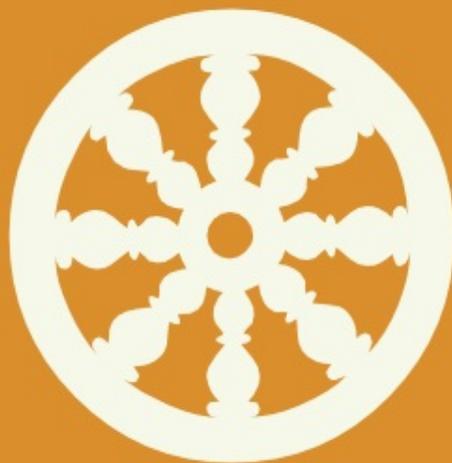


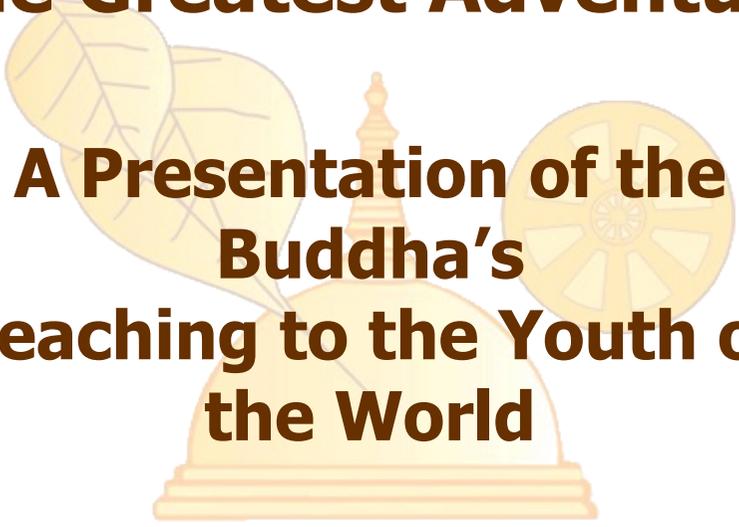
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**The Greatest Adventure
Buddha's Teaching For Youth**

David Maurice



The Greatest Adventure



A Presentation of the Buddha's Teaching to the Youth of the World

by

David Maurice

**Buddhist Publication Society
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Chapter I

Adventure

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en have always sought adventure and some look for it in very curious ways. Sometimes adventure comes to men when they are not seeking it and most of us have had thrilling adventures of this kind that have been pleasant or very much the reverse.

In the early days before history, men lived together in large families, each family related to the other and forming a small tribe and it was man who was the hunter and therefore the adventurer, and woman's place was to guard the camp and to make secure what the men had won. That was also an adventurous life for women of those days; but while men went out after adventure and so made adventure part of their lives, women for the most part feared adventure as something likely to destroy the security necessary for building a home and rearing a family.

In those early days of civilization, men ventured from the small patches of forest-land which they lived in, to explore wider areas of the country. They met with hostile tribes and animals and with fire and flood and

famine, and overcame these enemies or were overcome by them. They learnt which fruits were edible and which were poisonous and they learnt better ways of tilling the soil to produce more food, and better ways of building houses, villages, towns and finally cities.

They conquered the land and in time they began to conquer the rivers, using logs of wood which they later learned to hollow out, and finally they found out how to build ships. Then they began to conquer the sea and to sail to far-off places on great adventures. Later they began to conquer the air and now we find men attempting to conquer space, to fly to other worlds that are millions of miles away.

Now notice that word “conquer.” It means to vanquish or to overcome and is used in warfare between nations. The word is associated with adventure and unfortunately many adventures have been attempts to overcome other people in warfare. Sometimes that has seemed very necessary to the fighters; they have thought that they could live better if they took more land and more cattle from others. On the other hand this has not always been the case. Some wars have been fought by adventurous men just for the thrill of the adventure itself.

There is something exciting in adventure that appeals

to men and that quite often brings out the best in men and incites them to do great deeds. Courage and determination, selflessness and fortitude are virtues that are part of the spirit of adventure, but they are virtues only when they are combined with the greatest of virtues, with loving-kindness.

In the modern world much of the adventure has gone out of life and only a few people can set out to climb high mountains or to explore deep caves or to fit themselves to travel in space-ships. There are cinemas and story-books and the football-field to give some sense of adventure to the others.

There is a greater adventure than any we have mentioned and that is also a conquest, the adventure found in the pursuit of science. There is as much a thrill in finding a new breed of plant, especially if a man has created that plant, as there is in finding a new country. There is a wonderful thrill in conquering disease and bringing health to one's country and to the world.

In fighting death and disease there is all the thrill of battle and all the excitement of war and some of the risks as well. In the development of X-rays, for instance, many a scientist has lost a limb and some have lost their lives due to these rays. When the flesh is exposed repeatedly for a long period to X-rays, the

exposed part is destroyed and affects neighbouring parts and the only remedy is to amputate the limb. When the case is such that the part cannot be amputated, the man dies. Knowing this, many brave men and women have taken great risks to make ray treatment possible, and the work of making it safer still goes on.

In other fields of medicine and science similar risks are taken daily. They are taken not in order to kill but in order to cure. In this, is greater adventure and higher service to the world.

Chapter II

The Supreme Scientist

We have just read of the realms of adventure where there is still room for adventurers who can give service to the world. It is very interesting to note the word “adventurer” because that is a good example of how words can change their meaning. The word is still used in praise of a man and we may still say of Tensing and Hillary, who conquered Mt. Everest, “They were great adventurers.”

Four hundred years ago the people of Europe began to explore the world and to travel to far countries and they greatly praised the brave men who endured many perils in such adventures. Then they began looking for countries which they could conquer and from which they could get gold and raw material for manufacture as they began to invent machines. Using superior weapons they took many countries and then in their greed they began to fight among themselves and to rob one another’s ships. The successful men who fought against other countries and against the pirates who lay in wait for their ships carrying the wealth of Asia and America back to Europe, were called great adventurers. But since many of these men

were no better than pirates themselves and used force and fraud to gain their fortunes the word began to acquire a bad meaning. Today the word may be used either in praise or blame. In business when a man does not follow the rules but takes great risks, sometimes with the money of other people, he may be called “just an adventurer.”

But if we take the word in its best and highest sense, meaning one who has courage, determination, fortitude and selflessness, we can see that some of the medical workers and scientists have been great adventurers.

Of all such scientists, he who renounced the whole world and gave up everything to undertake the greatest adventure of all was the supreme scientist.

He was born in India nearly two thousand six hundred years ago, the son of Suddhodana, head of the Sakya clan and ruler of Kapilavatthu and his queen Mahāmāyā, and was named Siddhattha Gotama. Twenty-nine years later he gave up all his sheltered life, all the luxuries which his father had surrounded him with, to enter on the most difficult search that man has undertaken. That might seem to the unthinking man just the beginning of the adventure that was to last six years until he attained “Buddhahood” or Supreme Enlightenment. Actually

this greatest of adventures had begun many millions of years before, with the vow of a determined man to find a way out of all suffering.

That you may read about elsewhere. This is not so much to tell you of the beginning of the adventure, but of the last stages and of the end of it, and of the result that opens the way for you to undertake the greatest of all adventures. But where Siddhattha Gotama had to find a way for himself with no one to guide him, you may start off with a well-marked map and a way that has been well pointed out. Even so it is still the greatest adventure that you can undertake.

Before his birth his mother had a strange dream: she dreamt that a small white elephant had entered into her body. Since the white elephant has always been the symbol of power and leadership, this dream was interpreted, by those men who were skilled in such things, as a favourable omen. The child, they said, would be a great man of outstanding ability. When he was born he had also all the signs of health and vigour and intelligence above the ordinary. The wise men predicted that he would be a conqueror and that there were two courses open to him: either he would conquer the world in battle or he would conquer the world in an entirely different way, the peaceful way of giving up the material world in order to find that which is beyond the world.

His mother died when he was a few days old and his aunt, Pajāpati, cared for him and brought him up.

The Sakyans were brave warriors, and their clan was of the Khattiya caste. At that time there were four castes in India. The Khattiyas were the leading class, the rulers and great warriors; the Brahmins or priestly class were the teachers and religious men; the Vessas were the trading class and the Sudda caste provided the workmen. People were proud of their castes, especially those who could claim to be Khattiyas, the highest caste; so King Suddhodana determined that his son should not become a mere religious man but should be a great warrior, leader of the clan, conqueror of other clans and finally ruler of the world.

He taught his son archery and all the war-like sports and the young Siddhattha excelled in all of these. His father surrounded him with luxury and comfort and tried to shield him from even the sight of sorrow and suffering. Already, however, there were signs in the young prince of loving-kindness and compassion and freedom from the things of the world. At an early age, we are told, while watching his father perform the ceremonial ploughing of the fields, a custom of that time requiring the king to do the first ploughing so that the fields would be fertile, Siddhattha sat apart and meditated. He had a glimpse of another world and of higher things and never really forgot this.

Siddhattha was married at an early age to his beautiful and charming cousin, Yasodharā, and although for some years they had no children they were very happy together. Finally a son was born to them. He loved his wife very dearly and at that time every man looked forward eagerly to having a son to love also, and in the eyes of the world a woman was counted as nothing unless she had borne a son. A woman with no children was never completely happy.

Siddhattha now realized that he could not easily leave his home and family; but on the other hand he had no wish to live the luxurious life of a household man. Neither did he wish to make himself a great man by killing others as a conqueror in battle. Later, after he had become the Buddha, when he was asked why the Sakyans were called warriors, though so many were his followers, the Buddha answered, "Warriors are we called, and wherefore warriors? For lofty endeavour." He also said, "Though he should conquer a thousand times a thousand men in the field of battle, yet he who conquers himself is the noblest victor."

His preparation during previous lives had given him extraordinary powers of intelligence and made him a deep thinker. Although he had led a protected life and had never seen sickness, old age and death, yet he felt unsatisfactoriness behind all the carefree court life. His father had planned for him a sheltered, luxurious life

with the thought that only pleasant things should meet the eye of the young prince; no sign of sickness, suffering or death should be visible. He had three palaces, one for each season of the Indian year, and the king had ordered that when the young prince went out, the roads should be cleared and that nothing unpleasant was to be allowed to disturb Siddhattha.

However, the prince went out one day accompanied only by his faithful charioteer and saw a sick man, weak and pale. It was the first time he had seen such sickness and he was shocked to realize that this was the common lot of all men. After that he saw an old man, shaking and withered and with eyes dim and teeth missing. He then understood that this, too, was to be his fate and that of all his friends. Then he saw a dead man, something also that was new to him. This was something else that was a misfortune all men must meet. Finally he saw a calm person in the robes of a monk, an ascetic who had given up the pleasures of the world. His charioteer explained that there were such men who sought the way out of suffering that none had yet found.

He felt that death was not the end of everything but that there was continual rebirth, life after life. That was the general belief and there were those who knew it for certain, just as there are today some who know it for certain. What nobody knew was the way to prove

it; and nobody knew for certain the way out of this continual circle of rebirth. Most people believed either that there was no way out or that by uniting with God" as they thought of it, they would end their long struggle. Siddhattha Gotama wanted to discover if there were really a way out and, if so, how to show that way to others, so that all who wished could win freedom from suffering. He and his beloved wife and son and his father, his aunt and his close friends could not stay together for ever, that he knew well. One by one they would be snatched away by death.

Maybe they would be reborn in states of greater suffering.

Siddhattha pondered upon all this and now that a son was born he saw that to seek this ending of sorrow and to find the remedy was the greatest gift he could give to his wife, to his child and to the world. His mind was made up and he renounced all the years of comfort and happiness with wife and child and friends, to set out to find the deathless.

With one last, lingering look at his sleeping wife and child he left the palace and mounted his great horse, Kaṇṭhaka, and with his charioteer, Channa, went outside the city gates. There he cut off his hair and changed from his rich dress to the robes of an ascetic, and sending back his faithful friend and follower, left

on his great quest.

At that time the world was very different from the world you are used to. There was no steam or electricity and the only machinery was the primitive spinning wheel turned by hand or the wood-working tools operated by hand. The only way of travelling on land was by ox-cart or chariot or on horseback, although there were sailing ships which went to countries far away. There were no books, only stone slabs with writing sculptured on them or clay plates on which people wrote with sticks and then baked in a kiln or oven. That made it difficult to write and difficult to read, so writing was used for the sake of keeping records and there was no reading for pleasure, and no education by book. Most of the teaching was by word of mouth and most of the learning by heart. There were two great and famous teachers who claimed to have a method of teaching which would lead a man to union with God. That, they said, was the final end which men should seek. To these in turn the Bodhisatta (the Buddha-to-be) went for study and he quickly mastered their systems. Each in turn begged him to stay as a teacher but he saw that these systems did not lead to the deathless.

He set out anew with five companions who acknowledged him to be their leader. At that time there were people who believed that there was a way

out of the constant round of rebirth. They believed that the way was to conquer the body by inflicting suffering on it and so they tortured themselves. They lived on, as little food as they possibly could, and endured great hardships. Siddhattha and his companions tried this way for some years and he starved himself until he almost died. Eventually he realized that to follow his present course was to die with the goal not yet won. Then he remembered the experience of his early boyhood when he had had a glimpse of higher things. At that time, he remembered, his body was comfortable and his mind free. He decided to try this way and sat under a tree, now known as the Bodhi tree or tree of enlightenment, determined not to rise until he had attained full enlightenment. He succeeded and when he did rise up from his seat next morning it was as an Omniscient Buddha.

Chapter III

The Teaching

In attaining full enlightenment the Buddha attained omniscience. The word means “knowledge of everything.” He knew all the past and all the present and had only to turn His mind towards a thing to see and understand it. He had become a different being, a Buddha, greater than any man and greater than the highest god, with powers far surpassing those of any other being, man or god, whomsoever. Looking round with this superior power, he saw men lost in greed and craving (*lobha*), in hate and dislike (*dosa*) and in dullness and delusion (*moha*). There, he saw, are the roots of all action. Although they have their opposites: disinterestedness (*alobha*), amity (*adosa*) and wisdom (*amoha* or *paññā*), the latter three were, and still are, very rare in the world. He hesitated to give so deep a teaching to the ordinary men of the world who were bent only on pleasure, but on looking over the world with his superior understanding he realized that there were some men “whose eyes were only lightly covered with dust,” who would awaken and understand. Such men, with more intelligence and more kindness than their fellow human beings, would

accept the Teaching and follow it.

It is interesting to note that it was not always the learned men who understood the Teaching quickly. Learning is, at times, a great help to understanding, but it is simplicity and earnestness and clarity of mind that are required above all for understanding. The Buddha then set out to teach those in the world who would listen to his teaching, and could understand it. He knew that his former teachers, under whom he had studied, would be most likely to understand the teaching. Then he saw by his superior powers that they had already died. So he decided to teach first his former companions who had practised with him a life of asceticism.

In gaining enlightenment he had gained an appearance of great calmness and majesty and appeared as truly splendid as only a Buddha can appear. On the way to these former companions he met a wandering ascetic who was surprised at the wonderful appearance of the Buddha and asked him, "Friend, who is your teacher?" The Buddha replied that he was the Buddha, a fully enlightened one, conqueror of the world and teacher of gods and men, and that there was no one among men or gods whom he could regard as a teacher. There was at that time in India a sect of ascetics who had the strange belief that by owning nothing at all, not even clothes, they would

be nearer to some supposed god. Therefore they went about quite naked and dirty. There are a very few of such people in India even today. This ascetic was one of that sect and he was not able to grasp such a teaching as that of the Buddha. He said, "May be!" and nodded and went on his way.

When the Buddha arrived at the place where his former companions were, they saw him coming and determined not to accept him as a friend and teacher. They thought that he had betrayed all their ideas by giving up the strict ascetic life of torture and living what was, to them, a comparatively luxurious life. As he approached nearer, they were struck by his majestic and calm presence, just as was the naked ascetic, and their resolution to treat him coldly could not be kept up. They could not at first accept his Teaching but when he had spoken for some time they saw part of the truth and then, one by one, they perceived the full truth and became arahats.

What is the difference between an arahat and a Buddha? In one way there is none, since both on the death of the body attain full Nibbāna, never to be reborn in any of the worlds again. However, a Sammā Sambuddha (a Fully Enlightened Buddha) has, by his long preparation through many lives, superior powers; and while still living in the world is able to find the Truth as no one else can and is able to teach

this Truth as no one else can.

You may read elsewhere the story of the forty-five years of life of the Buddha, how all sorts of men became His followers. Many of these became arahats, some from rich families of high caste and some from the families of the poorest people and the lowest caste, and even those "out-castes" who were regarded by others as the lowest of men; some were mere children and others old men. Here we shall read of the Teaching of the Buddha.

Today men of science are beginning to make wonderful discoveries. They are now beginning to understand much of the truth taught by the Buddha so many centuries ago. The Buddha was omniscient and knew everything that ordinary men were able to do. He knew all the natural laws, those known to ordinary men and those unknown to ordinary men. In his teachings you will find that he knew all about atoms, for instance. But he did not teach how to use atomic power. He said that the truths he had taught his followers were like a handful of leaves in number while the truths that could be known were like the leaves in a great forest. "Why," he asked, "have I not taught you the other truths? Because they would not be helpful to you. Only those truths which will help you to attain calm and happiness and freedom from this round of rebirth have I taught you."

He taught the six roots of action of which we read in the last chapter and he taught also the three signs of being. That means the three conditions which govern everything that exists in the world. To put it more simply, everything is subject to Anicca, Dukkha and anattā. These three Pali words may be translated into English as follows: Anicca is Impermanence, that is, everything is continually changing and is in what we call a state of flux. From moment to moment nothing is the same. Things may appear to be the same, just as a river flowing towards the sea may seem to keep the same form. The river, however, is not composed of the same drops of water at one moment as it was the moment before or will be the next moment. In addition the river is slowly eating out its banks at some places and building them up at other places. Similarly your body and your mind are changing all the time, every part of your mind. Even such seemingly solid things as chairs and tables and houses and stones are all the time in motion. This was shown by the Buddha more than 2500 years ago and in the last fifty years western science has at last found this to be true.

Dukkha is sorrow and suffering. Whether it is deep sorrow and great suffering or just an uneasy feeling or a feeling of “unsatisfactoriness,” it is all contained in the word dukkha. If you think deeply you will see that

even in what we think are happy moments, the shadow of sorrow is always present. Since we cannot stay with our happy friends always and since we are always changing and always having to leave happiness behind, nothing is permanently happy and so happiness itself changes to sorrow.

The third fact of being is anattā, absence of any permanent unchanging self or soul. When you say “I” you are speaking of something that has already changed and is still changing. It is impossible that such an unsatisfactory compound or mixture, a bundle of feelings, changing from moment to moment can be thought of as a “Soul” which doesn’t change. Take away from yourself all thoughts and all feelings and what is left? Nothing is left at all that is able to be recognized as yourself or part of yourself or anything to do with yourself.

So having in mind these facts that can be proved, the Buddha gave the further Teaching of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path.

Chapter IV

The Four Noble Truths and the Precepts

All of the Buddha's Teachings are true and one part follows another very clearly. Following on the teaching of the Three Signs of Being, are the Four Noble Truths. These are:

1. That all in the world is, in its inner essence, suffering.
2. That there is a cause of suffering and that cause is desire or craving.
3. That if we can get rid of our craving and ignorance we can get rid of suffering.
4. That there is a way to get rid of ignorance and craving and that way is the Noble Eightfold Path.

It is put in the Scriptures in a longer way.

“This is the Noble Truth of Suffering: birth is suffering; growth and decay are suffering; death is suffering; to be bound to what we do not love is suffering; to be parted from what we love is suffering; not to obtain that for which

we long is suffering; all the Elements of Being are suffering.

“This is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering: it is that craving which leads from birth to birth, joined with lusts and longings which, now here, now there, continually seek satisfaction; it is the desire for the gratification of passion; it is craving for eternal life; it is longing for enjoyment here in this present life.

“This is the Noble Truth of the Ceasing of Suffering: it is the utter and complete annihilation of this craving (*taṇhā*); separation from it, freedom from it, deliverance from it.

“This is the Noble Truth of the Way that leads to the Ceasing of Suffering: it is that Noble Eightfold Path which consists of

1. Right Understanding,
2. Right Thought,
3. Right Speech,
4. Right Bodily Action,
5. Right Livelihood,
6. Right Effort,
7. Right Attentiveness,

8. Right Concentration.

We call it an “Eightfold” path because each part is not separate. The whole eight parts of the path have to be followed at one time and not one after the other. It can be seen that, as we follow this path, the path itself will become clearer to us the farther we go.

Thus the first step “Right Understanding” is, at the beginning, the right understanding of all we have learnt about the Four Noble Truths. Later on we get right understanding of these Noble Truths in a fuller and deeper sense.

“Right Thought” means a mind free from selfish desire, from ill-will and from cruelty. At the beginning we can only commence to make our minds clean and good. Later we can make them ever cleaner and clearer.

“Right Speech” is speaking only what is good and useful and kind. It is refraining from saying harsh and rough things and from telling lies, tale-bearing and from speaking foolishly.

“Right Bodily Action” is abstaining from taking life, from killing and from stealing and from dirty and immoral sexual acts.

“Right Livelihood” is to make a living in ways that do

not harm others.

“Right Effort” is putting forth energy to make evil and nasty thoughts leave the mind and to put forth energy to keep the mind on good and wholesome things. It is right effort to follow the good and right effort to stay away from the bad. It takes a good deal of effort to be attentive and to concentrate and this is right effort.

“Right Attentiveness” is being aware of the body, the feelings, the mind and of mental objects.

“Right Concentration” is keeping the mind firmly fixed on an object. This we shall mention fully in Chapter VI.

The Teaching of the Buddha is something to be and something to do. The something to do is our great adventure and we shall deal with it in Chapter VI also. The something to be is just to be good and decent. It is to follow at least the Five Precepts, and when and where possible, the Eight or the Ten.

Most Buddhists recite the Five Precepts in Pali and so we give them here in Pali with the English translations.

Pāṇātipāta veramaṇī—sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

I undertake to abide by the rule of training to refrain from taking life.

Adinnādāna veramaṇī—sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

I undertake to abide by the rule of training to refrain from taking that which is not given.

Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī—sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

I undertake to abide by the rule of training to refrain from sexual immorality.

Musāvādā veramaṇī—sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

I undertake to abide by the rule of training to refrain from telling lies.

*Surāmeraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī—
sikkhā-padaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from all intoxicants.

There are three further rules to make the eight precepts. They are:

I undertake to abide by the rule of training to refrain from eating after midday.

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from attending dancing, singing, musical and such shows and from the use of garlands, scents, cosmetics and adornments.

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from using luxurious beds.

For the Ten Precepts, the first five rules are used and

the next are very like the last three of the Eight. They are:

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from eating after midday.

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from attending dancing, singing, musical and such shows.

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from the use of garlands, scents, cosmetics and adornments.

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from the use of luxurious beds.

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from accepting gold and silver.

The layman who undertakes the eight or the ten rules of training should follow them very seriously and very strictly. For instance he must preserve absolute chastity as the third rule.

Monks can follow the Ten Precepts all the time and laymen can follow them on special days when they have no work or classes. Monks must follow all the above rules very strictly and further rules as well.

Monks have in all 227 rules to follow and that is why we should respect monks, since a true monk follows all the rules very strictly.

Now there is a question that an intelligent man may ask. That is: "Why should I keep all these rules?" He may think that there should be a reason, and there is indeed a reason. The Buddha gave a very good reason for his Teaching.

The first five precepts are plain to everyone. They are just the basic morality that all should follow. It requires very little common sense to understand that by keeping these simple rules you will earn a good name in this world as well as building a character that will be to your benefit after death. But the question may occur to you, "Why should a layman, especially a young man, keep the other five rules of training for a time?" You might also ask, "What harm am I doing to others if I never keep them?" You are not doing harm if you do not keep them, but you can gain a lot of good for yourself if you do keep them sometimes. The Buddha said that it is good for a layman to keep them on special Fasting-days as it will help him to think of the Arahats who keep them always, and it will improve his mind.

By undertaking this voluntary discipline, your mind will be clean and clear and united. Many people have divided-minds. A man wants to do a thing with part of his mind and wants to do something else, may be the opposite, with another part of his mind. His mind is not steady and in a way is fighting itself. Just as in a

country if the citizens are fighting among themselves that country becomes poor and weak, so if a man's mind is not united, it becomes poor and weak. You do not have to believe that without thinking about it, but if you think about it, then you will see for yourself that it is true. The Buddha taught that men should think for themselves. They should consider what they see or hear or are taught and neither believe it blindly nor disbelieve it blindly. Only after thinking it over deeply should they believe or disbelieve. When they see that a thing is not good and not reasonable they should reject it. When they see that a thing is good and in accord with reason, then they should accept it.

The Teaching of the Buddha has been preserved and enshrined in the Pali language. In the days of the Buddha there were monks who knew his teachings by heart and could recite them. There are still some who can do this. After the Buddha died and thus attained Mahāparinibbāna (complete Nibbāna without any remainder) a Great Council was called and Reciting Monks were appointed who, in groups, recited the Teachings to one another daily. As new members came into the Sangha, which is the name for the Noble Order of Monks, they took the "Yoke of Learning or the Yoke of Development," that is, they decided to specialize on Development of Insight or on learning the Teachings so that the Teachings could be handed

down exactly as the Buddha gave them.

Those who learnt the teachings joined one of the groups of reciting monks and so, though individuals have died, the groups remain as living bodies right through the centuries to the present day. That is why we can rely on the Pali Canon, or collection of teachings as being true. They are divided into three sections, called piṭakas, and the whole is called the Tipiṭaka.

There is the Vinaya Piṭaka, or Collection of Rules for Monks, with the stories of how those rules came to be promulgated; there is the Sutta Piṭaka or Sermons to Monks and Laymen, and there is the Abhidhamma Piṭaka or Philosophical Collection.

The Buddha did not teach a dogma, that is, something that must be believed merely because some person in authority has said it. In the Kālāma Sutta or Sermon to the people of the clan of Kālāma, he said,

“Do not accept views merely from hearsay or from what you have been told. Do not accept them merely because they are mentioned in scriptures, or merely because of argument or because the reasoning seems to be plausible. Do not believe because the speculations about a thing appear possible, and do not believe merely because your teacher is venerable.

“When you realize by yourself that these views are unwholesome, faulty, censured by the wise and they lead to harm and misery, when practised, you should reject them. When you realize by yourselves that these views are good, faultless, praised by the wise and when carried out and practised lead to good and happiness; then after acquiring them you should abide in them.”

The Buddha then questioned the Kālāmas,

“What do you think, Kālāmas? When generosity (*alobha*) arises in a man, does it arise for his good or his harm?”

“For his good, Lord.”

“This person free from greed, O Kālāmas, not being overcome by covetousness, with his mind totally uninfluenced by it, does not take life, does not commit theft and adultery, does not tell lies, and does not urge others to do so, and this leads him to good and happiness for a long time.”

“Quite so, Lord.”

“What do you think, Kālāmas? When goodwill arises in a person, does it arise for his good or harm?”

“For his good, Lord.”

“O Kālāmas, a man who is free from ill-will, not being overcome by it, and his mind not being under its influence does not take life, does not commit theft and adultery, does not tell lies, and does not urge others to do so, and this leads him to good and happiness for a long time.”

“Quite so, Lord.”

“What do you think, O Kālāmas? When knowledge arises in a man, does it arise for his good or for his harm?”

“For his good, Lord.”

“O Kālāmas, this person who is free from delusion, not being overcome by it, and his mind not being under its influence, does not take life, does not commit theft and adultery, does not tell lies, and does not urge others to do so, and this leads him to good and happiness for a long time.”

“Quite so, Lord.”

The Buddha thus showed the people of the Kālāma clan what is true virtue and that nothing is to be believed unless it is investigated and seen by reason to be good and true.

Buddhism and other Teachings

The Buddha taught that we should rely on ourselves and that we should live a life of virtue and that by our own efforts we can and should attain Nibbāna. He also said, however, that if a teacher of another sect speaks that which is Dhamma (truth and purity) we should salute him with joined hands. A Buddhist respects all truth and all good and realizes that many great Teachers have taught this. Therefore a good Buddhist respects other Teachings while holding fast to the truth, and respects all who live a life of purity and loving-kindness. There is no competition between Buddhism and other sects.

Chapter V

Mind and Body and the Roots of Action

The Buddha taught Loving-kindness and Compassion, and Reason. That we have seen in the previous chapters. He did not teach something to be believed in without a reason. He taught that we should be good and he gave good reasons for being good. That is not his greatest teaching, however. As well as teaching something to be, he taught something to do. "Who sees the Dhamma (the good law)," he said "sees me." He was not a God to be worshipped merely, but a man who became greater than any God, a Being to be followed.

The evil caste system was beginning to rise in India and he taught:

"Not by birth is one an outcaste,
Not by birth is one a noble;
But by deeds is one an outcaste,
And by deeds is one a noble."

He also said on another occasion:

"This two-footed dirty body

Which carries about a bad odour
And which is full of impurities
Which pour out from different places;
With a body of this sort
If one thinks highly of oneself
And looks down upon others
Due to what can it be except ignorance?"

This was to show that what we call the "self" is not important and we cannot think of ourselves as being great and wonderful.

Do you ever look at yourself in a mirror? You will not see there exactly what other people see when they look at you. You will see an image of your body but it will be changed by your mind at the very moment the image reaches your mind. You cannot see anything at all exactly as it is and, as the Buddha said, "Self is dear to self." Your idea of yourself will be made grander than it is by your wishes for yourself, so you do not see yourself clearly and truly. This self that is changing like a flowing river, this mind that is jumping about like a fish that has just been pulled out of the water, cannot be clearly perceived, cannot be fully understood. Only when the mind becomes completely clear and calm can it see itself. Only then can you really see yourself.

The Buddha, shortly after attaining Full

Enlightenment, met a party of thirty young men who were in a very disturbed state. They had gone out on a picnic with their wives, and one young man, having no wife, had taken along a girl he had met by chance. This young woman was a cheat and a swindler and she had pretended to be very tired and had suggested that the young people should keep their valuable jewels and ornaments with her, where she sat at the foot of a tree, while they enjoyed themselves by running races. When they agreed, she had taken charge of all the valuables, but stole away with them when the friends were busy with their games.

Now the young men were running here and there looking for the thief, and they told the Buddha that they were looking for a woman who had stolen their property.

“Is it more important to find this woman or to find yourself?” asked the Buddha.

The intelligent young men realized the deep truth behind the Buddha’s question and agreed that the most important thing in life is to seek for one’s self, for unless and until one begins to search for and to find and to understand this changing “Self,” one cannot gain that freedom, the only freedom worth having, which we call Nibbāna.

What is the thing that is closest to you? The “Self” is

closest to you, since, in a sense, it is “you,” and yet you are not a single indivisible whole. Sometimes you laugh at yourself and sometimes you blame yourself. Do you ever try to think what it is that blames “itself”; or what the “self” blames? If you do that for one minute you will realize that what you call the “Self” is a changing bundle of feelings, never for one moment quite the same.

To find your “Self” and to know your “Self” is the most important thing in the world for you and it is certainly the greatest adventure you can undertake.

How are we to set about this search for that which is so near and yet so far? Men have been trying and failing since the beginning of civilization, since the very earliest times. No god or spirit can help one and yet alone and unaided the task is almost an impossible one, though it may seem simple at first glance.

Alone and unaided the Buddha solved this great problem of existence, of life and death and of what lies beyond both life and death. Luckily for us he left a way which we can follow clearly. He called it *ekāyano*, “the only way.” This way is open to all men and the chart is clearly drawn, but it is not a way to be followed by fools or by sots or by cowards; it is a way for the brave, the resolute and the good.

It is a way that can be followed by the learned and by

the uneducated and although the educated man has something of an advantage in all things, if learning causes pride, that can be a handicap.

The story is told of the very learned monk, Poṭhila who was the teacher of other monks but had never found the way himself because he was too proud of his learning to follow the path. When the Buddha called him “Poṭhila, the Empty-head,” he realized that it was because he had not practised Development of Insight and had not really understood the changing self.

He went to a company of monks who had reached the end of the Path and had become Arahats and asked for instruction. They, in order to humble his pride, sent him successively to younger and younger members of their community until he reached the youngest, a mere child. This youngster told Poṭhila, “You, Sir, are a great teacher of the Three Piṭakas, all of the Buddha’s teachings. I have something to learn from you,” but Poṭhila was now humble and promised to do anything the young boy commanded if he would only show him the way. Finally the lad said to him, “Venerable Sir, if there are six holes in a certain ant-hill and a lizard enters the ant-hill through one of these holes, and if you wish to catch the lizard you must stop up five of the six holes, leaving the sixth hole open, and catch the lizard in the hole through

which he entered. Just so, you must deal with the six doors of the senses; close five of the six doors, and devote your attention to the door of the mind.”

There, and here only can you seize and understand the “Self.” The method will be explained in the next chapter.

When you perform any action you are moved by one or more of the six roots or springs of action. these are lobha, dosa, moha, and alobha, adosa and amoha, which we mentioned in Chapter III. It is important for you to know and understand when and how these six roots of action play in your mind. When you are lustful or greedy or desirous, you should be truthful with yourself and aware that you are lustful, greedy and desirous. When you are angry or irritable or feel even a slight aversion to anything, you should be fully aware of the feeling. When your mind is “dark” and perplexed and ignorant, you should be fully aware of that. Similarly when your mind is full of loving-kindness and well-wishing to all, when your mind is keen and alert but peaceful and poised, you should be fully aware of these states.

Chapter VI

Something to Do

Now, then, we come to the greatest adventure, which you are ready to set out on. It is a discipline, but a discipline that you impose on yourself, not one imposed on you by others. It is a training, and you are the trainer. If you can find a teacher to help you, you are more sure of success and success will come the more quickly.

You may take some preliminary exercises, just as a man who intends to climb mountains, first practises by walking long distances, and by climbing hills, or just as a man who intends to conquer some disease that endangers humanity, first fits himself by study and laboratory work. Something of this preliminary training has been mentioned earlier. You must take a few exercises in knowing your mind, in practising awareness. You watch for the arising of feelings of anger or of kindness or joy or sorrow and are aware that they are rising, that they are there and that they are dying away. Then you think to yourself, "These feelings change my mind and they are not permanent it seems, nor is my mind always the same. These feelings arise without my will and against my will.

How would it be if I could become complete master of my feelings and make them arise when I will and vanish when I will?"

A thought of lust or hate or just black dullness comes to your mind. You think, "I did not call you, get out!" But sometimes the thought stays and grows even as you think this and if you have not practised being aware of your thoughts and feelings, you will be overwhelmed like a weak swimmer in a stormy sea. Struggling is sure to end in disaster. You remain calm and cool. You do not struggle negatively. You are positive. You have a plan and you put that plan into operation. Just as a general in battle makes his plans beforehand, as an inventor or scientist makes his plans beforehand, so do you. Here is your plan, one given by the Buddha:

This practice has been given by the Buddha in the Vitakka-Saṅṭhāna Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya. [1] It consists in taking one's mind from the evil thought to an associated thought which is not evil. The modern psychologists call it "sublimation." If that is not successful there is a second step, the consideration of the wretchedness of such evil thoughts. Then, if the thoughts are not by this means driven away there is a third step, the turning of the mind away to other thoughts that are not associated at all with the evil thoughts, but are thoughts good in themselves. If they

still persist, the thoughts may be lessened by degrees, by taking thought that they may be made less violent: “Just as a man running swiftly might say to himself, “But what am I going so hurriedly for? How if I were to go more gently ...?” and thus as a man might slow down from more vigorous postures until he has finally stopped, then sat, then lain down, so evil, unbeneficial thoughts that arise may be gradually slowed down if other methods of banishing such thoughts fail altogether.”

“But if,” said the Omniscient Buddha, “O disciples, bringing these considerations to subsidence by degrees, evil unbeneficial considerations connected with Desire and Hate and Delusion should still persist in arising, then with teeth clenched and tongue pressed against palate, the monk by main force must constrain his mind and coerce it; and thus with clenched teeth and taut tongue, constraining and coercing his mind, those evil, unbeneficial considerations will disappear and go to decay; and with their disappearance, the mind of the disciple within him will become settled, subdued, unified, concentrated.”

Then there is the positive practice of mettā-bhāvanā. This is an actual, intense, creative force which is a protecting tenderness that vibrates long after it is sent forth. It is a sort of mental electrical impulse.

This is a Buddhist practice laid down by the Buddha in very many of his sermons as something that can be done by both laymen and bhikkhus alike.

While its practice, which can be undertaken for a few minutes each night and morning by anyone at all, has the effect of “loosening the heart,” improving the health, guarding against the worries and ulcers of modern men, improving the concentration and mental ability generally, this practice is not laid down for those reasons of self.

The force released, depending on its increasing purity and intensity, is able to build a new world, to change oneself and to change others for the better and to bring peace, tranquillity and calm happiness to a distracted universe. The practice is a positive radiation of loving-kindness to every being, whether insect or reptile or bird or animal or man or ghost or demon; to those who are unfriendly to us and attack us as well as to those who are friendly to us and help us.

The practice is as follows:

The person who practises prepares himself by putting away, taking out of the mind, all thoughts of temper, enmity, envy, grudging, cunning and other evil thoughts. He takes up a suitable sitting position, comfortable but not too relaxed, keeping the body erect and the intelligence alert and intent. Then

putting away the canker of ill-will, he abides with heart free from enmity, benevolent and compassionate towards every living thing, and purifies his mind of malevolence. Putting away sloth and torpor, he abides clear of both; conscious of light, mindful and self-possessed, he purifies his mind of sloth and torpor. Putting away flurry and worry, he abides free from excitement; with heart serene within, he purifies his mind of flurry and worry. Putting away doubt, he abides as one who has passed beyond perplexity; no longer in suspense as to what is good, he purifies his mind of doubt.

He, having put away these Five Hindrances, and to weaken by insight the strength of the things that defile the heart, abides letting his mind, fraught with loving-kindness, pervade one quarter of the world, that in front of him, and so too, the second quarter, to his right, and so the third, behind him, and so the fourth, to his left. Then he so pervades all below him and lastly all above him. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around and everywhere, and altogether does he continue to pervade with love-burdened thought, abounding, sublime, and beyond measure, free from hatred and ill-will. Then he lets his mind, fraught with compassion, pervade the world, and he lets his mind, fraught with sympathetic joy in the achievement of others, pervade the world. And he lets

his mind, fraught with equanimity, pervade one quarter of the world, and so the second quarter and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world—above, below, around and everywhere, and altogether—does he continue to pervade with heart fraught with equanimity, abounding, sublime, and beyond measure, free from hatred and ill-will.

This practice will help to change the world and it will certainly help to change you and help you to know yourself, but it is only the beginning; just as in climbing a high mountain, the more easy ascent of the foothills takes you part of the way and fits you better for the steep climb before you.

The real ascent now begins.

Just as in climbing a high mountain, difficulties and dangers may be met and only a brave and resolute man can complete his task, so also in this practice. One may meet obstacles and seem at times to be losing ground, but the determined man is not defeated, he begins again and again with confidence that as the way has been followed by others, he, too, can follow it if he summons up all his energies and turns temporary defeat into future victory. Even his defeats, since they have been preceded by struggles, have firmed his muscles and his mind for the next assault, if he realizes it.

In mountaineering, just as a capable and experienced guide is necessary; so is it necessary in following this Path to have a capable and experienced guide who has himself trodden the path, who knows the surest trails and how to avoid the dangers.

If you have practised all that has been mentioned above, you are better in morals and more poised and intelligent already. You are like a man who has climbed above the malarial swamps and jungle to higher and healthier ground. You have accomplished a great thing and you are all the better for it in every way, but still you have not found the "Self," and still you are not entirely out of danger. You are more ready for the great adventure, but it is at this point that many stop. They have gained something with no very great effort and what lies ahead is to be gained only by the expenditure of a great deal of effort.

The ascent to the heights, to complete freedom, to complete liberation, to the position where one can help others is by that Right Concentration taught in the Noble Eightfold Path.

The method at first sounds very simple, and you may think it is easier than it is in reality. Later, when you find it difficult you may think it is harder than it is in reality. We have to try to avoid both feelings of elation and feelings of depression and go ahead with the

practice.

Try this exercise first. Think of some one thing, perhaps a book in front of you. Think just of the idea of the book, not all about its size and colour, just of the idea "book." Keep your mind on this idea and do not let any other idea enter your mind. After a minute you will find that you are no longer thinking of the book, you have probably thought of twenty or even a hundred other things. The mind is not under your control, is it? The reason is that although you have had some practice in concentration, more than the ordinary individual if you are a real student, your mind is far from being a fully concentrated mind.

In the special practice you have to take a subject for concentration and practise holding it in the mind with just bare attention. That means that you are to keep your mind on that particular subject and not let the mind wander. You do not think about the subject but actually of the subject. Naturally your mind will wander. The Buddha said that it was like a wild calf that was caught in the jungle and tied to a post. The calf struggles to get free and wanders as far as it can. But if it is tied firmly to the post it will be brought back every time and finally will lie down quietly. The calf is like the mind, the rope is attention or mindfulness and the post is the subject of concentration you have chosen. If without flurry and

worry you bring your mind back every time to the subject of concentration, gradually you will discipline the mind and you will be your own master.

The Omniscient Buddha gave forty different subjects of concentration, some suitable for certain types of men and others suitable for others, while some are suitable for any kind of man, for the dull as well as for the bright, for the irritable as well as for the calm.

This is often called “Meditation” and in our thinking and speaking and writing, we must always remember that a word may mean different things to different people. “Meditation” means to some people, “reflecting upon, thinking about and pondering, i.e. weighing in the mind.” To others it means “observing with alertness.” Our concentration practice is something more than this, it is exactly the opposite of “pondering”; it is keeping the attention strictly on the subject and holding the attention there so that the mind does not wander.

Here we shall not discuss the forty subjects of concentration but shall mention only one that is suitable to all persons. That is concentration on in-breathing and out-breathing. This calms the body and the mind, by regular breathing, and focuses the mind-power just as a magnifying-glass can focus the rays of the sun so that they are gathered into one point where

they are then strong enough to set fire to paper or leaves.

The state of mind is then exactly the opposite of hypnosis. In hypnotism, part of the mind is lulled to sleep, leaving another part free to work. Sometimes, especially in the case of a mind that is fighting against itself, this makes the free part of the mind stronger, and in the absence of opposition, better able to do its work. Indeed the part of the mind, since it is not fighting against itself, can do exceedingly more than the whole mind if that whole mind is disunited.

Nevertheless there is still only a portion of the mind at work when a person is hypnotised. On the other hand, in the practice of Buddhist concentration the whole mind is awake, aware, alert and working in unity, once it has gained the mastery that is given by this practice.

The practice can be very dangerous if one attempts it with an impure mind. Virtue is the necessary beginning of the practice. The highest virtue is not just the repeating of precepts nor even the keeping of precepts. It is the mental attitude of an absence of greed, of a mind full of loving-kindness and of alertness and knowledge.

Concentration to the point of clear insight is the peak of Buddhist endeavour and sets Buddhism apart from

all other Teachings. If you learn more about Buddhist concentration and practise it, you will really know yourself.

You will know yourself and you will master yourself, if you persist and if you have a wise guide.

This is the greatest adventure that you can imagine. It is also the most interesting adventure that you can think of. You are, to yourself, the most important being in the whole universe. Yet you do not know who or what you are in reality. In finding out the fact, you will find out the truth about the world and the beginning of the world and the end of the world. You will win serene and unshakable happiness if you succeed.

No one can carry you on the adventure. "You yourself must make the effort, even Buddhas only point out the way."

As the Buddha said with his last breath, "Decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your own salvation with diligence."

It is possible that you may live to a great age or die in middle age or die tonight, but die, some day, you must. If you die while on the great adventure, the supreme quest, it is certain that the new being which will arise because of you, will be happier and stronger. If you reach the end of your adventure before you die,

then you will have attained “the deathless” and there will be no more death for you.

Notes

1. *The Removal of Distracting Thoughts* (Vitakka-Sañḥāna Sutta) transl. by Soma Thera. The Wheel No. 21, B.P.S. [[Back](#)]

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