, men take swords and shields and buckle on bows and quivers, and they charge into battle massed in double array with arrows and spears flying and swords flashing; and there they are wounded by arrows and spears, and their heads are cut off by swords, whereby they incur death or deadly suffering. Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasures, a mass of dukkha visible here and now, having sen-

sual pleasures as its cause, sensual pleasures as its source, sensual pleasures as its basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

"Again, with sensual pleasures as the cause, sensual pleasures as the source, sensual pleasures as the basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures, men break into houses, plunder wealth, commit burglary, ambush on highways, seduce others' wives, and when they are caught, kings have many kinds of torture inflicted on them. The kings have them flogged with whips, beaten with canes, [a long list of painful punishments then follows]… and they have their heads cut off with swords—whereby they incur death or deadly suffering. Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasures, a mass of dukkha visible here and now, having sensual pleasures as its cause, sensual pleasures as its source, sensual pleasures as its basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

"Again, with sensual pleasures as the cause, sensual pleasures as the source, sensual pleasures as the basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures, people indulge in misconduct of body, speech, and mind. Having done so, on the dissolution of the body, after death, they reappear in states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. Now this too is a danger in the case of sensual pleasures, a mass of dukkha in the life to come, having sensual pleasures as its cause, sensual pleasures as its source, sensual pleasures as its basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures.

"And what, monks, is the escape in the case of sensual pleasure? It is the removal of desire and lust, the abandonment of desire and lust for sensual pleasures. This is the escape in the case of sensual pleasures." [The Buddha then uses similar arguments regarding gratification, danger and escape in relation to material form and to feelings]." (MN 13.8–16)

Re-Training the Mind

In Part I we read some of the guidance that the Buddha gave to ordinary people, both rich and poor, and to rulers about how to live peacefully and in harmony with other people and with the natural world. This can lead to one level of happiness; but even here, as the above extract shows, we still remain at the mercy of unpredictable forces such as the weather and the state of the

economy, and unpredictable people such as governments, criminals and even our own relatives and friends. Therefore, the happiness that can result from the pursuit and acquisition of worldly goals is limited because it is dependent upon conditions which are impermanent, unreliable and to a large extent uncontrollable.

The Buddha consequently describes to us two kinds of happiness as follows:

[II/8] "There are two kinds of happiness, monks. The happiness of the home life and the happiness of monkhood. But the happiness of monkhood is the higher of the two.

"There is the happiness of the senses and the happiness of renunciation. But the happiness of renunciation is the higher of the two.

"There is happiness with the taints[39] and there is taintless happiness. But taintless happiness is the higher of the two.

"There is carnal happiness and non-carnal happiness. But non-carnal happiness is the higher of the two.

"There is noble happiness and there is common happiness. But noble happiness is the higher of the two.

"There is bodily happiness and there is mental happiness. But mental happiness is the higher of the two." *(*AN 2:7)

The Buddha taught that the nature of the world is such that any sort of peace that may be obtainable within it must be impermanent and subject to dukkha. This is because worldly peace is dependent on conditions and these conditions are inherently unstable and unreliable. But it is important to understand that this state of instability and unreliability (*anicca*) is not only a characteristic of all things external to us, it is internal as well. This is due to the fact that our desires and aversions are inherently incapable of final satisfaction. We assume that we will be happy when we get what we want and get rid of what we do not want.

39. *Āsavas*: taints, cankers or intoxicants. They are deep rooted propensities of body and mind originating from the unwholesome roots which perpetuate our continued existence within saṃsāra. For more details see Glossary.

But in reality things do not work out like that. Soon after we get what we want, which may be some physical thing, or a mental state or something more general such as a relationship or certain environmental or social conditions, we begin to get bored with the situation, or to find fault with it. Then our senses and mind begin seeking some new object or state to acquire, and the endless search goes into another cycle. The only permanent peace that is possible is the peace of the unconditioned, Nibbāna.

The Buddha once described the difference between the search for worldly conditioned peace and the search for "the supreme state of sublime peace" in the following terms:

[II/9] "Monks, there are two kinds of search: the noble search and the ignoble search. And what is the ignoble search? Here someone being himself subject to birth seeks what is also subject to birth; being himself subject to ageing, he seeks what is also subject to ageing; being himself subject to sickness, he seeks what is also subject to sickness; being himself subject to death, he seeks what is also subject to death; being himself subject to sorrow, he seeks what is also subject to sorrow; being himself subject to defilement, he seeks what is also subject to defilement…

"And what is the noble search? Here someone being himself subject to birth, having understood the danger in what is subject to birth, seeks the unborn supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna; being himself subject to ageing, having understood the danger in what is subject to ageing, he seeks the unageing supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna; being himself subject to sickness, having understood the danger in what is subject to sickness, he seeks the unailing supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna; being himself subject to death, having understood the danger in what is subject to death, he seeks the deathless supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna; being himself subject to sorrow, having understood the danger in what is subject to sorrow, he seeks the sorrowless supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna; being himself subject to defilement, having understood the danger in what is subject to defilement, he seeks the undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna. This is the noble search." (MN 26.6&12)

Siddhattha Gotama, the Bodhisatta in his last life, was successful in his quest, as we know, and he attained that "supreme

state of sublime peace," Nibbāna, at the age of thirty-five and became the Buddha who set in motion the wheel of the Dhamma. He formulated the Noble Eightfold Path as a set of training and guiding principles to help all those who wish to strive to follow that path to unconditioned permanent peace. There are teachers and books (including, of course, translations of the Pāli suttas) to help the follower and disciple along this path and the reader is encouraged to consult these for further guidance about the Noble Eightfold Path[40]. Those who are totally committed to following that path may well decide to take ordination as a monk or nun. But non-ordained lay-people can also make progress towards the state of ultimate peace and can find that their lives and their state of mind also become more peaceful as a result of making the effort to live by the Noble Eightfold Path in their everyday lives.

We saw in Part I that living a moral life whereby we strive to refrain from harming both ourselves and others is the basic foundation conducive to external peace. But it is important to note that it is also the foundation of internal peace. If we are acting and thinking in ways that cause harm either to others, to ourselves or to both, our minds cannot even begin to be at peace. In such circumstances we can experience guilt and shame and similar painful mental states that can even cause us physical illness. At the same time we know that the impulses to act, speak or think in unwholesome ways seem to spring from our minds, even when we do not want that to happen. Hence the Buddha placed enormous importance on purifying or cleansing our innermost mental processes:

[II/10] "No other thing do I know, monks, that brings so much suffering as an undeveloped and uncultivated mind. An undeveloped and uncultivated mind truly brings suffering. No other thing do I know, monks, that brings so much happiness as a developed and cultivated mind. A developed and cultivated mind truly brings happiness." (AN 1:3.1–10)

40. E.g. *The Noble Eightfold Path*, Bhikkhu Bodhi, BPS, 1999; *The Word of the Buddha*, Nyanatiloka, BPS, 2001, *The Buddha's Ancient Path*, Piyadassi Thera, BPS, 1964. See also the Bibliography.

A key aspect of purifying the mind is to become aware of our mental habits and how these habits become self-perpetuating processes. We can, with practice, change these habitual ways of thinking from unwholesome to wholesome:

[II/11] "Whatever a monk frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind… If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of ill will, he has abandoned the thought of non-ill will to cultivate the thought of ill will, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of ill will… If he frequently thinks upon thoughts of non-ill will, he has abandoned the thought of ill will to cultivate the thought of non-ill will, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of non-ill will." (Condensed from MN 19.6–11)

In this condensed extract we read of the Buddha once again returning to his theme of two kinds of behaviour and their results. Earlier, we encountered the two kinds of happiness, then the two kinds of search, and now, the two kinds of thought. The unifying theme that lies behind the two ways of living that is implied here is that one way, the wrong path, leads to the prolonging of existence in saṃsāra, the perpetuation of dukkha, and the continuation of rebirth. The other path, the safe and good path, leads to release from saṃsāra, the ending of dukkha, and the stepping out of the round of rebirth.

Once the follower or disciple has made serious efforts to purify his or her bodily, verbal and mental behaviour and has committed themselves to the regular practice of meditation and to generally leading a wholesome and reflective life, then that person can also begin to experience the flowering of wisdom leading to insight. It should be noted that although the abandonment of all harmful and unwholesome actions by body, speech and mind is necessary for complete liberation, it is not sufficient. Only when "having seen with wisdom" (*paññāya disvā*) the true nature of things in the most profound and deepest way is complete liberation possible. This is because the faculty of wisely seeing, when fully developed, is able to bring about the permanent abandonment of the "unwholesome roots" (*akusala-mūlaṃ*) which perpetually bring about the ways of thinking and behaving which

keep us bound within worldly existence. But abandoning unwholesome bodily and verbal behaviour on their own, without the full development of wisely seeing, cannot do this:

[II/12] "Which are the things, monks, that can neither be abandoned by bodily acts nor by speech, but can be abandoned having seen them with wisdom? Greed can neither be abandoned by bodily acts nor by speech; but it can be abandoned having seen it with wisdom. Hatred can neither be abandoned by bodily acts nor by speech; but it can be abandoned having seen it with wisdom. Delusion can neither be abandoned by bodily acts nor by speech; but it can be abandoned having seen it with wisdom." (AN 10:23)

Seeing things with wisdom begins by seeing the difference between paying attention to those things which produce harmful results and paying attention to those things which produce beneficial results:

[II/13] "Monks, I say that the destruction of the taints is for one who knows and sees, not for one who does no know and does not see. Who knows and sees what? Wise attention and unwise attention. When one attends unwisely, unarisen taints arise and arisen taints increase. When one attends wisely, unarisen taints do not arise and arisen taints are abandoned." (MN 2.3)

We get an indication here that wisdom and wisely seeing in the sense that they are used in the discourses by the Buddha are not based solely on thinking and learning (although these both have a role to play). Rather, wisdom is the product of refinement of the mental faculties (*sammā-samādhi*), particularly through meditation (*bhāvanā*). It involves a deep-rooted change in the way in which we think as we move closer to understanding things as they actually are.

But the practice of meditation alone is not sufficient for the arising of wisdom, one must also make a genuine and sustained effort to live a harmless and morally wholesome life. The Buddha encouraged those with whom he spoke to see the close supporting connection between morality and wisdom and he once praised a brahmin who came to consult him for saying the following:

[II/14] "Wisdom is purified by morality, and morality is purified by wisdom: where one is, the other is, the moral man has wisdom and the wise man has morality, and the combination of morality and wisdom is called the highest thing in the world. Just as one hand washes the other, or one foot the other, so wisdom is purified by morality, and this combination is called the highest thing in the world."

"So it is, brahmin [the Buddha replied]. Wisdom is purified by morality, and morality is purified by wisdom…" (DN 4.21–22)

Through the sustained effort to purify one's behaviour and the systematic practice of mindfulness and meditation, wisdom begins to arise and the disciple learns how to relinquish all attachments and the entire process of clinging. The Buddha made it very clear that for the disciple to experience the full fruit of the "noble path" there can be no exceptions to this need to relinquish worldly attachments, as even attachment to family and children results in dukkha. Once the Buddha was staying at a town called Uruvelakappa and the headman of the town, Bhadraka, came to the Buddha and asked to be taught about "the origin and the passing away of suffering":

[II/15] "What do you think, headman? [the Buddha replied] Are there any people in Uruvelakappa on whose account sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair would arise in you if they were to be executed, imprisoned, fined, or censured?"

"There are such people, venerable sir."

"But are there any people in Uruvelakappa on whose account sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair would not arise in you in such an event?"

"There are such people, venerable sir."

"What, headman, is the cause and reason why in relation to some people in Uruvelakappa sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair would arise in you if they were to be executed, imprisoned, fined, or censured, while in regard to others no such sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair would arise in you?"

"Those people in Uruvelakappa, venerable sir, in relation to whom sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair would arise in me if

they were to be executed, imprisoned, fined, or censured—these are the ones for whom I have desire and attachment. But those people in Uruvelakappa in relation to whom no sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair would arise in me—these are the ones for whom I have no desire and attachment."

"Headman, by means of this principle that is seen, understood, immediately attained, fathomed, apply the method to the past and to the future thus: 'Whatever suffering [*dukkha*] arose in the past all that arose rooted in desire, with desire as its source; for desire is the root of suffering. Whatever suffering will arise in the future, all that will arise rooted in desire, with desire as its source; for desire is the root of suffering.'"

"It is wonderful, venerable sir! It is amazing, venerable sir! How well that has been stated by the Blessed One: 'Whatever suffering arises, all that is rooted in desire, has desire as its source; for desire is the root of suffering.' Venerable sir, I have a boy named Ciravāsī, who stays at an outside residence. I rise early and send a man, saying, 'Go, man, and find out how Ciravāsī is.' Until that man returns, venerable sir, I am anxious, thinking, 'I hope Ciravāsī has not met with any affliction!'"

"What do you think, headman? If Ciravāsī were to be executed, imprisoned, fined, or censured, would sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair arise in you?"

"Venerable sir, if Ciravāsī were to be executed, imprisoned, fined, or censured, even my life would be upset, so how could sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair not arise in me?"

"In this way too, headman, it can be understood: 'Whatever suffering arises, all that arises rooted in desire, with desire as its source; for desire is the root of suffering.' What do you think, headman? Before you saw Ciravāsī's mother or heard about her, did you have any desire, attachment, or affection for her?"

"No, venerable sir."

"Then was it, headman, because of seeing her or hearing about her that this desire, attachment, and affection arose in you?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"What do you think, headman? If Ciravāsī's mother were to be executed, imprisoned, fined, or censured, would sorrow, lamentation,

pain, displeasure, and despair arise in you?"

"Venerable sir, if Ciravāsī's mother were to be executed, imprisoned, fined, or censured, even my life would be upset, so how could sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair not arise in me?"

"In this way too, headman, it can be understood: 'Whatever suffering arises, all that arises rooted in desire, with desire as its source; for desire is the root of suffering.'" (SN 42:11)

This perspective, that dukkha is always the end result of attachment to desire, is contrary to most people's everyday way of thinking and conflicts with the values which most social systems and governments encourage in their citizens. Before he became a follower of the Buddha King Pasenadi of Kosala once quarrelled with his wife, Queen Mallikā, because she quoted with approval the Buddha's words: "Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are born from those who are dear, arise from those who are dear." It was only when the queen used the same line of reasoning as the Buddha had used with the headman Bhadrika that King Pasenadi realized the truth that lay behind the Buddha's words: dependence for one's happiness on those things that are impermanent always ends in despair and dukkha when those things change in a way not to our liking (MN 87).

Here it should be pointed out that the attachment or clinging that the Buddha insisted was the root of dukkha actually refers to four different forms of clinging. These are: clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, clinging to rules and observances, and clinging to a doctrine of self (MN 11). It does not include the persistent desire for liberation from dukkha, which we might call spiritual desire, or even noble desire[41].

The Buddha's advice to his disciples on relinquishing all forms of worldly attachment, particularly those of the senses, does not mean that we should not love and care for our family, children, relatives and friends. It is the *attachment* and *clinging* to these

41. See SN 51:11–32 for explanations about the beneficial results of "concentration due to desire and volitional mental formations of striving" for the destruction of the taints.

people and these relationships which produces dukkha. Therefore the follower of the Buddha strives to develop love (*mettā*) for all sentient beings regardless of any personal, family or other relationships. As the Buddha advised us in the Metta-sutta: "Just as with her own life a mother shields from hurt her own son, her only child, let all-embracing thoughts for all beings be yours."

It is clear from the discourses that this teaching for one who is pursuing "the supreme noble peace, namely, the pacification of lust, hate, and delusion" entails the relinquishing of all worldly and sensual attachments which bind us to the round of re-becoming and rebirth. Other than the commitment to the training and practice just mentioned, all other attachments and forms of clinging are obstructions to progress on this path and must be put aside. This includes attachment to family, property and wealth, power, status, nation, religion, language, comforts, friends, rituals, pleasures like music and art and all the other thousand and one things to which human beings form attachments. For the disciple seriously pursuing the goal of Nibbāna all attachments to these things are obstacles. This is how the Buddha explained the matter in relation to what he called the five aggregates[42]as they are experienced in meditation:

[II/16] "Whatever exists therein of material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness, he sees these states as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumour, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self. He turns his mind away from those states and directs it towards the deathless element[43] thus: 'This is the peaceful, this is the sublime, that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all attachments, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna.'" (MN 64.9)

Sakka, the Ruler of the Devas and a follower of the Buddha, once asked him "how in brief is a monk liberated by the destruction of craving, one who has reached the ultimate end, the ultimate security from bondage, the ultimate holy life, the ultimate

42. Aggregates (Pāli: *khandha*) see Glossary.
43. *Amatadhātu*—"the deathless element"; an epithet for Nibbāna.

goal?" The Buddha responded with the following words which summarize the experience of the person who hears the teaching of the Dhamma and then follows it through to its highest development:

[II/17] "Here, Ruler of the Devas, a monk has heard [the teaching] that nothing is worth adhering to. [After] having heard [the teaching] that nothing is worth adhering to, he [comes to] directly know everything; having directly known everything, he [comes to] fully understand everything; having fully understood everything, whatever feeling he feels, whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, he abides contemplating impermanence in those feelings, contemplating fading away, contemplating cessation, contemplating relinquishment. Contemplating thus, he does not cling to anything in the world. When he does not cling, he is not agitated. When he is not agitated, he personally attains Nibbāna. He understands: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'" (MN 37.3)

In other words, that person has become an arahant—and it is the arahant's experience of peace that we shall explore in Part III.

III
Peace and the Arahant

Happy indeed are the arahants!
No craving can be found in them.
Cut off is the conceit 'I am,'
Burst asunder is delusion's net.(SN 22:76)

The Dhamma tells us that worldly peace, desirable as it may be, is dependant on conditions and is therefore impermanent, subject to dukkha and devoid of self or essence. The only lasting peace is the peace that comes with enlightenment. It is an important fact that some unenlightened beings, though they themselves have not yet reached that state of perfect peace, Nibbāna, yet can see the possibility of it in this very life. This is well expressed by a description the Buddha once gave of the puzzle he faced as a young man before his enlightenment, seeking peace but unable to find it:

[III/1] "Monks, before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, I, too, being myself subject to birth, sought what was also subject to birth; being myself subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, I sought what was also subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement. Then I considered thus: 'Why, being myself subject to birth, do I seek what is also subject to birth? Why, being myself subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, do I seek what is also subject to ageing sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement? Suppose that, being myself subject to birth, having understood the danger in what is subject to birth, I seek the supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna. Suppose that, being myself subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, having understood the danger in what is subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, I seek the unageing, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, and undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna.'" (MN 26.13)

As a result of Siddhattha Gotama's successful search for enlightenment we now have the example of the Buddha himself and all the arahants as evidence that complete and permanent liberation from saṃsāra and dukkha are, indeed, attainable in this very life.

The enlightened person is sometimes referred to in the Pāli discourses as "a sage at peace" (e.g. MN 140.32). But what are we to understand by saying that such a person is "at peace," and does he or she have any describable characteristics that ordinary unenlightened people can understand? Clearly it does not mean that such a person has a blank mind or no longer thinks, since discussing and teaching the Dhamma, which the Buddha and the early arahants continued to do, requires alert and responsive thinking.

We can, perhaps, begin to get some notion of the arahant's tranquil mind and conduct by first considering in a little more detail what it was that Siddhattha Gotama, the Buddha-to-be, was seeking. Text [III/1] above refers to the search for "the unageing, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, and undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna." This indicates completely transcending or passing beyond all that is subject to coming into being and passing away, all that leads to dukkha, all that is unwholesome or harmful, and all that ties us to the round of re-becoming.

The same discourse (MN 26) tells us of the Buddha designating the search for enlightenment as "the Noble Search." Referring back to the period prior to his enlightenment, he describes leaving his family and abandoning his life of comfort and luxury and going "in search of what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace." We get some further clues as to Siddhattha Gotama's conception of what it was that he was looking for when later, as the Buddha, he describes the reasons why he had left his first two spiritual teachers. In both cases he concluded:

[III/2] "This Dhamma [of each of the teachers] does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna…" (MN 26.15&16)

Another discourse (MN 36) tells us that Siddhattha Gotama next practised special breathing techniques, but that these failed to produce "the supreme state of sublime peace." After that he took to subjecting his body to extremely rigorous physical austerities which culminated in him almost totally ceasing to consume food. This practice took him close to death, but not to enlightenment and inner peace.

After returning to taking food and recovering from this regime Siddhattha decided to take up again the practice of meditation. But this time, rather than going into the higher states of absorption that he had practised under his previous two teachers, he entered successively the four jhānas. And it was this path that was to lead to his enlightenment. The following is one description of what that enlightenment entailed:

[III/3] "Then, monks, being myself subject to birth, having understood the danger in what is subject to birth, seeking the unborn supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna, I attained the unborn supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna; being myself subject to ageing, having understood the danger in what is subject to ageing, seeking the unageing supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna, I attained the unageing supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna; being myself subject to sickness, having understood the danger in what is subject to sickness, seeking the unailing supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna, I attained the unailing supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna; being myself subject to death, seeking the deathless supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna, I attained the deathless supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna; being myself subject to sorrow, having understood the danger in what is subject to sorrow, seeking the sorrowless supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna, I attained the sorrowless supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna; being myself subject to defilement, having understood the danger in what is subject to defilement, seeking the undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna, I attained the undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna. The knowledge and vision arose in me: 'My liberation is unshakeable; this is my last birth; now there is no renewal of being.'" (MN 26.18)

On another occasion the Buddha described his enlightenment in terms of the complete and irrevocable liberation of his mind from the three taints (*āsava*) of sensual desire, craving for existence, and ignorance:

[III/4] "When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfections, malleable, wieldy, steady, and gained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the destruction of the taints. I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is suffering [dukkha]'; I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the origin of suffering'; I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the cessation of suffering'; I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' I directly knew as it actually is: 'These are the taints'; I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the origin of the taints'; I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the cessation of the taints'; I directly knew as it actually is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of the taints.'

"When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When it was liberated, there came the knowledge: 'It is liberated.' I directly knew: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'" (MN 4.31–2)

The above accounts give descriptions of the Noble Search as it was seen by the Buddha-to-be prior to its fulfilment and as it was understood by the Buddha after its fulfilment. That completion of the search includes the discovery of the Four Noble Truths and the complete and permanent overcoming of the taints by the Buddha, the first arahant in the present world cycle. The enlightenment of subsequent followers of the Buddha is also often described in terms of the destruction of the taints. Once a man known as Aggivessana, who was a follower of another spiritual tradition, put a question to the Buddha about the nature of an arahant:

[III/5] "Master Gotama, in what way is a monk an arahant with taints destroyed, one who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, destroyed the fetters of being, and is completely liberated through final knowledge?"

"Here, Aggivessana, [the Buddha replied] any kind of material form whatever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—a monk has seen all material form as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,' and through not clinging he is liberated. Any kind of feeling whatever [as above]… Any kind of perception whatever… Any kind of mental formations whatever… Any kind of consciousness whatever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—a monk has seen all consciousness as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,' and through not clinging he is liberated. It is in this way that a monk is an arahant with taints destroyed, one who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, destroyed the fetters of being, and is completely liberated through final knowledge." (MN 35.25)

On other occasions the Buddha describes the movement towards enlightenment in terms of progressive liberation from the "fetters"[44](*saṃyojana*) (e.g. MN 64 & 66). The fetters can be seen as depicting a more detailed analysis of the taints, whose overcoming may be spread over several life-times.

We can describe an arahant as a man or woman who has completely freed himself or herself from the last traces of the controlling power of the taints—sense desire, craving for existence, and ignorance. Mentally and morally, such a person must be very different from an ordinary or average human being (*puthujjana*) and it is probably impossible for most of us to comprehend what it must be like to be such a being. Nevertheless, we can identify some of the characteristics of the "sage at peace" from the Pāli suttas and some of these have been selected and arranged in what follows under three headings: the state of mind of the arahant; the behaviour of the arahant and his or her interactions with others; and the arahant's relationship with the everyday world. This arrangement is for convenience only and should not be taken as indicating definite demarcations between the categories. The interested reader may also

44. See Glossary.

wish to study the numerous other references and accounts of arahants in other canonical and post-canonical works, such as the *Thera-* and *Therīgathā* and the *Visuddhimagga*.

The characteristics of the arahant described here should not be regarded as descriptions of the 'character' or 'personality' of the arahant in the sense of referring to personal dispositions, attitudes, traits, views and opinions about various matters, personal appearance, manner of speaking, and so on. Arahants do differ in their areas of expertise, special abilities and knowledge, as the *Mahāgosiṅga Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* makes clear (MN 32). But the underlying principles that guide their actions of body, speech and mind are devoid of any trace of unwholesome influences and do not originate from any selfish motive nor from the assumption of the existence of a self.

The enlightened person is sometimes described as "immeasurable" (SN 6:7), "indescribable" and "unfindable" (SN 1:20), "untraceable" (MN 22.36), "neither here nor beyond nor in between" (Ud 1:10). These terms refer to the complete absence of the three unwholesome roots: sense desire, aversion and delusion (MN 43.35–37). The arahant is also freed from attachment to the five aggregates of clinging which condition the thought and actions of the worldling. Such a being could now be said to have only one interest in life: to make known to others the truth about suffering and the cessation of suffering.

The State of Mind of the Arahant

The Buddha once described the mental and physical characteristics of the enlightened being using seven similes relating to familiar features of life in north-east India at that period:

[III/6] "Monks, this [enlightened] monk is called one whose shaft has been lifted, whose trench has been filled in, whose pillar has been uprooted, one who has no bar, a noble one whose banner is lowered, whose burden is lowered, who is unfettered.

"And how is the monk one whose shaft has been lifted? Here the monk has abandoned ignorance, has cut it off at the root, made it like a palm stump, done away with it, so that it is no longer subject to

future arising. That is how the monk is one whose shaft has been lifted.

"And how is the monk one whose trench has been filled in? Here the monk has abandoned the round of births that brings renewed being, has cut it off at the root [as above]…so that it is no longer subject to future arising. That is how the monk is one whose trench has been filled in.

"And how is the monk one whose pillar has been uprooted? Here the monk has abandoned craving, has cut it off at the root… so that it is no longer subject to future arising. That is how the monk is one whose pillar has been uprooted.

"And how is the monk one who has no bar? Here the monk has abandoned the five lower fetters[45], has cut them off at the root… so that they are no longer subject to future arising. That is how the monk is one who has no bar.

"And how is the monk a noble one whose banner is lowered, whose burden is lowered, who is unfettered? Here a monk has abandoned the conceit 'I am,' has cut it off at the root… so that it is no longer subject to future arising. That is how the monk is a noble one whose banner is lowered, whose burden is lowered, who is unfettered.

"Monks, when the gods with Indra, with Brahmā and with Pajāpati seek a monk who is thus liberated in mind, they do not find [anything of which they could say]: 'The consciousness of one thus gone is supported by this.' Why is that? One thus gone, I say, is untraceable here and now." (MN 22.30–36)

Another short description refers to the arahants' complete restraint of the taints and their purifying insight into the true nature of conceit:

[III/7] "[A monk who has completely abandoned the taints] is called a monk who dwells restrained with the restraint of all the taints. He has severed craving, flung off the fetters, and with the complete penetration of conceit he has made an end of suffering." (MN 2.22)

45. The five lower fetters are: personality-view, sceptical-doubt, adherence to rules and observances, sensual desire and ill-will. See also the Glossary.

It will be noted that this quotation refers to the severing of craving (*taṇhā*) in any of its forms. It has completely dried up, never to return. The complete abandonment of this impulse, which the second noble truth describes as the origin of dukkha, is sometimes cited by the Buddha as a single distinctive factor in the attainment of arahantship:

[III/8] "When a monk has abandoned craving, cut it off at the root, made it like a palm stump, done away with it so that it is no longer subject to future arising, then that monk is an arahant with taints destroyed, one who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, destroyed the fetters of being, and is completely liberated through final knowledge." (MN 73.6)

There is another short, succinct description of the mental state of the arahant which occurs in the answer the Buddha gives to Sakka, the Ruler of the Gods, when the latter asks how a monk is liberated by the destruction of craving and attains enlightenment. The Buddha replies that such a monk has contemplated the arising and cessation of all types of feelings whether pleasant, painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant: "Contemplating thus, he does not cling to anything in the world. When he does not cling, he is not agitated, when he is not agitated, he personally attains Nibbāna." (MN 37.3. For the Buddha's full response to Sakka's question, see Text [II/17].)

To be agitated (*paritassati*) is to experience restlessness (*uddhacca*) and these are mental states that prevent the mind being peaceful. Since one of the characteristics of arahants is that they do not experience agitation or restlessness, such a person is sometimes described as "a sage at peace" or *muni santa* (e.g. at MN 140.30).

The venerable Sāriputta once used a powerful simile to describe the permanently peaceful state of the arahant's mind:

[III/9] "Suppose, friend, there were a stone pillar sixteen metres long, eight metres sunk in the ground and eight metres above the ground. Then a powerful rainstorm would come from the east: the pillar would not budge, would not shake, would not tremble. Then a powerful rainstorm would come from the north… from the west… from the

south: the pillar would not budge, would not shake, would not tremble. Why not? Because of the depth of the base and because the stone pillar had been deeply planted. So too for a monk thus liberated in mind, if powerful sense objects come into range, they do not obsess his mind; his mind remains uncontaminated, steady, attained to imperturbability; and he contemplates their fall." (AN 10.90)

The arahant's mind has been irrevocably purified of all unwholesome and harmful impulses and tendencies by penetrating, absorbing and realizing the "supreme noble wisdom, namely, the knowledge of the destruction of all suffering (*dukkha*)" (MN 140.25). This is sometimes described as synonymous with the destruction of ignorance regarding the nature and origin of dukkha and the attainment by the noble disciple of the fruition of the way that leads to dukkha's permanent cessation:

(III/10) "Formally, when he was ignorant, he experienced covetousness, desire, and lust; now he has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Formerly, when he was ignorant, he experienced anger, ill will, and hate. Now he has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Formerly, when he was ignorant, he experienced ignorance and delusion; now he has abandoned them, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Therefore a monk possessing [this] possesses the supreme foundation of peace. For this, monk, is the supreme noble peace, the pacification of lust, hate, and delusion…

"The tides of conceiving do not sweep over one who stands upon these (foundations), and when the tides of conceiving no longer sweep over him he is called a sage at peace. So it was said. And with reference to what was it said?

"Monks, 'I am' is a conceiving; 'I am this' is a conceiving: 'I shall be' is a conceiving; 'I shall be formless' is a conceiving; 'I shall be percipient' is a conceiving; 'I shall be non-percipient' is a conceiving; 'I shall be neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient' is a conceiving. Conceiving is a disease, conceiving is a tumour, conceiving is a dart. By

overcoming all conceivings, monks, one is called a sage at peace. And the sage at peace is not born, does not age, does not die; he is not shaken and is not agitated. For there is nothing present in him by which he might be born. Not being born, how could he age? Not ageing, how could he die? Not dying, how could he be shaken? Not being shaken, why should he be agitated?" (MN 140.28–31)

Unlike the unenlightened person's state of mind, the arahant's is not dependent upon conditions being a certain way. In fact, it can be said that the arahant's mind has entered a permanent state of stable, peaceful equanimity:

[III/11] "For one who is dependent there is instability, for one who is independent there is stability; when there is no instability there is serenity; when there is serenity there is no inclination: when there is no inclination there is no coming-and-going; when there is no coming-and-going there is no cessation-and-arising; when there is no cessation-and-arising there is neither 'here' nor 'beyond' nor 'in between the two.' Just this is the end of dukkha." (Ud 8.4)

Another characteristic of the arahant's state of mind is that whereas the follower or disciple in training still has to practise in order to cultivate equanimity regarding the liked and the disliked, the arahant is incapable of being negligent regarding those experiences. In other words, so thoroughly cleansed is the arahant's mind that he or she no longer even has to make the effort to be equanimous, for that is now the natural state of mind of that noble disciple:

[III/12] "I do not say of those monks who are arahants, whose taints are destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal, utterly destroyed the fetters of existence, and are completely liberated through final knowledge, that they still have work to do with diligence in regard to the six sense bases for contact. Why is that? They have done their work with diligence; for they are incapable of being negligent." (SN 35.134)

The Arahant's Behaviour and Interactions with Others

Having uprooted the three unwholesome roots (*akusala mūla*) and destroyed the taints (*āsavas*) which corrupt the minds of ordinary worldlings, the arahant is incapable of deliberately doing anything motivated by the intention of causing harm to any living being or doing anything driven by sensuous desire. These principles govern the arahant's behaviour and interactions with others, therefore he or she always behaves in an exemplary way. The Buddha described to the novice monk, Cunda, nine specific actions which an arahant is incapable of doing:

[III/13] "[If followers of other sects] might say: 'The doctrines of the Sakyan's[46] followers are not well-founded.' They should be told: 'Friend, the Lord who knows and sees has taught and proclaimed to his disciples principles which are not to be transgressed as long as life shall last. Just like a locking-post [at the gate to a city] or an iron post which is deep-based, well-planted and unshakeable, immoveable are these doctrines he has taught. And any monk who is an arahant, whose corruptions are destroyed, who has lived the holy life, done what has to be done, laid down the burden, gained the true goal, who has completely destroyed the fetter of becoming, and is liberated by supreme insight, is incapable of doing nine things:

he is incapable of deliberately taking the life of a living being;

he is incapable of taking what is not given so as to constitute theft;

he is incapable of sexual intercourse;

he is incapable of telling a deliberate lie;

he is incapable of storing up goods for sensual indulgence as he did formerly in the household life;

he is incapable of acting wrongly through attachment;

he is incapable of acting wrongly through hatred;

he is incapable of acting wrongly through delusion;

he is incapable of acting wrongly through fear.

46. The Buddha was born into the Sakya clan and is sometimes referred to as "the sage of the Sakyans" or simply "the Sakyan".

These are the nine things which an arahant, whose corruptions are destroyed, cannot do." (DN 29.26; see also AN 9:7)

Sometimes the Buddha referred to an enlightened person as an *asekha*—"one beyond training" or "a non-learner." They are referred to in this way because in every way they have been completely and irrevocably purified of all unwholesome and harm-inducing habits and intentions and therefore require no further training. The Buddha described this "supreme attainment" of the arahant to one of his lay-followers, Pañcakaṅga, a carpenter, in the following words:

[III/14] "Now, carpenter, when a man possess what ten qualities do I describe him as accomplished in what is wholesome, perfected in what is wholesome, attained to the supreme attainment, an ascetic invincible? Here a monk possesses the right view of one beyond training, the right intention of one beyond training, the right speech of one beyond training, the right action of one beyond training, the right livelihood of one beyond training, the right effort of one beyond training, the right mindfulness of one beyond training, the right concentration of one beyond training, the right knowledge of one beyond training, and the right deliverance of one beyond training. When a man possesses these ten qualities, I describe him as accomplished in what is wholesome, perfected in what is wholesome, attained to the supreme attainment, an ascetic invincible." (MN 78.14)

The *Suttanipāta* contains a discourse which gives a comprehensive description of the "one of inward peace" (*upasanta*) which describes both the mental state of the arahant and how he or she interacts with other people. It begins with the Buddha being asked about how an arahant sees things and behaves:

[III/15] "Gotama, sir," a questioner said to the Buddha, "I want to ask you about the perfect man. There are those people whom we call 'men who are calmed'—can you tell me how they see things and how they behave?"

[The Buddha:]

"One who is calmed, who has extinguished all his cravings before the time his body disintegrates into nothing, who has no concern with

how things began or with how they will end and no fixation with what happens in between: such a one has no yearnings.

"He has no anger, no fear and no pride. Nothing disturbs his composure and nothing gives him cause for regret. He is the wise man who is restrained in speech.

"He has no longing for the future and no grief for the past; there are no views or opinions that direct him. He knows detachment from the entangled world of sense-impression.

"He does not conceal anything and there is nothing he holds on to. Without acquisitiveness or envy, he remains unobtrusive; he has no disdain or insult for anyone.

"He is not one who is full of himself, or a one who is addicted to pleasure; he is one who is gentle and alert, with no blind faith; he shows no aversion (to anything).

"He is not a person who works because he wants something; if he gets nothing at all he remains unperturbed. There is no craving to build up the passion to taste new pleasures.

"His mindfulness holds him poised in a constant evenmindedness where arrogance is impossible; he makes no comparisons with the rest of the world as 'superior,' 'inferior' or 'equal.'

"Not held by anything, he is free from dependency and there is nothing he relies on. For him there is no more craving to exist or not to exist.

"This is what I call one who is calmed. Such is one who does not seek after pleasure, who has nothing to tie him down, who has gone beyond the pull of attachment.

"Such is one without heirs, one without wealth, without fields, without cattle—one with nothing in him that he grasps at as his or he rejects as not his.

"Such is one who receives false criticism from other people, from priests and hermits but who remains undisturbed and unmoved by their words.

"Such is one without greed and without possessiveness; such is one who, as one of wisdom, does not consider himself 'superior,' 'inferior' or 'equal.' Such is one who is free of all criteria and does not fall into any category.

"Such is one who has nothing in this world that he calls his own and who does not grieve for not having anything. He is calmed who

does not take speculative views." (Sn 848–861)

Among the characteristics of the arahant mentioned above is the fact that he or she never enters into disputes relating to views and opinions about anything. This is also mentioned on other occasions in the discourses:

[III/16] "A monk whose mind is liberated thus, Aggivessana, sides with none and disputes with none; he employs the speech currently used in the world without adhering to it." (MN 74.13)

Being without any sort of attachment whatsoever arahants have no hopes or expectations about how things should or should not. Therefore they do not experience dejection or discontent when alone:

[III/17] On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāketā in the Añjana Grove, the Deer Park. Then when the night had advanced, the young devā Kakudha, of stunning beauty, illuminating the entire Añjana Grove, approached the Blessed One. Having approached, he paid homage to the Blessed One, stood to one side, and said to him:

"Do you delight, ascetic?"

"Having gained what, friend?"

"Then ascetic, do you sorrow?"

"What has been lost, friend?"

"Then, ascetic, do you neither delight nor sorrow?"

"Yes, friend."

"I hope that you're untroubled, bhikkhu.
I hope no delight is found in you.
I hope that when you sit all alone
Discontent doesn't spread over you."

"Truly, I'm untroubled, spirit,
Yet no delight is found in me.
And when I'm sitting all alone
Discontent doesn't spread over me."

"How are you untroubled, Bhikkhu?
How is no delight found in you?
How come, when you sit all alone,
Discontent doesn't spread over you?"

"Delight comes to one who is miserable,
Misery to one filled with delight.
As a Bhikkhu undelighted, untroubled:
That's how you should know me friend."

"After a long time at last I see
A brahmin who is fully quenched,
A Bhikkhu undelighted, untroubled,
Who has crossed over attachment to the world." (SN 2.18)

In the final verse above we read of the "brahmin"[47]being "fully quenched." This can be taken as referring to the permanent cessation of the energy which continuously impels unenlightened beings to experience dukkha. The second noble truth identifies this as craving (*taṇhā*). The Pāli word *taṇhā* originally meant thirst, and, since the enlightened person has completely eradicated this thirst, it can be said to be fully or completely "quenched." The word also tells us that the yearning that such a person formerly had for escape from the pain of dissatisfaction (*dukkha*) that is repeatedly experienced in saṃsāra has also been quenched. In other words, what he or she was seeking—liberation—has now been realized. This dual aspect of quenching is found on other occasions in the discourses, as in the following instance where a monk, Vaṅgīsa, speaks of the contentment that comes after he had dispelled his own dissatisfaction with the monastic life:

[III/18] "*Having abandoned discontent and delight*
And household thought entirely,
One should not nurture lust towards anything;
The lustless one, without delight—
He is indeed a bhikkhu.

47. *Brahmin* is here used by the Buddha to refer to one who has attained liberation from saṃsāra; see Sn 594–656.

Whatever exists here on earth and in space,
Comprised by form, included in the world—
Everything impermanent decays;
The sages fare having pierced this truth.

People are tied to their acquisitions,
To what is seen, heard, sensed, and felt;
Dispel desire for this, be unstirred:
They call him a sage
Who clings to nothing here…

Proficient, long trained in concentration,
Honest, discreet, without longing,
The sage has attained the peaceful state,
Depending on which he bides his time
Fully quenched within himself." (SN 8:2)

The Arahant and the Everyday World

It could be said that even though living in the world, arahants are only affected by the world in two ways. The first arises from the need to maintain the body—to eat, protect it from environmental afflictions such as excess heat or cold, to rest and take medical treatment if necessary. The second way arahants are affected by the world comes from their compassion for living beings who still experience dukkha and their ability to give advice and guidance to other people concerning the means to reduce their dukkha and to follow the path to total liberation. Apart from these two aspects, the enlightened person remains detached from worldly matters. The Buddha once explained to a monk called Kaccānagotta the importance of right view about the true nature of the world:

[III/19] "This world Kaccāna is for the most part shackled by engagement, clinging, and adherence. But this one (with right view) does not become engaged and cling through that engagement and clinging, that mental standpoint, adherence or underlying tendency; he does not take a stand upon 'my self.' He has no perplexity or doubt that what arises is only suffering [dukkha] arising, what ceases is only suffering ceasing. His knowledge about this is independent of others. It is in this way, Kaccāna, that there is right view." (SN 12:15)

All conditioned things end in dukkha and only the deathless (that which is neither born nor dies) brings perfect, permanent peace. Therefore it would be pointless for the arahant to become involved in worldly concerns which contribute to the continued experience of dukkha. The Buddha advised the early monks to beware of the "eight worldly conditions" (*loka-dhamma*—see AN 8:6); so the arahant, as one who has "reached the end of the world," completely comprehends the world's dangers and is incapable of living with any worldly attachments remaining:

> [III/20] *Hence the wise one who knows the world,*
> *The one who has lived the holy life,*
> *Will reach the end of the world,*
> *Knowing the world's end, at peace.*
> *He no more longs for the world*
> *Nor for any other.* (AN 4:45)

The arahant's relationship to the world is in marked contrast to that of ordinary unenlightened persons who, in the following statement, are characterized as "the world":

[III/21] "The world, becoming otherwise, attached to becoming [i.e. worldly existence], seeks delight only in becoming." (SN 35:31)

The ordinary person, infatuated with worldly things, is also bound and trapped by those same worldly conditions and is incapable of disentangling the intricate knot that keeps him or her shackled to the cycle of re-becoming in saṃsāra. This is why human beings continue making the same mistakes over and over again, from one generation to the next. But the arahant is one who has disentangled the tangle that ties beings to saṃsāra and to their continual experience of dukkha. Once the Buddha was asked about this by a brahmin known as Jaṭā Bhāradvāja, or Bhāradvāja of the Tangle:

> [III/22] *"A tangle inside, a tangle outside,*
> *These people are entangled in a tangle.*
> *I ask you this, O Gotama,*
> *Who can disentangle this tangle?"*

(The Blessed One:)

"A man established on virtue, wise,
Developing the mind and wisdom,
A Bhikkhu ardent and discreet:
He can disentangle this tangle.

"Those for whom lust and hatred
Along with ignorance have been expunged,
The arahants with taints destroyed:
For them the tangle is disentangled.

"Where name-and-form[48] *ceases,*
Stops without remainder,
And also impingement and perception of form:
It is here this tangle is cut." (SN 7:6)

Sometimes the Buddha found it necessary to emphasize that this state of contentment and peace beyond all mentality and materiality is not to be confused with the yearning for non-existence or the annihilation of consciousness and the body which ordinary people may sometimes have due to the burdens of living:

[III/23] *"Look at the people in the world, afflicted by ignorance,*
Come into being, delighting in being, not freed.
Whatever forms of being exist, in anyway, anywhere,
All these forms of being are impermanent,
Subject to suffering, of a nature to change.

On seeing this as it actually is with perfect wisdom
The craving for being is abandoned,
Yet one does not delight in non-being.
Nibbāna is total dispassion and cessation
(Attained) with the complete destruction of cravings.
(Ud 3.10)

Because of arahants' "total dispassion" and "the complete destruction of craving" they are always peaceful, even in

48. *Nāma-rūpa* or 'mentality and materiality.'

circumstances where others are dominated by emotions such as happiness or sadness:

[III/24] The sage, being freed from worldly ties, remains peaceful among the restless. He is indifferent among sectarian squabbles, not embracing them whilst others remain attached. (Sn 912)

Because arahants have totally and irreversibly freed themselves from all worldly attachments the Buddha sometimes described them as the highest of all beings:

> [III/25] *Above, across, and below,*
> *Delight is no more found in them.*
> *They boldly sound their lion's roar:*
> *'The enlightened are supreme in the world.'* (SN 22:76)

Another quality of arahants that should be noted is that they are sometimes described in the discourses as having gone beyond any sort of kammic action; that is, they can no longer act with the intention of bringing about either a wholesome result or an unwholesome result:

[III/26] "Unsullied by both merit and demerit he [the arahant] has discarded the ego; he does not commit here any action productive of [kammic] results." (Sn 790)

The fact that the arahant has transcended having to choose between right and wrong actions is also referred to in the Dhammapada: "The man who is without blind faith, who knows the Uncreated, who has severed all links, who has destroyed all causes (for kamma, good and evil), and has thrown out all desires—he truly is the most excellent of men." (Dhp 97)

This should not be confused with the view held by some that an "enlightened" person can do what he or she wishes without the constraints of morality; sadly, from time to time there are those who use the claim of high spiritual qualities to justify behaviour that would be morally unacceptable when done by an "ordinary" person. This is unmitigated delusion and has nothing in common with the Buddha's teachings. In fact the Buddha taught the exact opposite, as many of the above texts make clear, saying that the

moral behaviour of arahants is always exemplary and they are incapable of knowingly doing or saying anything that would contribute to harming any living being. This is why arahants do not have to struggle to think or act in a morally correct or meritorious way, for they always act in that way, naturally, so to speak. It should be noted that the Buddha did not argue that people should simply accept this on faith; he encouraged them to carefully test and examine those claiming to live by and to teach the highest moral and spiritual practices (MN 95.17–20; AN 3.66 & 4.184). There is no reason to think that he considered that his own teachings and personal behaviour should be excluded from this examination.

It follows from this that it does not seem reasonable to argue that arahants are oblivious to the difference between right and wrong and therefore do not think "good" thoughts, do "good" things or produce "good" results. If that was correct, it would make meaningless the Buddha's decision after his enlightenment to teach the Dhamma "for the welfare and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world" and to urge the first sixty-one arahants to do likewise (Text [I/6]). What most of us call good we do so in relation to what we believe to be bad, and we often have to struggle to do the right thing. An arahant has permanently uprooted the last remains of the unwholesome roots of thought and conduct and therefore can no longer think an unwholesome thought or do an unwholesome act or do anything that knowingly contributes to such things being done. Such a person does still "act" but their actions have no moral result (*vipāka*) because the unwholesome roots are no longer active.

The arahant, we might say, is now naturally and perfectly good. This does not mean that he or she no longer knows what good and bad are. To the contrary, it could be said that no one other than an arahant, having fully trained in the Dhamma to perfection, could be better placed to truly comprehend the profound implications of the deepest roots of right and wrong and be capable of faultlessly guiding others on the morally correct path.

This provides us with some very effective criteria by which to assess the capabilities of spiritual teachers. Based on the principles

outlined above, we can examine a spiritual teacher's conduct in relation to greed, aversion and delusion to see whether anything they do, say or think contributes to bringing about results that are harmful. We can then use that to help us assess whether their advice really is likely to lead to liberation from dukkha and to peace.

Because arahants have thoroughly investigated and understood in practice the attraction, the danger and the escape in relation to the world, they have been able to completely free themselves from domination by all worldly limitations:

> [III/27] *Fettered by both these bonds—*
> *The sensual bond and the bond of being—*
> *Living beings continue in saṃsāra,*
> *Journeying on to birth and death.*
>
> *Those who abandon sensual desires*
> *But have not reached the taints' destruction,*
> *Fettered by the bondage of being,*
> *Are declared to be non-returners.*
>
> *But those who have cut off doubts,*
> *Destroyed conceit and renewal of being,*
> *Who reach the taints' full destruction,*
> *Though in the world, have gone beyond.* (It 3.96)

There is no doubt that to follow the Buddhist path to its culmination of complete liberation from saṃsāra is extremely difficult. However, even some effort in that direction is worthwhile, for the way is open to all even if the journey takes many lifetimes to complete:

> [III/28] *Open to them are the doors to the Deathless,*
> *Let those with ears now show their faith.* (MN 26.21)

IV
Peace and the World

> *By effort and heedfulness, discipline and self-mastery,*
> *let the wise one make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm."* (Dhp 25)

The Buddha's advice to his disciples and followers was not just intended to be practised within the confines of the home, the religious community (such as the monastery) or, in the modern context, the Meditation or Retreat Centre. The Buddha urged all who listened to him to strive to live by his teachings at all times, on all occasions, and in relation to all people. For the Dhamma expresses universal truths and the Buddha's concern was to guide us in weakening and eventually overcoming, the causes of dukkha in every situation where it occurs. Therefore, if we think that the Dhamma is only to be followed on special occasions or only in relation to our family and friends and that in everyday life, or in exceptional circumstances, it does not apply, then we are only heaping up more suffering for ourselves in the future.

At the time that the Buddha was teaching there was a view propounded by some teachers in India, such as Pūraṇa Kassapa, that doing good or harm has no corresponding harmful or beneficial result for the doer (see DN 2.15–18). Hence a person may lie, steal or kill and, as long as they are not caught or later discovered to have done such things, they will experience no unpleasant or painful consequences. The Buddha regarded adherence to views of this nature as obstructing all progress to Nibbāna and, moreover, as causing much suffering in the world. The discourses refer to this belief as the view that there is "no fruit or result of good and bad actions."

We can see this view as closely allied to a notion quite widespread in the modern world: that morality is only a matter of adhering to society's conventions and of avoiding society's

retribution if one does not do so. This way of looking at morality is also often accompanied by the view that since others also act immorally, why shouldn't I do the same? The ruthlessly ambitious, for example, will use such arguments to justify doing anything to get what they want, and the only crime they acknowledge is to be caught or found out.

But if there is no *necessary* harmful outcome to be experienced by the wrongdoer and no *necessary* benefit to be experienced by doing right then there is nothing to be gained inwardly by following a spiritual path or living an honest and pure life. Therefore one might decide to develop one's skills in lying, dissimulation and deception, which, indeed, is what we can find ourselves doing if we do not take care. Sadly, some become highly skilled at these arts of deception and cause great misery to others and, eventually, to themselves.

But for the serious follower of the Buddha refraining from deliberate acts of harm, such as the taking of life and stealing, is seen not only from the perspective of not hurting another living being, nor simply as a matter of adhering to the moral conventions of society. In addition, refraining from such acts is regarded as essential for progress towards Nibbāna and as contributing to a life of purity and harmlessness leading to a happy future in this life and the next. Conversely, living a life in which we do harm to others leads away from Nibbāna and brings us unhappiness in present and future lives. This is because such acts also intrinsically bring pain to those who do them regardless of whether anyone else (human or divine) knows about them and regardless of whether one is punished or censured by others for carrying them out. The Buddha's personal attendant, Ānanda, once explained this matter to a spiritual teacher called Sandaka who was himself the leader of a group of ascetics at the time of the Buddha:

[IV/1] "Here, Sandaka, some teacher holds such a doctrine as this: 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed; no fruit or result of good and bad actions; no this world, no other world; no mother, no father; no beings who are reborn spontaneously[49]; no good and virtuous recluses and brahmins in the world who have themselves

realized by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world. A person consists of the four great elements. When he dies, earth returns and goes back to the body of earth, water returns and goes back to the body of water, fire returns and goes back to the body of fire, air returns and goes back to the body of air; the faculties are transferred to space. (Four) men with the bier as fifth carry away the corpse. The funeral orations last as far as the charnel ground; the bones whiten; burnt offerings end with ashes. Giving is a doctrine of fools. When anyone asserts the doctrine that there is (giving and the like), it is empty, false prattle. Fools and the wise are alike cut off and annihilated with the dissolution of the body; after death they do not exist.'…..

"Again, Sandaka, here some teacher holds such a doctrine and view as this: 'When one acts or makes others act, when one mutilates or makes others mutilate, when one tortures or makes others inflict torture, when one inflicts sorrow or makes others inflict sorrow, when one oppresses or makes others inflict oppression, when one intimidates or makes others inflict intimidation, when one kills living beings, takes what is not given, breaks into houses, plunders wealth, commits burglary, ambushes highways, seduces another's wife, utters falsehood—no evil is done by the doer. If, with a razor-rimmed wheel, one were to make the living beings on this earth into one mass of flesh, into one heap of flesh, because of this there would be no evil and no outcome of evil. If one were to go along the south bank of the Ganges killing and slaughtering, mutilating and making others mutilate, torturing and making others inflict torture, because of this there would be no evil and no outcome of evil. If one were to go along the north bank of the Ganges giving gifts and getting others to give gifts, making offerings and getting others to make offerings, because of this there would be no merit and no outcome of merit. By giving, by taming oneself, by restraint, by speaking truth, there is no merit and no outcome of merit.

"About this a wise man considers thus: 'This good teacher holds this doctrine and view: "When one acts [in the ways described above]… there is no merit and no outcome of merit." If this good

49. This refers to the view that in certain realms rebirth takes place "spontaneously" without either a mother or a father.

teacher's words are true, then here (in this teaching) I have done [what is right] by not doing (it), here I have lived (the holy life) by not living (it). Both of us are exactly equal here, both have arrived at equality, yet I do not say that whatever both (of us) do, no evil is done. For it is superfluous for this good teacher to go about naked, to be shaven, to exert himself in the squatting posture, and to pull out his hair and beard, since I, who live in a house crowded with children, who uses Benares sandalwood, who wears garlands, scents and unguents, and accepts gold and silver, shall reap exactly the same destination, the same future course, as this good teacher. What do I know and see that would make me lead the holy life under this teacher?' So when he finds that this way negates living of the holy life, he turns away from it and leaves it.

"This is the second way[50] that negates the living of the holy life that has been declared by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened, in which a wise man certainly would not live the holy life, or if he should live it, would not attain the true way, the Dhamma that is wholesome." (MN 76.7 & 10–12)

The Buddha himself employed the powerful metaphor of the razor-rimmed wheel which reduces all the living beings on this earth to one mass of flesh in a discourse he gave to the brahmin householders of Sālā. In this instance he said that if one took the view that there was no intrinsic merit or demerit in our acts of body, speech and mind then we might just as well act wrongly or harmfully as rightly or benevolently. By taking this view we would not see any "danger, degradation or defilement" in unwholesome acts or mental states, or any benefits or blessings in wholesome acts or mental states. (MN 60.13–20).

In fact, this understanding that "there is fruit and result of good and bad actions" forms an essential part of what the Buddha called Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and is a crucial requirement for the development of the Noble Eightfold Path (see MN 117).

50. The first way (details omitted here) refers to the argument that "there is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed".

Developing Compassion as the Antidote to Adversity

As with the Buddha's advice to the people of Bamboo Gate and the brahmins of Sālā, the first moral practice the disciple of the Buddha must follow is to abstain from killing living beings. But the guidance goes even beyond that: the monk or other follower is urged to develop compassion for all living beings and to always act gently and kindly. These qualities have to be developed so that when encountering criticism, disrespect, insults and even assaults, the disciple does not allow their mind to be overcome by aversion nor do they respond with aggression:

[IV/2] "When others address you, their speech may be timely or untimely… true or untrue… gentle or harsh… connected with good or with harm… spoken with a mind of loving-kindness or with inner hate. In these cases you should train thus: 'Our minds will remain unaffected, and we shall utter no evil words; we shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate. We shall abide pervading that person with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, and starting with him, we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill-will.' That is how you should train, monks…

"Monks, even if bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handled saw, he who gave rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be carrying out my teaching. In this case, monk, you should train thus: 'Our minds will remain unaffected, and we shall utter no evil words; we shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate. We shall abide pervading them with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, and starting with them, we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill-will.' That is how you should train, monks.

"Monks, if you keep this advice on the simile of the saw constantly in mind, do you see any course of speech, trivial or gross, that you could not endure?"

"No, venerable sir."

"Therefore, monks, you should keep this advice on the simile of the saw constantly in mind. That will lead to your welfare and happiness for a long time." (MN 21.11 & 19).

Once a monk called Puṇṇa went to the Blessed One for some advice before departing for another country. The Buddha gave him a short discourse on the cessation of suffering through the cessation of delight and then asked Puṇṇa where he was going to live. The monk told the Blessed One that he was going to dwell in the Sunāparanta country.

[IV/3] "Puṇṇa, the people of Sunāparanta are fierce and rough. If they abuse and threaten you, what will you think then?"

"Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta abuse and threaten me, then I shall think: 'These people of Sunāparanta are excellent, truly excellent, in that they did not give me a blow with the fist.' That is how I shall think on that occasion, Blessed One; that is how I shall think then, Sublime One."

"But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta do give you a blow with the fist, what will you think then?"

"Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta do give me a blow with the fist, then I shall think: 'These people of Sunāparanta are excellent, truly excellent, in that they did not give me a blow with a clod.' That is how I shall think on that occasion, Blessed One; that is how I shall think then, Sublime One."

"But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta do give you a blow with a clod, what will you think then?"

"Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta do give me a blow with a clod, then I shall think: 'These people of Sunāparanta are excellent, truly excellent, in that they did not give me a blow with a stick.' That is how I shall think on that occasion, Blessed One; that is how I shall think then, Sublime One."

"But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta do give you a blow with a stick, what will you think then?"

"Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta do give me a blow with a stick, then I shall think: 'These people of Sunāparanta are excellent, truly excellent, in that they did not give me a blow with a knife.' That is

how I shall think on that occasion, Blessed One; that is how I shall think then, Sublime One."

"But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta do give you a blow with a knife, what will you think then?"

"Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta do give me a blow with a knife, then I shall think: 'These people of Sunāparanta are excellent, truly excellent, in that they have not taken my life with a sharp knife.' That is how I shall think on that occasion, Blessed One; that is how I shall think then, Sublime One."

"But, Puṇṇa, if the people of Sunāparanta do take your life with a sharp knife, what will you think then?"

"Venerable sir, if the people of Sunāparanta do take my life with a sharp knife, then I shall think thus: 'There have been disciples of the Blessed One who, being repelled, humiliated, and disgusted by the body and by life, have sought an assailant. But I have obtained this assailant even without a search.' That is how I shall think on that occasion, Blessed One; that is how I shall think then, Sublime One."

"Good, good, Puṇṇa! Possessing such self-control and peacefulness, you will be able to dwell in the Sunāparanta country. Now, Puṇṇa, it is time to do as you think fit." (MN 145.5–6)

The discourse ends by describing how the venerable Puṇṇa travelled by stages to the Sunāparanta country and there, during the first year, gained five hundred male and five hundred female lay followers. Soon he experienced enlightenment and at his death attained final Nibbāna.

For most of us, such an attitude of patience and loving-kindness in the face of the hostility of others is enormously difficult to practise and to maintain. Partly this is because it appears to go against what we take to be our instincts of self-defence and self-preservation. However, by deep reflection on the nature of our existence and the kammic consequences of our thoughts and actions it becomes possible to see that the inner suffering which we experience when we are affected by anger and hatred can be far more painful and long-lasting than the mental or physical pain we may feel as a direct result of aggression from others. If we can only find the moral and spiritual strength, we can

discover for ourselves a far more potent response than mere animal fear or self-defence. By examining the feelings and sensations we have when we experience an emotion such as anger we can become aware of how painful and tortuous they are and start to develop a strong desire to be free of them. We can also begin to realize that thinking and acting from compassion (*karuṇā*) and love (*mettā*) will demonstrate to others that it is possible to live without being dominated by unrelenting thoughts of anger and aggression. We may also be fortunate enough to encounter a person who does, in fact, live by such principles. When we see their calmness and peacefulness, it can begin to dawn on us that we, too, can allow those qualities to unfold within ourselves and can experience for ourselves the happiness that they bring to the heart.

When the Buddha says in the *Dhammapada*: "Hatred is never pacified by hatred in this world; by non-hatred alone is hatred pacified. This is the law, ancient and eternal," (Dhp 5) he is reminding us of an important moral and psychological truth. If we counter the hatred that comes from others with our own hatred, we may succeed in frightening or deterring the other person, but we will not end the hatred they have for us. As the Buddha says elsewhere in the *Dhammapada*: "Victory gives rise to enmity, the defeated dwell in pain. Happily the peaceful live, discarding both victory and defeat." (Dhp 201 and SN 3:14)

The Buddha says more on this matter after being told by the monks about a battle between two kings in which the victor had confiscated all the troops of the loser:

> [IV/4] *The killer begets a killer,*
> *One who conquers, a conqueror.*
> *The abuser begets abuse,*
> *The reviler, one who reviles.*
>
> *Thus by the unfolding of kamma*
> *The plunderer is plundered.* (SN 3:15)

Here the Buddha is reminding us of the iron law of kamma-vipāka and that no one can escape the consequences of their intentional actions. In this case, kamma-vipāka manifests in two

ways. Firstly, if we respond to aggression with aggression we ensure that we keep the cycle going, for, inevitably, the other person or group will respond, in turn, to our aggression with yet more aggression of their own. Secondly, we are also storing up more negative consequences for ourselves by allowing unwholesome tendencies of anger to determine our behaviour, thus paving the way for more suffering for ourselves in the near or distant future. Clearly this applies to the other person or group as well—they also become trapped in the cycle of aggression and violence with no way out: "Thus by the unfolding of kamma the plunderer is plundered." It is the general ignorance of the way in which our usual response to aggression actually perpetuates the very thing we want to bring to an end that ensures that mankind continues on the path of endless rounds of wars and conflicts that we have been following since the dawn of humanity—as true today as it ever was in the past.

Very often conflicts come to an end not because the opponents become aware of the folly of what they are doing, but only because they reach physical and mental exhaustion. In such cases, as soon as they regain their strength they continue as before. We see this when we study the history of any nation or society and observe how centuries old enmities flare up, then die down—only to flare up again years later. Sometimes, however, shock, shame and revulsion when seeing the consequences of their actions can spur people into thinking differently about these matters. This happened in the case of the Emperor Aśoka when he reflected on the enormous scale of the suffering that arose from his military campaigns to unify India in the third century BCE. Also it could be said that such a change in thinking occurred in the minds of many Europeans after the mass slaughter and unparalleled destruction of two world wars in the first half of the 20th century.

In his discourses the Buddha sometimes made reference to the constantly recurring war between two groups disputing for control of the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven, one of the lower of the twenty realms of happy existence[51]. These two groups were the devas, ruled by Sakka, and the asuras, or titans, ruled by Vepacitti and

Verocana. The asuras constantly sought to conquer the heavenly realm of the devas. In a sense the rulers of the two groups could be said to represent two different moral and political outlooks which beings who live in the world of sensual existence may follow. Sakka, the ruler of the devas, tries to apply the rule of righteousness and justice to the way in which he leads his defence of the deva realm, practising patience towards aggressors, treating wrongdoers with compassion, using the minimal necessary force, and not allowing his actions to be ruled by anger or vengefulness. Vepacitti and Verocana, the rulers of the asuras, on the other hand, believe that patience and compassion demonstrate weakness and that this invites more aggression from others; therefore wrongdoing has to be dealt with harshly.

The Buddha used the example of Sakka, ruler of the devas, to exhort the monks to develop and practice patience and gentleness:

[IV/5] "Once in the past, monks, the devas and asuras were arrayed for battle. Then Vepacitti, lord of the asuras, said to Sakka, lord of the devas: 'Lord of the devas, let there be victory by well-spoken counsel.' (And Sakka replied:) 'Vepacitti, let there be victory by well-spoken counsel.'

"Then, monks, the devas and the asuras appointed a panel of judges, saying: 'These will ascertain what has been well spoken and badly spoken by us.'

"Then Vepacitti, lord of the asuras, said to Sakka, lord of the devas: 'speak a verse, lord of the devas.' When this was said, Sakka replied to Vepacitti: 'You, being the senior deva here, speak a verse.' When this was said, Vepacitti, lord of the asuras, recited this verse:

"Fools would vent their anger even more
If no one would keep them in check.
Hence with drastic punishment
The wise man should restrain the fool."

51. For more information on the terms used in this section see *asuras, devas* and *Tāvatimsa Heaven* in the Glossary.

"When, monks, Vepacitti, lord of the asuras, spoke this verse, the asuras applauded but the devas were silent. Then Vepacitti said to Sakka: 'speak a verse, lord of the devas.' When this was said, Sakka, lord of the devas, recited this verse:

"I myself think this alone
Is the way to check the fool:
When one knows one's foe is angry
One mindfully maintains one's peace."

"When, monks, Sakka, lord of the devas, spoke this verse, the devas applauded but the asuras were silent. Then Sakka said to Vepacitti: 'speak a verse, Vepacitti.' When this was said Vepacitti, lord of the asuras, recited this verse:

"I see this fault, O Vāsava,
In practising patient endurance:
When the fool thinks this of you,
'He is silent out of fear,'
The idiot will chase you even more
As a bull does one who flees."

"When, monks, Vepacitti, lord of the asuras, spoke this verse, the asuras applauded but the devas were silent. Then Vepacitti said to Sakka: 'speak a verse, lord of the devas.' When this was said, Sakka, lord of the devas, recited these verses:

"Let it be whether or not he thinks,
'He is silent out of fear,'
Of the goals that culminate in one's own good
None is found better than patience.

"When a person endowed with strength
Patiently endures a weakling,
They call that the supreme patience;
The weakling must be patient always.

"They call that strength no strength at all—
The strength that is the strength of folly—
But no one can reproach a person
Who is strong because guarded by Dhamma.

"One who repays an angry man with anger
Thereby makes things worse for himself.
Not repaying an angry man with anger,
One wins a battle hard to win.

"He practises for the welfare of both,
His own and the other's,
When, knowing that his foe is angry,
He mindfully maintains his peace.

"When he achieves the cure of both—
His own and the other's—
The people who consider him a fool
Are unskilled in the Dhamma."

"When, monks, Sakka, lord of the devas, spoke this verse, the devas applauded but the asuras were silent. Then the panel of judges appointed by the devas and the asuras said this: 'the verses spoken by Vepacitti, lord of the asuras, are in the sphere of punishment and violence; hence [result in] conflict, quarrelling, and strife. But the verses spoken by Sakka, lord of the devas, are in the sphere of non-punishment and non-violence; hence [result in] freedom from conflict, freedom from quarrelling, and freedom from strife. Sakka, lord of the devas, has won the victory by well-spoken counsel." (SN 11:5)

Sakka's thinking is presented in the discourses as being even deeper than that of any of the wheel-turning monarchs we encountered earlier. In contrast to them, Sakka not only ruled during the period of the Buddha's teaching, but he also met the Buddha and become one of his followers, eventually becoming a stream-enterer[52]himself (DN 21). He was also present when the Buddha attained Parinibbāna. However, despite all his efforts to

52. Stream-enterer: see Glossary

understand and to practice the Dhamma, he was attached to the comforts of the Tāvatiṃsa heaven (see MN 37). He also found it impossible to prevent the asuras from periodically attacking the devas and he led his own army in defence of their realm. So at that time he clearly had not completely renounced the use of violence, though it is unclear from the accounts in the discourses whether he continued to lead the defence of the deva-realm after he became a stream-enterer.

In an important way the account of the never-ending wars between the (good) devas and the (bad) asuras can leave us feeling frustrated and discontented. We might think that this is not what we want to hear; we would like to hear that this war has finally come to an end and that either the asuras have finally accepted defeat or they have been accepted back into the heavenly realm by the devas. But this is not what happens, and the Tāvatiṃsa devas and the asuras seem committed to living in eternal conflict.

This can lead us to conclude that the accounts of the wars between the devas and the asuras represent, in fact, an archetype or model of the unavoidable pain that beings experience in saṃsāra where even the 'good' devas led by the 'righteous' Sakka have to use force to defend themselves and survive. Such actions can be called righteous in terms of our everyday concepts of what is right and wrong and they conform with notions such as 'self-defence is no offence' and similar maxims. Moreover, the texts make it clear that Sakka, in leading the defence of the devas, is not dominated by emotions such as anger, fear, vengefulness, grudge-bearing or the inability to forgive. We can also note that even though Sakka's patience and lack of anger did not, it seems, succeed in ending the wars with the asuras because the ambitions of the latter were too powerful, it ensured that periods of peace did prevail from time to time, and that the devas created only the minimum unwholesome kamma needed to defend themselves. But this is not the perfection and the attainment of complete peace that we might hope for.

Moreover, if the Buddha's teachings on *kamma-vipāka* are correct, what Sakka and the devas are doing in defending the Tāvatiṃsa heaven is rooted in the unwholesome and will contribute to their continual experience of dukkha and their

rebirth in saṃsāra. After all, in defending the heavenly realm where they reside, are not Sakka and the devas driven by their attachment to it[53]?

Spreading the Dhamma in a Non-Contentious Way

One of the most important aspects of the Buddha's guidance relates to the fact that the manner in which the Dhamma is taught and promoted must, itself, be done in a non-contentious and harmonious way. Not only must physical violence never be used to spread or defend the Dhamma, the follower of the Buddha should even avoid entering into disputes and quarrels with others (see MN 48). To this end the Buddha encouraged the members of the Sangha to train themselves not to allow anger to fill their minds even when they encountered harsh criticism about the Buddha, the Dhamma or the Sangha:

[IV/6] "Monks, if anyone should speak in disparagement of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha, you should not be angry, resentful or upset on that account. If you were to be angry or displeased at such disparagement, that would only be a hindrance to you. For if others disparage me, the Dhamma or the Sangha, and if you are angry or displeased, can you recognize whether what they say is right or not?"

"No, Lord."

"If others disparage me, the Dhamma or the Sangha, then you must explain what is incorrect as being incorrect, saying: 'That is incorrect, that is false, that is not our way, that is not found among us.'

"But, monks, if others should speak in praise of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha, you should not on that account be pleased, happy or elated. If you were to be pleased, happy or elated at such praise, that would only be a hindrance to you. If others praise me, the Dhamma or the Sangha, you should acknowledge the truth of what is true, saying:

53. For an occasion where the arahant Mahā Moggallāna acts to point out to Sakka this attachment see MN 37.

'That is correct, that is right, that is our way, that is found among us.'" (DN 1.1.5–6)

The Buddha said that his followers should be sensitive even to the way in which they teach the Dhamma to those who wanted to hear it. This is concisely expressed in the following advice that the Buddha once gave to the monks:

[IV/7] "One should know what it is to overpraise and what it is to disparage, and knowing both, one should neither overpraise nor disparage but should teach only the Dhamma… One should not utter covert speech, and one should not utter overt sharp speech. One should speak unhurriedly, not hurriedly. One should not insist on local language, and one should not override normal usage [of language]." (MN 139.3; see also MN 59 & MN 74)

It follows from this advice that those followers of the Buddha's teachings who are engaged in promoting the virtues and benefits of peaceful and harmonious living over the misfortunes and dangers of living in conflict and violence should, themselves, strive to do so in a non-aggressive and peaceful way. Otherwise they fall into the same error as those who put their viewpoint in an aggressive and confrontational manner and seriously undermine their own position. We can also take note of the important psychological observation that anger and even displeasure are hindrances to our seeing things in an objective and dispassionate way. When these mental states arise we are in great danger not only of doing the wrong thing, but of making the situation even worse.

This means that those who are striving to follow the Buddha's path need to give great emphasis to cultivating loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*) and considering the wishes of others. Once when the Buddha was living at a place called Kosambī, the monks there became embroiled in a dispute and refused to listen to his advice to find a way to settle their quarrel. He left that community and eventually went to a place known as the Eastern Bamboo Park where he came upon a small community of three monks who told the Buddha "we are living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other

with kindly eyes." The Buddha asked one of the monks, Anuruddha, how they were able to live in that way.

[IV/8] "Venerable sir, [Anuruddha replied] as to that, I think thus: 'It is a gain for me, it is a great gain for me that I am living with such companions in the holy life.' I maintain acts of loving-kindness towards these venerable ones both openly and privately; I maintain verbal acts of loving-kindness towards them both openly and privately; I maintain mental acts of loving-kindness towards them both openly and privately. I consider: 'Why should I not set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do?' Then I set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do. We are different in body, venerable sir, but one in mind." (MN 128.12).

As with abandoning the taking of life, the Buddha's own abandoning of unwholesome talk was one of the basic matters of morality for which ordinary people praised him:

[IV/9] "Abandoning false speech, the ascetic Gotama dwells refraining from false speech, a truth-speaker, one to be relied on, trustworthy, dependable, not a deceiver of the world. Abandoning malicious speech, he does not repeat there what he has heard here to the detriment of these, or repeat here what he has heard there to the detriment of those. Thus he is a reconciler of those at variance and an encourager of those at one, rejoicing in peace, loving it, delighting in it, one who speaks up for peace. Abandoning idle chatter, he speaks at the right time, what is correct and to the point, of Dhamma and discipline. He is a speaker whose words are timely, to be treasured, reasoned, well-defined and connected with the goal." (DN 1.9).

Some Practical Conclusions

Many people, whether they regard themselves as Buddhists or not, will find the Buddha's teachings on peace illuminating and helpful. But for those who take the view that the Pāli suttas are, indeed, the oldest and most accurate, complete and comprehensive record of what the Buddha taught in his life time, these passages are of the very highest importance. This is because they are not only the

principal source for understanding this ancient and comprehensive teaching, but they also reflect the truth about the nature of mankind's existence and the causes of some of our major problems, as well as give us guidance for trying to alleviate these problems.

But experience tells us that this is not easy to do, for we humans are highly experienced in the art of finding plausible justifications for our own unwholesome behaviour[54]. So, faced with the nasty realities of what people do to each other, we can sometimes find ourselves thinking that if only people would follow the Dhamma, we wouldn't have all the horrible crimes and social problems that we hear about, even war could be abolished. But this is merely to say that if people were not bad they would be good, and does not get us very far in practice. One solution to the problem of violence and disruption in society that human thinking has come up with is to try to *impose* goodness by force. This is often linked with the habit of blaming someone else, or identifying a scapegoat, and thinking that if only we could get rid of the problem people, everything would be fine. But this is a method of ruling favoured by all despots and demagogues and always ends in disaster, partly due to the failure to accept our own responsibility for our problems, and partly due to the corrupting effects of having unchallenged power.

The Buddha was certainly not a utopian or millenarian. He did not promote the view that the perfect society could and should be established by human effort nor did he envisage that at some time in the future universal perfection would come about by some sort of divine purging of all that is evil and wrong. That is surely clear from his rejection of Mara's suggestion that he could "exercise rulership righteously" (see Text I/6). Even the devas in their heavenly realm led by the Buddha's follower, Sakka, had to face aggression from the asuras; and the Buddha himself could not

54. For a thoughtful account by a modern neuroscientist of how we deceive ourselves regarding our motives and actions see *A Mind of Its Own: How the brain distorts and deceives*, Cordelia Fine, London, Icon Books, 2005.

prevent some people from hating him and trying to discredit him or even, as in the case of the monk, Devadatta, from trying to kill him.

We therefore have to deal with the world as it is, not as we would wish it to be. Some might conclude from this that the world is such a corrupt place that nothing at all can be done about it. Others might say that the Buddha's teachings are all very fine for those committed to following a spiritual or religious life, but they are quite impractical for those of us who have to deal with some of the vicious realities of everyday life in society at large. It could also be said that, given mankind's seeming irremediable propensity for disputes, conflict, violence and war, there is no reason to think that those in positions of power or influence now will behave any differently from those who wielded power in the past. To support this, it can be said that history seems to demonstrate the invariable and pervasive corrupting effects of wealth and power in most instances, and that good and honest government in the interests of all has been extremely rare in human society.

The Buddha himself was well-aware of mankind's capability for vicious and brutal behaviour of the most depraved sort, as some of the texts quoted in Part I demonstrate. He was also aware of how difficult was the path to the total eradication of unwholesome thoughts and actions. But that did not lead him to advocate total withdrawal from involvement in mundane affairs and did not hinder him from attempting to teach the Dhamma to kings, ministers, generals, and wealthy bankers and traders, as well as ordinary people such as farmers, craftsmen, labourers and so on.

With the Buddha's example and encouragement to guide us we can conclude that though we cannot solve *all* humanity's problems it does not follow that there is nothing at all we can do about them. In practice there are always *some* things we can do, no matter how small. One general point that can be made is that followers of the Buddha's teachings who wield power, authority and influence in society, either through wealth or government position, have the opportunity to show their commitment to the teachings by trying to carry out their work and duties in a way that produces the greatest benefit for society and the least harm to

others and to themselves. This applies not only to those who have power and influence by virtue of wealth, but also those who have power and influence in bodies such as national or local government, non-governmental organisations, schools, as well as voluntary organisations like trade unions, clubs and so on. It also applies to those who have the right to use force in certain circumstances, such as legislators, and those in the judiciary, the military and the police.

This is not just because the actions and decisions of such people affect the welfare and happiness of others, but also because, by the law of kamma, their own future in this life and the next is partly governed by whether they think and act in a wholesome or in an unwholesome way in their daily lives.

In Texts [I/34], [II/2] and others we read of the Buddha drawing attention to some of the causes of social discontent and conflict between individuals and groups. In those texts we read that, according to the Dhamma, the origins of disputes, conflicts and violence lie in our attachments to such things as property, power, land, status, views, ideas, etc. Disputes over such matters lead to the arising of anger, quarrels and aggression and, in the debate between Sakka and Vepacitti, we encountered two different approaches to dealing with situations of that sort. Sakka is quoted favourably by the Buddha as arguing that, as a response to hostility from others, counter-aggression or suppression by force will usually only temporarily deal with that hostility, which can then easily spring up again later.

From this we can learn that by making the effort to understand the reasons for the discontent of others with an open and non-judgemental mind we help put everyone in a better position to deal with it in a peaceful and satisfactory way when it arises. In addition, such an approach helps us to become aware of any incipient anger in its earliest phases before it gets out of hand. This will also help us to discover the causes of hostility from others which will further assist us in defusing it.

In a discourse known as *The Exposition of Non-conflict* (MN 139) the Buddha describes to the monks methods for reducing friction and conflict as they live their daily lives and practise the

training principles which he is teaching them. Careful reading of this discourse reveals important and useful approaches which we can use as general principles to guide many aspects of our lives where we are interacting with others. For example, the Buddha encourages the monks to take a non-dogmatic approach to the use of local language and the everyday usage of words when teaching the Dhamma. He emphasizes that it is possible to be practical, by using language that people understand, and at the same time to refrain from distorting or diluting the teachings.

There are other guidelines that we can draw out from the Buddha's teachings on conflict in the *Dhammapada, Suttanipāta* and the Buddha's reports of the encounters between Sakka (the ruler of the devas) and Vepacitti (the lord of the asuras). These include the following:

We can try to deal with others just as we would a good friend, this even includes those we strongly disagree with and those who may be doing harmful things. That is to say, to treat them with compassion and loving-kindness—this is the only way if we are truly to live by the four *brahmā-vihāras*.

This draws our attention to the importance of striving to listen to the point of view of others, especially those with whom we disagree. If our only concern is with promoting our own point of view and assuming that everyone else is wrong then we are always going to be in conflict with others, and they will see us as dogmatic and opinionated.

If we are in positions of power and authority it is well worthwhile trying to establish systems whereby people can air their grievances so that we become aware of problems in their early stages. We should follow widely accepted means of administering justice, whereby justice is not only done, but is seen to be done. We should also try to adhere to basic rules of fairness and morality and follow correct ethical standards of conduct. This means we should be impartial, honest, and trustworthy and should refrain from offering or accepting bribes.

Another very important point is that we should show respect for all religious beliefs and linguistic, cultural and ethnic identities and beware of the dangers of the tyranny of the majority.

Religious, ethnic and other minorities who feel that they are undervalued and treated as inferiors can easily become prey for mischief-making extremists with authoritarian and fundamentalist objectives.

It is because the perfect society is not possible that those in power have to deal with vicious and violent behaviour from others, such as criminals and terrorists. Those who have the legal right to use force, to imprison, even to take life, therefore have responsibilities which weigh heavily in two respects. Firstly, they have to ensure that they use their powers wisely, dispassionately and justly to promote the happiness and well-being of all members of society and to promote harmonious relations with other people and nations and the peaceful resolution of disagreements.

Secondly, if they are wise, they will be acutely aware of the kammic consequences for themselves of how they use their power. A person who uses their wealth or power in selfish, corrupt and unjust ways not only helps create misery and suffering for others, but also builds up weighty negative kamma for themselves contributing to their own future experience of pain and suffering. Therefore, those who have power over the liberty and lives of others have two very good reasons to make the effort to use their powers in a wholesome way.

Those who have the right or the power to use force when dealing, for example, with violent anti-social behaviour such as crime and terrorism, can consider the following general guidelines which will contribute to helping ensure they adhere to the dhamma of justice and righteousness:

Before resorting to force try to exhaust all other non-coercive and non-violent possibilities. Only when it appears beyond a reasonable doubt that refraining from the use of force will result in unacceptable and disproportionate harm being done, should minimal force be used as a last resort. However, great care has to be taken to eliminate the possibility that one's judgement is affected by selfish or biased thinking. In the same way one should also try to eliminate the possibility of being driven by anger, blood-lust, desire for revenge, and similar malevolent mental states. Instead one should try to be dispassionate, causing the minimal

possible harm, like a surgeon in the days before anaesthetics who had to cut into the body, even amputate limbs, in order to preserve the life of the sick person. This brings to mind Text [I/19] where the Buddha describes the actions of a baby's nurse extracting a stick or shard from the mouth of the infant "even if she had to draw blood." In this case the nurse has to act in this way out of compassion in order to prevent a greater harm being done to the child, even if it temporarily causes pain to the baby. In the same way there are sometimes circumstances where, for those without the highly developed persuasive skills of a spiritual adept, to refrain from the use of force will result in more harm being done than if it is used.

It must be pointed out, however, that this whole area is fraught with dangers and traps. As was said earlier, human beings are masters of the art of self-justification and self-deception. Many of history's most blood-thirsty conquerors and empire-builders have argued that their actions were carried out in defence of their people and their country—and there is no guarantee that our own thinking will not be similarly distorted when we believe that what is dear to us is under threat.

It also important to be aware that even the use of guidelines based on worldly notions of justice and righteousness, like those mentioned above, can, at best, only reduce but not negate the results of unwholesome kamma such as using violence or taking life (AN 3:99 & 4:232). According to the Buddha's teachings, any action rooted in desire, aversion or delusion is unwholesome and has future unpleasant kammic consequences for the person who carries out such an action. The most basic unpleasant consequence is the continuation of the cycle of rebirth itself. It should also be born in mind that the law of kamma applies equally to those who encourage and incite others to unwholesome actions even if they themselves do not carry them out.

It should not surprise the follower of the Buddha that the perfect, truly peaceful and harmonious society is an impossibility. That would be to expect to find the undefiled state within that which is subject to defilement and would make the Buddha's teachings on Nibbāna unnecessary. The *Majjhima Nikāya* records

that an arahant named Raṭṭhapāla, who came from a wealthy Brahmin family, was once asked by a king why he had gone forth into homelessness from his life of luxury and ease. This is the first part of his reply:

[IV/10] "Great king, there are four summaries of the Dhamma that have been taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. Knowing and seeing and hearing them, I went forth from the home life into homelessness. What are the four?

"'(Life in) any world is unstable, it is swept away': this is the first summary of the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. Knowing and seeing and hearing this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.

"'(Life in) any world has no shelter and no protector,' this is the second summary of the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees… [as above]

"'(Life in) any world has nothing of its own; one has to leave all and pass on': this is the third summary of the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees…

"'(Life in) any world is incomplete, incapable of satisfaction, the slave of craving'; this is the fourth summary of the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened. Knowing and seeing and hearing this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness." (MN 82.36)

Only the Unconditioned—that which is not subject to change and defilement—is accompanied by perfect, unchanging peace. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the Buddha unhesitatingly encouraged the thoughtful pursuit of worldly, relative peace, both personal and social, since this contributed to the reduction of suffering and distress in the world. But the highest peace, and the only permanent peace, is the peace of Nibbāna.

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GLOSSARY

aggregates: (Pāli: *khandha*); five processes that the Buddha said encompass the totality of individual existence covering all that is material and mental. These 5 processes are designated: corporeality, feelings, perceptions, mental-formations and consciousness. It is through these processes that beings cling to worldly existence and experience rebirth, hence they are sometimes referred to as "the five aggregates of clinging."

arahant: one who has destroyed all defilements and is incapable of committing an unwholesome action by body, speech or mind. He or she has permanently entered into the supreme state of perfect peace and will no longer be subject to rebirth following the death of the present body.

āsava: variously rendered as 'canker,' 'taint,' 'pollutant,' 'intoxicant,' the term refers to three, or sometimes four, deep-rooted proclivities or propensities through which continual clinging takes place. These proclivities are the taints of sense-desire (*kāmāsavā*), of becoming or being (*bhavāsavā*), and of ignorance (*avijjāsavā*); a fourth type found in some texts is the taint of views (*diṭṭhāsava*). The enlightened person or arahant is sometimes referred to as *khīṇāsava*—'one with taints destroyed.'

asuras: sometimes referred to as 'titans' or 'demons'; they are inhabitants of one of the regions of the 'plane of misery' (*apāya* or 'the bad destination'). At one time, it seems, the asuras had been inhabitants of the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven (q.v.) but were expelled following a quarrel with the devas, who also lived there. Hence they are continually battling with the devas to gain re-entry to that heavenly realm.

Bodhisatta: the stream of kammic energy, manifesting in successive life forms in the various planes of existence, which leads, over many aeons, to the arising of a Buddha. The process begins as the result of a person vowing to a previous Buddha to struggle for future Buddhahood.

brahma-vihāra: the four 'sublime' or 'divine abodes' which the Buddha urged his followers and disciples to nurture and to practise in relation to all living beings without exception. They are: loving-kindness or friendliness (*mettā*), compassion or kindness (*karuṇā*), joy at the happiness of others (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

brahmin: originally referring to the priests who were the custodians of the revered texts (Vedas) and ancient rituals of India, the Buddha redefined the term to make it synonymous with arahant.

devas/devatās: heavenly or celestial beings, undetectable by the senses of most human beings, who inhabit various regions of the 'plane of happiness' and who live for thousands of years. The terms are frequently used to refer to the inhabitants of the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven (q.v.). The ruler of that heaven is called Sakka and he became a follower of the Buddha. The devas are periodically attacked by the asuras (q.v.) who are trying to regain entry to their heavenly realm after being expelled by the devas.

Deva is often translated as a 'god' but the devas of early Buddhist cosmology are not really comparable to the Roman and Greek conception of gods as divine beings controlling, or at least influencing, specific aspects of nature and who constantly intervene in the lives of human beings. All devas are mortal beings, although their lives may last for thousands of years. Some devas, such as Sakka, the Ruler of the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven, designate a role or position, rather than an individual being. Therefore, after a long period of time, the being holding a particular deva role will die and will be replaced by another being taking re-birth into that role.

dukkha: refers to the inherent unsatisfactory nature of all that which comes into being due to conditions; hence it results in the intrinsic inability of beings subject to rebirth to find lasting satisfaction from anything which arises due to conditions. Dukkha includes all subjective experiences of dissatisfaction, which are generally accompanied by aversion, from the mildest restlessness, through pain itself, to the most intense sorrow and suffering. Recognition and understanding of dukkha is the first of the Four Noble Truths (q.v.) and dukkha is one of the three characteristics of existence in Buddhism. Only the unconditioned, Nibbāna, is not subject to dukkha.

fetter: see *saṃyojana.*

Four Foundations of Mindfulness: (Pāli: *satipaṭṭhāna*); the practice of awareness and contemplation of body, feeling, mind and mental qualities as described by the Buddha in the two Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas (DN 22 and MN 10) and in other discourses. Both discourses commence and conclude with the Buddha stating: "Monks, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of dukkha and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realisation of Nibbāna—namely, the four foundations of mindfulness." It is the basic mental training extolled by the Buddha as leading to the development of insight or vipassanā. For further details see: *Satipaṭṭhāna: the Direct Path to Realization*, Ven. Anālayo, BPS, Kandy, 2003; *Mindfulness in Plain English*, Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, BPS, Kandy, 2002.

Four Noble Truths: (Pāli: *ariya-sacca*); the four truths which summarize the teachings of the Buddha. These four truths are:

—all forms of worldly experience are ultimately unsatisfactory and are subject to dukkha (q.v.);
—dukkha is the outcome of our constantly arising craving for sense experience "now here, now there" and the pleasure and delight associated with that; ceaseless craving also gives rise to fresh rebirth;
—dukkha is extinguished with the complete abandonment of, and liberation from, craving; this is the ending of re-birth and is Nibbāna;
—there is a way of living and a path of practice that leads to the permanent extinction of dukkha and to Nibbāna; that way is called the Noble Eightfold Path (q.v.).

For further details see: Nyanatiloka Thera, *The Word of the Buddha,* BPS, 2001.

gandhabbas: celestial musicians who act as attendants to the devas (q.v.) and are much addicted to sense-pleasure. The term is also sometimes used as to refer to a new consciousness arising after the death of another being and about to be born as a human.

iddhi-pāda: the four bases for spiritual power which develop as the seeker for complete liberation from saṃsāra reaches a high level of

purification of his or her actions and mind. The four *iddhi-pāda* are described as:

> concentration arising from zeal and determined striving;
> concentration arising from energy and determined striving;
> concentration arising from purity of mind and determined striving;
> concentration arising from investigation and determined striving.

For further details see *The Requisites of Enlightenment*, Ledi Sayādaw, Kandy, BPS, 1983; *The Wings to Awakening*, Ṭhāṇissaro Bhikkhu, Dhamma Dana Publications, Barre (USA), 1996.

jhāna: four states of meditative absorption in which the mind becomes increasingly more absorbed in the meditative object and attains progressively greater degrees of detachment from unwholesome states. The jhānas play an important role in perfecting progress on the path because the deep concentration they involve provides a firm foundation for the development of insight. There are, in addition, four higher absorptions sometimes referred to by modern writers as jhānas. But, like the true jhānas, they are mundane and do not in themselves lead to enlightenment.

For further details see: *The Jhānas in Theravāda Buddhism*, Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, Wheel No. 352/352, Kandy, BPS, 2007.

Māra: can be understood as a living being (a deva) who normally resides in the Paranimmitavasavatti Heaven (usually translated as the 'Heaven of Those who Wield Power over the Creations of Others'). Māra can also be seen as a personification of all those things that tempt beings away from the path of enlightenment. Traditionally Māra often tried to tempt and frighten Siddhattha Gotama away from pursuing the goal of enlightenment after he left his palaces and his family and went forth into homelessness on the noble search. He also tried in vain to obstruct Siddhattha Gotama when he was seated under a bodhi tree on the night of his enlightenment. For one year after the Buddha's enlightenment Māra continued to try to tempt him away from the true path. He also returned to pester the Buddha during the last few months of his life before attaining final *Parinibbāna*. Māra is not equivalent to Satan or the Devil as a personification of pure evil.

nāgas: include certain snakes (such as the king cobra) and serpents revered in India at the time of the Buddha—and still revered and even worshipped in parts of South East Asia today. They are believed to be wise, powerful and capable of helping humans if treated respectfully. Sometimes the word is used as an epithet of other noble or heroic beings such as elephants, even arahants.

Noble Eightfold Path: (Pāli: *ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*); eight practices and qualities which, working together, lead to the extinction of dukkha. They are:

Right View or Understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*);
Right Thought or Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*);
Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*);
Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*);
Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*);
Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*);
Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*);
Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

For further details see: *The Noble Eightfold Path*, Bhikkhu Bodhi, BPS, Kandy, 1999.

Nibbāna: the highest and ultimate goal to which the follower or disciple of the Buddha's teachings (the Dhamma) aspires. Nibbāna is that state of being where the life-affirming impulses have been totally burnt up, or exhausted, and one no longer clings to any aspect of existence. It can be experienced in this very life and the moment of first entering it is frequently referred to as 'enlightenment.' "This is the peaceful, this is the sublime, that is, the stilling of all that is conditioned, the relinquishing of all attachments, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna." (DN 64.9).

samādhi: the sustained attention of the mind on a single object resulting in kammically wholesome consciousness. It may also lead to states of meditative absorption (*jhāna,* q.v.). The word is also used to refer collectively to Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration in the Noble Eightfold Path (q.v.).

saṃsāra: literally 'perpetual wandering.' The word refers to the continuous process of being reborn, experiencing dukkha, growing old, dying, then being reborn again, and so on. According to the

Buddha's teachings, the repeated experience of saṃsāra only comes to a definitive end with enlightenment.

saṃyojana: 'fetters'; the discourses describe ten fetters which tie beings to continual rebirth in saṃsāra:

1 personality belief (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*);
2 sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*);
3 clinging to rules and observances (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*);
4 sensuous craving (*kāma-rāga*);
5 ill-will (*vyāpāda*);
6 craving for existence in the fine-material realm (*rūpa-rāga*);
7 craving for existence in the immaterial realm (*arūpa-rāga*);
8 conceit (*māna*);
9 restlessness (*uddhacca*);
10 ignorance (*avijjā*).

Sāriputta: Initially the follower of another wandering ascetic called Sañjaya, he became an arahant shortly after ordaining in the Sangha and developed to become one of the most respected disciples of the Buddha. It is said that Sāriputta was second only to the Buddha in the depth and range of his understanding of the Dhamma and his ability to teach it. For this reason he became known as the Marshall of the Dhamma (*Dhammasenāpati*).

stream-enterer: (Pāli: *sotāpanna*); the first of the four 'noble persons' (*ariya-puggala*) who has uprooted the three lower fetters (personality-belief, sceptical doubt, attachment to rules and observances) and has entered the stream to Nibbāna having attained both path and fruit of the first path. A stream-enterer will experience re-birth no more than seven times, none of which will be in the lower realms.

sutta: a record in the Pāli language of a discourse, talk or discussion on Dhamma given by the Buddha or, in a few cases, by one of his most senior monks or nuns. The suttas that are believed to form the basis of the present Pāli canon or collection were recited at the First Council three months after the Buddha's Parinibbāna. Initially they were recited and memorized and passed on from monk to monk by repetition and memorisation. The total collection of suttas was first written down about 350 years after the

Parinibbāna in Sri Lanka, i.e. about 100 years BCE.

taints: see *āsava.*

Tāvatiṃsa Heaven: the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven (sometimes referred to as the Heaven of the Thirty-three) is depicted as being two levels above the human realm, the latter being the lowest of the twenty realms of happy existence. The ruler of the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven is called Sakka who corresponds to Indra in the older Vedic pantheon. The male and female devas (q.v.) in this heaven are born spontaneously, i.e. without mother or father, live for thousands of years and stay youthful until just before they are about to die. Generally the life of the devas is blissfully happy, except that periodically they face attack from the asuras (q.v.).

For further details see *The Four Planes of Existence in Theravāda Buddhism*, Dr. Sunthorn Na-Rangsi, *The Wheel* No. 462, BPS, 2006.

Note: In referring to the human realm as being the lowest of the twenty realms of happy existence it should be noted that it is the lowest only in the sense of the degree and range of sensual pleasure that can be experienced. The early Buddhists argued that the human realm is the only one where a Bodhisatta can realize Buddhahood and is one of only two realms where a being can lead a life that leads directly to Nibbāna (the other being the Brahmā realm).

Three Refuges: (Pāli: *tisaraṇa*); this refers to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha in which every adherent of the Buddha puts their trust.

underlying tendencies: (Pāli: *anusaya)*; proclivities or powerful inclinations which continually arise and produce the conditions for clinging to life in saṃsāra. Typically there are seven of these tendencies: sensuous craving (*kāma-rāga*), aversion (*paṭigha*), speculative opinion (*diṭṭhi*), sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), conceit (*māna*), craving for continued existence (*bhavarāga*), ignorance (*avijjā*).

uposatha days: the full-moon day, the new-moon day, and the two days of the first and last quarters of the moon's cycle. In Buddhist communities lay followers will visit monasteries and other Bud-

dhist centres and holy places and may observe 3 additional precepts in addition to the 5 which they normally try to follow. The 5 precepts are abstaining (1) from killing; (2) from stealing; (3) from sexual misconduct; (4) from speaking untruths; and (5) from using intoxicants or narcotics. The 3 additional precepts are abstaining (6) from eating after midday; (7) from dancing, singing, music and shows, and from wearing garlands, scents, cosmetics and other adornments; (8) from sleeping in luxurious beds.

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