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**Going Forth (Pabbajjā)  
A Call to Buddhist Monkhood**

*Sumana Sāmanera*



# **Going Forth Pabbajjā**

## **A Call to Buddhist Monkhood**

An Essay, and Letters on Buddhism by

**Sumana Sāmanera**

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# Preface

**T**

he essay that forms the first part of this booklet, bears in its German original the title *Pabbajjā* which, in Pali, the language of the Buddhist texts, means *Going forth*, namely from the household life to the homelessness of a Buddhist monk. The Pali word *Pabbajjā* is also the term for the first ordination bestowed for entry into the Buddhist monastic Order (Sangha) by which the candidate becomes a Novice or *Sāmanera* like the author of the writings presented here, whose illness and premature death deprived him of taking higher ordination.

Fritz Stange, the lay name of our author, was a German by birth, and received his novice ordination in 1906 at Mātara (Ceylon), under the nestor of the German Buddhist monks the Venerable Nyanatiloka Thera (d. 1957). Together with Sumano, a Dutchman, called Bergendahl, was ordained as the *Sāmaṇera* Suñño. They were the first two pupils of the Venerable Nyanatiloka who, on his part, had received novice ordination in 1903 and higher ordination in 1904, both in Burma. As related in the Appendix of this booklet, illness obliged Sumano to go back to Germany, but in the same year he returned again to Ceylon, together with the

Venerable Nyanatiloka who had paid a short visit to Germany. He took ordination again and then lived in the undulating, grassy hillocks of Bandarawela, in Ceylon's up-country—a landscape of ascetical bareness, breathing seclusion and quietude. There he died and was cremated in January 1910. A spout just by the spot where he lived, still bears in the Sinhala language the name “German Phihilla” (“German spout”). [1]

Sumano was held in great reverence by the people for his deep piety. He was of an unassuming nature; but his bearing emanated an atmosphere of saintliness and detachment, of maturity and gentle firmness which obviously must have set him apart from the multitude.

The same atmosphere of the true ascetic's sincere and forceful simplicity radiates from the pages of his little book *Pabbajjā*. Its first publication in Germany, in the year 1910, deeply impressed and inspired the members of the small circles of German Buddhists. An English version by Bhikkhu Silācāra appeared in Ceylon the same year. This has been fully revised for the present edition, after comparison with the German original.

Sumano's letters first appeared in print in a German Buddhist magazine, *Die Buddhistische Warte*, and are published here for the first time in an English version prepared by the Venerable Nyanaponika Thera.

Both, essays and letters, served first to justify and explain Sumano's unusual step of entering Buddhist monkhood in

the East. There is, however, nothing apologetic in his words, no diffident defence; they are rather a stirring call to kindred minds for proceeding on that hard but incomparably rewarding road towards the “unshakable deliverance of mind.” In the same spirit they are offered here to the reader, as a companion to another booklet in this series of Buddhist publications, *The Ascetic Ideal* by Ronald Fussell (*The Wheel Publication* No 23).

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# Pabbajjā

## “He is beside himself”

“Marvellous is it, O Lord, extraordinary is it, O Lord, how the Exalted One has so clearly pointed out the Four Satipaṭṭhāna, which lead to the purification of beings, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the cessation of pain and grief, to the attainment of the path, to the realization of Nibbāna! For we also, Lord, as householders, have from time to time fixed our minds upon the Four Satipaṭṭhāna.”

“Whilst we thus dwell with earnest minds, eager, unweariedly, the memories of household things pass from us; and as they so pass, the heart grows ever more steady, becomes quieted and unified, finds peace.”

The more frequently a man thus dwells all the more perceptibly does the alienation increase, does the world die away from him, for ever more clearly does the true nature of the world reveal itself to the mind through the persistent

contemplation of this truth founded in experience:

“Thus is form; thus it arises; thus it passes away.  
Thus is feeling; thus it arises; thus it passes away.  
Thus is perception; thus it arises, thus it passes away.  
Thus are the mental formations, thus they arise, thus  
they pass away.  
Thus is consciousness; thus it arises, thus it passes  
away.”

Always the same law, always the same song:

*Aniccā vata saṅkhārā uppāda-vaya-dhammino;  
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti, tesam vūpasamo sukho'ti.*

“Transient are all compounded things;  
To rise to fall, their nature is.  
Having become, they pass away;  
Their final rest is highest bliss.”

“I know not, Ānanda, even of a single form whereby pleasure and satisfaction in form does not pass into sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief, despair, since it is transient and changeable”—and so with feeling, and so with perception, and so with the mental formations, and so with consciousness. “This world, however, seeks pleasure, loves pleasure, prizes pleasure. Only a few beings are stirred by things that are truly stirring, in comparison with the greater number who remain unstirred by truly stirring things. And again, there are only a few who, being



stirred, earnestly strive, in comparison with the greater number who, being stirred, yet do not earnestly strive.”

Unrestrained by the perception of the hollowness of things, the hot stream of foolish desire flows on: “O, that no birth lay before us, no old age, no death, no sorrow, no lamentation, no pain, no grief, no despair!—but this is not to be obtained by mere desiring; and not to get what one desires is suffering.” Ah! if only our parents would remain alive; Ah! if only our loved one would not die,... Ah! the misery of this law of nature! How many millions daily sob and weep over graves! The misery of this law of nature! “What is dear to one brings sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief, and despair: attachment is the root of suffering.” Hence the uprooting of suffering is non-attachment, the way of escape from all this wretchedness is non-attachment, denial, renunciation. “Whoso cleaves to woe, follows after woe, is bound up with woe, and thus considers: ‘That belongs to me, that I am, that is my self (*attā*, self, soul)—can such a one really comprehend woe, can such a one avoid the woe that encompasses him?’ But he who withdraws himself from attachment and learns to renounce, to deny, and to turn away, deprives the heart’s pain of its nourishment, and by degrees brings about its extinction. “The turning away of the will vanquishes all woe.”

This turning away comes into operation where there is an understanding of *suffering*, of the arising of suffering, of the

cessation of suffering, and of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. Before understanding these truths, man hastens from birth to death in the sea of existence (*saṃsāra*), without deriving therefrom any true gain for his deliverance—worn out for naught, the body perishes.” “It is through lack of understanding and insight into the Four Holy Truths, ye disciples, that we had to travel so long the weary round of Saṃsāra—both you and I. What think ye: which is greater—the floods of tears which, weeping and wailing, ye have shed on this long journey, ever and again hastening towards new birth and new death, united to the undesired, sundered from the desired—this or the waters of the four great seas? For long have ye experienced the death of a mother, for long the death of a father, for long the death of a son, for long the death of a daughter, for long the death of brothers and sisters; for long have ye suffered the loss of your property; for long ye were harassed by disease; and whilst experiencing the death of mother, of father, of son, of daughter, of brothers and sisters, the loss of property, the torment of disease, whilst being united with the undesired and sundered from the desired, thus hastening from birth to death and from death to birth ye have verily shed more tears on this long journey, than all the waters that are held in the four great seas! But how is that possible? Without beginning and without end is this Saṃsāra, unknowable is the beginning of beings sunk in ignorance (*avijjā*) who, seized by craving (*taṇhā*), ever and again are brought to renewed birth, and so hastened through the endless round

of rebirths. Thus, for long have ye experienced suffering, experienced torment, experienced misery, and filled the graveyards—long enough truly to have become dissatisfied with all existence, long enough to turn away from all being, long enough to seek release from it all.”

“If I truly understand the doctrine declared by the Exalted One, it is not easy for one who remains in household life to fulfil point by point the wholly stainless, wholly purified ascetic life.” “Whoso lives in the house is busy over-much, is much occupied, anxious about many things, disturbed about many things; he is not always entirely devoted to truthfulness; not always and entirely zealous in self control, chaste, recollected, given to renunciation.”

“Man falls as falls the fruit from off the tree,  
Unripe or mayhap ripe, with sudden crash:  
and so, O king, a beggar I become,  
For, the sure pilgrim-life me seems the best.”

“There has never been a householder, Vaccha, who without forsaking household-ties, has, at the dissolution of the body, made an end to suffering.”

Therefore, whoso resolutely seeks the end, “after a time will leave behind a small property, or leave behind a large property; he forsakes a small circle of acquaintances, or he forsakes a large circle of acquaintances, and goes forth from home to homelessness”—*pabbajjā*.

But father and mother, wife and children, love and duty? The sense of duty depends on understanding. Once a duty has been understood as the higher one, it sets aside the lower conception of duty held formerly.

For years a man may have devoted himself to the care of wife and child, prizing nothing higher than his family's welfare. Then war comes to his country. The course of events stirs him profoundly; he is affected by new ideas, another view of things gains strength within him. "Sweet it is to die for the fatherland!" The feeling overpowers him: "What care I for wife, what care I for child!" Of his own free will he goes forth to meet the foes of the fatherland. The duty to his country now seems to him higher than the duty to his wife and children.

Another man has in former days, with full conviction, solemnly vowed faithfully to stand by his country even to death. Later on, in consequence of higher comprehension he gains a higher standpoint, a wider outlook; envisages politics as a citizen of the world, thinks in universal terms: "This Frenchman is a fellow human being, is a fellow sufferer. This Russian is a fellow human being, is a fellow sufferer. Life is a sacred thing; frightful, barbaric is this wholesale killing, called war—the visible aggravation of suffering." No longer can he slay his fellow-men. In case of a call to arms he willingly allows himself to be shot by his own countrymen. The duty "Thou shalt not kill!" stands higher in his eyes than any duty towards his fatherland.

Yet another, as pastor, for many a year enjoyed a secure living with his family. By degrees his views undergo a change. He finds himself unable any longer to give his assent to dogmas, to the doctrines of Revelation, of Grace, or of Forgiveness of Sins, or Vicarious Atonement; he can no longer believe in that deplorable and absurd doctrine of "eternal damnation for the deeds of a brief spell of thirty years." A higher knowledge has come to fruition within him. Clear and evident to him has become the universally ruling law, the unchangeable, equable relation of cause and effect, the unfailingly just recompositions of right or wrong action (kamma). He burdens his mind neither with thoughts about the unfathomable, nor with useless discussions: he understands suffering and the cessation of suffering.—the saviour in man. As an honourable man how can he go on preaching as before? He will follow his altered convictions, give up his position as pastor—come what may!

Whoso acts according to his deepest understanding is always straight and candid, ever acts in accordance with truth—at least relatively so: for a man's truth is his degree of understanding.

"This above all: to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow as the night the day;  
Thou canst not then be false to any man:  
Be true to the highest within you!"

To a man now, who has clearly perceived the pitiable

condition of all beings that share a common existence, what higher, holier, or more urgent task can there be than to become perfectly kind, perfectly good or holy and thereby to get himself cured of this being born, growing old and dying, of this sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair? Hence if he has truly recognised the significance and value of asceticism for the fulfilment of this highest duty, and experienced the impossibility of its perfect realisation in household life, there follows the going forth into homelessness (*pabbajjā*) as necessarily as the fall of the drop that is full. “No man can serve two masters”—fully well. The man who devotedly strives for the fulfilment of the Doctrine experiences intensely the unsatisfactoriness of divided allegiance. Hence after a time, he gives it up, for the blessing of himself as well as of his family; an inward law of development that is beyond dispute. Only a mother knows the pangs of childbirth, and only a mother knows the succeeding joys of motherhood. Only he who has left home knows the relief of relinquishing accustomed bonds; only he who has left home, knows the happiness of being free: an inward experience—indisputable! “The joys of the family life and the joys of the homeless life—these are two different joys: and the nobler of the two is the joy the homeless life.”

If millions of honest men in worldly life find *pabbajjā*, the Going Forth, obnoxious; if they condemn the incomprehensible act as wrong, as unnatural, or deplore it as a mental aberration, they are quite right from their own standpoint; no intelligent man will contradict them. They

act in accordance with their conception of duty, and are “great, great in their place” if, before all things they care for beloved parents, for wife and children, and strive to fulfil the manifold important duties laid upon them by their life in the world. Also the few who have a bent for the ascetic life and honestly long for it, but feel themselves bound one way or another to their wanted way of life and therefore remain in its bondage—they also are right from their own standpoint. So also are those individuals right who go forth, being no longer bound inwardly. It is not the outward circumstances that bind a man; by himself is man really bound, by himself is he really free.

“Having left parents, son and wife,  
Relations, wealth and land,  
And all desires of sense,  
Let him wander alone like the rhinoceros.”

By logic, by reasoning or by eloquent words alone that act of going forth into homelessness can certainly not be argued or explained. But whoso sees this law, whoso sees this truth, no longer asks for proof. Quietly and with confidence he acts. What the world says about it, leaves him unconcerned.

“There are two goals, the holy goal and the unholy goal. But what is the unholy goal? One, himself subject to birth, seeks what also is subject to birth; himself subject to old age, to sickness, to death, to pain, to defilement seeks what also is subject to old age, to sickness, to death, to pain, to defilement. But what is subject to birth, old age, sickness,

death, pain and defilement? Wife and child are subject to birth, old age, sickness, death, pain and defilement; servant and maid, lamb and goat... gold and silver are subject to birth, old age, sickness, death, pain and defilement. Subject to birth, old age, sickness, death, pain, to defilement are these things. And allured, blinded, enchanted, a man himself subject to birth, to old age, to sickness, to death, to pain, to defilement seeks what also is subject to birth, old age, sickness, death, to pain, to defilement! This is the unholy goal. But what is the holy goal?

“One himself subject to birth, perceiving the misery of this law of nature, seeks that which is free from birth: the incomparable surety of Nibbāna; subject to old age, to sickness, to death, to pain, to defilement, perceiving the misery of this law of nature, seeks that which is free from old age, sickness, death, pain and defilement, the incomparable surety of Nibbāna. This is the holy goal.

“Formerly, when but a Bodhisatta, myself subject to birth, I sought what also was subject to birth; myself subject to old age, sickness, death, pain, defilement, sought what also was subject to old age, sickness, death, pain, defilement. And it occurred to me as follows: ‘Why, myself subject to birth, old age, sickness, death, pain, defilement, do I seek what also is subject to birth, old age, sickness, death, pain, defilement? What, if now, myself subject to birth, perceiving the misery of this law of nature, I were to seek the incomparable surety of Nibbāna free from birth: myself subject to old age, sickness, death, pain, defilement perceiving the misery of



this law of nature, I were to seek the incomparable surety of Nibbāna free from old age, sickness, death, pain, defilement? And after a time while still young, with coal-black hair, possessed of radiant youth, in the prime of my life, against the wish of my weeping and wailing parents, I had my hair and beard shaved off, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the household life to the houseless one...”

Whoso well in time sees the holy goal with penetrating clearness, he can no longer tie matrimonial bonds.

“Who dwells alone and seeks not any mate,  
Though young in years yet bides not anywhere,  
Averted, turned away from contact’s transports:  
Him the wise well and truly call a sage.”

Whether, however, a man be old or young, whether he be married or not—at whatever period of his life that the urge in him for the ascetic life asserts itself, then along with the other bonds binding to the worldly life, the bonds of blood-relationship also lose their force. The mother has become an elder sister; the father has become a brother; the wife has become a sister; the son has become a brother... fellow beings, fellow sufferers. Attachment, longing have died away, alienation has set in. Such a one has no longer a place and use in the family. “Another law works in the members,” a wider love. In love the ascetic goes forth from the family, out of love he leaves it. Truly difficult to understand is the love in genuine ascetic mind, yet relatives also learn to

understand it. “And if the families out of which those noble men have gone forth from home into homelessness, think of these noble men with love, for long will it make for their weal and happiness.”

Just as a man, who out of true feelings gives alms at the same time makes richer his family, though to outward appearance that family may suffer some loss in goods or money: so truly bestows a householder a rich treasure to an understanding family, if in a right frame of mind, moved by the highest of duties, he renounces the worldly life, even though that family may lose its external support. This loss which not seldom is brought about by premature death, can be made good and is unessential; but essential is: awakening from the slumber, thoughtfulness, insight, the perspective of Anattā (not-self), turning away, detachment—that is what matters.

“Naught is the loss of relatives, riches and honour; but the loss of insight is the heaviest loss. Naught is the gain of relatives, riches and honour; but the gain of insight—that is the highest gain. Wherefore let your endeavour be: Insight will be gain! Let this be your endeavour!”

“And the former wife of the venerable Saṅgāmañi had heard it said: ‘The monk Saṅgāmañi has arrived in Sāvathī.’ Then she took her child and went to the monastery at the Jeta Grove, near Sāvathī. At that time, however, the venerable Saṅgāmañi sat at the

foot of a tree to spend the afternoon there, devoted to meditation. Then the former wife of the venerable Saṅgāmaji betook herself thither and spoke to the venerable Saṅgāmaji: Look at thy little son here, O ascetic! Give me food!’ But to these words the venerable Saṅgāmaji maintained silence. A second and a third time the former wife of the venerable Saṅgāmaji so spoke: ‘Look at thy little son here! Give me food!’ And a second and a third time did the venerable Saṅgāmaji preserve silence. Then the wife of the venerable Saṅgāmaji laid the child down in front of the venerable Saṅgāmaji and went away, saying: ‘There is thy son, O ascetic; give him food!’ The venerable Saṅgāmaji however, neither looked at the child nor uttered a word. Now when the former wife of the venerable Saṅgāmaji having gone some distance turned round, she saw that the venerable Saṅgāmaji neither looked at the child nor said anything. Then she thought ‘This ascetic cares not even for his child,’ turned back, took up the child and went away.”

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

— Luke XIV.26 and 33

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

— Matthew X.34-37

“Let the dead bury their dead.”

— Luke IX.60

“My kingdom is not of this world.”

— John XVIII. 36

Apart from the differences existing between the teachings of the Buddha and of the Christ, all these sayings have these ideas in common:

1. Void throughout is this world.
2. Whoso “hungers and thirsts” to overcome this world, will loosen all earthly bonds, count them but dirt. Commentators and scribes there are in abundance but “whoso has eyes will see.”

Day after day, twenty-four hours older, a hundred thousand

heart beats nearer to the grave inevitably! "O, put all wishes aside save the desire to know truth; recognize the truth and tell it, come what may!" Whoso does not act in that way, deceives himself and others. Whoso shrinks from the decision that truth demands, puts obstacles in the way of himself and others though it may not always be obvious.

"From life departing, man no refuge finds,  
Nor friend, nor loved one, boon companions none.  
The heirs, with strife, divide the heritage,  
Himself fares forth according to his deeds."

"Put not thy trust in friends or relatives, and put not off thy salvation till the future, for man will forget thee sooner than thou thinkest. It is better to provide now in time and do the right than to trust to help of another. If thou art not solicitous for thyself now, who will be solicitous for thee in the future? Now is the time very precious, now is the day of salvation...!"

— Thomas á Kempis

None can do for another what is needed for deliverance. Here each has to rely on himself alone.

"Self alone is the lord of self.  
What higher master can there be?  
By self alone is evil done, by self one is defiled;  
By self is evil left undone; by self alone one is purified,

Pure and impure on self alone depend;  
No one can make another pure.  
Hence give not up thine own best weal  
For others' weal however great.  
Once thou hast seen thine own best weal,  
Pursue it keenly for thyself."

Concern for oneself, in that sense, is far from being reprehensible egotism. It has nothing to do with the oppression or exploitation of others, with harshness towards others.

"Once, Lord, in an hour of solitude and retirement the following thoughts came to me: 'To whom is one's self dear, to whom is it not dear?' And this, Lord, occurred to me: Those who do, and speak, and think evilly, to these their self is not dear. And even though they say: 'We love ourselves,' yet they do not love themselves. And why not? Whatsoever unlovely thing they do to one unbeloved that they do to their own selves. Therefore is it that their self is not dear to them. Those, however, who act, and speak, and think rightly, to them their self is dear. And even though they may say: 'We love not ourselves,' yet they do love themselves. And why? Whatsoever lovely thing they do to one beloved that they do to their own selves. Therefore is it that their self is dear to them."—"That is so, great king."

Not only is such true care for oneself irreprehensible, but it is the only way to become hale and holy oneself and to help others to become likewise. "A man may do ever so much good and take upon himself ever so many abnegations, and yet as long as he does not know himself he will not reach deliverance."—"The only limitations he imposes upon himself, are those arising from not knowing himself. In the degree, however, that he knows himself, he is able to do greatest service a man can render for another, namely: to help him to help himself; to bring him to a true knowledge of himself, of his own inner power." Hence, the more ardently a man devotes himself to the work of his own deliverance, all the sooner and more effectively can he become a blessing to others; for all the sooner can he learn and experience what will help himself and others to win true deliverance; the laws for it are the same for all. Any other helpful action, however meritorious it may be, is concerned with things external, not with the world within. "Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Whoso has ever offered to others "bread for stones," has first of all laboured within himself, "lonely, apart, untiringly, ardent and resolute."

The inward worker who has lived the truth, speaks from experience, with the assurance of an "expert": "So it is," he says, and not, "So it may be." Therefore his words produce in susceptible minds an inner crisis never experienced before, a crisis severe but wholesome: "The word of the wise heals." As is the speech of the inwards worker, so is his

outward behaviour: true, straight and firm, serene, aloof, uncommon. Such venerable ones are the greatest benefactors of their fellow men, the best physicians; visible witnesses of the fact that detachment from the world is possible; by their very lives they point to the way by which that what continually produces and feeds new suffering can be eliminated. Therefore, whether householder or monk—above all, win to a true vision for thyself! “Know thyself!”—“Be ever mindful of thyself.”

“The wise upon the path of truth  
He first establishes himself:  
Then only can he others teach.  
Who thus, as he to others tells,  
Can conquer and subdue himself,  
May haply turn them to the true;  
But hard it is to rule oneself.”

“That, Cunda, one himself sunk into the mire should pull out of the mire another sunk therein—this cannot be. But that one, himself not sunk in the mire, can lift out of the mire another sunk therein—that may be. And that one, himself not subdued, not disciplined, not attained to the extinction of delusion, should lead others to become subdued and disciplined to attain to the extinction of delusion—this cannot be. But that one who himself is subdued and disciplined, and has attained to the extinction of delusion, should lead others also to become subdued and disciplined and to attain to the extinction of



delusion—this may well be.”

The most likely possibility of escape from the mire of ignorance (*avijjā*) is offered by the life of a true monk (*bhikkhu*). Though the Buddha’s Teaching has been described as “running counter to the common current, profound, subtle and hard to realize,” there are those in the world who, on hearing that Teaching, feel irresistibly attracted to the monk life. There are those who, once they become aware of the general misery of life and of the way of the speediest release from it, lay everything else aside and, without delay, go forth into the homeless life—“their insight needed only to be roused.” Others again are able, only after a severe struggle, to break up all bridges behind them. Deep-rooted desires and ideas, coarse or subtle, so strongly ingrained in ordinary life, may obstruct for long an appreciation of the ascetic life; hence people are not in a hurry to turn to it, and the strength of character needed for renunciation, is lacking.

“Even that state of mind, *Mahānāma*, still exists in thee and causes thy heart to be overpowered at times by impulses of desire, by impulses of anger, by impulses of delusion. For, *Mahānāma*, if that state of mind no longer had any place in thee, thou wouldst not remain in the home life, in the enjoyment of desires.”

It is quite true that noble characters can be found

everywhere in society, also in family life; it is true that not a few householders die more ennobled in mind than many a monk; it is true that an earnest, devoted disciple, by virtue of an unusually developed character, due to his good Kamma of the past, may, without abandoning household ties, attain to almost all stages of holiness, that is up to the stage of the non-returner (*anāgāmi*). But no one who knows will maintain that he who is determined to make an end of suffering, may to the same effect remain in the household life as lead the life of a monk. On the contrary, “the wisest of all times” teach that such a man will choose a mode of life detached from all worldly bonds: he will go the road that offers the least resistance to his aspirations.

“Even as the peacock, the blue-necked bird of the parks,  
In its aerial flight never can rival the swan,  
So the dweller in house can never equal the monk—  
Him the thinker withdrawn, in forest abiding.”

Separation, isolation, again and again, is necessary for bringing suffering to an end. Just as the steam which is asleep in the water and awakened by fire, does not develop its giant strength, does not become a concentrated power, unless it is shut in, likewise man’s inner potentialities for lack of seclusion, for lack of isolation, cannot develop, cannot be converted into higher powers. “Many live far below their possibilities because they continually surrender their individualities to others.” In the worldly life, full self-

recollectedness, full devotion to the goal, do not come easily. The chaotic mass of uncontrolled impressions will divert and distract again and again, and will lead astray. Sadly great is the sum of energy daily expended to no profit. In home life, too much nutriment gross or subtle is supplied by the world of the five senses, and this will ever and again disturb those thoughts that in the noble-minded are naturally directed towards higher things; hence there is only very slow progress in discarding and uprooting obstructing qualities and evil propensities of the mind.

Quite different is it in the homeless state, in a life of solitude. There man is, as it were, forsaken by all the world, and thrown back entirely upon himself, without palliatives and self-deceptions. There he learns to be profoundly ashamed of all that is base, and feels himself impelled to strive for progress; mindfully he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out, and he wins to the insight that frees from suffering. In secluded places—in the depth of the forest, in a lonely cottage, a mountain cave, a cemetery—the five senses, in the absence of their usual objects of craving, are, as it were, put out of action; and the sixth sense, the mind, alone, detached, undisturbed, effectively collected, can do its work, can understand the workings of greed, hatred and delusion, can reject them.

“What are the characteristics of those venerable ones, what is so special to them that people should say of them, ‘Truly, these venerable ones have lost greed and hatred and delusion, or are on the way to

overcome them'? This question may be answered thus: 'Those venerable ones seek out lonely places in the depth of the forest: There are not to be found any forms entering the field of vision, that can be looked at and craved for; no sounds entering the field of hearing, to be listened to and craved for; no odours entering the field of smell, to be smelled and craved for; no flavours entering the field of taste, that can be tasted and craved for; no bodily contacts entering the field of touch, that can be felt and craved for.'

Bodily isolation (*kāya-viveka*) in secluded places facilitates isolation (*citta-viveka*) from craving and other hindrances. At the start, this purification and concentration of mind comes only temporarily, during specific meditative exercises; but later on, strengthened by these very exercises, that pure and concentrated state of mind can be maintained for an increasingly longer time, and will make possible a deep and penetrative insight (*pañña vipassanā*) into the true nature of things. And that vision, when completely cleansed of delusion will finally bring about ultimate isolation, the freedom from every kind of attachment (*upadhi-viveka = nibbāna*). In other words: to a disciple tirelessly meditating in solitude, the transient, painful and unsubstantial nature of all constituents of existence will become apparent with an increasing clarity and certainty. To the degree, however, that ignorance and delusion (*avijjā, moha*) about this world disappear, also desire (*raga*) for anything in it, and hate or

anger (*dosa*) against anything in it, will die away: they will lose their objects, their foothold, their basis, their sanction. Thus, with the withdrawal of the fuel, this terrible conflagration of suffering is brought to extinction, sooner or later, according to previous action-force (*kamma*) and present effort.

True holiness is never born without solitude; never is it perfected without lonely struggle with the passions within. Yet, the untiring activity of Gotama, the Buddha and of many of his disciples demonstrate that solitude and the happiness of seclusion are not, as many think, the aim and end of the ascetic life, but they are an essential means to the end, and are an incomparable mine of strength and inspiration to him who resolutely strives for the goal.

“Ye should know that those people practise the most useful practices. Know ye that the kingdom is blessed where man is inwardly one. They produce more eternal gain in one moment than all works ever wrought outwardly.”

— Meister Eckehart

By a wrong view of life all ascetic endeavour will naturally be considered as egotism pure and simple; but right understanding will never regard it like that. The true ascetic who has wholeheartedly taken up the training knows that, in the absolute sense, there is no ego nor anything belonging to it, neither I nor mine. Neither corporeality nor feeling,

perception, formations and consciousness contain any abiding substance, because they are transient, painful, subject to change. Therefore, no longer can one who has entered the path where deliverance is assured (the *sekha*) bestir himself for the sake of the ego; his striving aims at the final cessation of the conditioned personality (*kamma*, *khandha*), by the gradual elimination of all its roots. But during his more or less protracted struggle for final emancipation the *Sekha* is not yet entirely cured of all self-affirmation, of all impulses connected with I and Mine; still the old *Kamma* clings to him. Only in the Arahant, the Holy One, is the truth of Anatta fully realised, and therewith all and every form of self-affirmation is done away; “through the cessation, rejection, removal, denial and relinquishment of all notions of I and Mine, and all biases of self-conceit, he has won perfect deliverance.” In other words:

Much ignorance (and craving): Much self-affirmation (and suffering),

Little ignorance (and craving): Little self-affirmation (and suffering),

Free from ignorance (and craving): Free from self-affirmation (and suffering).

“Ignorance is the root of all self-affirmation.”

It is this very truth that none in this world period has as perfectly penetrated, as perfectly taught as the Buddha. The entire hard struggle for deliverance was called by the Enlightened One briefly “The liberation from the fetter of

ignorance” that is, from self-illusion. “Hence, Sāriputta, thus should you train yourself: ‘Concerning this body endowed with consciousness, there shall not arise any notions of I and Mine, nor any biases of self-conceit shall arise; and also concerning all external impressions, these notions and biases shall not arise! And we shall abide in the attainment of this deliverance of the heart, this deliverance by wisdom through which all these notions and biases cease.’ Thus, Sāriputta, should you train yourself. And in so far, Sāriputta, as a monk attains to this deliverance of the heart, this deliverance by wisdom, he is called one who has cut off craving, removed the fetters of existence, has made an end of suffering by the full elimination of self-conceit.”

The more devotedly one strives towards this goal, the more selfless he becomes, and the earlier will he make an end of all egotism:

*Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

“I take refuge in the Order of Monks.”

But, to be sure, mere outward asceticism is of no avail.

“Whether one remains in the household life or whether one goes forth from it to the homeless state, if one lives wrongly I do not praise it. For, whosoever either remains at home or departs from home, if he lives wrongly, on account of that wrong way of life he can gain nothing on the good path of the Dhamma.”—“I do not ascribe asceticism to a robe wearer just because he wears a monk’s robe. I do not ascribe asceticism to a forest hermit just because he lives in the

forest. I do not ascribe asceticism to a knower of text just because he knows many texts... Not because a man wears a robe, dwells in the forest, knows the texts, speaks much about the Doctrine, can he get rid of craving propensities, can he get rid of hating propensities, can he get rid of delusive propensities."

"There are people who, void of faith, go forth from home into homelessness, hypocrites, dissemblers, sham-ascetics, conceited men, busy talkers and chatterers, bad guardians of the doors of the senses, without moderation at meals, not devoted to wakefulness, indifferent to asceticism, without respect for the training, fond of luxury, importunate, preferring what is detrimental, shunning solitude as a heavy burden, lazy, without energy, heedless and uncomprehending; uncontrolled and distracted minds of small understanding, and stupid. Such a monk's asceticism appears to me, O monks, like a murderous weapon, meant for slaughter, doubled edged, well sharpened, covered and wrapped round with a robe. A knife taken up by the blade, wounds the hand: misused asceticism drags one the downward path."

"In error ye wander, O monks of Assaji, upon a false path ye wander, O monks of Assaji. How far apart have they strayed, the foolish, from this Doctrine and Discipline!" "Hard it is to serve the Exalted One, very hard it is to serve the Exalted One!"—meeting with



this experience many a weak disciple, discouraged or displeased, has given up asceticism (see Majjhima Nikāya No. 67, 77).

Only to him who knows suffering, only to one who, true to the Doctrine, earnestly works within, fighting purposefully and persistently against Māra—to such a one only will the external circumstances of asceticism prove to be what actually they ought to be according to Buddha's declaration: the most suitable conditions which the world can offer for the complete overcoming of the world. Again and again did the Master place before his disciples the hollowness and futility of half-hearted asceticism, as well as the seriousness and difficulties of the true monk's life. Never did he attempt to persuade anyone to become his disciple or to lead the ascetic life under him. "He lays the Doctrine before the people, does not persuade them, does not dissuade them." "He shows the nature of this world after he himself has understood and penetrated it. The doctrine, excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in its consummation, does he proclaim, both in the spirit and in the letter; he sets forth the holy life in its fullness and purity." Now, if the nature and purpose of this ascetic life becomes overwhelmingly clear to a householder or a householder's son, he will become an ascetic of his own free will, following his inner urge. "Sunken I am in birth, in old age and death, in distress, lamentation and pain, in grief and despair; sunken in suffering, lost in suffering! Oh that it

might be possible to make an end of this whole mass of misery!" In such a state of mind, filled with confidence, he renounces the worldly life, and such a renunciation is called in the texts "right-minded renunciation" (*nekkhammasaṅkappa*). [2]

With such a true renunciation, such a true *Pabbajjā* (Going Forth), "has he arrived in a clearing (of life's jungle)"—but no further. "Whoso, as a noble son, has thus renounced, what has he to do? Whoso finds no detachment from desires, from evil states of mind, whoso finds no joy and happiness or other still better gain, his heart will be seized and bound by lust; will be seized and bound by ill-will; will be seized and bound by sloth and torpor; will be seized and bound by restlessness and worry; will be seized and bound by doubt; will be seized and bound by dissatisfaction; will be seized and bound by attachment. But whoso finds detachment from desires, from evil states of mind, and finds joy and happiness and other still better gain, his heart will not be seized and bound by lust, will not be seized and bound by ill-will, by sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, by doubt, dissatisfaction and attachment." But this nobility of mind, how is it acquired? Only through meditation and again meditation (*Satipaṭṭhāna*): "Here trees invite; there, lonely cottages. Go, meditate! Be not slothful, lest later ye repent!"

True asceticism is an obstinate, mute struggle. Mighty is Māra! Fearfully deep-embedded is delusion! "Dying and becoming! Dying and becoming!" No standing still should

be permitted; no satisfaction with what has been attained!  
“Ever more strong must ye become to reach what is still  
unreached, to attain what is still unattained, to realise what  
is still unrealised!” “I declare unto you, O monks, I call  
upon you to give heed, ye that aspire to the goal of  
asceticism: see that the goal does not elude you while there  
is more to accomplish!”

Dying and becoming, again and again—until nothing can  
any more become, and hence there is nothing that can die!  
No rest, no stopping before Nibbāna is reached! “Also to the  
world beyond I shall not cleave, nor shall my consciousness  
be bound to that world. All nutriment is misery, heavenly  
food as well. To be conscious is to be suffering.” An ascetic  
thus minded “has found and finds ever greater and loftier  
results; he is well satisfied with the ascetic life, does not give  
up the noble effort.” “It is called ‘death’ in the Order of the  
Holy One, when a person gives up asceticism and turns  
back to the common life of the world”—this he now  
appreciates, depending upon none in that experience. “As  
the moth that has caught sight of the light does not turn  
back to the darkness, and as the ant dies on the sugar heap,  
so he turns not back to the worldly way of life but devotes  
himself fully to the noble training, so that he may reach the  
highest state, Nibbāna, the extinction of delusion.”

“And so he becomes fit to eradicate the taints (*āsava*), and to  
attain, in this very lifetime, the taint-free deliverance of the  
heart, the deliverance by wisdom.”

“Whoso, monks, practises the four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) for seven years, may expect one of the two results: the Highest Knowledge (of Sainthood) in his present life time, or, if there is a remainder of clinging left, the state of Non-return (to this world; *anāgāmitā*). Setting aside seven years, whoso, monks, thus practises the four Foundations of Mindfulness for six years, five years, four years, three years, two years, one year—nay, setting aside one year: whoso practises the four Foundations of Mindfulness for seven months, may expect one of the two results: the Highest Knowledge, in his present life time, or, if there is a remainder of clinging, the state of Non-return. Setting aside seven months, whoso, monks, practises these four Foundations of Mindfulness for six months, five months, four months, three months, two months, one month, or half a month —nay, setting aside half a month: whoso practises these four Foundations of Mindfulness for seven days, may expect one of these two results: the Highest Knowledge, in his present life time, or if there is a remainder of clinging, the state of Non-return.”

If weak men only knew themselves! The hero, verily, slumbers in many a one!

“Striving, have many won the deathless,  
And still to-day by striving men can win  
If they with wise endeavour persevere.  
But none can do it who does shun the fight.”

# Five Letters About Buddhism

## I

Letter of 9-8-1906

Dear —,

From your letter I hear the cry for deliverance. “Deliverance is born of knowledge.” For attaining to that liberating knowledge, I can, from my own experience, only give the advice to you who are otherwise fairly well prepared; to imbibe for a period of years the spirit of the Discourses of the Buddha, and to set to work accordingly. There will then be no need for you to *believe* (as you write) that a system of thought can do justice to the world (i.e., to reality), but you will *know* it. Buddhism does justice to the world even to such a degree that it leads to the overcoming of it. It is an unspeakably vast task to struggle through and beyond all apparent contradictions, and to struggle free, from the most subtle fetters (*taṇhā*). Gotama, the Buddha says expressly: “Profound is this doctrine, hard to

understand, hard to perceive, tranquil, sublime, beyond the realm of logic, intelligible only to the wise. You will hardly understand it without patience, devotion, guidance and effort.” But, “there are beings whose eyes are only little covered by dust. Not hearing the truth, they will be lost. It is they who will understand the Dhamma.” For it has been said that there are “two conditions of right understanding: the voice of others (be it orally or in writing) and wise reflection” (MN 43). Furthermore: “Also in this doctrine and discipline is it possible to show a gradual training, gradual practice, gradual progress” (MN 107). Gradually one will come to acquire a wise understanding of the teachings proclaimed by the Exalted One, and then “lofty results will gradually be experienced.”

You write that the spirit of Buddhism is repugnant to you, owing to its rationalistic penetration of the world. I too had formerly that opinion; but it disappears with a more exact knowledge about man’s composite nature and his way of development as taught by the Master. Meditation (*bhāvanā*, the four *Satipaṭṭhāna*, *Samādhi*) rests upon the fact that mind is the forerunner in evolution (thoughts, words and deeds: *kamma* or *saṅkhāra* within the Dependent Origination, [3] *paṭicca-samuppāda*). In brief, what man thinks, that he becomes. Meditation, in the Buddhist sense includes what we, in Christian lands,

call feeling, heart, love, and so on. What commonly is called “feeling” or “emotion,” is, in fact, only a “clinging,” low or noble; it is but ties and fetters, gross or subtle. For me, for instance, music was formerly such an important factor that, when listening particularly to Beethoven’s symphonies, I was clearly possessed by them, ravished, shaken. Even four or five years ago I busied myself with writing music and composition. My judgment of musical performances was generally appreciated. But art is just a means to lead us on to the *comprehending* of suffering, and not only to an emotional experience of it; it takes us from the “particular” to the “general” (aspect of suffering). But more subtle devices (than art) await us. All of them, however, are, as the entire Teaching, meant “for letting go, not for keeping a hold on them” (MN 22).

You say that you have suffered much, and yet you think that this world of suffering is a glorious place! But if you progress from the emotional experience of suffering to an understanding of life’s general nature as ill, then there will come a turning point in your ideas. You will come to reflect deeply upon the fact that the entire existence, being something originated, is bound up with impermanence (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*). *Everything* originated (body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness) is *aniccā*. What ceases is woe, is suffering and not-self,

unsubstantial, *dukkha*, *anattā*. Among these three related characteristics of existence, [4] the most tangible one, *dukkha*, has been taken out, fully stated and defined in the First Truth of suffering; in the second, its cause; in the third its cessation; and in the fourth, the practical path of deliverance. He who has eyes, will perceive these things. The better one understands and practises the Eightfold Path, the less one will be assailed by suffering.

*Taṇhā* (craving), that 108-headed hydra, will gradually die away—beginning with the grossest, and ending with the most subtle craving which one notices only later. Then “done is, what ought to be done.” Suffering is transcended, and thereby the world or life (= suffering), are transcended. “Ceased has rebirth, lived to its end is the holy life, the work is done, nothing more beyond this—thus he knows” (MN 94). To him who wishes to inquire further, the following texts are recommended for thorough reflection: the 63rd and 72nd Discourse of the Majjhima Nikāya, and further the Discourses 2, 22, 38, 140; and it is advisable to think slowly and carefully about causality (Dependent Origination).

Enough for to-day. Though Buddhism, as you say, is for you partly still unpalatable, yet in the first words of your letter, you admit the strict consistency and inner strength of my own way of action. I have understood Buddha’s logic and love: “the shortest



way between two points (i.e., the present stage of development, and deliverance) is the straight line.”

The study of Pali will permit you a much quicker penetration of the teaching, since all translations are makeshifts (even the sound ones by Neumann); our words (concepts) are insufficient, and often they lead astray.

...If, in addition, you will learn by heart the most important Discourses, fully or partly, then you will have a solid foundation, inwardly and with regard to your linguistic studies.

## II

Dear Sir,

One who has understood the universality of suffering and the importance of the ascetic life for the speediest elimination of that suffering, such a one will certainly sympathize with you. According to your valuable and frank confession you have “a strong sensuality.” You may know that asceticism or the “holy life” is mostly called *brahmacariyaṃ* (the chaste life). It is significant that the same term is used in the third *sīla* (Precept) of the monk. “Having abandoned unchastity, he lives a life of chastity; he keeps aloof and abstains from that vulgar practice, sexual intercourse.” “He keeps aloof,” that is, he observes a prudent distance from women, lest he lend a hand to Māra, because he is still weak, and in the process of growth.

For the millions of those who live a worldly life, sexual intercourse within the limits indicated in MN 41 is not regarded as *akusala* (unwholesome); [5] but for the disciple proper who wishes “to bring suffering to an end,” it is always *akusala*: unwholesome, wrong, and conducive to suffering. How could he gain a deeper, truly penetrating

insight, as long as that powerful affirmation of life vibrates through his organism, and paralyzes his mind? Therefore, *kāmacchanda* or *kāmarāga* (sense-desire, or sensual lust) is the first Hindrance, Fetter and Defilement; and its opposite *nekkhamma*, “renunciation,” is the first help and aid in gaining *sammā-samādhi*, “right concentration,” which is required for the pure vision of truth (*vipassanā*). Although the entire realm of *kāma* (i.e., the five sense objects) are a hindrance to *samādhi* yet one has to recognize the sexual sphere as the most portentous in the realm of sensuality. One knows what an enormous amount of energy is expended here. He who is infatuated will be aware of it only faintly; but later when fighting and subduing his passion, it will become clear to him that he was formerly but a miserable specimen of humanity, a slave of Māra; he will then appreciate that a mind kept in a violent tremor by strong emotions, cannot possibly see reality as it is.

“The teaching that goes against the current, that is deep, subtle and hidden — invisible it remains to those infatuated by lust.”

The Buddha-Dhamma is said to go against the current. The crowd goes along with the current: life-affirmation, lust, hatred, self-delusion. The true

disciple goes against that stream; he negates it, because he wishes to transcend the world, get rid of it.

“The turning away of the will vanquishes all woe.” Our blind fellow-beings, however, who float along with the current will say: “But sexual desire is something natural!” It is that very fact which a perspicuous Buddhist knows, and therefore turns away:

“This world, the other world as well  
the Knowing One has clearly shown:  
the realm of nature and its law,  
and freedom ending all that woe.” (MN 34)

He who understands *that*, has achieved much.

Also he who has strong sensual inclination, *can* live *brahmacariya*, the chaste life. “There is one who is by nature lustful, yet he preserves his chastity, even if passion often makes him feel pain and torment; but he is able, though with pain and torment, to live the noble, pure life of chastity (*brahmacariya*)” (MN 45)

A disciple who has made himself familiar with the Buddha’s instruction, is able to fight the passions with quite different weapons from other folk, but knowledge without application is dead. How, then, can a tendency be gradually expelled from one’s nature, for instance that to sensuality? By displacing,

eliminating and replacing. You may have observed how thoughts are placed in the sequence of time, how they follow each other, and how only *one* thought at one time can be present to consciousness, if ever so briefly.

Make a start now, and take matters into your own hands! Instead of allowing your thoughts to roam about aimlessly, in a confused way and impelled by emotions—you should first select a time of the day, a short half an hour, in which to give to your thought-processes a definite direction by choosing a suitable subject of meditation such as *asubha-bhāvanā* (contemplation of the body's foulness). By doing so, gradually a counter-tendency is developed, because during the 30 minutes of *asubha-bhāvanā*, lust has simply dropped out. If you now return to your routine life, the tendency developed during your practice will produce an after-effect which will grow more and more beneficial in proportion to the intensity and duration of the practice. Gradually, with strengthened mindfulness (*sati*), that noble tendency will permeate almost your whole thought-process, always ready to step in with its beneficial effect whenever Māra wishes to intrude. Most of our fellow-beings “believe that they push while they are pushed themselves.” But the true disciple actually pushes matters himself, because he has grasped “the law of elimination by disuse,” and thus he displaces

and eliminates, so that passions die away; until at the end there is nothing more to die away.

First a Buddhist should suffuse and saturate himself with the Master's words like those in (the "Revelation of the Body"), in the *Sutta Nipāta* (v. 193ff), the *Theragāthā*, Suttas like Majjhima Nikāya No. 82; then, if he has noble aspirations, the powerful sexual urge will be reduced noticeably.

"Look how this puppet is decked out,  
that skin-enveloped skeleton!  
Fools are deluded by that sight;  
Not those who seek the shore beyond."

According to the Master's injunction (MN 75), after listening (or reading), there should be thorough reflection about it (*yoniso manasikāra*), to be done best at a quiet place. You should contemplate and analyze this body as it is described (so simply but ever so true) in Majjhima Nikāya 10 (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta): "He contemplates his body from the sole of the feet upwards, and from the crown of the head downward, covered by the skin, filled with many impurities." He understands it as a passing combination of elements; he visualizes it as a putrefying corpse, food for worms, as a skeleton and as decaying bones: "My body, too, is of that nature, will become like that, and cannot escape it."

After such thorough contemplation (*asubha-bhāvanā*), actual realization will unfailingly follow. If he now sees women, he is no longer dominated by the animal urge of carnal desire, but he sees *through* it; he sees them as skeletons. Looking ahead he, already now, perceives the flesh now, after death, it will be devoured by worms; and, then his prevailing feeling will be compassion: “Soon these bodies will perish and will add to the charnel field. May beings awake from their frenzy, so that it may no longer be said of them: ‘Worn out in vain, the body dies away,’ but may their Kamma come gradually to rest!”

For him who is moved by such compassion, will it be possible to use a being for satisfying his lust? Only selfishness will be able to do so, even if it hides behind greatest learning. The Master has taught his disciples—of whom none was a eunuch—how to regulate that desire, and how to bring it to rest. If you make substantial progress in that respect, you will have achieved much. May you remain mindful of the fact that you do it for *your own* sake, for *other’s* sake, and for the cause (of the truth).

“Him who as sage from mating keeps aloof,  
Who, young in years, nowhere ensnares  
himself,  
From heedless rapture free, detached,  
Him as a sage the wise ones rightly hold.”

(Sutta Nipāta v. 218)

Namo Buddhāya,  
Sumano



### III

Dear —,

Not many details can be told about your first question. [6] I became aware of the fact: “I am afflicted by birth, old-age and death, sunken into sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, submerged by suffering, lost in suffering! Oh, that it might be possible to make an end of that whole mass of suffering!” (With regard to your question) consider “evolution” in its widest sense. I mean to say: Beings understand and follow the teaching of the Blessed One according to the degree of their own development. “He who has eyes, will see.”

Let us assume there is an “intelligent person,” “a man of understanding.” He perceives clearly (a) the impermanency of all that is originated, and he understands (b) the conclusion: what is impermanent is liable to suffering (*dukkha*) and it is not-self (*anattā*). Through both (a) and (b), he will understand the equation: life = suffering; and now, awakened from his slumber, he works with increasing intensity to make an end of suffering, and thereby, of life.

But how? “Deliverance results from knowledge.”

That liberating knowledge (=Right Understanding) is (and according to the above, cannot be anything else): 1. to know suffering; 2. to know the origin of suffering; 3. to know the cessation of suffering; 4. to know the path leading to suffering's cessation. This is "the teaching particular to Enlightened Ones." "This only do I teach, now as before: suffering and the cessation of suffering." Any doubt as to whether that knowledge is actually the only one needful to us now, will disappear if one reflects carefully on the 63rd Discourse of Majjhima Nikāya.

From experience I may give the assurance that man will grow in his detachment, and that suffering will touch him less and less, the more mindfully and energetically he walks the path. *Taṇhā* (craving), the direct cause of suffering (2nd Truth) and of renewed existence (paṭicca-samuppāda links 8, 9, 10; [7] Majjhima Discourses, 9, 38), is gradually brought to extinction. First its gross form dies away, and later the more subtle one that is imperceptible at the start (this *Taṇhā*-hydra has 108 heads).

Though, as a rule, only the genuine bhikkhu will be able to walk the path perfectly, yet the opinion which one sometimes finds expressed, that *only* the bhikkhu can do it at all, is erroneous. Everyone who leads the home life—more especially if living alone—can tread the Path and progress on it very far, "according to the nature of his actions." Everyone who has become a

bhikkhu with the clear awareness of what he is doing, has once lived the worldly life before, but has prepared himself before he chose to lead the ascetic life that is so beneficial. Gotama Buddha, in the 43rd Discourse (Majjhima Nikāya) addressed to the citizens of Sala, has given very valuable instructions for right conduct in thoughts, words and deeds. Adherence to that conduct will, to the degree of one's success in doing so, contribute considerably to the overcoming of suffering. Without having fully understood the importance of a virtuous life (*sīla*) for purification and for mental concentration, it will be premature if the disciple desires to attain the meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). If you consider very carefully the following you will see clearly in that matter.

We find in the texts the following threefold division of the Path:

I. *sīla* (virtue):

3. *sammā-vācā*, Right Speech
4. *sammā-kammanta*, Right Action
5. *sammā-ājīva*, Right Livelihood

II. *Samādhi* (concentration):

6. *sammā-vāyāma*, Right Effort
7. *sammā-sati*, Right Mindfulness
8. *sammā-samādhi*, Right Concentration

### III. *Pañña* (wisdom):

1. *sammā-ditṭhi*, Right Understanding
2. *sammā-saṅkappa*, Right Thought

Usually the factors numbered (1) and (2) are mentioned first, because the Path cannot be trodden without a degree of Right Understanding and Right Thought. In their *perfected* form, however, they constitute *pañña*, the highest wisdom.

Virtue comes first (being perfected later, by concentration and wisdom). Then follows Concentration, comprising the 6th, 7th and 8th factor of the Path. Among them, Right Effort consists of the Four Endeavours (Discourse 141); and these four are also called “implements of concentration.” The four “Foundations of Mindfulness” [8] (*Satipaṭṭhāna*), which according to Discourse 141 form the seventh Path factor, are “the objects of concentration”; and Concentration proper, the 8th factor, is explained by the four meditative absorptions (*jhāna*).

In other words, firstly strong energy (6th factor) has to be developed, and untiringly one should work, that is meditate, in accordance with the four Foundations of Mindfulness, for providing the inner training required for the entry into the First Absorption.

How then, can such mighty energy be developed? “If

he sees with his eyes a visible object, he does not take up its general features nor its details. Because lust and grief, unwholesome and evil thoughts may overwhelm him who dwells with his sense of sight unrestrained, he practises that restraint, guards his sense of sight and watches over it.” The same holds good for the other four physical senses and mind as the sixth.

	<b>I</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>VI</b>
1	eye	ear	nose	tongue	body	mind
2	forms	sounds	smells	tastes	tactile objects	mental objects

Through the six senses (the subjective side of reality; see the first line in the sketch) we communicate with the outer world (the objective side of reality; see the 2nd line). From this is seen the immense importance of controlling that [sense] apparatus (*saḷāyatana*, the 5th link of the Nidāna-chain, *Paṭiccasamuppāda*) for the specific purpose of gaining mental concentration, and for the general purpose of eliminating suffering. “He who does not know and understand according to reality, the eye (ear, etc.), visual (etc.) objects, visual (etc.) consciousness, visual (etc.) impression, the feelings produced by visual (etc.) impression—he

will be delighted in the eye; being delighted in it and attached to it, he will allow himself to be allured by it, looking always for the enjoyment provided by it. To him the life process consisting of the five Groups (*khandha*) will continue to accumulate, and craving that leads to renewed existence, finding delight here and there, will continue to grow... But he who knows and understands according to reality, the eye..., will not be delighted in the eye..., seeing always the danger in it. To him the five Groups will decrease, and craving... will vanish."

"The concentration of one who has achieved that, is Right Concentration"...; "He who sees the Dependent Origination, sees the Dhamma; he who sees the Dhamma, sees the Dependent Origination."

This spiritual struggle will lead to victory chiefly through constant mindfulness and thought concerning the fact of origination (arising), in other words, impermanence. For instance: "Now this unpleasant feeling has arisen in me (e.g., by insult) produced by auditory impression (see paṭiccasamuppāda 5, 6), and it is conditioned, not unconditioned. Conditioned by what? By sense impression. And he knows: impression is impermanent; he knows: feeling is impermanent... Then his mind, thus discerning the elements, becomes gladdened, serene, strong and steady" (similarly with I, III-VI of the above sketch).

So far about Energy or Right Effort (the 6th path factor), being the implement by which to attain concentration (meditative absorption).

Information about the Four Foundations of Mindfulness will be found in MN 10 (*Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*), 118 (“Mindfulness on Breathing”), 119 (“Mindfulness on the Body”), 62 (“Admonition to Rāhula”). Then, “while he thus dwells earnest, ardent and mindful, the memories bound up with home life will vanish in him.”

I have experienced myself how important it is to meditate upon the four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*). I have learned that Discourse by heart, in Pali, and daily I repeat one seventh part of it in my meditation; every week has brought new revelations (*sati*). But one must work for it. “He who does not work, cannot follow the truth.” “It is not possible, thus I teach, to obtain assurance at once, at the start; but gradually fighting, progressing step by step, one will obtain assurance... And because he makes determined effort, he realizes for himself the highest truth and visualizes it by wise penetration.” He who attends to the preparatory work, as indicated, will avoid the illusions of “wrong concentration” (*micchā-samādhi*), and will steer straight towards Right Concentration, because cultivation of *samādhi* means the cultivation of, and the training in just these things, i.e., Energy and

Mindfulness.

The fact that also householders (lay followers) can practice mindfulness, is mentioned in Discourse 51: “We too, O lord, being householders, have from time to time established our mind in the four Foundations of Mindfulness; and we dwell, O Lord, contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief regarding the world.”

If you now read a Discourse like the 27th, where the Master gives a connected summary, you will have confirmation of that sequence of practice mentioned above: first *sīla* (virtue; but here more comprehensive, being intended for monks); then the control of the senses (i.e., energy) and mindfulness (the passage on Clear Comprehension from Discourse 10). Also the five Hindrances which have to be overcome before one can enter the first Absorption, are found in the 10th Discourse, at the beginning of the fourth Foundation of Mindfulness. How difficult it is, generally, to gain the Absorptions is shown by the Buddha’s statements in the 128th Discourse; there, profoundly, and step by step, the hindrances and their overcoming are shown... But the difficulties mentioned there will not deter an earnest disciple. He knows that evolution does not proceed at a bound, but that, by an indefatigable application of the appropriate means, progress undreamt of may be



achieved in a short time... However, the fact cannot be concealed: “Profound is this teaching, difficult to grasp... you will hardly understand it without patience, devotion, effort and guidance”; and “there are fools who study the teaching; but though they have studied it, they do not wisely examine the meaning of the teachings; without wisely examining the teachings their contemplation will not yield satisfaction;... they do not grasp the purpose for which they have studied the teaching. To them, their wrong grasp of the teaching will bring them harm and suffering for a long time.”

Yet it has been said that the teaching is intelligible to every person of understanding, and that it grows in clarity for the earnest disciple. “There are no ascetics who know and understand everything at once. That is impossible.” It is by *training*, by indefatigable training, that everything is nursed to maturity. “What a monk considers and reflects upon for a long time, to that his mind will incline.”

If once the fundamental truths have been thoroughly grasped and experienced, and, through a faithful devotion to the inner work, “the gradual perception of a great result” has appeared, then from such a soil a beneficial and powerful *saddhā* (confidence) concerning the future work (“the achieving of the unachieved”) will grow. This is the first of the five “qualities of spiritual striving” (*padhānaṅga*), by the

help of which the disciple may achieve his aim quickly.

I am filled with an unshakable *saddhā* (confidence). A confidence rooted in understanding and experience surmounts difficulties met by one who is given to speculative thinking, a hair-splitter, or a petty critic. Though the way of expression (in the Discourses) may sometimes be difficult or strange (particularly in translations), and though, in some instances, the teachings given there, may remain unintelligible for some time, let us have *Saddhā*! “Enlightened Ones do not speak imperfectly.” “Work, Work!” as we have stressed above—that is the key word. Then the Dhamma will be realised, experienced and no longer requires proof or guidance, not even by a Buddha. “In the Liberated One is the knowledge of Liberation.” Then there is no longer any difference as to liberation. “Equal to me will be those victorious ones who have destroyed craving.”

*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-sambuddhassa!*

—Stg.

## IV

Bandarawela (Monastery)

28th April 1909

Dear Mr. N.,

If you attach great significance to “Mindfulness of Breathing” (*ānāpāna-sati*) you have perceived an important fact. As the four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) may be called the heart of the doctrine, so is “Mindfulness of Breathing,” if rightly understood, the heart of the heart.

“Mindfulness of Breathing if developed well and regularly practised, brings to perfection the four Foundations of Mindfulness,” thus it is said in the 118th Discourse. He who knows these means of deliverance, and applies them, will experience by himself that restlessness, desire, anger, misapprehensions and thereby all deep sorrows, will vanish, and will reappear only and always, when that mindfulness (*sati*) is absent. While our other fellow-beings—millions of them—go on living ‘without any substantial gain’ in liberation (“worn out in vain, this body dies away”), he

who knows the laws of deliverance can purposefully take into his hands the work of their unfolding; he can loosen, and finally break, the chains of slavery.

First of all, three things are required here: 1. persistence; 2. persistence; 3. persistence. Without great devotion, without extraordinary patience even one who is otherwise gifted, will not be able to make progress. It is important that the beginner betakes himself to a quiet place, as secluded as possible, so that the habitual *tanḥā*—nourishment for the five senses (see end of MN 150)—is reduced, and the numerous sounds, voices and noises which, particularly at the beginning, hinder so much any deeper concentration, do not constantly interfere. You will not have missed the fact that it is expressly stated in the Discourses 10, 62, 118 and 27, that the disciple should resort to the forest, an empty room, etc. Thus, whenever bonds of profession or family do not fetter you, you should make haste to go out of your town, like one who seeks hidden treasure, and should choose a suitable spot in forest environment. Then you should sit down there in a posture that allows you the longest time of sitting immovably. “Mindfully he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out”—that

is the general practice of *ānāpāna-sati*, introducing the subsequent 16 specific exercises, and forming the transition from ordinary confused thinking to concentrated meditation focussed upon a definite mental object. The former kind of thinking, ordinary reflection, is called *vitakka*, i.e., “discursive thinking.” By Mindfulness of Breathing that discursive thinking is suspended and silenced. *Ānāpāna-sati bhāvetabbā vitakk’upacchedaya:* “Mindfulness of Breathing ought to be practised for cutting off discursive thinking.” How is it to be done?

“Breathing in long, he *knows* ‘I breathe in long’; breathing out long, he knows ‘I breathe out long’; breathing in short, he knows “I breathe in short””; breathing out short, he knows “I breathe out short.” Now, at one and the same time only one single thought can be clearly present to consciousness; thoughts *follow* each other, they are placed in time. All exclusion of evil thoughts effected by meditation, rests upon that fact, is made possible by that fact. He who thinks for one minute a thought of kindness, has *at that time* no thought of hate in his mind; he who thinks of a corpse for one minute, has no lust while doing so; he who contemplates impermanence

for one minute, will not have conceit. Whenever, and as long as, one knows “I breathe in, and out, long or short,” for that time, even if it is only for a fraction of a second, other *vitakkā* (discursive thoughts) will be excluded.

You will, however, experience that, when you resolve to be strictly watchful, the first breaths that follow, will go in and out a clear awareness of them, but after that, habitual worldly thoughts (*vitakkā*) will appear again during a single breath. But if one considers that the complete tranquillization and exclusion of discursive thoughts is tantamount to the entry into the Second Absorption, one will, in spite of all relapses, persist in one’s practice, week by week, month by month, year by year; and during a single session the meditator will apply mindfulness 100 times or 1000 times or more. Gradually the law of “development by use” (the inherent power of repetition) will show itself; it works as reliably as the law of “elimination by disuse.”

In one minute, one may breathe 15 times (30 inhalations and exhalations). If one is conscious of it, even if only at the beginning, one will have given a definite direction to one’s mind 300 times in 10 minutes. If for

about 10 minutes no breath has been missed, it is certainly an achievement, though, to a beginner, some fatigue may be noticeable. The simile of the turner (“turning long or short”), given in the 10th Discourse, shows clearly how simply that exercise is meant (long-short, in-out; knowing). Generally spoken, it is the most simple that is truly great and profound. From the foregoing it will become clear how important that simple and easily intelligible exercise is. If patiently sustained, it is bound to result in the calmness and concentration of mind (*samatha*), aspired by you. The Master teaches how to bind a second postulate, a “Must”—mindfulness (*sati*)—to breathing which is the constant companion of man from birth to death. The first “Must” is faithful: man *must* breathe constantly (except in the fourth Absorption). The second “Must” has to be developed from it. In other words, breathing cannot wait; if it is not to escape unnoticed (as it happens in ordinary life), mindfulness (*sati*) must be present and alert. “For one of confused mindfulness, I say, there is no Mindfulness of Breathing.”

There are people endowed with outstanding gifts. As soon as they know the method, they will practise with zeal and determination.

Perhaps you too will, even after a short time, attain genuine Absorption of mind, will easily leave behind the Sensuous Sphere, and realise one or more stages of meditation. Through those two exercises that degree of Samatha (tranquillity) can be achieved only if the five Hindrances are removed, the presence of which is incompatible with Absorption.

But even if, for a long time, the meditator cannot attain to the Absorptions, other gratifying results of *ānāpāna-sati* will become evident. Firstly, the calm and concentration of mind as effected by meditative training in solitude, can now be maintained for increasingly longer periods of time. Calm and concentration will gradually enter into the meditator's innermost being, and will also manifest themselves outwardly in his daily behaviour (in the family, in professional life and towards friends), by a calmer and more composed way of speaking (*santa-vaco*, "quiet of speech"), and by calmer bodily movements (*santa-kāyo*) in going, turning, looking, bending and stretching of limbs. Secondly, what is incomparably more important, there will be a keener insight (*vipassanā*) into the nature of the world, that is, of the five Khandhas, as impermanent, liable to suffering and not-self.



A man with keen eye sight will excel in observation. Similarly, greater tranquillity (*samatha*) means deeper insight (*vipassanā*); and, again, strengthened insight into suffering will be an incentive to achieve a greater power of concentration as a means to the end (insight). It is a reciprocal process “No meditative absorption without wisdom: and no wisdom without absorption.”

Therefore, after having practised for some time the exercises No. 1 and 2, [9] one may go over to No. 13: “contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe in and out” (Discourse 118 or 62). In doing so, one should keep in mind that what is spoken of here (in the 13th exercise) are phenomena (*dhammā*), objects of thought (i.e., what appears in the mind), pertaining to the fourth Foundation of Mindfulness. The four *Satipaṭṭhānas* may be regarded as stages: 1. at the first stage, one learns to contemplate on the gross material body, as it appears to simple observation (MN 10); 2. in the second *Satipaṭṭhāna*, the feelings, likewise in their simple presentation (as pleasant, unpleasant, etc.); 3. in the third an essential change should follow; the knowledge, gradually prepared and matured by the first three *Satipaṭṭhānas*, that the entire world of plurality is only an

object for each subject, a manifestation of thought, hanging only on a single thread: consciousness.

Then the passage in MN 10—“Thus is corporeality, thus is its origin, thus its end,” etc.—will appear in a different light, because the proper light has dawned upon the meditator. “Thus is corporeality”; appearances, phenomena, arising in consciousness with help of the likewise conditioned visual organ (colours) the auditory organ (sound waves), and so on; just as it arises, it disappears again, as a subjective process: appearance, *Aniccā, anattā*. It is similar with the other Khandhas: “Thus is feeling, thus is its origin, thus its end.” Here one can learn to understand the whole of existence as an illusion, as not-self (*anattā*); and the Ego-delusion will dissolve quickly. This is so, because all wishing, longing, hating, disliking, fearing, grieving or being excited, in brief all mental afflictions stem from the Atta-idea (“I,” “Mine,” “my own,” self). If that delusion loses its hold, a decisive change takes place, a detachment, a feeling of liberation as never experienced before. The person X is now seen as a temporary combination of ever changing Khandhas (processes of existence); and after

sometime this person will disappear from the scene; it has never harboured an eternal self (also Karma can become exhausted).

The idea of Anattā may get strengthened in us in a way somewhat like this:

not I (an abiding individuality) breathe, but breathing occurs;

not I go, but going occurs;

not I stand, but standing occurs;

not I sit, but sitting occurs;

not I lie down, but lying down occurs;

not I look, but looking occurs;

not I bend, but bending occurs;

not I eat, but eating occurs;

not I talk, but talking occurs;

not I feel joy or grief, but a pleasant or unpleasant feeling occurs;

not I think, but thinking occurs.

By such a contemplation, one will become selfless, all-loving, truly detached. and the words in MN 10 will become clear: “He lives independent, and does not cling to anything in the world.”

By the power of thinking sharpened and made lucid by the exercises 1 and 2 (of ānāpāna-sati), the facts of impermanence and not-self (impersonality) will be visualized more strongly (exercise 13). Therefore I have given here that indication, because it is insight that lastly leads to deliverance. Concentration (*samādhi, samatha*) is only the clarification of mind, which, however, is indispensable; just as in spectacles the glasses are the essential thing, but one can look through them only after removing from them the dirt or moisture.

I have mentioned to-day only the exercises No. 1, 2 and 13. As you know, talking is here of little avail; doing, practising, is all that matters. After some time you may communicate your experiences, and, if required, ask for further information. You are quite right in saying that, without explanation, one cannot do much with the 16 brief instructions (Discourse 62 or 118), particularly if the translation is unsatisfactory. But in the Canon you will find further elucidations about the single points.

— Sumano

## V

Naples

17th October 1906

Dear Friend,

A few words about giving-up. It is better not to have cigars about oneself, on principle. Similarly, he who wishes to wean himself from alcohol will not carry a bottle with him. He who wants to give up desire for women will better not go to places where he will have to face temptation. To be sure of one's steps is important, particularly at a stage of transition. Māra is on the look-out for any possible opening, therefore he must not be given any chance. "Once" is not "never." He who has no cigars about himself *cannot* smoke (and so it is with drinking). No fire can flare up without fuel; for the present, at least, indulgence has been made impossible. Gradually the law of "elimination by disuse" will come into effect. The need and desire for the former enjoyment will weaken and finally cease. If someone says that he has got over smoking, etc., but he carries cigars about him for the sake of a test,

then he has not yet fully abandoned, *taṇhā* (craving). He who has entirely abolished that craving, will no longer cherish such thoughts; in that respect he is fully at peace, and already thinks further ahead. Thus a disciple who has freed himself from sexual urge will, though immune, not seek temptations. More important things have to be done. No rest before Nibbāna! Besides, if he refrains from testing his power of resistance, this will be more profitable to others in his environment who cannot see into his heart, but observe only his external behaviour; and quite reasonably, their confidence might be shaken by their observations, though they may not talk about it.

Doubtlessly, the struggle against Māra (*taṇhā*, craving) is hard, because for Māra it is actually a question of “to be or not to be,” a fight of life or death for his “kingdom of nature.” For long, long times we have been his serfs. Now this serfdom is over for us. Nevermore shall we find lasting satisfaction anywhere in this Saṃsāra. One who has taken the Buddha as his guide and master will understand the nature of “Māra’s Realm” so poignantly that he can no longer find full satisfaction in the “Realm of Nature” where everything is

impermanent. By seeing the misery of it, we are on the road of escape from it.

What, now, is the principal task for us who already possess a good deal of right understanding, who at least have a knowledge of the doctrine and observe virtue (*sīla*)? *To watch, watch, watch.* To be constantly on guard. In particular: to try to remain mindful. *Samādhi* (concentration, meditation) is the Buddhist practice proper. At the start of the practice the mind is not collected at all, the capacity of concentration is weak. But, as the Master explained, by training, by unceasing training, the little child, first constantly falling, learns to toddle about, till finally as a grown-up man he can walk steadily and continuously for long stretches. If a man possessed of intelligence falls, he has not been watchful, was absent-minded. "Lax mindfulness, produces new taints (*āsava*) and strengthens the old ones; unflinching mindfulness gives no room for new taints and destroys the old ones." For instance, one has seen innumerable times that "all formations are impermanent"; one has also agreed with the Buddha's words: "Whatever corporeality exists, one's own or of others, beautiful or ugly, all corporeality should, with proper understanding, be

regarded as it truly is: 'It is not mine...'; thus it will be abandoned, will be rejected." Very often the misery of corporeality has been felt most pungently, and the misery of craving has been understood, yet this or that object will still titillate our senses whenever watchfulness is lacking. But if one remains mindful, and turns at once to an analysis of the perception, one will not be enticed by any material form. One will see that the material form has been made up into an evanescent structure of this or another kind (young or old, beautiful or ugly), by the karmic formations (*saṅkhārā*) which are impermanent in themselves, one will see that material form is put together in a similar way as a potter (himself impermanent) shapes (fragile) pots. Then "his mind, dissecting thus the elements, will become joyful, gladdened, strong and steady."

It is doubtlessly a hard way, but gloriously safe. Truly, in that manner, one can perceptibly detach oneself from the world.

*Namo tassa,*

—Stg.



# Appendix I

## Reminiscences of Sumano by Dr. P. Derval

“Fritz Stange, student of natural sciences”—thus my late friend, then a newly registered freshman, was introduced to the academical association to which I belonged. A handsome young man, with smooth, blond hair, and an elegant moustache, with deeply blue and strikingly large eyes, a gentle voice and a mild glance, thus he stood before us. He was a gentle person and a keen student, who, in lonely hours, used to comfort his soul by playing the violin; he was an ardent admirer of Richard Wagner, and, if possible, he did not miss a single performance of Wagner’s operas. If anyone had said that a person like he would ever become a Buddhist ascetic, he would have provoked general laughter.

We liked each other from the beginning. Strange became my personal freshman. My other freshman was a great artist in the field of music, and has now become an excellent, though little known, Sanskritist

and Vedantist. The three of us, united by bonds of closest friendship, soon met regularly at the sessions of the Theosophical Society which everywhere has prepared the way for the Buddhist movement. Following the wish of his father, Stange had to give up his studies so dear to him and donned the uniform of an official of the Postal Department. For none of us had the student life any special attraction, and Stange himself saw in it only the karmic way by which we came together. As an official, Stange remained a keen Theosophist, lived as a vegetarian, and plunged deeply into the study of those teachings which then we called Buddhism.

Besides he was unusually capable in his profession, and, personally, he was the favourite of all who knew him. When he was a probationer for the higher postal career ("*Oberpostpraktikant*") at Kassel, he began to study the Discourses of the Buddha in Neumann's translation, under the guidance of a friend who was an ardent Buddhist, and soon the resolution matured in him to seek deliverance from the grievous suffering that pervades the life of all beings. He had fully grasped the Truth of Suffering. But knowledge alone was not sufficient for his fervent, pure, and profound heart. Thus he left, as a true follower of the Blessed One, his home, his property and his relations, in order to enter the Sangha (Buddhist Monkhood) in distant Asia.

“Why does one go to the countries of Buddhism?” he wrote to me once. “Briefly spoken, because there, particularly in Burma, all conditions are cut out for a life in the Sangha. One is relieved of all worldly cares, for eating, drinking, clothing, lodging, etc.; in contrast to Europe, one can live there the holy life, first externally. How one detaches oneself inwardly is everyone’s most personal affair.” Thus he came to Ceylon. “The reception,” he wrote, “was so friendly, the helpful response so strikingly unexpected, that already a fortnight after my arrival in Ceylon, I followed an invitation of the Bhikkhu Jinavaravaṃsa to stay at Chulla Lanka. [10] There I have spent the holiest time of my life, in meditation, study of Pali, and conversation about the teaching... But this body ‘that sickly thing,’ did not stand it.” On medical advice, Stange decided to return to Europe to cure his lung disease. In summer 1906, he lived first at Wingendorf near Lauban; afterwards, following the invitation of a friendly physician with Buddhist leanings, at Birkfield in Styria (Austria).

On the 11th of October 1906, the ship took him out again, hardly recovered. This time he went soon to the healthy up-country of Ceylon, to Bandarawela. Until his complete recuperation, he took, as preliminary step towards the Sangha, the white dress of an Upāsaka, but soon he donned again the yellow robe of a Sāmaṇera (novice). His intention was to

return later to Europe, together with Nyanatiloka, for establishing the Sangha there. "The time will come," he wrote in his letter of 7-7-1906, "when a Sangha will be established in Germany by thoroughly trained Bhikkhus, and thereby a firm basis will be formed for the dissemination of the Teaching that brings such unspeakable bliss."

"When illness visits thee, make mindfulness arise.

Illness has come. No time is now for negligence."

(Theragāthā)

How earnest he was in his determination, is confirmed by the following words of his:

"And even if I had not met a single good Bhikkhu, this would not have disconcerted me. "Rare are Enlightened Ones." "Small is the number of those who are gripped by things truly stirring, compared with those who are not gripped by them." These words of the Enlightened One are of general validity. A perceptive disciple will see in that fact an admonition to make all the quicker an end of suffering. So strongly have I become aware of the truth of this Teaching and of its profundity, that, on the one hand to swerve from that path to another one has become an impossibility; and, on the other hand,

even my walking alone on that path would be done without hesitation or surprise.”

Now his striving within this present impermanent existence has come to an end. Just as his going forth from home was similar to that of his Lord and Master Gotama, so it was the same illness, dysentery, which had dissolved the body of the Perfect one, that also took away the dear heroic Sāmaṇera Sumano. Death is indeed the lot of everything born and originated.

When Sumano started on his way to Homelessness, he pointed out to his relatives the justification of that step in a beautifully lucid tract, quoting in it, especially, sayings of Jesus of Nazareth. To the public he gave the work published a few weeks ago, “Pabbajjā, Going Forth into Homelessness.” Only by absorbing its contents fully, we shall be able to measure the single-minded, pure, noble, and yet firmly rooted work for deliverance done by our friend who is now free from the world of appearance.

## Appendix II

### From a Letter by the German Bhikkhu Kondañño

“What I have to say about Sumano’s death is the following: In autumn last year, Bhikkhu Nyanatiloka, the Burmese monk *sīlavam̐sa* and myself made a walking tour for a week through the South West of Ceylon, via Adam’s Peak, and came also to Bandarawela. First the three of us went to the small mud hut, hardly 3X4 metres in size, where Sumano had lived and died. The hut is situated in a very lonely place, outside of the village, in the midst of bare grassy hillocks, so that no sound can be heard from the village, and no human habitation can be seen right around. It is desolate and lonely there, as rarely anywhere else. The second hut which, when Sumano died, was inhabited by Suñño, had already fallen into decay, and the rain had washed away nearly every vestige of it. Afterwards we wanted also to go to the site of the cremation, but we missed the place. Hence I went, without Nyanatiloka, once more

there, together with the Thera of the Bandarawela Monastery, and I found there, besides some pieces of molten glass, a few small unburned splinters of bone. I picked them up and handed them over to Nyanatiloka who still keeps them at Dodanduwa as a token.

The site of the cremation is on the top of one of those grassy hillocks, about 10 minutes distance from the hut. Boys planted a Bodhi tree at that spot. A great gathering is said to have been present at the cremation, amongst them hundreds of Christians and Mohammedans who secretly respected the ascetic way of life led by Sumano... After the cremation, the ashes were distributed among the lay people, and many a Christian, Mohammedan, and Hindu took them as gladly as a Buddhist..."

# Notes

1. To those who have the opportunity of visiting Bandarawela some road directions may be welcome. The place where Sumano lived and died, is reached by going up the Grand Road to Uturu Kabillawela, a distance of about one and one-half miles from the Bandarawela Town Hall, and then walking down a little over one quarter mile on the foot path leading to Gediyarde village. [\[Back\]](#)
2. *Nekkhamma-saṅkappa*, “the thought of renunciation,” is one of the three kinds of Right Thought or Right Aspiration (*samma-saṅkappa*), the second factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. [\[Back\]](#)
3. See “The Wheel” No. 15a/b: *Dependent Origination*, by Piyadassi Thera. [\[Back\]](#)
4. See “The Wheel” No. 20: *Three Signata*, by Prof. O.H. de A. Wijasekara. [\[Back\]](#)
5. The author’s use of the Buddhist technical term *akusala*, i.e., “karmically unwholesome,” is here somewhat misleading; but the meaning



intended by him is clear: For a layman, sexual intercourse in marriage is not immoral, being not a violation of the Five Precepts binding on him. Any form of lust (*lobha*), however, is karmically unwholesome, in the strict sense of the term *akusala*, though “unlawful lust” (*visama-lobha*; e.g., adultery) is so in a higher degree.—The Translator. [\[Back\]](#)

6. This question was, probably, about the Rev Sumano’s reasons for entering the monkhood. [\[Back\]](#)
7. See “The Wheel” No. 15a/b. [\[Back\]](#)
8. See “The Wheel” No. 19: *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*. [\[Back\]](#)
9. This refers to the 16 exercises given in MN 118. [\[Back\]](#)
10. An island in the sea near the coast of Mātara, a town in South Ceylon. The Sinhalese name of the island is Galgodiyaana [\[Back\]](#)

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