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# Buddhist Broadcast Talks

*V. F. Gunaratna*

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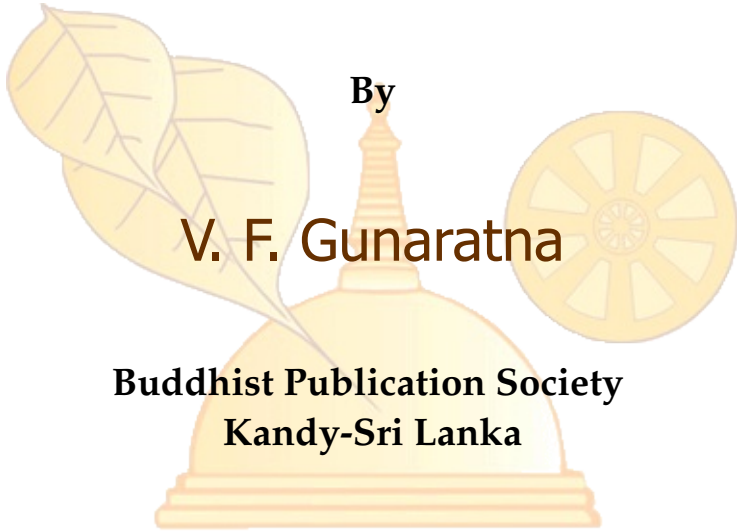

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# Mettā or Universal Love

Friends,

am happy to be able to inaugurate this new series of radio talks entitled "Thoughts of Mettā." I am happy to take this opportunity to speak to you on one of the grandest and noblest qualities that man can ever possess, namely, the quality of *mettā* or universal love. What is mettā? It is love in its purest, highest and widest sense. It transcends the limits of ordinary love which is selfish. It is a sublime attitude of perfect benevolence and utter compassion towards all without a trace of selfishness. It is to be directed not to a select few but to all. Hence the English rendering for mettā is universal love. One must radiate mettā at all times and under all circumstances to all beings, friend or foe, known or unknown. It must extend even to those who are ill-disposed to us. Yes, it must extend even to our bitterest enemies who are openly working against us. If it is confined only to those who are well-disposed to us, it is not mettā. If it is confined to human beings only, it is not mettā. It must extend to every manner of being in whom that mysterious thing called life is pulsating. Yes, it must extend to the stray dog in the street, to the fierce animals that roam the forest and even to the meanest worm that

crawls the earth.

For these very reasons mettā has a wonderful refining influence, a wonderful uplifting influence on the mind of the person practising mettā, not to speak of the soothing calm and sublime tranquillity engendered by this attitude of mind once it becomes habitual. Friends, depend upon it, mettā is the best attitude of all attitudes of others towards us, towards the friendly attitude as well as the hostile attitude of others, towards the tolerant attitude as well as the intolerant attitude of others. To start the day with a mind radiating with mettā is to equip ourselves with the best frame of mind to face the various situations desirable or undesirable, pleasant or unpleasant, that may present themselves to us during the course of the day. Indeed with mettā looming large in our minds we are best prepared and best fortified for the battle of life.

Mettā, like any other quality of mind, increases with systematic and regular practise. Hence while mettā continues to fashion our general attitude of mind we cannot ignore the regular and systematic practise of radiating thought-currents of mettā each day at some particular time. For this purpose there must be a set place and a set time each day, and when that time arrives one should put aside everything else and engage himself in the practise of radiating thought-currents of mettā to all and sundry for a short while. Even ten minutes is enough if the practise is carried out fully and intensely.

Early morning immediately on awaking is the most convenient time to most of us. It can with profit be repeated at night also before retiring to sleep. It may be asked why this practise of mettā is so highly spoken of and so strongly recommended. What makes it so great and important? In the first place this concentration of thought-currents of mettā on all beings at a fixed time each day, if undertaken with sufficient enthusiasm and seriousness, will uplift you to a sublime and lofty plane of thought. It dispels all low and mean attitudes of mind towards others with whom you come into contact each day. Gradually, all thoughts of anger, hatred and jealousy will leave you, and your mind will be imbued with strong feelings of purest love and utter compassion towards all with whom you come into contact.

As you progress further in this practise, this strong feeling of purest love and utter compassion will be felt by you towards all beings known and unknown, beings with whom you have come into contact as well as those with whom you have not come into contact. Mettā thus practised will sooner or later give you not merely a sense of great calm and tranquillity, it will also give you that most sublime feeling of being at peace with every one—at peace with the whole world. This is a deep spiritual experience known as Samatha and having attained this, higher spiritual progress is available to you.

Another aspect of mettā should now be considered. The element of compassion in the man of mettā will enable him easily to do something which others cannot always do with

the same ease, namely, to rejoice at another's joy and grieve at another's grief. The man of mettā by reason of his boundless compassion is able to appreciate the other man's point of view. He can also readily see and appreciate the good points in a bad man. Mettā is known to have succeeded in subduing the hardest of hearts.

The language of mettā is sweet, pleasing to the ear and goes direct to the heart. It is the language of kindly expression. When a man of mettā finds fault with a wrong-doer this language of kindly expression is used. It leaves no sting behind and provokes no resentment. On the other hand when a wrong-doer is angrily and harshly reprimanded, the wrong-doer adverts not to the wrong he has committed but to the angry manner in which he had been spoken to and this rankles in his mind. His wrongful tendency is not cured, not corrected. At the most it is only stemmed and temporarily driven underground.

Mettā is so important that it is one of the ten pāramitās or perfections that have to be developed in order to enable us to reach the state of Buddhahood. Mettā along with three other kindred qualities are collectively referred to as Brahma Vihara, which literally means living with Brahma, that is to say, living a divine life. In short, mettā opens up a path to the divine heights.

Let us now see how vividly the Buddha in the Karaṇīya-Metta Sutta describes how mettā should be radiated: "Even as a mother at the risk of her life would protect her son, her

only son, so let one cultivate towards all beings this boundless love. Let one radiate with a full heart this loving mettā towards all the world, without hindrance, free from all hatred or unfriendliness—above, below, and in all directions. While standing, walking, sitting or reclining—so long as one is awake—let one maintain this attitude of mindfulness which is spoken of as the Highest Living, or the Divine Living."

I will now conclude with an enumeration of the eleven, beneficial effects of the practise of mettā as mentioned in the Mettānisaṃsa Sutta:

"Happily he sleeps. Happily he awakes. He sees no evil dreams. He is dear to human beings. He is dear to non-human beings. Fire, poison, and weapons do not touch him. He is able to gain concentration of mind quickly. His countenance is serene. He dies composed in mind. He attains to Arahantship immediately after death, or if this is not possible, he is reborn in the Brahma heaven happily as though he awoke from sleep."

# Power of Thought

Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to be able to speak to you this morning on the important subject of the power of thought.

We are astonished at all the wonderful machinery of this modern scientific age whereby human labour is saved, time is economised and distance is shattered. Yet, we are not astonished at the much more powerful machinery—the machinery of the human mind. Do remember that it is the human mind with its power of thinking that is responsible for planning and creating all the machinery in this world. There was no divine assistance received by man for this purpose. No god came down from the heavens to instruct him. All this wonderful machinery and other wonderful inventions were anticipated, created and fashioned by little man, unaided and alone. It will thus be clearly seen how great and powerful is the human mind.

Sages and saints, philosophers and scientists have with one accord expressed the view that man's capacity for mental effort is unlimited. Both the psychologist and the physiologist alike maintain that the greater the mental effort exercised, the greater is the number of cells that arise in the

brain in order to cope with the extra activity undertaken. Such is the power generated by the mind to enable man to perform a stupendous task. This is thought-power. It lies hidden within the human mind. It has to be aroused and developed in order to be made use of. But for this latent thought-power, one cannot understand how a certain Yogi in India in 1936, after having been buried alive in a sealed tomb made of stone in the presence of a large gathering, was found still to be alive when he was taken out of the tomb after a lapse of 40 days. Doctors had examined him before the burial as well as after the exhumation. There was no divine intervention here, but by dint of sheer concentration of thought-power this Yogi was able to succeed in his determination to control his breath and the movements of his heart for 40 days. It must not however be supposed that the ability to perform this achievement or the ability to perform similar achievements by others was obtained over night all of a sudden. Nothing short of a long, personal course of training in concentration and meditation can succeed in awakening this latent thought-power.

This latent thought-power can be utilised not merely to perform miracles by obtaining mastery over the forces of nature, but also to achieve spiritual perfection by obtaining mastery over the forces of evil. It is only recently that scientists and psychologists began to assert that thought-power is one of the greatest forces in the universe. But do you know that this view was anticipated by the Buddha over 2500 years ago when in the very first stanza of the

Dhammapada it was stated—"Mind is the forerunner of all states and conditions, mind is supreme, mind-born is everything"?

In that one line, the Buddha has said much. What are the implications involved? Everything first arises in the mind, in the world of thought, before it enters the world of reality: Hence it is that everything is said to be mind-born. Thought always precedes actions. A house with its size and shape first exists in the mind of the architect before it exists in the outer world. To proceed to a more complex illustration, a war between two countries first takes its rise in the minds of war-minded statesmen and others who are at the helm of affairs in the two countries concerned, before a real war commences in the outer world. A powerful thought of one man can easily influence so many others. Hence has the Buddha said in the Saṃyutta Nikāya — "Thought rules the world. By thought the world is led. Thought it is above all other things, that, brings everything within its sway." Actions are always the results of some prior thoughts—immediately prior or remotely prior. Sometimes a thought results in immediate action, sometimes it is the cumulative effect of several similar thoughts repeated from time to time. In either case, action is the undoubted result of thought.

Thought is so powerful, so important, that sometimes thought alone unaccompanied by any resultant action can exert a great influence and lead to startling results. Consider the story of the youth Mattakuṇḍali mentioned in the

Dhammapada Commentary. He was seriously ill and was lying on his sick-bed when he saw the Buddha. He was immensely pleased with the appearance of the Buddha and wished very earnestly to worship him. But he was too weak to rise up or even to raise his hands in an act of worship. He then worshipped him mentally. It was a mental worship that he performed. Shortly thereafter he died, but this mental worship was powerful enough to cause his rebirth in a good state of existence.

When we say that thought is power, we must also understand that it is power either for good or bad. It is like fire. It can help us. It can also harm us. It all depends on the nature of thought we entertain. Great as is the influence of the body over the mind, the influence of the mind over the body is immeasurably greater—and why? It is because of the predominating power of thought. Hence wholesome thoughts make for good health while unwholesome thoughts make for bad health. Otherwise there is no reason why doctors require that patients should be kept in good cheer. Worry and disappointment have a debilitating influence on the human system. Anger is a poison, not metaphorically only, but actually as well. This was once effectively demonstrated by an experiment carried out at the science laboratory of Duke University in America. It is now known that thoughts of anger and hatred can cause indigestion, make the blood impure, quicken the clotting of blood and in extreme cases can induce high-blood pressure. To the woman Rohiṇī who was suffering from a skin

disease the Buddha remarked—"Do you know what is the cause of your skin-disease—it is anger." On the other hand, thoughts of mettā or universal love generate in the human system valuable chemical compounds which stimulate the cells of the body to produce energy.

Mettā thus has a tonic effect on the human system. The Mettānisaṃsa Sutta mentions as many as eleven beneficial effects according to one who habitually practises mettā: "He sleeps happily. He awakes happily. He is not disturbed by evil dreams. He becomes dear to human beings. He becomes dear to non-human beings. The gods protect him. Fire, poison and weapons cannot touch him. He gains concentration quickly. His countenance is serene. At the moment of death he is not confused or confounded but dies in peace. Furthermore, if he does not attain to Arahatship he will at least be reborn in the Brahma world." It is thus left to us by the type of thought we entertain, to improve our physical well-being or weaken it, and also to enable ourselves or degrade ourselves.

We now see very clearly that thought is power. Thought undoubtedly is energy, and as such it is indestructible. Thought also cannot contain itself. It must sooner or later express itself in action, and if the thought is exceptionally strong by reason of habitual repetition, it can burst into action—action which the thinker himself is thereafter powerless to check. This is why psychologists say that thought is not static but dynamic. When we know that thought is a power for good or bad depending upon the

good or bad nature of the thought we entertain, there is one obvious valuable lesson which we must learn. We must be extremely careful of the type of thought we entertain, because the type of thought we entertain determines the type of action we perform, and the type of action we perform determines the type of character that is formed. Evil cannot be easily checked at the action-stage. It is more easily checked at the thought-stage because we are, then, tackling the problem at its root. You have heard the maxim —"Take care of the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves." We might in the same strain say—"Take care of your thoughts and your actions will take care of themselves." A thought once entertained tends to reproduce itself, and if the reproduced thought is again entertained without any discrimination as to whether it is a wholesome thought or unwholesome thought, the stage will sooner or later arise when this thought will be a habitual thought which will be automatically entertained. It will be an ever present thought, difficult to resist, looming large in your mind dominating it, and engrossing it. If the thought in question is an evil thought, an unwelcome thought, just consider how freely and easily evil actions will result from it, and these evil actions you are powerless to resist. Friends, do you not then realise how careful we should be at the first appearance of an evil thought? But do we take that care? How often during the day, do not unwholesome and evil thoughts appear and disappear without our having made the slightest effort to discourage such thoughts the moment

they appear.

Perhaps on a Poya (= *uposatha*) day when we are observing the eight precepts we may make some attempt to control our minds and resist the appearance of evil thoughts. But surely, need we wait for a Poya day or any auspicious day to be selective about the type of thoughts we should entertain? In the Majjhima Nikāya the Buddha has emphatically declared that to the good man every moment is an auspicious moment and every day is Poya day. In our day-to-day life there is ample scope and opportunity to check the arising of unwholesome thoughts and to induce the arising of wholesome thoughts. Do we make use of these opportunities? Do we so much as regard these as opportunities? The telephone rings while we are engrossed in some urgent work. We rush to the telephone only to find that a wrong number has been rung up. We are upset. What does that mean? It means that an unwholesome thought, a thought of resentment or irritation has arisen in our mind. Is this not a fit opportunity to warn ourselves not to yield to this unwholesome thought? Is this not an opportunity to induce the wholesome thoughts of patience and forbearance? Do we even regard this as an opportunity?

We are driving a car at an excessive speed since we are bent on an urgent errand for which we are already late. At the first junction the traffic signals show a red light. We apply our brakes and halt the car as we have to. But do we apply our mental brakes and halt the bitter thoughts of impatience and anger that are surging within our mind when our

urgent trip is delayed for just two minutes which however to our impatient mind seem like two hours? There is no red danger signal here to warn us of the consequences of anger and impatience. But once we know that anger and impatience are poisons which are injurious to our mental and physical wellbeing, is not the knowledge a sufficient danger signal to us? Some may say that these are trifling matters and what the mind must be guarded against are far more serious types of evil thought. This however is not the Buddha-view. Buddha once stressed the necessity of guarding and protecting ourselves, and mentioning the various ways how this can be done referred thus to one particular way—namely "*anumattesu vajjesu bhayadassāvī*" — which means "seeing danger in the minutest faults." Surely this is a sufficient danger signal.

I trust enough has been said to make us appreciate the power of thought and to make us realise the necessity of habitually entertaining good and wholesome thoughts.

# Buddhist Mindfulness

Friends,

I propose to speak to you today on Buddhist mindfulness. We all know in a general way what mindfulness is. We all know that the practise of mindfulness makes us more and more alert, more and more precise and more and more careful in whatever we say or do. We also know that the absence of mindfulness results in the occurrence of these unfortunate lapses and slips, these accidental errors and emissions which form a fairly frequent disturbing feature in life. Is there no cure for this? Has no one prescribed a remedy for this? No doubt, in the recorded sayings of sages and philosophers of old, as well as in the books of modern psychologists, mindfulness is emphasised, mindfulness is eulogised, mindfulness is strongly recommended as a quality of mind which makes for efficiency in everything, but there is no special technique prescribed by them for the practise and development of this very desirable quality of mind.

It is just here that the difference is seen between mindfulness in general and mindfulness in the Buddhist sense. Nowhere in the whole wide field of the world's

literature, do we find mindfulness treated as a special subject of mental exercise, treated as a profound process of mental culture, enriched with a special technique and loaded with a wealth of detailed instructions as in Buddhism. All this could be found in the Buddha's discourse entitled "Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta." Satipaṭṭhāna means "establishment of mindfulness." This is Buddhist mindfulness and let us now learn something about this type of mindfulness.

There are numerous things about which one can be mindful. In other words, the objects of mindfulness are numerous, but in this discourse the objects of mindfulness are brought within four categories:

1. mindfulness of body and bodily movement.
2. mindfulness of sensations.
3. mindfulness of thoughts.
4. mindfulness of Dhamma.

There are many sub-divisions within this first category of mindfulness. For lack of time, we shall confine ourselves to one particular sub-division only, namely, mindfulness of Breath. It is called Ānāpānasati which literally means "mindfulness of breathing in and breathing out." The trainee in mindfulness begins this practise by adopting the prescribed posture and then taking in a breath slowly and calmly. As he thus breathes in slowly and calmly, he must train himself to be aware that breath is coming in. Then he

slowly and calmly breathes out, and as he thus breathes out, he must train himself to be aware that breath is going out. Then gradually he becomes fully concentrated on the breath, its rise and its fall and nothing else. The first effect of the continued practise of awareness of the rise and fall of breath, will be that the trainee develops a wonderful tranquillity and calm within himself, at first experienced during the moments of practise only, but later it is present right through the day. The practise of this type of mindfulness is specially beneficial to all of us in this hectic modern age with its countless factors which combine to create an atmosphere of rush and tension attended by a continual din and disturbance which robs us of that calm and quiet so necessary for our mental well-being.

The second type of mindfulness is mindfulness of sensations. Sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent, and they arise through the five senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. Here the trainee should not identify himself with his sensations but must regard them objectively and not subjectively. He must concentrate on the sensation and the sensation only and not on the effect on himself. Continued mindfulness on sensations as they arise and as they pass off will make him realise that sensations come and sooner or later they go. He will vividly realise the rise and fall of sensations in him. The continued realisation of the rise and fall of sensations combined with the objective way of considering them without identifying himself with them, will have the wonderful effect of making the trainee

less sensitive to sensations of pain and pleasure while he is engaged in such practise. This is especially useful to those suffering from chronic aches and pains of a serious nature, for such persons can by this method reduce these painful effects, instead of resorting to sedatives, tranquillisers and other pain-killing drugs which often have their after-effects.

The third type of mindfulness is mindfulness of thoughts. Here too, the trainee in mindfulness must not identify himself with his thoughts. He must consider them objectively and not subjectively. He must stand outside himself as it were, and calmly, dispassionately and impartially watch the play of thoughts on his mind. He should watch the play of thoughts as if the play is on something external to him and not on his own mind. Then only can he see more of this play of thoughts just as a spectator sees more of a game than a player who is engaged and involved in the game itself. This is what is meant by saying that the trainee should look at his thoughts objectively. If he looks at them subjectively and identifies himself with his thoughts, then a link is established between himself and the thoughts. In view of this affinity the trainee loses the power to view his thoughts impartially. His view is coloured by the colour of these thoughts. The continued practise of this type of mindfulness increases the trainee's power of self-control, and as a result he will not rashly rush headlong into action under the influence of an incoming thought however powerful it may be. He is able to assess the desirability or undesirability of a thought that enters his

mind. No thought can enter his mind without his being keenly aware of it, but if somehow there happens to be a sly entry of an undesirable thought, sooner or later the watch-dog of mindfulness will bark at the unwelcome visitor and arouse the attention of the trainee. Gradually there will arise to the trainee a vivid awareness of the rise and fall of thoughts.

We now come to the last type of mindfulness, mindfulness of dhammas. Dhamma here does not mean the doctrine itself but the many and various items of the Dhamma. Several examples of these items are given in the sermon itself such as the five mental hindrances and the Four Noble Truths. The trainee must learn to recognise and be mindful of these items whenever they become relevant to his life. Whenever a situation occurs in respect of which one or other of these items of the Dhamma appear to be applicable, the trainee must be mindful of such an item and its applicability to the situation in question. In this way so many items of the Dhamma can each day be brought into contact with his life at many points. Then the patterns of the Dhamma gradually get absorbed into the thought-world of the trainee. The important result is that there will arise an awareness or mindfulness of the Dhamma growing within him as distinguished from an intellectual knowledge of the Dhamma. This is of immeasurable help to him to lead the Dhamma-life.

In respect of each of the four practises of mindfulness with which we have dealt, we have also referred to the

advantages that accrue to the trainee. But, friends, these are not the advantages the Buddha had in view when he preached the Sermon on mindfulness. The advantages so far referred to are just by-products of the system, the main purpose of which according to the Buddha is to help the trainee to attain to Nibbāna.

Thus, in the case of the practise of mindfulness of breath, as the awareness of the rise and fall of the breath becomes more and more vivid, the trainee with equal vividness will develop the awareness of the rise and fall of all beings and all things. This is a deep spiritual experience in a higher plane of consciousness. To him Nibbāna is near. In the case of the practise of mindfulness of Sensations the same deep spiritual experience comes since the awareness of the rise and fall of sensations leads to the awareness of the rise and fall of all beings and all things. In the case of the practise of mindfulness of thoughts the same deep spiritual experience comes, since the awareness of the rise and fall of thoughts leads to the awareness of the rise and fall of all beings and all things. Lastly in the case of the practise of mindfulness of Dhamma, here too the same deep spiritual experience comes with the continued awareness of the vitality of the Dhamma growing within the mind of the trainee.

In a moving peroration the Buddha concludes his sermon on mindfulness with the assurance that if a trainee practises fully the four types of mindfulness the state of Anāgāmi or Arahat can be reached in seven years. In the very next sentence he says, “No, O bhikkhus, leave aside seven years.

Six years will suffice." The successive sentences one by one bring down the period to six years—five years—four years etc. and the last sentence brings it down to seven days. It will thus be seen that what matters is not so much the length of time as the intensity of the practise. Let us also commence this great and powerful practise if we have not already done so.

# Message of the Dhammapada

Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to inaugurate this new series of Radio talks entitled "Message of the Dhammapada." Before I deal with the contents of the Dhammapada, I would wish to dwell a little on the Dhammapada in general.

The literature of the world abounds in garlands of verses or anthologies as they are called, some of which are read and re-read for the pleasure they yield. I venture to think that in the entire field of the world's literature, there is no anthology so rich with beauty of expression happily blending with beauty of thought, so fascinating with its terse eloquence, so instructive with its practical wisdom, so universal in its appeal, so inspiring, so elevating as the Dhammapada which is the oldest anthology in the world.

The Dhammapada is a collection of 423 beautiful stanzas and forms part of the Khuddaka-Nikāya which as you may perhaps be aware is one of the divisions of the Tipiṭaka.

How fascinating these Pali stanzas must have been to foreign scholars can be gauged from the fact which is not widely known, that long, long before they had been translated into Sinhalese, they had found their way into

several languages of the West. As far back as 1855, these exquisite stanzas had been translated into Latin by Fausböll and a second edition of this translation appeared within five years of the first. In 1860 Professor Albrecht Weber published a German version in an Orientalist journal, which was the first translation of the Dhammapada into a living Western language, in 1870, Professor Max Muller translated it into English and it was included in the 10th Volume of the series entitled *Sacred Books of the East.* It ran into two editions within seven years.

In 1893, K. E. Neumann translated the Dhammapada into German verse. The original Pali text was published by the Pali Text Society in 1914 and F. L. Woodward's translation into English verse appeared in 1921. These and other translations of the Dhammapada by both Eastern and Western scholars would seem to indicate in what high esteem the book had been held by scholars of Buddhism.

It was not only in the past that the Dhammapada attracted the attention of translators. Coming to recent times we have in 1936 a revised version of Professor Max Muller's translation by Professor Irving Babbit of the Harvard University, and one to the credit of the Venerable Nārada Mahā Thera. It must be mentioned that he was the first in Ceylon to come out with an accurate English prose translation of the Dhammapada. That was in 1940. The latest translation is by Professor Radhakrishnan (1950) who in his preface says that the Dhammapada has an appeal to the modern world because its central theme is that "human

conduct, righteous behaviour, reflection and meditation are more important than vain speculation about the transcendent."

It is encouraging to find that today in Ceylon the value of the Dhammapada is being increasingly appreciated. Series of sermons on its various stanzas are frequently arranged, books are published containing an abridged account of the Dhammapada Commentary both in English and in Sinhalese, and a well-known Buddhist Society is conducting annual "Dhammapada examinations" and awarding prizes in order to encourage the Buddhist youth of this country in the study of the Dhammapada.

Foreign scholars of Buddhism are of opinion (an opinion not shared by local scholars) that not all the verses of the Dhammapada could be attributed to the Buddha. Nevertheless they are all of the view that even if some of the verses do not reproduce the very words of the Buddha, they correctly reflect the true spirit of his teaching.

To a world such as we find ourselves in today, a world lacking in the fundamentals of sane living, a world lacking in right perspective and balanced judgement, a world intoxicated with a passion for power, for money, for the gratification of the senses, what is more important is not the origin of the Dhammapada but the message of the Dhammapada, for its value lies in its rich contents. Containing as it does, the concentrated essence of Buddhist ideals and principles, it is a book of wisdom for all times

and all persons. The wisdom of the Tipiṭaka is crystallised into these 423 stanzas each of which is a sermon in itself. It is a book which speaks not to one man or one country, but to humanity throughout the ages. Indeed its appeal is universal. The Dhammapada is a gospel with a timeless message. It is a message of hope and good cheer to the dejected and sorrow-stricken, a message of wisdom to the ignorant, a message of caution to the unwary, a message of gentle reproach and sympathetic guidance to the sinner and a message of appreciation and encouragement to those who are already treading the correct path. While pointing out the dangers of an indolent irreligious life, it holds before us a clear prospect and a bright picture of the beauty and grandeur of the spiritual life.

Of course, to enjoy the Dhammapada to its fullest, one must read it in its original mellifluous Pali, the glorious beauty of which some translators have failed fully to capture.

As an example of the terse elegance for which the Dhammapada is famed, I would refer you to the 360th and 361st stanzas which have a special appeal and a special beauty of their own. It is said that the constant conscious and deliberate repetition of any word or words connoting any quality of mind helps us considerably to imbibe that quality. In like manner, it will be observed by any one who cares to do so, that the constant repetition of these two stanzas—with understanding of course—produces a very composing effect on the mind, for these stanzas deal with composure and the beauty and power of restraint in all

aspects and directions. In simple straightforward language they express a plain truth namely that restraint of the eye is *sādhu* (i.e., good), that restraint of the ear is *sādhu* (i.e., good) etc., and the sound of the words expressing this idea carries with it the very suggestion of composure. Repeat these stanzas a number of times with deliberate and conscious articulation and you will see the effect for yourselves:

*Cakkhunā saṃvaro sādhu, sādhu sotena saṃvaro*
*Ghānena saṃvaro sādhu, sādhu jivhāya saṃvaro*
*Kāyena saṃvaro sādhu, sādhu vācāya saṃvaro*
*Manasa saṃvaro sādhu, sādhu sabbattha saṃvaro*
*Sabbattha saṃvuto bhikkhu, sabba dukkha pamuccati.*

Good is restraint in eye—good is restraint in ear,
Good is restraint in nose—good is restraint in tongue,
Good is restraint in body—good is restraint in speech,
Good is restraint in mind—good is restraint in everything,
The monk restrained in everything is from every sorrow freed.

For a message of sturdy self-reliance, for a message indicative of the great power within ourselves for good or for bad, for an emphatic pointer to the fact that no one in this wide world can help us or harm us so much as our own very selves, can one find anything comparable to the 165th stanza?

*Attanā va kataṃ pāpaṃ, attanā saṅkilissati*
*Attanā akataṃ pāpaṃ, attanāva visujjhati*
*Suddhi asuddhi paccattaṃ, naññho aññaṃ visodhaye.*

By oneself alone is evil done,
by oneself alone is one defiled,
By oneself alone is evil avoided,
by oneself alone is one purified,
Purity and impurity depend on oneself,
None can purify another.

The great truth that craving is at the bottom of all sorrows and fears that afflict the human mind and that if we wish to be free from sorrow and fear we should rid ourselves of craving is beautifully expressed in the 216th stanza:

*Taṇhāya jayati soko, taṇhāya jayati bhayaṃ*
*Taṇhāya vippamuttassa, natthi soko, kuto bhayaṃ.*

From craving springs grief, from craving springs fear,
For one fully freed from craving, there is no grief, whence fear?

Each stanza in the Dhammapada brings out some special remedy for some particular ill, and is a message to some particular individual, a special "prescription" designed to cure the special trouble of some one tossed about in the ocean of saṃsāra.

I cannot better conclude this talk on the message of the Dhammapada than by repeating the words of the Venerable Bhikkhu Kassapa found in his foreword to the Venerable Bhikkhu Nārada's translation of the Dhammapada:

> "If I were to name any book, from the whole Tipiṭaka, as having been of most service to me, I should without hesitation choose the Dhammapada. And it goes without saying that, to me, it is the single book in all the wide world of literature. For forty years, and more, it has been my constant companion and never failing solace in every kind of misfortune and grief. There is not a trouble that man is heir to, for which the Lord over sorrow cannot point out cause and prescribe sure remedy. One never turns in vain to these stanzas of incomparable beauty for advice, for alleviation of life's manifold pains, or for message of cheer and penetrating insight."

# For Constant Contemplation

Friends,

In the Aṅguttara Nikāya the Buddha has said that there are five subjects which should be contemplated over and over again by men and women, by laymen as well as recluses. The first subject for this constant contemplation is set out thus: “Old age can come upon me.” The Buddha has explained that most persons behave as if old age is a condition that will never come upon them: He has said that they do so through thoughtlessness and also by being obsessed with the strength and pride of youth. At least the sight of an old person weighed down with the infirmities that old age brings with it should serve as a salutary warning to them. Forewarned is forearmed. To the young, however, the reaction on the sight of an old person is the thought “It is not I,” “It is not I that am old”. The result is, that when at length old age does come upon them with its attendant infirmities, they are liable to be disillusioned and despondent; and not having made the most profitable use of their youth with its health and strength, they will now be full of remorse. It is only those who engage in the constant contemplation of the possibility of the approach of old age that will have no occasion for subsequent despondency and

remorse. This is indeed a most useful contemplation. Remember it is the sight of an old man, the sight of a sick man and the sight of a dead man that influenced the young Prince Siddhartha living in the lap of luxury to renounce the lay life for that of an ascetic in order to find a cure for these ills of life.

The second subject for constant contemplation is the thought "I am liable to disease." Disease is such a common feature in any stage of human life, often making its appearance when it is least expected, that every one, young and old alike, should realise that it can come upon him at any time however careful he may be about his health. Indeed forewarned is forearmed. A visit to any hospital should bring to mind the various diseases to which the human flesh is heir. But to the heedless man the only reaction is the thought "It is not I" "It is not I that am sick." The false comfort that such a thought yields is dispelled when sooner or later disease visits him.

Then only will he be disillusioned. The same consequences which follow the neglect of the first contemplation will also follow the neglect of this second contemplation which is just as useful as the first contemplation.

The third subject for constant contemplation is the thought "I am liable to die." Just as many persons are heedless about the possible approach of old age and disease, so also many persons are heedless about the possible approach of death. It is only the wise and cautions few, who, in the midst of the

pleasures and joys of life, are keenly aware that death is waiting round the corner, as it were, and can be expected to make its grim appearance at any moment. Most persons are not a bit concerned about the possible approach of death and in their folly they relegate death to a vague and distant future. This heedlessness is reflected in the unrestrained matter in which they lead a hectic life of gratification of the senses, planning grandiose mundane schemes for the future as if they are going to live for all time, little knowing that death can dash all their hopes to the ground and that death can put an end to their meaningless life lacking serious and useful preparation for the life beyond. "*Maraṇaṃ niyataṃ, jīvitaṃ aniyataṃ*" the Buddha has said. This means that life is uncertain while death is certain. The uncertainty of the duration of life has been compared to the position of a dew-drop on the tip of a blade of grass. Any moment the dew-drop may glide away. It is the constant contemplation of the possibility of death at any moment that gives balance to an otherwise unbalanced life, that gives meaning to an otherwise meaningless life. It is not for nothing that in the Mahāvagga division of the Saṃyutta Nikāya the Buddha has said: "Monks, the idea of death, if cultivated and made much of, conduces to great results and great profit." Death is a great leveller. The thought of death helps to dispel all thoughts of pride and vanity. It can also dispel thoughts of passion and hatred. Furthermore it energises one to perform all one's duties and do all that is needful before it is too late. Hence has the Buddha said, "*Māraṇasatim-anuyutto satataṃ*

*appamatto hoti*." This means that the constant mindfulness of death dispels delay and promotes diligence. It cannot be denied that this third subject for constant contemplation is most beneficial to man.

The fourth subject for constant contemplation is stated thus: "All things that are near and dear to me are subject to change and to separation." The heedless man living complacently when everything is going well with him, when everything that is near and dear to him continues to be so, disdains to give a thought to the possibility that conditions can change, that persons, who are near and dear to him may cease to be so and that such persons may be separated from him or may cease to live. Not thinking thus he lives on gladly, obsessed, as the Buddha remarks, with the pride of life. Not realising that the all-powerful law of change can operate at any time in regard to any person, thing or condition he holds on to, the fond delusion that he is one of Fortune's favourites. Not being forewarned he is not forearmed. It is only sudden and unexpected changes for the worse or the shock of a separation from those near and dear to him that will bring disillusion to him with sorrow and disappointment in its wake—a disillusion which never could come to one who practises this most useful contemplation.

The fifth subject for constant contemplation is set out thus: "I am the result of my own deeds, heir to my deeds. Whatever good or bad I do, I shall become heir to it." This contemplation though stated at great length is nothing more

than an affirmation of the Law of Karma. As a man sows, so shall he reap. If this idea is thoroughly ingrained in us by constant contemplation, we will not feel the sting of sorrow when losses, disappointments, failures and all other forms of adversity occur, for we will know that they are the results of our own misdeeds in the past. We will be able to accept these situations with calm resignation instead of fretting over them and making life unpleasant to ourselves and to others. When once we know that there is no god or other external power arbitrarily conferring good and bad destinies to mankind but that we are the architects of our own destiny, we are immensely comforted in the thought that this is a changeable destiny—changeable by us only—and that by the performance of good and meritorious deeds we can convert a bad destiny into a good destiny. This comforting thought will undoubtedly arise with the constant practise of this contemplation.

Friends, let us refine our lives and purify our lives by constant contemplation of these five subjects.

# Who is Near to Nibbāna

Friends,

Let us this morning ask ourselves the question "Who is near to Nibbāna?" The Buddha has answered this question in the fourth section of the Aṅguttara Nikāya where he has referred to four qualities possessed of which a bhikkhu is incapable of falling away from the religious life he has taken to and is therefore near to Nibbāna.

The first quality is perfection in sīla or virtue. He should be perfect in the practise of right conduct. He should be one who sees danger in the slightest of faults. On many an occasion the Buddha has stressed the fundamental importance of sīla and also the importance of being able to see danger in the commission of very slight faults. This perfection of sīla is the best guarantee that one is incapable of falling away from the religious life and in this sense he is near to Nibbāna.

The second quality is the ability on the part of a bhikkhu to guard well the doors of his sense-faculties. For instance, if with his eye he sees any object, his mind should not be swept away by the general features of that object, or by any details of that object. Otherwise unprofitable and

unwholesome states of mind like anger, hatred or passionate desire may arise. He should calmly and dispassionately view the object and leave it at that. This should be so in regard to all the other sense-faculties. This therefore is what is meant in the advice the Buddha gave to Bāhiya who was anxious to become an Arahat. This is the advice: "In the seen there shall be to you only the seen. In the heard there shall be to you only the heard. In the sensed (as smelt, tasted or touched) there shall be to you just the sensed. In the thought, there shall be to you just the thought." For one who is thus guarded in regard to his sense faculties, falling away from the religious life is not possible and he is therefore near to Nibbāna.

The third quality is moderation in eating. The greed to eat is incompatible with high aspirations. A bhikkhu should take his food thoughtfully and prudently, not for the mere pleasure of it nor for mere indulgence, but just enough for the maintenance of his body to enable him to lead the religious life. He does not live to eat, but he eats to live. He will therefore not be a slave of desire.

In all things he will practise moderation. To such a one falling away from the religious life is not possible and therefore Nibbāna is near to him.

The fourth quality is constant watchfulness, that is, watchfulness over the mind. During the day while walking up and down, and also when he is seated, such a bhikkhu should always have a watch over his mind and see that no

evil states arise in it. In the first watch of the night he should do the same as he did during the day. In the second watch of the night he should calmly and collectedly retire to sleep fixing his thoughts of rising up again, In the last watch of the night, that is at break of dawn, he should again commence his watchfulness as at the first watch of the night. This eternal watchfulness secures the great purpose of preventing evil and unwholesome states of mind from arising. To such a person also Nibbāna is near as there is no danger of his falling away from the religious life.

Possessed of these four qualities a bhikkhu is said to be "*nibbānassa santike*," i.e., near to Nibbāna.

# Proof of Rebirth (Talk no. 1 )

Friends,

As there are many who are more interested in the proof of rebirth than in the theory of rebirth, I propose in this talk to deal with the proof of rebirth. There are two methods by which the truth of rebirth can be ascertained. One is more or less an empirical method not connected with any science, The other can be said to be a scientific method. As it is not possible in one talk to deal with both methods, I shall in this talk deal with the first method.

It is well known that there are several cases of children who come out with recollections of what they say are their past lives. While some of them are spontaneous recollections, there are also cases where thoughts of this nature are cunningly introduced into the undeveloped child-mind by dishonest parents. As the child grows up and is questioned he will come out with the information introduced into his mind as if it was his own unaided recollection. The child is not aware of what had happened. The first task of the investigator of rebirth-allegations is to satisfy himself that they are not fabrications. This can be done by questioning the parents and other relatives and friends who say they

heard the child recalling his past. Each person should be questioned separately, each not being allowed to hear what the other says. If this is a fabricated case, a little skilful cross-examination will bring out obvious contradictions between the witnesses, and the investigator can then reject the case as being unreliable.

If, however, we regard the evidence on the whole as being satisfactory the investigator's next step is to proceed to the place of the alleged former birth. If this place is not described with sufficient accuracy or if the place is far distant and if the person whom the child alleges is his former self is an insignificant person and not a person of consequence and note, a search for the home of such a deceased person is bound to be futile and the case will have to be set aside as being unprovable. If however these difficulties are not present the search can be undertaken. The child and some reliable persons should accompany the investigator. If it is possible to trace the home and the relations of the deceased person, such relations should be questioned by the investigator following the procedure already mentioned. In this way the investigator can check on the details already mentioned by the child regarding his former self and his former home. If the majority of items in the child's recollections are correct and there are no glaring contradictions, the child's story of his former birth may be accepted as correct.

Professor Ian Stevenson, the well-known investigator of rebirth cases and Chairman of the Department of Neurology

and Psychiatry in the University of Virginia, in one of his books where he discusses the quantum of evidence needed to establish a case of rebirth has said that he is not disposed to accept as dependable if only six or seven items of the child's past recollections tally with the subsequently verified facts for such tallying may be due to chance or coincidence. Only if the number of items that tally is very much more can the case be considered as satisfactory. To use his own words, "With larger numbers of items tallying, the chances of coincidental matching or tallying between the apparent memorised and the verified facts become geometrically reduced."

An outstanding case of rebirth established in this way is the case of Shanti Devi. She was born in Delhi. From about her third year she began to refer to her former life in Muttra, a town sixty miles away from Delhi. She said that her former name was Lugdi and that she was married to a cloth merchant called Kadar Nath Chaubey. She also stated that ten days after giving birth to a male child she died. As Shanthi Devi was repeatedly making these references to her alleged former life, her parents wrote to Kadar Nath Chaubey who to their surprise answered their letter and confirmed the correctness of Shanthi Devi's references. Later he sent a relative of his to visit the girl and followed it up with his own visit which was unannounced. The girl identified both of them. Enquiries were made and it was established that she had never been out of her native Delhi.

A committee was then appointed to witness the proposed

visit of the girl to Muttra and note her reactions. On alighting at the platform of the Railway Station at Muttra, out of a large crowd of persons collected there she recognised another relation of Chaubey. When she entered the horse-carriage that was made ready for her, she was asked to give instructions to the driver. She then correctly directed the driver right up to the house of Chaubey. This house had been repainted and bore a different colour in spite of which she was able to recognise it. She was also able to identify Chaubey's old father. A number of questions were put to her before she entered the house, regarding the accommodation there, and regarding the arrangement of the furniture there, all of which she correctly answered. She also identified about 50 persons out of the large crowd that had gathered there. On going to the house of Chaubey's parents, she pointed to a corner in a particular room where she said that she had buried some money. The place was dug up but no money was found. Shanti Devi insisted that she had placed the money there. Thereupon Chaubey confirmed this to be true and confessed that after his wife's death, he had removed this money.

There are several cases like this, all of which when investigated prove the truth of rebirth. However there are obstacles which can prevent the successful investigation of alleged previous lives. I have already mentioned the possibility of fraudulent fabrications. There is also the possibility of what is known "as "racial memory" or "genetic memory" expressing itself through a child who is

unaware of it. There is what is known as the theory of "a collective unconscious" according to which, in our minds there sometimes lie hidden memories carried over from our past ancestors. The child being unaware of this source, considers them to be his own memories of the past. The nature and extent of such genetic transmission is not yet known. Then there is also the possibility that a child's recollection of a supposed past is the result of the child having acquired that knowledge through clairvoyance or telepathy and the child is therefore unaware of the source of this knowledge.

It will thus be seen that this method of investigation has its weaknesses and limitations. In my next talk I will deal with the more effective method of proving rebirth.

# Proof of Rebirth (Talk no. 2)

Friends,

On the last occasion when I spoke on the proof of rebirth, for lack of time I confined myself only to one method of proof, a method it will be remembered on account of its inherent limitations was not quite dependable and satisfactory. Today I am dealing with a second method of proof, a method which is more effective and dependable than the first method. It is not an empirical method. It is a method based on science—the science of hypnosis. Therefore some understanding of hypnosis is necessary to understand this method of proof.

It has been established beyond doubt by researches in psychology that all our thoughts, whatever they are, that arise in our conscious mind, make their impressions on the sub-conscious mind before they fade away from the conscious mind. These thoughts thus remain stored up in the sub-conscious mind of which we are not conscious. Thus when a person says he has forgotten a name or a date, it only means that such name or date is lost to his conscious mind only, but it lies hidden in his sub-conscious mind. With the aid of hypnosis it will be possible to ferret out this

forgotten name or date from his sub-conscious mind by questioning him and he will then come out with it himself. The technique adopted is to put a person into a hypnotic sleep which is quite different from normal sleep. The hypnotist then questions the hypnotised person starting from the most recent events and gradually going backwards to remote events. This is known as hypnotic regression and it is most surprising to find how the hypnotised subject while in that state of sleep when he is not conscious of anything, is able to answer questions put to him. This is the great and startling difference between hypnotic sleep and normal sleep. The fact that the conscious mind is not active when one is in a hypnotic sleep could be verified by the curious circumstance that however hard you may strike him with a rod or cut him with a knife while in that state of sleep he will not awake. He does not feel the pain. That is because he is not conscious of what is happening. His conscious mind is not working.

Often the hypnotised subject is able to come out with even the most trivial events of his remote past though lost to his conscious mind. On awaking from the hypnotic sleep he remembers nothing of what he has said, not even the fact that he was questioned. This is because in the hypnotic sleep his conscious mind is inactive and therefore he is not conscious of anything that takes place. It is only the sub-conscious mind that operates at this time. All answers are given from this sub-conscious mind that operates at this time. All answers are given from this sub-conscious mind.

Hence it is that the person who has forgotten a name or date can come out with when he is questioned while he is in the hypnotic state, for as I said before, all thoughts that fade away from the conscious mind are retained in the sub-conscious mind.

In this manner hypnotists have been able to help persons to find out anything which they have forgetfully left behind and cannot remember where it has been left. Later on, hypnosis had advanced one great step further when hypnotists found that they were able by this method of hypnotic regression to get the hypnotised person not merely to recall the past details of his present life, but also to recall the details of his previous life. It is most surprising to see how hypnotised subjects while in the hypnotic sleep are able to come out with vivid details of their previous lives, how they speak of previous parents and relatives and also of previous homes and their surroundings. These details where possible are verified by the investigator by going to the places referred to, and if what is said under hypnosis accords with what is subsequently seen by the investigator, here then are cases where rebirth has been proved by the aid of hypnosis.

This method too has its limitations. Some persons can never be put into a hypnotic sleep and sometimes the places mentioned by the hypnotised subject cannot be reached or located nor can the previous personality be identified. Nevertheless there are hundreds of cases where by the aid of hypnosis, rebirth has been successfully proved.

Speaking of proof by hypnosis, one cannot avoid referring to a book that was published in 1970 and had created a great sensation. Within seven years it had reached its tenth edition. It is entitled “Many Mansions” and its authoress is Gina Cerminara. It deals with the wonderful cures effected by one Edgar Cayce of Virginia in America. He first cured himself and thereafter cured an incredibly large number of patients. His technique was to get himself hypnotised by someone and in that state look into the previous lives of the patients, find out the root-cause of their illnesses and prescribe accordingly. On his awaking from the hypnotic state he could not remember what he did, but his prescriptions have resulted in marvellous cures. When he prescribed a cure while in the hypnotic state, someone recorded it, for on awaking he would not remember anything. These prescriptions were typed in duplicate, one was given to the patient and the other filed as a record. They are called Cayce readings, since in them the past lives of the patients are also read. There are over twenty thousand of such readings at present available for inspection at the Cayce Institute at Virginia Beach. There is one person from Ceylon who has been there and has seen these readings.

According to Cayce there is a root-cause for everything and so there is a root cause in a past life why one person should contract a particular disease while the others in his family or his next door neighbour do not. This root-cause is often an undesirable state of mind such as wickedness or jealousy

which in a subsequent life creates the very conditions necessary for that particular disease to arise. Cayce's method thus seems to have been based on hypnosis and certain other mysterious powers which all the more strongly prove the truth of rebirth.

# Chances of a Human Rebirth

Friends,

This morning let us ask ourselves in all seriousness this question—"What are our chances of being born again as human beings?" It is necessary to address ourselves to this question since a large majority of us do not seem to be concerned about this. They presume that there is no difficulty in being reborn as human beings but that the difficulty is to be reborn in a higher plane of existence such as in the deva-worlds. They take for granted that rebirth in the human world is a matter of course requiring no special effort. Those who thus complacently hold to this comfortable view would do well to hear what the Buddha had to say in this connection. On one occasion the Buddha mentioned four things as being rare and difficult of achievement and one of them is rebirth in the human world. Does this not suffice to show that entry into this human world should not be regarded in the light of a permanent passport entitling one to repeated living in the human world. Nothing short of an arduous course of righteous living can be the guarantee for a repeated entry into the human world.

How emphatic the Buddha has been on this matter can be understood when one reads what is recorded in the very last chapter (entitled Five Destinies) in the last division (Mahā Vagga) of the Saṃyutta Nikāya. Every paragraph in that last chapter records the dramatic manner in which the Buddha sought to bring home the truth of the rarity of human rebirth. The Buddha, taking up a little dust on the tip of his finger nail, addressed the bhikkhus thus: "What do you think, O bhikkhus? Which is greater, the little dust I have taken up on the tip of my finger nail, or this mighty earth?" The bhikkhus replied that the little dust taken up in the Buddha's finger nail was exceedingly small and was nothing in comparison with the mighty earth. "Just so," said the Buddha, "few, very indeed are the human beings who after death are reborn again as human beings. More numerous, much more numerous are those human beings who after death are reborn in other planes of existence as in the states of hell or as evil spirits (*pretas*) or as animals."

If rebirth in the human world is so difficult, it necessarily follows that merely living what may be described as a fairly satisfactory life and abstaining from the more heinous offences is not a sufficient guarantee for a rebirth in the human world. Most of us do not commit the more heinous offences, but this should not lull us into a false sense of security and satisfaction about our future destiny. Much less should spasmodic acts of goodness make us feel that all will be well after death. We should form definite ideals of virtuous living and every moment of our lives, in thought,

word and deed, we should work up to those ideals, incline to those ideals and look up to those ideals, despite occasional failures and disappointments. Then only can we justifiably hope for a human rebirth.

In the Mahāvagga Division of the Saṃyutta Nikāya there is recorded a conversation that took place between the Buddha and Mahānāma. Buddha was at the time staying among the Sakyans in Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park. Mahānāma was a Sakyan. He had lived a blameless life but he feared what his future destiny would be. He therefore asked the Buddha what his future destiny would be if he were to die at once. To this the Buddha's reply is worth remembering. This is what he said: "Have no fears, Mahānāma, have no fears. He whose mind has for a long time been practised in faith, in virtue, in learning, in renunciation and in insight, the mind soars aloft, the mind wins the summit. Now, your mind, Mahānāma, has long been practised in faith, virtue, learning, renunciation and insight. Have no fears, Mahānāma, have no fears. For instance, Mahānāma, if a tree bends to the east, slopes to the east, tends to the east, which way would it fall if its roots were cut?" "It would fall in the direction towards which it bends, slopes, and tends" replied Mahānāma. "Similarly," replied the Buddha, "the Aryan disciple blessed with the four qualities I have referred to, bends to Nibbāna, slopes to Nibbāna, tends to Nibbāna."

From this it is clear that if anyone forms definite ideals of virtuous living and every moment looks up to them, bends

towards them, slopes towards and tends towards them, he is bound to be reborn in states of existence where he can come closer to his ideals and ultimately realise them. His will be a progressive life here and hereafter. Only such a person need have no fears about his future life as was told to Mahānāma. He need have no fears that he would retrogress to inferior states of existence.

# The Last Utterances of the Buddha

Friends,

In this talk—the last of the series—it is fitting to consider the last utterances of the Buddha.

The Buddha must be pictured now as reclining on his death-bed, calm and self-possessed, in his characteristic "lion-pose" with his body turned to the right side and with one foot resting on the other. It will be remembered that his birth as well as his enlightenment took place not under a roof but under the open sky.

It is fitting therefore that he chose to breathe his last also under the open sky—beneath two twin sal-trees in the sal-grove at Kusināra, a small town in India. Sal flowers blooming out of season, heavenly mandara flowers and heavenly sandal-wood powder dropped down sprinkling and scattering themselves all over the body of the Buddha. Heavenly music and heavenly songs wafted from the skies. Thereupon the Buddha lying on his death-bed seized the opportunity to preach a homily to Ānanda and his other disciples who had gathered round his death-bed. Said the

Buddha: "All these incidents have taken place,, Ānanda, out of honour, respect, and veneration for the Tathāgata. But, Ānanda, it is not thus that the Tathāgata could be rightly honoured, respected and venerated. The bhikkhu or bhikkhunī, the pious devout man or woman who continually fulfils the greater and lesser duties, who is correct in life, living according to the precepts, it is he who rightly honours, respects and venerates the Tathāgata. Such an offering is the highest offering for the Tathāgata. Therefore be ye constant in the fulfilment of greater and lesser, duties, and be correct in life, living according to the precepts."

Shortly thereafter, Ānanda, his favourite disciple who attended on him with devotion was found some distance away leaning against the lintel of a door and weeping. He was weeping at the thought that his Master was passing away and was aggrieved that he was still a learner who had not as yet attained to Arahantship. He was faced with the dread situation that alone and unaided he would have to work out his own spiritual development and perfection. The Buddha sent for Ānanda and on his appearance consoled him and advised him thus:

"Do not, Ānanda, weep. Do not grieve. Have I not on former occasions explained to you that it is in the very nature of all things most near and near to us, that we must leave them, separate ourselves from them, sever ourselves from them? How then, Ānanda, can you thus grieve when anything whatsoever that is born, brought into being, and

organised contains within itself the inherent necessity of dissolution?" Having consoled him the Buddha gave him this assurance: "For a long time, Ānanda, you have been very near to me by acts of love that never varies. You have done well, Ānanda. Be earnest in effort, and you too shall soon attain to Arahantship." The Buddha thereafter addressing his other disciples extolled the virtues of Ānanda thus: "Through the long ages of the past the Buddhas also had servitors just as devoted to them as Ānanda has been to me. Ānanda knows when it is the right time for others to see me, for the brothers and sisters of the Order, or for devout men and women or for a King or King's ministers to see me."

Later, one Subhadda mentioning a number of founders of various schools of doctrine inquired from the Buddha whether they all have attained the highest wisdom or only some of them. The Buddha advised him not to worry himself about this matter as it is something which will not help him. Instead, the Buddha wanted him to realise that in whatsoever doctrine or discipline the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, there is also not be found there the possibility of becoming a true saint. Void are those doctrines—void of true saints. And then he added, "If bhikkhus lead the perfect life, the world would not he bereft of Arahants."

Addressing Ānanda, some time later, the Buddha said, "It may be, Ānanda, that in some of you the thought may arise that the word of the Master is ended and that you no more have a teacher. That is not so, Ānanda. The Dhamma and

the Vinaya that I have set forth and laid down will be the teacher to you after I am gone."

The Buddha then asked his disciples whether they had any doubts regarding the doctrine that need be cleared. They were silent. The Buddha then asked them the same question twice over remarking "Do not have to reproach yourselves afterwards with the thought that when your teacher was face to face with you, you did not bring yourselves to ask questions from him and clear your doubts." They still were silent and the Buddha knew that they had no doubts to be cleared.

The Buddha was now quickly reaching his end. Then, before breathing his last, he made this final exhortation to all his disciples. We may well regard this as applicable to all of us as well:

"Behold now, O bhikkhus, I exhort you. Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your own salvation with diligence."

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