

BUDDHISM HANDBOOK

Intermediate Level

The Buddhapadipa Temple, 14 Calonne Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 5HJ

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Editor Phrakru Samu Lom

Consultant readers Ron Maddox, Andrew Brown

Editorial coordination Patricia Barylski and Geoffrey Newman OBE

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Preface

The Buddhapadipa Temple and other Buddhist foundations have for many years offered introductory courses in Buddhism. A growing number of people who have attended these courses and gained from them have requested an intermediate course on Buddhism to deepen their knowledge and practice. This book aims to offer resources for such an intermediate course. It follows the *Curriculum of Dhamma Studies for Secondary Level* as set out by the Royal Dhamma Studies Office of Thailand. Originally published in Thai, the *Curriculum* also has an English edition, but the translation is often unclear, creating a need for other resources for an English-speaking audience. Materials from various sources have been brought together in this handbook, and useful books and websites for further reading are listed at the back.

This handbook, which is not intended to be read straight through from start to finish, can be used in various ways. For example, the Buddhist proverbs in the first part of the book could form the basis for group discussion, providing an opportunity to explore the meaning of these proverbs and the relevance they have for our everyday lives. Alternatively, they could be used for essay writing, in which several proverbs are discussed within the wider context of Buddhism. The thirty-two proverbs included here are only a small selection, and those meeting together might bring other Buddhist proverbs from internet sites or books. Buddhist proverbs might, thus, form a part of each class.

The Dhamma subjects in the second part of the book might likewise serve as a starting point for wider discussion of the Dhamma. For example, the first of these in the ‘sets of two’, the practice of mind development, might open a discussion of the two types of meditation, *samatha* and *vipassanā*: how they differ; what sort of person might be best suited to each; whether one might start with either one and proceed to the other. The experiences that people have had in their practice of meditation could form part of the discussion.

The sections of the book on ‘Life stories of the Buddha’s disciples’ and the ‘Observation of Uposatha days’ likewise lend themselves to a further and deeper exploration of Buddhism and its history as well as the practical development of self training in one’s own life. Selections from each of these might be covered at each meeting.

The resources brought together in this book include publications that are now out of print or difficult to obtain. The Buddhapadipa Temple is very grateful to those who have allowed their work to be shared. The hope is that this handbook is just a beginning – that the material collected together here will prove helpful in developing an intermediate course in Buddhism, that those who use it will benefit from it, and that it will be improved upon and expanded in the years to come.

Introduction

This handbook is intended for English speakers who want to go beyond the preliminary stages in their study of Buddhism. It is for those who are already familiar with the story of the Buddha and such key teachings as the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. It is based on the curriculum followed throughout Thailand by lay people studying Buddhism at the secondary level. Annual examinations are held in Thailand and in Thai temples outside Thailand, including the UK. This handbook can be used to study for such examinations, or simply to gain a greater understanding of Buddhism.

The examination at the intermediate level generally consists of four parts as set out below (though the form of the exam is subject to change):

1. Essay writing based on the Buddhist proverbs that form the first part of this book. Students are required to write an essay joining two of the proverbs, making them merge together in one complete essay, and referring to two other proverbs in support of their reasoning.
2. Dhamma knowledge, based on the numerical subjects that follow in the second part of this book.
3. Knowledge of the lives of the Buddha's disciples, whose stories make up the third part of this book.
4. Knowledge of Uposatha observance for lay persons, covered in the fourth part of this book.

The structure of this book follows the *Curriculum of Dhamma Studies for Secondary Level*, published by the Royal Dhamma Studies Office, and also draws upon the work of His Royal Highness The Late Supreme Patriarch Prince Vajirañāṇavarorasa and the work of the Mahāmakut Educational Council, the Buddhist University of Thailand. These and other publications consulted are listed at the back of this book.

1 BUDDHIST PROVERBS

Reading, contemplating and discussing Buddhist proverbs is a traditional way of gaining a greater understanding of the teaching of the Buddha. For newcomers to Buddhism and life-long followers, proverbs offer inspiration and guidance. The proverbs included here are those that appear in the *Curriculum of Dhamma Studies for Secondary Level*. Translations, notes and explanations are based on *Buddhist Proverbs Book 2*, published by the Mahāmakut Educational Council.

On the self (*Attavagga*)

1. *Attadatthaṃ paratthena
bahunāpi na hāpaye
attadatthamabhiññāya
sadatthapasuto siyā.*

Do not neglect your own spiritual development out of concern for others, no matter how important they may be. Realising what is for your own benefit, attend to it resolutely.

Khuddaka Nikāya Dhammapadagatha 25/37

Note: The Buddha gave this advice to his disciples, when, after learning from him that he would utterly pass away (*parinibbāna*) within three months, they gathered together asking ‘What can we do?’ ‘What can we do?’ Spending their time in this way, they neglected their daily meditation. When the Buddha learned of this, he warned them not to neglect their daily practice of spiritual development.

2. *Attānañce tathā kayirā
yathaññamanusāsati
sudanto vata dametha
attā hi kira duddamo.*

Follow yourself what you teach others. Train yourself before instructing others, for it is difficult to train one’s self.

Khuddaka Nikāya Dhammapadagatha 25/36

3. *Attānameva paṭhamaṃ
paṭirūpe nivesaye
athaññamanusāseyya
na kilisseyya paṇḍito.*

Set yourself on the right path first, before instructing others. Then you should not falter.

Khuddaka Nikāya Dhammapadagatha 25/36

On action (*Kammavagga*)

4. *Atisītaṃ atiuṇhaṃ
atisāyamidam ahu
iti vissaṭṭhakammante
atthā accenti māṇave.*

‘Too cold’ ‘too hot’ ‘too late’ can always be easy excuses for those who do not want to work. They let their chances pass by.

Dīgha Nikāya Patikāvagga 11/199

5. *Atha pāpāni kammāni
karaṃ bālo na bujjhati
sehi kammehi dummedho
aggidaḍḍhova tappati.*

The wicked fool is not conscious of doing evil deeds. His mind will be tormented later, as if being burnt by his own bad actions.

Khuddaka Nikāya Dhammapadagatha 25/33

6. *Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ
tādisaṃ labhate phalaṃ
kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ
pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ.*

One reaps what one sows. Those who do good will receive good in return, those who do evil will receive evil.

Saṃyutta Nikāya Sagathavagga 15/333

7. *Yo pubbe katakalyāṇo
katattho nāvabujjhati
atthā tassa palujjanti
ye honti abhipatthitā.*

Those who lack gratitude for the things done for them destroy all the goodness they seek.

Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Sattakanipata 27/288

8. *Yo pubbe katakalyāṇo
katattho manubujjhati
atthā tassa pavaḍḍhanti
ye honti abhipatthitā.*

Those who are grateful for the things done for them will have all the goodness they desire.

Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Sattakanipata 27/288

9. *Yo pubbe karaṇiyāni
pacchā so kātumicchati
varuṇakatṭhaṃ bhañjova
sa pacchā anutappati.*

Those who put off until later what they should do first will be filled with regret.

Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Ekanipata 27/23

10. *Sace pubbe katahetu
sukhadukkhaṃ nigacchati
porāṇakam kataṃ pāpaṃ
tameso muñcate iṇaṃ.*

Happiness and suffering resulting from previous accumulated *kammas* (actions) are like the settling of old accounts wherein one has to pay the balance.

Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Pannsanipita 28/25

11. *Sukhakāmāni bhūtāni
yo daṇḍena vihiṃsati
attano sukhamesano
pecca so na labhate sukhaṃ.*

All sentient beings seek happiness. Those who in pursuing their own happiness spoil that of others will never find happiness themselves.

Khuddaka Nikāya Dhammapadagatha 25/32

12. *Sukhakāmāni bhūtāni
yo daṇḍena na hiṃsati
attano sukhamesāno
pecca so labhate sukhaṃ.*

All sentient beings seek happiness. Those who do not spoil the happiness of others for the sake of their own will find happiness.

Khuddaka Nikāya Dhammapadagatha 25/32

On forbearance (*Khantivagga*)

13. *Attanopi paresañca
atthāvaho va khantiko
saggamokkhagamaṃ maggaṃ
āruḷho hoti khantiko.*

Those who have forbearance bring benefits to others as well as to themselves. They are following the path to heaven and to the extinction of passions.

Saṃyutta Nikāya Mahāvāravagga 222

14. *Kevalānaṃpi pāpānaṃ
khantī mūlaṃ nikantati
garahakalahādīnaṃ
mūlaṃ khanati khantiko.*

Forbearance eradicates all evils. Those equipped with forbearance uproot the causes of evil, such as blame and fault-finding.

Saṃyutta Nikāya Mahāvāravagga 222

15. *Khantiko mettavā lābhī
yasassī sukhasīlavā
piyo devamanussānaṃ
manāpo hoti khantiko.*

Those who have forbearance and loving kindness are always honoured and happy. They are beloved and appreciated by divine and human beings.

Saṃyutta Nikāya Mahāvāravagga 222

16. *Satthuno vacanovādaṃ
karotiyeva khantika
paramāya ca pūjāya
jināṃ pūjeti khantiko.*

Those endowed with forbearance are called the real followers of the Buddha. They are said to revere the Buddha with the highest kind of worship.

Saṃyutta Nikāya Mahāvāravagga 222

17. *Sīlasamādhiguṇānaṃ
khantī padhānakāraṇaṃ
subbepi kusalā dhammā
khantīyeva vaddhanti te.*

Forbearance is the chief cause of all virtues such as morality and concentration. All other virtues increase with the development of forbearance.

Saṃyutta Nikāya Mahāvāravagga 222

On wisdom (*Pāññavagga*)

18. *Appassutāyaṃ puriso
balivaddova jīrati
maṃsāni tassa vaddhanti
paññā tassa na vaddhati.*

The uneducated grow old like an old bull, whose flesh increases but not his wisdom.

Khuddaka Nikāya Dhammapadagatha 25/35

19. *Jivatevapi sappañño
api vittaparikkhayā
paññāya ca alāphena
vittavāpi na jīvati.*

A wise person can manage even if he lacks wealth. But lacking wisdom, no fool can hold his ground.

Khuddaka Nikāya Theragāthā 26/350

20. *Paññavā buddhisampanno
vidhānavidhikovidō
kālaññā samayaññū ca
sa rājivasatiṃ vase.*

An intelligent person with the gift of discernment, knowing how to manage affairs, and clever at (selecting) the right time and season, can be in government service.

Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Mahanīpta 28/339

21. *Pañña hi seṭṭhā kusalā vadanti
nakkhattarājāriva tārakānaṃ
sīlaṃ sirī cāpi satañca dhammo
anvāyikā paññavato bhavanti.*

Wisdom, says the intelligent person, is the best of virtues, like the moon (shining) among the stars. Discipline, glory and other virtuous natures follow the wise person.

Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Cattalisanīpata 27/541

22. *Mattāsukhapariccāgā
passe ce vipulaṃ sukhaṃ
caje mattāsukhaṃ dhīro
saṃpassaṃ vipulaṃ sukhaṃ.*

Seeing that perfect happiness can be attained by sacrificing lesser ones, the wise person should abandon lesser happiness for the sake of the perfect one.

Khuddaka Nikāya Dhammapadagāthā 25/59

23. *Yasaṃ laddhāna dummedho
anattaṃ carati attano
attano ca paresaṅca
hiṃsāya paṭipajjati.*

Having obtained power, people without wisdom (usually) become corrupt, and so hurt themselves as well as others through their actions.

Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Ekanīpata 27/40

24. *Yāvadeva anattthāya
ñattam bālassa jāyati
hanti bālassa sukkaṃsam
muddham assa vipātayaṃ.*

A villain's cleverness leads only to his own destruction. It corrupts his mind and kills his virtuous nature.

Khuddaka Nikāya Dhammapadagatha 25/24

25. *Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve
duppañño asamāhito
ekāhaṃ jīvitam seyyo
paññavantassa jhāyino.*

A hundred years spent living as an ignorant, wavering person is not worth a single day of a wise person whose mind is concentrated.

Khuddaka Nikāya Dhammapadagatha 25/29

On association (*Sevanāvagga*)

26. *Asante nūpaseveyya
sante seveyya paṇḍito
asanto nirayaṃ nenti
santo pāpentī sugatiṃ.*

Let not those who are wise associate with the unwise. Instead they should associate with the virtuous. Those who lack wisdom will lead them to suffering, while the virtuous will lead them to a higher plane of existence.

Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Visatīnipata 29/437

27. *Tagaram va palāsena
yo naro upanayhati
pattāpi surabhī vāyanti
evaṃ dhīrūpasevanā.*

Just as a leaf smells sweet when it wraps up a perfumed herb, so does a person gain in reputation when they keep company with the wise.

Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Visatīnipata 29/437

28. *Na pāpajanasamsevī
accantasukhamedhati
godhākulam kakaṇṭāva
kalim pāpeti attanaṃ.*

Those who keep bad company cannot enjoy real happiness. They inflict evil upon themselves. They are like the young iguana in the *Jātaka* story who befriended a lowly chameleon and was later betrayed.

Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Ekanipata 27/46

29. *Pāpamitte vivajjetvā
bhajeyyuttamapuggale
ovāde cassa tiṭṭheyya
patthento acalaṃ sukkhaṃ.*

Let those who hope for real happiness keep away from bad company. Let them associate with virtuous people and respectfully follow their instruction.
Khuddaka Nikāya Theragāthā 26/309

30. *Pūtimacchaṃ kusaggena
yo naro upanayhati
kusāpi pūti vāyanti
evaṃ bālūpasevanā.*

Just as a leaf smells bad when it has been used to wrap up a rotten fish, so do bad qualities rub off on people who keep the wrong company.
Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Mahanīpa 28/303

31. *Yādisaṃ kurute mittam
yādisaṅcūpasevati
sopi tādisako hoti
sahavāso hi tādiso.*

People are inclined to act the same as the friends with whom they associate, for such is the nature of association.
Khuddaka Nikāya Jātaka Visatīnipata 29/437

32. *Saddhena ca pesalena ca
paññavatā bahussutena ca
sakhitam hi kareyya paṇḍito
bhaddo sappurisehi saṅgamo.*

A wise person should associate with a pious individual who delights in the good and who is blessed with wisdom and knowledge, for it is a blessing to associate with such a person.
Khuddaka Nikāya Theragāthā 26/404

2 DHAMMA SUBJECTS

Knowledge of the Dhamma is traditionally organised into sets of two, three, four, etc, based on the number of subjects covered. The selection below ranges from sets of two to sets of twelve. The Dhamma subjects included here are those in the *Curriculum of Dhamma Studies for Secondary Level*. Explanations and notes are based on *Dhamma Vibhaga, Numerical Sayings of Dhamma, Part Two* by his Royal Highness the late Supreme Patriarch Prince Vajirañāṇavarorasa published by Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya Press.

Sets of two

1. The practice of mind development (*kammaṭṭhāna*)

- i. Practice for the sake of calm (*samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*)
- ii. Practice for the sake of insight (*vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna*)

Āṅguttara Nikāya Dukanipāta 20/77

Explanation:

The practice of mind-development for the sake of controlling wandering thoughts and fixing them on one particular point or theme only is called *samatha*. It is practised for the purposes of calmness and tranquility, and can sometimes serve as a base for *vipassanā*.

The practice of mind-development that leads toward the development of penetrating insight, looking into the nature of phenomena (*nāma-rūpa*, or mind and body) on the basis of three common characteristics (*samañña-lakkhaṇa*) is called *vipassanā*.

2. Sensuality (*kāma*)

- i. Sensual temperament or passion (*kilesakāma*)
- ii. Sensual objects (*vatthukāma*)

Khuddaka Nikāya Mahāvāravagga 29/1

Explanation:

Those passions or temperaments that spring from sensual craving are called *kilesakāma*, such as lust (*rāga*), greed (*lobha*), longing desire (*icchā*), envy (*issā*), ill-will (*arati*) and lack of contentment (*arati*).

The things that arouse sensual craving are called *vatthukāma*. They are pleasant sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch.

3. Worship (*pūjā*)

- i. Material worship (*āmisapūjā*)
- ii. Practical worship (*paṭipattipūjā*)

Āṅguttara Nikāya Dukanipāta 20/117

Note: The first refers to worship by means of offerings such as flowers or incense sticks. The second refers to worship by following the Buddha's teachings sincerely and earnestly. The first is not discouraged or prohibited, but the second is recommended as the best, as outward forms without sincere and earnest practice of the Buddha's teachings cannot lead to any real development or progress. The Buddha

addressed the Venerable Ānanda and other bhikkhus just before he passed away as follows:

The twin sāla trees are all one mass of flowers out of season and these drop and scatter over the body of the Tathāgata. But, Ānanda, it is not thus that the Tathāgata is rightly honoured and revered. Any bhikkhu or bhikkhuni or any lay disciple, man or woman, who performs his or her duties properly, conscientiously and wisely is said to have rightly honoured, venerated, worshipped and respected the Tathāgata with the highest kind of worship.

4. Methods of greeting or welcoming a visitor (*paṭisaṅṭhāra*)

- i. Greeting with things (*āmisapaṭisaṅṭhāra*)
- ii. Greeting with a respectful attitude (*dhammapaṭisaṅṭhāra*)

Ānguttara Nikāya Dukanipāta 20/116

Explanation:

The first, greeting with things, has to do with offering such refreshments as food and drink. The second, *Dhammapaṭisaṅṭhāra*, used to be understood as conversing on the *Dhamma* or teachings of the Buddha. It is now understood to mean welcoming a guest according to his or her rank or status. This may require the host to stand and join his or her palms in a respectful salutation (*anjali*) or to extend a welcome in some other proper way. The manner of the host and the appropriate reception of the guest are no less important than offering things such as food and drink.

5. Happiness (*sukha*)

- i. Physical happiness or well-being – based on the senses of the body (*kāyikasukha*)
- ii. Mental happiness or well-being – resulting from an inward source (*cetasikasukha*)

Ānguttara Nikāya Dukanipāta 101

Explanation:

When the body is in good health, is not experiencing hunger or thirst (both having been quenched for the time being) and is not exposed to the severity of the elements, it is said to be in a condition of happiness or well-being. This is called physical happiness or well-being.

When the mind is absorbed in delight, whether in having its sensual desires satisfied or in its having performed a good deed, or in the ecstasy born of insight, it is said to be in a state of happiness or well-being. This is called mental happiness or well-being.

Sets of three

1. Evil thoughts (*akusala vitakka*)

- i. Those producing lust or greed (*kāmavitakka*)
- ii. Those producing hatred (*byāpāvitakka*)
- iii. Those producing aggression or violence (*vihimsāvitakka*)

Ānguttara Nikāya Chakkanipāta 22/496

Explanation:

Examples of the first can be seen when a person indulges in inappropriate sexual behaviour such as adultery or questionable sexual acts, or when a person who is overpowered by covetousness looks for illegal ways of acquiring money. Evil

thoughts of the second kind are those aroused by anger and nurtured by hatred or a desire for revenge. Those of the third category can be seen in the case of a person who enjoys himself at the expense of others or who likes to overburden his subordinates or working animals and is indifferent to their suffering.

2. Meritorious thoughts (*kusalavitakka*)

- i. Those leading toward renunciation (*nekkhammavitakka*)
 - ii. Those tending toward elimination of hatred (*abyāpādavitaṅka*)
 - iii. Those tending toward the eradication of aggression or violence (*avihimsāvitakka*)
- Majjhima Nikāya Mūlapaññāsaka 12/232*

Explanation

The term *nekkhamma* or ‘renunciation’ generally suggests the idea of living a chaste life. It also signifies thoughts of self-restraint – to renounce sensual objects and to restrain oneself from being overpowered by a sensual temperament. Both implications are closely associated, for such thoughts usually result in such actions. The second means the extension of loving kindness to others, aiming at their welfare and happiness. When thoughts are based on compassion, the will to help others from suffering, they are included in the third. Such thoughts inspire a person with an understanding of others’ feelings and desires. Such a person is not selfish in his or her treatment of subordinates or working animals, nor does he or she take pleasure at others’ expense.

3. Fires (*aggi*)

- i. The fire of lust (*rāgaggi*)
 - ii. The fire of anger (*dosaggi*)
 - iii. The fire of delusion (*mohaggi*)
- Khuddaka Nikāya Udāna 25/301*

Explanation

These passions are called fires because of their burning effects upon the mind.

Note: ‘Lust’ means the desire for sensual pleasures, whether sight, sound, smell, taste or touch. It is a fire in that it has beneath it a burning desire for more and more. It is not difficult to understand how anger can be compared to a fire; it is aroused when the lustful desire above is obstructed. Delusion may be less obvious as a fire, but its influence in the mind runs longest and deepest. It gives birth to lust and anger and may be likened to a smouldering fire, whereas lust is like a flame and anger a blaze.

4. Sovereignty or dominating influence (*adhipateyya*)

- i. Sovereignty of self (*attādhīpateyya*)
 - ii. Sovereignty of the world (*lokādhīpateyya*)
 - iii. Sovereignty of Dhamma or righteousness (*dhammādhīpateyya*)
- Aṅguttara Nikāya Tikaniṭṭhā 20/186*

Explanation

An example of the first kind may be seen when people do some good through their own liking or convenience. Such people follow the sovereignty of self in that their decisions are based on their own criteria or judgement. When, however, people act as

a result of being impressed by others' opinions or attitudes, either being afraid of criticism or aiming at praise and honour, they are said to have followed the second, the sovereignty of the world – on the grounds that they put others' likes and dislikes before their own. When people do good purely for the sake of good, having realised that it is right and proper to do so (irrespective of their own trouble or others' attitudes), they are following the third, the sovereignty of Dhamma or righteousness.

Note: Of the three kinds of sovereignty, the first two may sometimes be right and at other times wrong, since people's likes and dislikes are not the criteria by which to judge the value or propriety of any action. It is through obeying the Law of Righteousness that a person's decision or judgement can be safely guided.

5. Insight (*ñāṇa*) (with regard to time)

- i. Insight into the past (*atītaṅsañāṇa*)
- ii. Insight into the future (*anāgataṅsañāṇa*)
- iii. Insight into the present (*paccuppannaṅsañāṇa*)

Dīgha Nikāya Pāṭikavagga 11/292

Explanation

The ability to trace present effects back to their causes in the past is called 'insight into the past'. The ability to calculate future effects of present or future causes is called 'insight into the future'. The ability to know the proper way to act in the presence of causes or effects arising immediately is called 'insight into the present'.

6. Insight (*ñāṇa*) (with regard to the Four Noble Truths)

- i. Insight into the truths themselves (*saccañāṇa*)
- ii. Insight into what is to be done with regard to each and every truth (*kiccañāṇa*)
- iii. Insight into what has already been done with regard to each and every truth (*katañāṇa*)

Samyutta Nikāya Mahāvāravagga 19/531

Explanation

Insight into the fact that this is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering and this is the path leading to the extinction of suffering is called 'insight into the truths themselves'.

Insight into the fact that suffering is what is to be known or understood, the cause of suffering is what is to be eradicated, the extinction of suffering is what is to be realised and the path leading to the extinction of suffering is what is to be cultivated is called 'insight into what is to be done concerning those truths'.

Insight into the fact that suffering has been known, the cause of suffering has been eliminated, the extinction of suffering has been realised and the path leading thereto has been cultivated is called 'insight into what has already been done with regard to those truths'.

These three stages of insight encompass each of the Four Noble Truths, resulting in what is called the twelve-fold process or the three cycles of insight with regard to the Four Noble Truths.

7. Desire or craving (*taṇhā*)

- i. Desire for sensual enjoyment (*kāmatāṇhā*)
- ii. Desire for existence or being (*bhavataṇhā*)
- iii. Desire for non-existence or non-being (*vibhavataṇhā*)

Āṅguttara Nikāya Chakkanipāta 22/439

Explanation

Whatever drives sentient beings to ceaseless strife and struggle is called desire or craving. The first kind of desire refers to strife or a struggle for sensual enjoyments that are not yet obtained, and an indulgence in those that have been obtained. The second is the lingering desire either for continuing existence in the present plane or for rebirth in a blissful plane in future. The third is, in contrast, a desire not to be in the present plane of existence (to die) because of weariness or despair or not to be born again in another plane of existence.

8. Miracles (*pāṭihāriya*)

- i. Exciting miracles (*iddhipāṭihāriya*)
- ii. Mind-reading miracles (*ādesanāpāṭihāriya*)
- iii. Miracle of the teaching (*anusāsanipāṭihāriya*)

Dīgha Nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga 9/273; Āṅguttara Nikāya Tikaniipāta 20/217

Explanation

The first kind of miracle is conventionally the most widely known, involving performing what seems to be the impossible, and therefore tends to evoke feelings of awe and excitement. Some of these are, according to descriptions in the scriptures, levitation, walking on water, being invisible, creating living reproductions of one's person.

The second seems to be more limited in manifestations, as its name implies, being nothing more than the act of mind-reading, or, in modern terms, telepathy.

The third is characteristic of the Buddha, in spite of the fact that he was able to perform the two kinds above equally well. This refers to the wonders of the Buddha's teaching, which withstands tests, challenges and doubts and produces real, self-evident results to sincere followers.

9. The Baskets or Canon (*piṭaka*)

- i. The Basket of Discipline (*vinayapiṭaka*)
- ii. The Basket of Discourses (*suttantapiṭaka*)
- iii. The Basket of Metaphysics (*abhidhammapiṭaka*)

Vinayapiṭaka Parivāra 8/224

Explanation

These sections of the Teaching are called 'baskets' in that they are like vessels wherein the collection of the Buddha's words are stored.

The Basket of Discipline is mainly the collection of the Buddha's teachings that deal with monastic discipline, and is particularly intended for bhikkhus (monks), who live a homeless life of celibacy.

The Basket of Discourses is a collection of the Buddha's sermons and teachings to various disciples on various occasions, dealing generally with the modes of practice other than discipline.

The third, the Basket of Metaphysics, which is also said to be the Buddha's teachings, has a distinctive character in that it speaks impersonally about events and phenomena.

10. Functions performed by the Buddha (*buddhacariyā*)

- i. Functions performed for the world (*lokatthacariyā*)
- ii. Functions performed for the relatives (*ñātatthacariyā*)
- iii. Functions performed as a Buddha (*buddhatthacariyā*)

Manoratha Pūraṇī Paṭhamabhāga 104

Explanation

Instances of the Buddha's functions fulfilled for the world include the countless occasions when he began the morning surveying clairvoyantly, looking for beings who were mature enough to grasp his teachings on that day, and having seen them come within the range of his clairvoyance, set forth on this preaching pilgrimage irrespective of the troubles and dangers to be encountered on the way.

His functions for relatives include his stopping their quarrel over the supply of water, which was about to develop into war, and also when he proceeded to the town of Kapilavattu to preach to his relatives, establishing many of them in the path of enlightenment.

His functions in his capacity as a Buddha include, for instance, the laying down of disciplinary rules for the order of bhikkhus in order to encourage the bhikkhus who were earnest and sincere in their motives, and at the same time bar the way for infiltration by the shameless and corrupt ones, and also the painstaking efforts of preaching to his disciples, thereby securing a firm foundation for the establishment and development of his message before he passed away.

11. The cycles (*vaṭṭa*)

- i. The cycles of passion (*kilesavaṭṭa*)
- ii. The cycle of karma (*kammavaṭṭa*)
- iii. The cycle of effects (*vipākavaṭṭa*)

Abhidhammattha Saṅgahapāli 46

Explanation

The term 'cycle' is used to mean a condition without beginning or end. These three are interrelated and intertwined, each being both the cause and the effect of the others: the arising of passions or desires leads to actions and thus karma, which leads once again to the arising of passions or desires of one kind or another. This process goes on

endlessly unless and until it is cut short by the Path of the Enlightened One. Efforts to break the cycle must be directed towards the passions or desires, reducing their driving force and finally neutralising their influence.

12. Advanced courses of study and practice (*sikkhā*)

- i. The course of higher precepts or morality (*adhisīlasikkhā*)
- ii. The course of higher meditation (*adhicittasikkhā*)
- iii. The course of higher wisdom (*adhipaññāsikkhā*)

Āṅguttara Nikāya Tikanipāta 20/294

Explanation

The higher or advanced course of practice is one that aims at renunciation of sensual pleasures and the resultant insight into the nature of phenomena, not one that has the celestial realm or enjoyment in sensual pleasures as its goal. The higher precepts or morality refer to the precepts in the context of the Noble Eightfold Path, wherein a bhikkhu (or a seeker) establishes himself firmly in the Code of Discipline and Conduct for the Homeless Life, always avoiding even minor transgressions that are supposed to have ‘small’ consequences. The second, the higher meditation, refers to the four advanced stages of meditation or *jhāna*. The third, the higher wisdom, means one enabling a seeker to realise the three common characteristics (impermanence or *anicca*, suffering or *dukkha* and not-self or *anattā*) and the Four Noble Truths.

Sets of four

1. Realms of woe (*apāya*)

- i. Hell beings (*niraya*)
- ii. Animals (*tiracchānāyoni*)
- iii. Hungry ghosts (*pittivi saya*)
- iv. Demons (*asurakāya*)

Khuddaka Nikāya Itivuttaka 25/301

Explanation

The realms of woe (*apāya*) are the realms or planes where no possibility of development or progress exists.

The first, *niraya*, refers to the realms called hell where it is supposed that punishment is administered to evil-doers after their departure from this world. Such punishment takes various forms, such as burning and execution by order of the Lord of Hell. These reflect beliefs of Brahmanism in the Vedic period, which decreed that evil-doers were to be judged by Yama, Lord of the Underworld and the punisher of souls, who subjected the evil doer to dire punishment. In later scriptures, however, although various forms of terrible suffering were still mentioned as being characteristic of the realms of hell, the existence of the vindictive Lord of Hell was omitted, suggesting thereby that all such punishments were manifestations of psychological states caused by a person’s own evil.

The second, *tiracchānāyoni*, refers to the realm of animals. The scriptures also mention the realms of animals in unseen worlds, such as the *nāga* (mythical serpent) and *garuda* or (mythical bird), the latter the sworn enemies of the *nāgas*. These kinds

of mythical animals are said to have their own planes of existence with their own kings and also to have delightful possessions and great power and strength. Yet they were regarded as sub-human and their realms are still called realms of woe on the grounds that, unlike human beings, they are never in a position to be enlightened by following the path.

The third, *pittivisaya*, refers to the realm of so-called hungry or unhappy ghosts or *pitti*, generally meaning doers of misdeeds that were not so serious as to lead them to the realms of hell. They are supposed to be very hungry and miserable. These unseen beings seem to depend occasionally on the human world. This can be seen in the discourse called *Tirokudda Sutta*, where the former relatives of King Bimbisāra are cited as waiting for offerings or gifts from this world to quench their hunger and thirst. From the commentary on this discourse, it seems the hungry ghosts had particular realms of their own. A realm more closely related to the human world is mentioned, which is uniquely strange in that those in this realm are destined to experience great happiness and terrible suffering alternately. They are said to enjoy celestial bliss within celestial mansions in the day and then to suffer hellish punishment at night. At daybreak they return to the enjoyment of their celestial realms.

The fourth, *asurakāya*, is obscure in its meaning since it is never mentioned in the Pali Canon and is only casually referred to in the commentary. Sanskrit dictionaries explain it as a realm of malicious demons.

With regard to food or what sustains these beings, it is said that beings in hell are sustained by their own evil deeds; they must suffer until the exhaustion or expiration of their own evil that has sent them there. As to animals in the human world, some live on vegetation and others prey upon other kinds of animals. Hungry ghosts are said to be sustained partly by the causes (karma) that sent them into that condition and partly by offerings of gifts by human beings. What nurtures demons is not mentioned.

2. The supporters (*apassenadhamma*)

- i. Contemplation before using or association
- ii. Contemplation before enduring
- iii. Contemplation before abstaining
- iv. Contemplation before reducing

Dīgha Nikāya Pāṭikavagga 11/236

Explanation

For the first, before using the requisites of life (ie clothing, food, shelter, medicine) or associating with anyone or making use of any practical method, it is advisable for seekers after Truth to stop to contemplate the benefits and disadvantages of these, weighing carefully the creation and development both of virtues and vices expected. This is the first supporter: contemplation before using or associating.

For the second, in the presence of unpleasant experiences such as heat, cold, hunger, thirst, pain or insult, another kind of contemplation is suggested. This is contemplation upon the nature of changeability – contemplation on being subject to

birth and death, and then on the evils of being affected by unpleasant experiences, coupled with the benefits of not being so affected but being able to endure intelligently in their presence. Such is contemplation before enduring.

For the third, in the face of temptation, it is advisable that a seeker stop to contemplate the accruing evils, considering how they lead to the development of existing vices and the birth of new ones, as well as the decline of existing virtues and the prevention of new ones. A person then manages to avoid temptation or abstain from falling prey to its influence. This is contemplation before abstaining.

For the fourth, when troubled by unwholesome thoughts (thoughts influenced by lust, greed, hatred or ill-will), which make the mind restless and upset, a seeker is advised to contemplate the evils to be expected as a result of such thoughts, and then try to reduce the unwholesome thoughts to a minimum until they are wiped out of the mind. This is contemplation before reducing or eliminating.

These four practices support seeker on the path, safeguarding them from unnecessary trouble and suffering and strengthening them with the development of necessary forces and virtues. They are accordingly called the ‘supporters’.

3. The unlimited or immeasurable (*appamaññā*)

- i. Loving kindness (*mettā*)
 - ii. Compassion (*karunā*)
 - iii. Sympathy (*muditā*)
 - iv. Equanimity (*upekkhā*)
- Dīgha Nikāya Sīlakhandhavagga 9/310*

Explanation

The first, loving kindness, is characterised by its goodwill devoid of lust.

The second, compassion, is a feeling of pity for others’ sufferings. It also implies an intention to free or save others from such a condition.

The third, sympathy, refers to a sympathetic feeling for others’ joy or sorrow. It implies an absence of envy or ill-will.

The fourth, equanimity, is the feeling of neutrality, the absence of sympathy where sympathy is impossible or inadvisable, such as where help (to the needy or those in danger) is practically impossible and where a sympathetic joy for one side will appear to be prejudiced and therefore hurtful to the other side. This virtue is to be based on the understanding of the law of karma: effect following cause or the reaping of whatever one has sown. This attitude of mind is advisable when help or sympathy is impossible or inadvisable.

The extension of these four virtues towards all sentient beings without limit or discrimination is called the unlimited or immeasurable. As the unlimited or immeasurable, they are intended to be the intrinsic virtues of bhikkhus, who, having renounced the world, should be without attachment to any particular person or group.

When extended toward a particular person or group of persons, these practices are called the Divine States of Mind or the Dwelling Place of Brahma (*Brahmavihāra*). They may refer to advanced celestial beings or to those human beings in advanced positions with dependants or subordinates under their responsibility, both of whom are required to be always endowed with these four virtues in order to justify their name and rank.

Note: The Pali term ‘*upekkhā*’, from which equanimity (both as divine states of mind and as the unlimited) is translated, is also capable of other interpretations. Care must be taken not to confuse this with ‘*upekkhā*’ as one of the three feelings where it is translated as ‘neutrality’ (neither pleasure nor suffering) and ‘*upekkhā*’ as one of the seven factors of enlightenment, where it is also translated ‘equanimity’ but has a wider and deeper meaning, for as one, and the last, of the seven factors of enlightenment, equanimity is the climax of the six preceding virtues and implies the highest degree of insight, whereby the seeker remains as a detached observer in the presence of all manifestations of the phenomena of aggregates.

4. The floods (*ogha*)

- i. The flood of sensuality (*kāmogha*)
- ii. The flood of being (*bhavogha*)
- iii. The flood of views (*ditthogha*)
- iv. The flood of ignorance (*avijjogha*)

Saṃyutta Nikāya Mahāvāraṇavagga 19/88

Explanation

These are called ‘floods’ because they have the force to sweep away sentient beings who have fallen victim to their powers.

The first, the flood of sensuality (*kāma*), comprises those passions that spring from sensual craving, such as lust, greed, longing-desire, envy, ill-will and lack of contentment and the things that arouse sensual craving, such as pleasant sights, sounds, smells, taste and touch, as set out in the Sets of Two above.

The second, the flood of being (*bhava*), refers to all planes of existence where birth and death can be expected.

The third, the flood of views, includes three particular wrong views (*ditthi*). The first wrong view is denying the effects of karma, or holding that there is no real or intrinsic effect in what is called good and evil. This includes the view that it is when people are rewarded by others that they can be said to have experienced the result of goodness and when they are punished by others that they can be said to have experienced the result of evil, while a good or evil action that goes unnoticed has no effect. The second wrong view is denying the causes of karma itself, holding instead a belief in fate or predestination. This view rejects karma as the underlying cause of happiness and suffering. The third wrong view is the view of nothingness, which holds that people and animals are entities resulting from the assemblage of so-called elements.

This being so, because of their intrinsic nature, there is nothing of what is supposed to be merit or evil.

The fourth of the floods, the flood of ignorance, comprises ignorance of the Four Noble Truths.

These four floods are also called bonds (*yoga*) and pollutions or outflows (*āsava*) on the grounds that they are the agents whereby sentient beings are bound to the cycle of rebirth and whereby their minds are polluted.

5. Functions of the Four Noble Truths

- i. To know (*pariññā*) is the function of the First Noble Truth
- ii. To abandon (*pahāna*) is the function of the Second Noble Truth
- iii. To realise (*sacchikaraṇa*) is the function of the Third Noble Truth
- iv. To develop (*bhāvanā*) is the function of the Fourth Truth

Saṃyutta Nikāya Mahāvāravagga 19/529

Explanation

The First Noble Truth, the Truth of Suffering, is to be known thoroughly, in all aspects.

The Second Noble Truth, the Cause of Suffering, which is desire or grasping, is to be abandoned or annihilated.

The Third Noble Truth, the Cessation of Suffering, is to be realised through the extinction or annihilation of desire or craving.

The Fourth Truth, the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering, is to be developed to its fullest degree, resulting in the extinction of desire or grasping, the cessation of suffering and a complete knowledge and understanding of suffering.

6. Communities of Buddhists (*parisaddo*)

- i. Monks or bhikkhus
- ii. Nuns or bhikkhunis
- iii. Male lay disciples or upāsakas
- iv. Female lay disciples or upāsakis

Aṅguttara Nikāya Chakkanipāta 21/178

7. Four kinds (or grades) of people

- i. The highly intelligent or gifted (*ugghatitaññū*)
- ii. The intelligent and studious (*vipacitaññū*)
- iii. The educable (*neyya*)
- iv. Understood as either the slow and hesitant learners or as the untrainable

(*padaparama*)

Aṅguttara Nikāya Chakkanipāta 21/183

Explanation

The highly intelligent or gifted represents the type of person who can grasp teaching through merely listening to a theme or topic of instruction. This type is compared to

the lotus that has risen above the surface of the water and will certainly bloom at the first ray of dawn. Instances include the Venerable Sārīputta, the mendicant Bāhiya, the novice Saṅkicca, who were enlightened almost instantly when they listened to the first verse of instruction.

The intelligent and the studious, the second type, have a lower grade of wisdom. They need further explanation and elaboration before they can win enlightenment. Examples include the five ascetics and the group of one thousand fire-hermits led by Uruvelakassapa. They are compared to lotuses that are just below the surface of the water, waiting to rise above it on the following day.

The educable include the majority of people – not so wise, but not so ignorant either. They need a series of instructions and further elaboration, and also a period of training and practice before they can hope for substantial progress or development. They may be compared to lotuses that are still some distance below the surface of the water. They need a longer period of growth before they emerge above it.

The slow and hesitant learners are those whose progress will normally be slow and difficult. They are sometimes described as the untrainable. The Compassionate One never abandoned anyone, however, and found appropriate or skillful ways of helping or assisting those in need, on occasions with dramatic results. This group may be compared to lotuses that rise above the surface of the water only with difficulty, or which may fail to do so at all.

8. The path (*magga*)

- i. The path of the stream enterer (*sotāpattimagga*)
- ii. The path of the once-returner (*sakadāgāmicimagga*)
- iii. The path of the non-returner (*anāgāmicimagga*)
- iv. The path of the Enlightened One (*arahattamagga*)

Visuddhimagga Nāṇadassaniddesa Tatiyabhāga 319

Explanation

‘Path’ here is meant as the insight whereby a number of spiritual fetters are annihilated once and for all. These fetters comprise a Set of Ten, summed up below.

In the first path, that of the stream enterer, insight eradicates the first three fetters. These are the fetters of wrong ideas regarding the self or personality, doubt or hesitation, and clinging to the efficacy of rites. Having entered into the stream of transcendental bliss, the seeker is incapable of retrogression and is destined to full and final Enlightenment within seven lives.

In the second path, that of the once-returner, insight eradicates the first three fetters and diminishes the remaining seven to a great degree. The first three plus lustful desire and irritation make up the lower fetters. The remaining five, the higher fetters, include delight in (subtler) forms (‘form’ meditation), delight in ‘formless’ meditation, pride or ego, distracting thoughts, and ignorance. The insight of the once-returner is supposed to be somewhat higher than the stream enterer, but it is rather obscure to what extent he or she is really more advanced. We read only that he or she

is destined to be born once more as a human being and attain Enlightenment here in the human plane.

In the third path, that of the non-returner, insight eradicates the first five of the ten fetters, with only the other five remaining.

In the fourth path, that of the Enlightened One, insight eradicates all ten fetters. This is full and final enlightenment, making his or her birth the last one.

9. The fruition (*phala*)

- i. The fruition of the stream enterer (*sotāpatti-phala*)
- ii. The fruition of the once-returner (*sakadāgāmi-phala*)
- iii. The fruition of the non-returner (*anāgāmi-phala*)
- iv. The fruition of the Enlightened One (*arahattaphala*)

Dīgha Nikāya Pāṭikavagga 11/240

Explanation

The moment of the mind consecutively following that of the path, being the immediate effect of the path, is called the fruition. It is of four kinds, corresponding to the path. The relationship between the path and the fruition may be seen in an analogy with sickness and health. The spiritual fetters are like illnesses, the path is like the permanent recovery from those illnesses through medical processes, and the fruition is the health and happiness resulting from it.

Sets of Five

1. Practices of progressive importance (*anupubbīkatha*)

- i. Charity (*dāna*)
- ii. Morality (*sīla*)
- iii. Enjoyment in celestial planes (*sagga*)
- iv. Evils of enjoyment of sensual pleasures (*kāmādīnava*)
- v. Benefits of renunciation of sensual pleasures (*nekkhammānisaṅsa*)

Mahāvagga Paṭhamabhāga (Vinaya) 4/30

Explanation

There are five themes of practice that are of progressive importance. The Buddha often used this method in preaching to lay disciples who were endowed with the potential for enlightenment, but who needed progressive instruction before they would be able to understand the advanced teaching concerning the Four Noble Truths.

The first step is charity, a practice to counteract selfish miserliness, giving away part of one's possessions for the relief of others' suffering.

The second step is morality, the capacity for self-restraint from causing injury to others. This creates respect for the other and his or her possessions and rights, and is conducive to a united and peaceful society.

The third is the description of heavenly realms and enjoyment therein as the outcome of charity so as to delight the listener in the above-mentioned practices.

The fourth is the remarkable turning point, whereby the listener, being so far absorbed in sensual delight, is disillusioned by the contrary description of the evils of sensuality, which are always latent and pervasive in so-called enjoyment. This is the beginning of a dispassionate attitude of mind, which tends to disentangle the skein of desire and attachment.

Finally comes the decisive step of renunciation of sensual pleasures of all kinds. This is the natural outcome of the skein being untangled and the mind seeking a higher value through its disillusionment.

The above manner of leading a listener step by step is a perfect one for preparing a disciple for a gradual ascent of the peak of enlightenment. By this means a disciple is first of all rid of inherent miserliness, then established in the practice of self-restraint, with a justifiable expectation for sensual pleasure, only to become disillusioned and to seek instead its renunciation. Being now endowed with this attitude of mind, a seeker has no difficulty in grasping the profundity of the searching and dispassionate mind.

2. Miserliness (*macchariya*)

- i. Being a miser regarding land (*āvāsamacchariya*)
- ii. Being a miser regarding the family (*kulamacchariya*)
- iii. Being a miser regarding gains (*lābhamacchariya*)
- iv. Being a miser regarding fame (*vaññamachhariya*)
- v. Being a miser regarding knowledge (*dhammacchariya*)

Aṅguttara Nikāya Navakanipāta 23/481

Explanation

The term miser is here used to mean selfishness and narrow-mindedness based on a negative attitude, which will be explained in each case.

The first means a selfish desire to preserve one's own land or territory exclusively for one's own group, sect or country, not wishing it to be inhabited by outsiders or strangers.

The second means the selfish desire to preserve the glory of one's own family, not wishing other families to rival or excel beyond one's own family. For bhikkhus this may be manifest by the desire to monopolise the help received from their own lay patrons, not wishing those patrons to help other bhikkhus.

The third means an avaricious desire to hoard wealth for its own sake, not wishing to share it with others even when and where it is advisable and necessary.

The fourth has two implications, for the term *vañña* can mean fame or recognition as well as physical appearance. An envious desire by which a person cannot bear to see others being equal or superior to one with regard to fame, honour, recognition, physical appearance or beauty is therefore the mark of this kind of miserliness.

The fifth means a person is driven by selfish desire to safeguard knowledge in science, arts, or means of earning a livelihood. They cannot bear to see others as intelligent or skilful as they are and try to safeguard their knowledge most carefully.

3. The impediments or obstructions (*māra*)

- i. The (five) aggregates (*khandha*)
- ii. The passions (*kilesa*)
- iii. The great creative forces (*abhisankhāra*)
- iv. Death (*maccu*)
- v. Unseen beings (*devaputta*)

Visuddhimagga Cha-anussatiniddesa Paṭhamabhāga 270

Explanation

The five aggregates (material form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness) are called impediments or obstructions because they are the causes of suffering to such an extent that occasionally someone, in despair, attempts suicide.

The passions are impediments in that they possess the tyrannical power of binding and spoiling minds that are under their dictates.

The great creative forces (merit, demerit and the immovable) here refer particularly to the demeritorious side because of its weakening forces. An instance may be seen in a person, who, during the period when demerit or evil forces gain control, loses the strength of resistance and is accordingly led astray.

That death is considered an impediment or obstruction is obvious enough when it refers to the fact that opportunity to accumulate good is cut short. Perhaps one of the best illustrations may be seen in the case of the Buddha's former teachers Alāra and Uddaka, whose opportunity to understand the Dhamma was lost due to their passing away a short time before the Buddha's Enlightenment. Had they been still living and heard the doctrine, they would have understood it immediately, being as they were highly advanced in spiritual development.

'Unseen beings' here is translated from the term *devaputta*, literally angels or gods, but in this context it is to be understood as referring to ghosts, spirits, demons or other such entities. That is why the neutral term 'unseen beings' is preferred here.

4. Feelings (*vedanā*)

- i. Happiness of the body (*sukha*)
- ii. Suffering of the body (*dukkha*)
- iii. Happiness of the mind (*somanassa*)
- iv. Suffering of the mind (*domanassa*)
- v. Neutrality of the mind (*upekkhā*)

Saṃyutta Nikāya Salāyatanavagga 18/287

Explanation

Feeling as one of the five aggregates is sometimes divided into three kinds: pleasant or happy, unpleasant or suffering, and neutral. In this case, pleasant includes the

happiness both of the body and of the mind, and the unpleasant includes the suffering of the body and the mind. There is, however, no mention of the feeling of neutrality of body, since in that condition it is considered a degree of happiness. Thus there is only the feeling of neutrality of the mind.

Instances of the suffering of the body are hunger, thirst, pain, fatigue and illness, whereas the absence of such conditions is regarded as happiness. Suffering of the mind includes, for instance, grief, sorrow and lamentation, whereas happiness of the mind may be seen in ecstasy or happiness accruing from doing good. When the mind is not in the condition either of happiness or suffering, it is said to be in a condition of neutrality.

Sets of Six

1. Disposition or inclination (*carita*)

- i. Inclination towards lust (*rāgacarita*)
- ii. Inclination towards anger (*dosacarita*)
- iii. Inclination toward delusion (*mohacarita*)
- iv. Inclination towards worry or uncontrolled thoughts (*vitakkacarita*)
- v. Inclination towards credulity (*saddhācarita*)
- vi. Inclination towards intellectuality (*buddhicarita*)

Visuddhimagga Kammaṭṭhānagahananiddesa Paṭhamabhāga 627

Explanation

For those monks (not nuns) opting to follow advanced practices of renunciation of attachment, lusts and desires (*rāgacarita*) can be subdued or ended by cultivating focused meditation on i) the transitory nature of human life (the body) and ii) bodily sustenance (subsistence) to reduce or reject both the appeal and claims of the body and the natural appeal of foods. These – among thirteen permitted practices in all – are known collectively as the ascetic or *dhutaṅga* (means of shaking off or shedding) practices.

Those who are given to anger and are easily irritated by even the slightest provocation are encouraged to meditate upon the virtue of loving kindness and compassion, based on the truth of the effects of karma (*vipaka*) applying to everybody at every moment of thinking, speaking and acting.

Those inclined toward delusion may counter this by efforts in studying, and by approaching and questioning good and wise people.

Distracted, uncontrolled thinking often leads to worry or imagined troubles. This can be subdued by meditation, fixing the attention on one point, such as meditation on breathing.

Credulity is also related to intellectual power. It is advisable to recollect themes that are intrinsically helpful or beneficial, such as the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

Intellectuality is not always an asset. In excess it can be a liability, when, without a proper attitude of mind or not based on right knowledge, it can lead a person into the abyss of extreme wrong views. Thus, it must be coupled with right knowledge (one giving an accurate picture of life and phenomena). The analytical process recommended in Buddhism, based on the three common characteristics of being, the five aggregates, the Four Noble Truths and others, are wholesome ingredients for digestion and assimilation by individuals having this type of inclination.

2. Virtues or wonders of the Dhamma (*dhammaguṇa*)

- i. It is the Dhamma which is well expounded by the Buddha (*svākkhāto bhagavata dhammo*)
 - ii. It is self-evident (*sandiṭṭhiko*)
 - iii. It is timeless (*akāliko*)
 - iv. It invites everyone to come and see for himself or herself (*ehi-passiko*)
 - v. It is practicable or attainable (*opanayiko*)
 - vi. It is to be individually realised and proven (*paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*)
- Āṅguttara Nikāya Tikani-pāta 20/266*

Explanation

The first virtue or wonder of the Dhamma, namely that it has been well expounded by the Buddha, refers to its being both true and internally consistent, with no contradictions. It also refers to its coherence, both in terms of language and meaning, ‘perfectly pure’, and ‘beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle and beautiful in the end’. Such are the characteristics of the first virtue or wonder of the well-expounded Dhamma.

The second, being self-evident, implies that it is also self-proven, there being no need for a disciple to depend on any other person’s recognition for his own realisation.

Being timeless means not being limited by time, not getting old or outdated through the passage of time. Whenever the Dhamma is put into practice, results can be expected.

The ‘come-and-see’ aspect of the wonder suggests that it is a wonderful teaching par excellence, deserving to be propagated, the propagators being never in a position to be compromised thereby.

Being practicable is another wonder of the Dhamma. It asserts that the Dhamma is applicable to the daily lives of people in all walks of life, hard or difficult though these may be.

To be individually realised and proven is another essential characteristic of the Dhamma. By this it means that there is no vicarious salvation, it being impossible for anyone to eat or drink in order to quench the hunger and thirst of someone else. The virtues of loving kindness and compassion may be made manifest through giving advice or offering help, but when it comes to making a decision or effort every individual must do so for himself or herself.

Sets of seven

1. Grades of purity (*visuddhi*)

- i. Purity of precepts or morality (*sīlavisuddhi*)
- ii. Purity of mind (emotion) (*cittavisuddhi*)
- iii. Purity of views (*diṭṭhivissuddhi*)
- iv. Purity of insight by which to transcend doubt (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇavisuddhi*)
- v. Purity of insight by which to realise what is the path and what is not (*maggamaggañānadassanavisuddhi*)
- vi. Purity of insight by which to know the way of practice (*paṭipadāñānadassanavisuddhi*)
- vii. Purity of insight (*ñānadassanavisuddhi*)

Majjhima Nikāya Mūlapañāsaka 12/290

Explanation

The first refers to the faithful observance of precepts or morality in accordance with one's status as a layperson, novice, monk or nun, as the case may be.

The second, purity of mind, refers to the development of meditation or *samādhi*.

The third, purity of views, refers to the condition of being equipped with Right Views concerning *nāma-rūpa* or mind and body. This is the realisation of their nature, which is impermanent, destructible and void of person or self.

The fourth, the purity of insight by which to transcend doubt, is the insight whereby a seeker is able to determine the causes of the birth and death of aggregates (mind and body) ridding the seeker of his doubt as to the nature of mind and body in the past, the present and future.

According to the later compilers, when a seeker has progressed to the fifth, the purity of insight by which to realise what is the path and what is not, some ten defilements of insight usually occur, which delude the seeker into thinking he has won through to Enlightenment. He is advised against such an outlook born of self-deceit and is urged to recognise as distractions those things which will lead him the wrong way. The ten defilements of insight are:

- a. the appearance of light (*obhāsa*)
- b. knowledge (*ñāṇa*)
- c. ecstasy (*pīti*)
- d. tranquillity (*passaddhi*)
- e. bliss (*sakha*)
- f. fervent belief (*adhimokkha*)
- g. earnestness (*pagghāha*)
- h. establishment (*upaṭṭhāna*)
- i. equanimity (*upekkha*)
- j. subtle desire (*nikanti*)

It must be understood that the above are called defilements only in the light of the higher attainment of insight. For the sake of advancement a seeker is advised against clinging to them as the point of finality, else he be bound thereby. These, it must also

be remembered, do not convey the meaning known to average people – those who have never experienced anything like that, being conscious all the time of nothing but the world of sensuality. Thus, the seeker who does not cling to these distracting influences, knowing they are to be superseded for the sake of higher attainment, is said to be blessed with the insight by which to know what is the path and what is not.

Next comes the sixth, the insight by which to know the practical way.

Finally, the seventh, the purity of insight itself, refers to the path and the fruition, as described in the Sets of Four.

In the Discourse called *Rathavinīta* in the Middle Section of the Middle Length Sayings, these seven steps of purity are compared to a relay of seven cars, each helping to send the seeker to his final aim – *nibbāna* or the extinction of suffering.

Sets of eight

1. Ignorance (*avijjā*)

- i. Ignorance of suffering
- ii. Ignorance of the causes of suffering
- iii. Ignorance of the cessation of suffering
- iv. Ignorance of the path leading to the cessation of suffering
- v. Ignorance of the past
- vi. Ignorance of the future
- vii. Ignorance of both the past and the future
- viii. Ignorance of dependent origination

Dhammasaṅgani (Abhidhamma) 281

Explanation

The first four items refer to ignorance of the Four Noble Truths. The fifth, sixth and seventh refer to ignorance of the ability to trace present effects back to their causes in the past, and ignorance of the ability to calculate future effects through present or future causes (see Sets of Three, no. 5 above). The eighth refers to the Law of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), which sets out how suffering comes into being, tracing eleven steps.

Sets of nine

1. Virtues of the Buddha (*buddhaguṇa*)

The Blessed One (*itipisobhagavā*) is:

- i. the arahant (*araham*)
- ii. the Self-Enlightened One (*sammāsambuddho*)
- iii. perfect in knowledge and its instrumental causes (*vijjācaraṇasampanno*)
- iv. well-gone (*sugato*)
- v. knower of the worlds (*lokavidū*)
- vi. supreme trainer of those that can be trained (*anuttaro purisadammasārathi*)
- vii. teacher of gods and men (*sattā devamanussānaṃ*)
- viii. the Awakened One (*buddho*)
- ix. the Blessed One (*bhagavā*)

Aṅguttara Nikāya Tikanipāta 20/265

Explanation

The first virtue, arahant, etymologically admits to four interpretations:

- a. Being far or free from evils and defilements
- b. Being the breaker of the cycle of birth and death, having absolutely purged himself of ignorance, attachment and desire
- c. Being worthy of respect, reverence and worship
- d. Being without secrets – without anything evil to be kept secret or to be concealed

The epithet arahant is also common to other Noble Disciples since they are also called arahant. To distinguish them from the Buddha, two particular attributes are added to mark the difference. Thus, the Buddha's epithet is in full arahant *sammāsambuddho*, meaning the arahant who is enlightened through his own efforts, and for the Noble Disciples the epithet in full is arahant *khīṇāsavo*, meaning the arahant who has abandoned all defilements.

The second, the Self-Enlightened One, means the Buddha was Enlightened to the truths of Dependent Origination, the Four Noble Truths and others through his own efforts. He was the founder of Buddhism, the king of Dhamma (or *dhammarājā*) proclaiming the Dhamma of his own discovery.

The third, perfect in knowledge and its instrumental causes (ie those that are productive of its achievement), can to some extent be applied to some noble disciples who may be endowed with knowledge like the Buddha himself, but, compared with the Buddha, they are not the discoverers of its instrumental causes. The term '*carāṇa*' also can be interpreted as 'behaviour or conduct'. From this meaning it can be understood that unlike most other teachers, the Buddha's behaviour was in perfect alignment with his knowledge, there being no flaw or contradiction. This is another of his virtues.

The fourth, being well-gone, may mean:

- firstly, his reaching the point of finality, from which there is no retrogression (ie no moving backward to a lower state)
- secondly, his going along the path of the cessation of suffering
- thirdly, his invaluable help rendered to mankind wherever he went
- fourthly, his taking birth into the world in order to proclaim the Dhamma to mankind

The fifth, world-knower, could imply the Buddha's knowledge of the geography of the world along with the habits and characters of the people living in different places and also the causes of their development and decline. But in a deeper sense, it means his knowledge of the causes of happiness and suffering and also of development and decline of the world of human beings, including the underlying nature of the impermanence, destructibility and voidness of self that underlies their lives. Such enlightened knowledge gave him a detached attitude of mind, being never tempted or threatened by anything or anybody.

In the sixth, supreme trainer of those who can be trained, the Buddha is likened to a trainer in the sense that he was blessed with the perfect training skills for people,

much in the way a horse trainer is for horses. ‘Those that can be trained’ or taught allows for the exclusion of those who are either too shallow or spiritually undeveloped to grasp the teaching or, being too egotistic, did not care to listen to the teaching. It does not exclude those who tried to listen, even with the intention of finding fault with the teaching. Some differences that distinguish the Buddha, the supreme trainer of people, from trainers of horses or other animals is that the Buddha, unlike the latter, did not use force, threat or punishment. Further whereas trainers of animals aim at their own benefits, the Buddha had in mind the benefit of those he trained. And finally, an irreversible degree of perfection was achieved by those who had been fully trained by the Buddha, whereas no matter how well trained horses or other animals might be, they retain the potential to become wild and unruly.

The seventh, teacher of gods and men, has been interpreted in several ways. One interpretation takes the terms ‘*deva*’, usually translated as gods, to mean kings, which it can sometimes be used to mean. Thus, the meaning is taken to be that the Buddha was the teacher of all people, both high and low, from kings or princes to peasants or paupers. This is reasonable enough, but appears to be rather incomplete. The Pali Canon gives many accounts of the gods (*deva*) as unseen celestial beings who approach the Buddha at night to ask questions as well as to listen to his preaching. In these accounts the gods are often mentioned by name, and can be recognised not as kings on this earth but as great evolved beings in various celestial realms. This sense of the term *deva* or god should not be overlooked in understanding this epithet.

The eighth, the Awakened One, has two shades of meaning. First, it implies that the Buddha was spiritually in a waking state, as opposed to the condition of spiritually sleeping, which means being deluded or ignorant. Secondly, it also refers to the fact that, being awake himself, he also took pains to rouse others from their sleep.

The ninth, the Blessed One, is derived from the term *bhagavā*. The etymological roots of this term are so varied as to make tracing its meaning difficult. The term is used in Brahmanist texts sometimes for hermits and ascetics and sometimes for gods. In Buddhism, however, the use of this term is limited, with specific reference only to the Buddha. It is not used to refer to disciples. One likely source is the term ‘*bhaga*’ which derives from the root ‘*bhaja*’, meaning to analyse or elaborate, hence the interpretation of the Buddha as the Analyser. This would refer to how, during the forty-five years of his preaching, the Buddha undertook to analyse or elaborate the Dhamma of his discovery in various ways for the understanding of various listeners. Another reasonable meaning frequently applied to this epithet is the Blessed One, referring to the fact that in spite of all the hardships and difficulties, dangers and temptations, he overcame them all and established the Dhamma for the sake of mankind to this day.

2. Virtues of the Sangha (*saṅghaṇa*)

The Sangha disciple of the Blessed One (*bhagavato sāvakaṅgho*) is:

- i. of good conduct (*supaṭipanna*)
- ii. of upright conduct (*ujupaṭipanno*)
- iii. of wise conduct (*ñayapaṭipanno*)
- iv. of pure conduct (*samīcipaṭipanno*)

- v. worthy of offering (*āhuṇeyyo*)
- vi. worthy of presentations (*pāhuṇeyyo*)
- vii. worthy of oblations (*dakkhiṇeyyo*)
- viii. worthy of respectful salutations (*añjalīkaraṇīyo*)
- ix. an excellent field on which to sow the seeds of merit (*anuttaram puññākettam lokassa*)

Aṅguttara Nikāya Tikanipāta 20/267

Explanation

The term Sangha here means the noble disciples who have won through to the path. The first, of good conduct, has the widest range of meaning. It means, for instance, conduct or practice that is consistent with the Middle Way, being neither too lax nor too strict.

The second, of upright conduct, implies the virtue of sincerity, as opposed to hypocrisy; and also the virtue of open-mindedness, having no secrecy.

The third, of wise conduct, has the interpretation as conduct or practice leading to knowledge. It is also sometimes interpreted as ‘conduct or practice that is based on the Dhamma or righteousness’.

The fourth, of pure conduct, means conduct worthy of respect or homage.

The fifth, worthy of offerings, implies things taken to the place of the persons to whom they are to be offered out of respect.

The sixth, worthy of presentations, means things offered to guests, such as food and drink.

The seventh, worthy of oblations, means things for religious purposes, such as for making merit.

The eighth, respectful salutations, means to join hands in a token of respect or to prostrate.

The Sangha is compared to an excellent field, one with rich soil that produces a bounteous harvest. This is due to the virtues of purity and nobility of the Sangha. The seeds or merit sown through the Sangha are like seeds sown on a field of the richest soil, where the richest returns can be expected.

Sets of ten

1. Perfections (*pāramī*)

- i. charity (*dāna*)
- ii. morality (*sīla*)
- iii. renunciation of sensual pleasures (*nekkhamma*)
- iv. wisdom (*paññā*)
- v. effort or energy (*virīya*)
- vi. patience or forbearance (*khanti*)

- vii. truthfulness (*sacca*)
 - viii. resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*)
 - ix. loving kindness (*mettā*)
 - x. equanimity (*upekkhā*)
- Khuddaka Nikāya Cariyāpīṭaka 33/596*

Explanation

Literally, the term *pāramī* is supposed to come from *parama*, meaning supreme, referring to the virtues or practices that are supreme. It is said that all Buddhas must have developed these supreme qualities as they became Buddhas-to-be in their remote former lives; it is not until they have attained to the perfection of these supreme qualities that they can be enlightened as Buddhas.

Three grades

These ten perfections were classified into three groups or grades, making thirty in all. The three groups were called, in progressive grades, perfections (*pāramī*), near perfections (*upapāramī*) and then super-perfections (*paramattha-pāramī*). The criterion for such a gradation (notes His Royal Highness the late Supreme Patriarch Prince Vajirañāṇavarorasa) is, however, difficult to understand. Even among the compilers of ancient scriptures there is often disagreement. Charity, for example, is expanded thus: giving money or other materials is the (ordinary) perfection; giving part of the body the near (intermediate) perfection; and giving one's life the the super-perfection. This is only one way of grading. Morality may also be classified by this standard. Thus the observance of morality that needs the sacrifice of money and other materials may be regarded as the (ordinary or elementary) perfection; if it requires the sacrifice of part of the body, then it may be called near (or intermediate) perfection; and with life at stake it is super-perfection.

It has been noted (by His Royal Highness the late Supreme Patriarch Prince Vajirañāṇavarorasa) that it is possible to divide the rest in accordance with this standard, but that this proves to be an over-simplification and cannot but be clumsy in some cases. His idea of classification is that the perfections accumulated by the Buddha-to-be in the very remote past, when he was sometimes born as a human being and at other times an animal, should be grouped as the (ordinary or elementary) perfections; those observed in the ten lives before the final one, when on nine out of ten occasions he was born as a human being (one as a powerful serpent), should come as the intermediate or near perfections; those fulfilled in his life as Prince Siddhattha (before his Enlightenment) may be termed the super-perfections.

Life stories of the Buddha

This mode of division complies in part with the way of dividing the accounts concerning the Buddha by the compilers of ancient scriptures. According to that division, there are three categories of accounts regarding the Buddha's life stories, which were divided on the basis of time: remote stories (*dūre*), the not-so-remote (*avidūre*) and those near in time (*santike*). However, there is still a difference in the period of time used for division. The remote stories refer to those from the time he made the decision to become a Buddha in the time of the Buddha named Dīpaṅkara to his birth in the Tusita heaven after the birth as Prince Vessantara; the not-so-remote

begin from his rebirth from the Tusita heaven to his enlightenment; the near starts from his enlightenment to his passing away. And this is not the only way of dividing such stories.

It is held that these perfections are to be fulfilled not only by the Buddha but also by the Noble Disciples, the difference being, however, that the time required for the Noble Disciples to master them (the perfections) would be shorter than that taken by the Buddha because unlike the Buddha, they did not have to pioneer the way or be the founder of the path to deliverance.

The following are the manifestations of those perfections of the Buddha in his final life:

- The dedication of his life for the sake of humankind reveals the perfections of charity and loving kindness.
- His renouncing the world is his virtue of renunciation.
- The observance of the discipline of a bhikkhu’s life is his perfection of morality.
- His dedication and striving in the face of hardships are patience and effort.
- His steadfastness of aim and truthfulness to his original purpose are reflections of resolution and truthfulness.
- The poise or balance of mind, being not swayed by desire or aversion in the face of temptations and threats, is equanimity.
- His discernment, the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, what is distraction and what is conducive to the path, which led him ultimately to enlightenment, is the quality of wisdom.

Sets of twelve

1. Karma

A. Based on time

- i. the present (*diṭṭhadhammavedanīya*)
- ii. the immediate future (*uppajjavedanīya*)
- iii. the distant future (*aparāparavedanīya*)
- iv. the absolved (*ahosi*)

B. Based on function

- i. the producer (*janaka*)
- ii. the strengthener (*upatthambhaka*)
- iii. the enfeebler (*upapīlaka*)
- iv. the killer (*upaghātaka* or *upaccheda*)

C. Based on intensity

- i. the weighty (*garu*)
- ii. the habitual (*āciñña* or *bahula*)
- iii. the closing (*āsanna*)
- iv. the mechanical (*katattā*)

Visuddhimagga Kaṅkhāvitaranavisuddhiniddesa Tatiyabhāga 223

Explanation

The term karma (or *kamma* in Pali) refers especially to the will or volition that is behind all actions, be they physical, verbal or mental. But in general, it can be used to mean all deeds, words and thoughts (including emotions and all other mental faculties), both good and evil. It has, therefore, a neutral sense.

Based on time

The present – this is the karma that produces its fruits in the present existence due either to its great strength or to its nature to ripen within this period.

The immediate future – due either to its milder strength or its own nature, this kind of karma will be prevented from bearing its fruit in the present existence and has to wait for an opening in the next one.

The distant future – this is somewhat like the second and will produce its fruits in the existence after the next one at the soonest or in some existence after that. But it is supposed never to expire and will relentlessly pursue its doer, never giving up the chase.

The absolved. This is said to be the karma that is prevented from giving effect until the time-limit for it has run out. Thereafter it becomes automatically absolved. It is compared to a seed that has been kept for so long a period that its potential for growth is eventually lost. Another explanation given is that it is karma that has borne its fruits to the fullest extent and so loses its strength. An analogy is made with the prisoner who has served his term of imprisonment and is freed, with all his past crimes absolved, being thereby not in a position to be charged by anyone with that same crime again.

Based on function

The producer – this is compared to a father (or a mother) in its function of leading a person to a new birth in another plane of existence. It is then said to have fulfilled its function (although its effects may still continue to exert their influence long after that, perhaps the whole period of that existence).

The supporter or strengthener – this is compared to a nurse who helps feed the baby after the mother has given it birth. The supporter helps strengthen the influence of the producer in the same manner and kind established by the producer. Thus, when the producer is of a good kind, giving a birth in a good family, the supporter increases the person's opportunity of doing good, making him or her progress steadily in life. When, to the contrary, a person is born amidst unfavourable circumstances, the supporter worsens the situation, making him or her more evil with the passage of time. In the former case, the situation is, as it is called in the scriptures, 'come bright, go bright' (*joti jotiparāyano*), where as the latter is 'come dark, go dark' (*tamo tamaparāyano*).

The enfeebler or weakener – this is the opposite of the strengthener or supporter, and, as its name implies, serves to counteract the influence of the producer, weakening its power or shortening the time of its bearing fruit. When the producer endows a person

with a good birth, the enfeebler minimises the opportunity inherent in such a birth. If the producer endows a bad birth, the enfeebler acts against the bad influence due to such a birth and gradually leads a person away to a more favourable environment. In the former case, it is what is called ‘come bright, go dark’ (in Pali *joti tamaparāyano*), while the latter is ‘come dark, go bright’ (*tamo jotiparāyano*).

The killer – this is in the same category as the enfeebler since it functions against the influence of the producer. But it is markedly different in that, unlike the enfeebler, it does not wield its influence in a gradual, unconscious manner but imposes itself on the existing kind of karma, abruptly ending the others’ function while introducing its own. An instance of this may be seen in the case of a wealthy or prosperous man who, out of impulse, has committed a murder. A split second of his loss of self-control changes him into a murderer, depriving him of all his wealth, social status and opportunity to progress in his work, and sending him into a place of confinement for a number of years. This is the influence of killer karma on the evil side. On the meritorious side, an instance may be seen in the case of a person who, having committed a crime, has later volunteered to risk his own life for the sake of many. His sacrifice has proved to be of such a remarkable result that it outweighs his former evil and exempts him from the penalty that would otherwise have been enforced upon him.

Based on intensity

The weighty – this is the first kind with regard to degree of intensity or strength. On the good or meritorious side, it is described as the achievement of meditation on the *jhāna* level, which abruptly stops (though in some cases may not annihilate) the tyrannical influence of the mental hindrances or other evils for as long as the person wishes to remain in that level of spiritual development.

(Note: These are examples on the spiritual aspect. In the lower, material one, an act of treason might be supposed to correspond to weighty karma on the evil side, whereas an act of heroism in defense of one’s country should also be considered as being outstanding on the meritorious side.)

The habitual – this is the next in terms of intensity or strength, and is the most significant for most people, who have not performed weighty karma, either of a good or evil aspect, whether on the spiritual or physical plane. It also serves as the foundation for the third – the closing. It is an obvious fact that what a person is can be to a greater extent determined by his or her own habits, which here include tendencies, aptitudes, emotions and character or, more precisely, his or her individuality. This is due also to the influences of association or environment. Unless an individual has exceptional self-control or immunity, the person in the midst of an evil environment is susceptible to the evil atmosphere and will become more evil with time. This is true also in the case of a good atmosphere.

The closing – this is the karma people perform on their deathbed or when they know their days are numbered. This kind of karma is to a great extent based on the nature of the habitual. If a person is habituated to doing evil over many years, it is less likely that he or she would be blessed with closing karma of the good kind. On the other hand, when a person is used to doing good for most of their life, it is unlikely they

would be carried away by an evil closing karma on their deathbed. In some rare cases when a habitually evil person is reminded on his deathbed of some small good he had done a long time ago and then dies with his mind dwelling on it, certainly he is due to a better plane of existence through the energy of his closing karma. But his enjoyment is sure to be short-lived, being soon overrun by his accumulation of evil. This is also true in the reverse case of a habitually good person who, while dying, is by chance reminded of some small evil and dies with an evil state of mind.

The mechanical – this is the weakest of the four. It implies an act that has the least support of intention, one that is done without any purpose, design or objective or almost without any effort. Its influence is both weakly felt and short-lived. However, this kind of karma sometimes has another shade of meaning, when it refers to an action that produces a greater result than that intended. The result may be more negative or more positive than was the intention. In such cases, karma cannot be judged solely on the measure of its effect, but the intention or motive behind it must also be taken into consideration. It is compared to an arrow shot by a madman. In such cases there is little probability that it will hit anything or anyone.

Another instance may be seen in the Vinaya or the Rules of Monastic Discipline for bhikkhus, in which there are also prescribed some kinds of penalty imposed upon those who commit a wrong even through ignorance or without any intention.

But there may be another shade of meaning for this kind of karma, for it may be used to include an action that produces greater result than the intention or effort involved. The result thereof may be more serious or more advantageous, as the case may be. Parents who unintentionally inflict an injury upon their child out of their own intention merely to punish it may be cited as an instance. In such a case karma cannot be judged solely on the measure of its effects, but the intention or motive behind it must also be taken into consideration.

Note:

1. The law of karma is in fact the law of cause and effect on the immaterial (spiritual) plane. It is to teach people that there is no cause without an effect and vice versa and that this is true no less on the spiritual plane than the material one. The point or essence is directed to the mind, the volition or will or motive lying underneath each and every action, whether physical, verbal or mental. A person's responsibility, thus, is limited to taking care of his or her own mind (thoughts and emotions). People are not forced to be answerable to outside factors, which are beyond their control.

2. The analysis and classification of karma in the manner shown and discussed above serves positively to clarify the seemingly confusing instances of injustice seen in our everyday life, and negatively to prevent an extremely materialistic viewpoint, where the existence of good and evil are questioned. An understanding of the workings of this law will help encourage people to do good and then to wait with the ultimate certainty of its infallible function. It also strengthens people's faith in the Buddha's Enlightenment and his proclamation of the law. They will be endowed with farsightedness and will not be inclined to judge things on the basis of a single life-

time. With such a reasonable faith they are sure to be firmly established on the Buddha's Path.

3. It should be noted that the division of karma into twelve kinds above is done for the sake of analysis only. Any karma may be of more than one of the three overall types. For example, based on time it might be in the present, producing its fruits in the present existence. Based on function, it might be of the killer type, imposing itself on an existing kind of karma, abruptly ending its function while introducing its own. And based on intensity, it may be weighty, or of the highest degree of intensity. Thus it can be regarded as three kinds of karma at the same time when it is judged on the three bases laid down for such

3 LIFE STORIES OF THE BUDDHA'S DISCIPLES

This section offers short summaries of the lives of the Buddha's disciples. As there is no scripture that tells the full story of the life of any disciple, scholars (many of them Buddhist monks) have drawn these biographies together from fragments scattered in various parts of the Pali canon. More is known about some disciples than others, so the length of entries varies.

The material presented here follows the structure of the *Curriculum for Dhamma Studies, Secondary Level*, which covers forty disciples. This handbook draws on two works by His Royal Highness the late Supreme Patriarch Prince Vajirañāṇavararasa: *Biographies of Some of the Noble Disciples, Book One*, which covers eight disciples, and *Biographies of Some of the Noble Disciples, Book Two*, which covers an additional eleven. Other books consulted include the very readable *Great Disciples of the Buddha* by Nyanapaika Thera and Hellmuth Hecker edited and with an introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi, which covers in greater detail six of the disciples as well as providing shorter entries on twelve great women followers of the Buddha. For the twenty-one disciples covered in the *Curriculum* but not in any of these books, a number of specialists dictionaries and encyclopaedias of Buddhism were consulted, but the accounts therein were often brief and sometimes conflicting. There is a need for a scholarly and readable account of all forty of these disciples in English following on from *Great Disciples of the Buddha* noted above.

Traditionally the life stories of the disciples are told following a set pattern. In his introduction to *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, Bhikkhu Bodhi describes this as 'their past-life backgrounds and early experiences, their struggles for enlightenment, their attainments and teachings, their activities as members of the Buddha's retinue, and (when known) the manner of their death.' The *Curriculum for Dhamma Studies* sets out nine headings, using these where details are available and often merging several together. The headings are:

1. Old status, which covers the given name of the individual, the names of parents and their caste, and the disciple's place of birth
2. Background before becoming a monk, which covers education, marriage, profession, practice of asceticism, etc.
3. The reason for becoming a monk, which covers their motivation for renouncing the world and leaving their previous religion
4. The attainment of Supreme Dhamma, which covers the circumstances in which they became stream enterers and their path to reach the highest state of arahant
5. The propagation of Buddhism, which covers the support and help they gave in spreading the teachings of the Buddha
6. *Etadagga*, which sets out the special trait for which the Buddha praised them as being foremost among monks. (Forty-one monks are mentioned in the Pali canon as being foremost in one way or another.)
7. *Punyadhikara*, which covers past lives, especially the life in which a previous Buddha predicted that the individual would one day become a disciple of Gotama Buddha praised as foremost for a special trait
8. *Dhammavada*, which covers a teaching that the disciple delivered
9. *Parinibbāna*, which covers the circumstances of the disciple's final passing.

These headings have been adapted for this book and merged where this is suitable for a particular biography. With regard to the Buddha of the past who made the prediction that an individual would one day become a disciple of Gotama Buddha, this can be summed up briefly here. Two disciples, Sārīputta and Moggallāna, expressed their original aspiration and received the prediction from the Buddha Anomadassī, the eighteenth counting backwards from the Buddha Gotama. All other disciples received this prediction during the time of the Buddha Padumuttra, the fifteenth Buddha counting backward from the Buddha Gotama. The previous life stories, generally not included here, underscore the basic teaching of Buddhism that our present short life is the result of our actions in many rounds of rebirth. The disciples often seem to attain stream entry and even arhantship in a short space of time in their biographies, but this is sometimes explained as the fruit of good deeds in many previous life times that led them to become a disciple of the Buddha and gain spiritual progress through his teaching.

Bhikkhu Bodhi suggests that the proper way to read the lives of the disciples is as ‘an exercise in contemplation rather than as an enterprise of objective scholarship’. He notes that ‘The Buddha says that contemplation of the noble disciples is an essential part of the meditative life To contemplate the noble ones, who broke the bonds of egotism and reached the heights of purity and wisdom, is a great encouragement for those who still find themselves far from deliverance. By their example these exalted persons inspire us with confidence in the emancipating power of the Dhamma.’

1. The Story of the Venerable Aññakoṇḍañña

Family background and name

The first Noble Disciple, later to be called Aññakoṇḍañña, was called simply Koṇḍañña at the time of his birth. He was born into a wealthy Brahmin family, in the village of Doṇavatthu, near the town of Kapilavatthu. As a young man he completed a study of the Vedas (the holy scriptures of Brahmanism) together with a study of the meaning of physical marks on the body, and how to use these to identify an infant who would become a ‘*mahāpurisa*’ or great man.

At the time of the birth of prince Siddhattha, King Suddhodana invited 108 Brahmins to the traditional feast at his palace; eight were selected to foretell the future of the royal infant by interpreting the physical marks on his body.

Although younger than the rest, the Brahmin Koṇḍañña was invited to the feast and selected as one of the eight. The other seven Brahmins, having read the marks on the infant's body, stated ambiguously that he would have two choices: to be either a universal king if he chose to live as a layman or to be a Buddha should he prefer the life of a monk. However, the Brahmin Koṇḍañña, being certain of his knowledge, affirmed that the infant was sure to renounce the world and consequently would be a Buddha. From that time Koṇḍañña resolved that, if he lived to the day when the renunciation took place, he would follow in the footsteps of the prince.

The name ‘Aññakoṇḍañña’ came from an utterance of the Buddha himself. When Koṇḍañña heard that Prince Siddhattha had renounced the world and was undertaking austere practices, he persuaded four other young Brahmins to go with him to attend

upon the prince. These five took up the homeless life of ascetics and followed rigid practices in the traditional way of asceticism. Their purpose in so doing was to hear what the Buddha-to-be would teach them when he attained enlightenment. Thus, Koṇḍañña was present when the Buddha gave his First Discourse (or First Sermon) at the Deer Park of Isipatana near the town of Benares. While the Buddha was delivering this Discourse, there arose in Koṇḍañña transcendental insight into the nature of himself and all other phenomena, through which he became a stream enterer (Pali: *sotāpanna*) or one who has entered the Stream of Enlightenment. The Buddha, knowing that Koṇḍañña had become a stream enterer, exclaimed: ‘Koṇḍañña has understood; Koṇḍañña has understood’ (Pali: *Annasi vata bho koṇḍañño*). From that time onward he was known as Aññākoṇḍañña, as the Pali word ‘*aññā*’ means ‘has understood’.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of Supreme Dharma

Koṇḍañña (as noted above) became a stream enterer on hearing the Buddha’s First Discourse in the Deer Park. Having become a stream enterer, he asked to ‘go forth’ in his teaching. This was the first request for ordination. The Buddha granted it, saying, ‘Come, O Bhikkhu, well-expounded is the Dhamma. Live a chaste life for the sake of the end of *dukkha* (sorrow).’ This was regarded as formal acceptance into the Sangha since there was at that time no ordination procedure. Aññākoṇḍañña, thus, became the first monk in Buddhism, and it was with his ordination that the Sangha was created. The Buddha’s acceptance of him began with the word ‘come’ (starting with ‘*Ehi*’). This way of ordination was called ‘*Ehibhikkhu-upasampada*’.

The Buddha delivered his Second Discourse on Anatta (the nature of the five aggregates), which is known as the *Anattalakkhana Sutta*. Hearing this Discourse, Aññākoṇḍañña reached the highest stage, becoming an arahant and winning through to the highest path of full and final enlightenment.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

After his enlightenment, the Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña went to Kapilavatthu. There he converted his nephew, Puṇṇa. (He was the son of Aññākoṇḍañña’s sister, Mantānī.) Puṇṇa became a great monk and teacher (see Puṇṇamantānī Thera below).

Outstanding quality

The Venerable Koṇḍañña was ranked foremost of all other monks with regard to his seniority. This was called in Pali ‘*rattannu*’, conveying the sense of being eldest and consequently having the widest experience. With long and varied experience in the affairs of the Sangha, he was equipped with managerial skill and able to lead and instruct other monks in adopting the right way of doing things; his advice was reliable and his instruction worthy of respect.

Final Nirvana

As he became advanced in years, the Venerable Aññākoṇḍañña found staying in a town unsuitable. So he bade farewell to the Buddha and went to live in a secluded place in the forest of Chaddanta, on the banks of a lake. The retirement suiting him, he stayed there until he passed away, which took place before the Buddha’s own passing.

2. The Story of Venerable Uruvelkassapa Thera

Family background and name

His family name was Kassapa and he was born into the Kassapa clan of the Brahmin caste. He was born before the Buddha, and thus was older than him. He had two younger brothers, and the three are said to have completed their study of the Vedas together. Later in life, all three brothers became ascetics, all of the kind described as having matted hair, who practised fire rituals.

Uruvelkassapa's name comes from the district of Uruvelā, where he set up his hermitage or ashram. The middle brother settled near a bend in the river Ganges and was accordingly called Nadīkassapa, from the term '*nadī*' meaning river. The hermitage of the youngest was situated in the district of Gayā; hence his name, Gayākassapa. Uruvelkassapa gathered some five hundred disciples at his ashram, while the middle brother had some three hundred and the youngest around two hundred.

Ordination into Buddhism

Having sent forth in various directions the first group of his disciples for their missionary work, the Buddha, seeing the potential for enlightenment of a number of people living in the kingdom of Magadha, thought it advisable to establish the Dhamma in that land. But he also realised that his task would be made easier by the conversion of the Uruvelā hermit, who was held in high esteem by the people of Magadha. With this aim, he proceeded along the path to Uruvelā, and on arriving at the hermitage, asked the hermit Kassapa for a dwelling place within the retreat.

Unwilling to welcome the Buddha, but also not wishing to be seen to be rude, the hermit decided to make the Buddha fearful of staying there. So he said that the only place was in the fire hall, where the sacred fire was kept, but that a terrible serpent spirit lived there. The Buddha agreed to pass the night there, and was found to be unharmed the next day. The followers of Kassapa saw this as a wonder and began to treat him with respect. The Buddha then caused a number of strange events to happen. For example, when the hermits tried to chop wood for the fire sacrifice, the wood could not be cut. Then the Buddha entered the river and the waters parted where he was standing. Kassapa realised that the Buddha was superior and that he was suffering from false pride. He and his followers cast their fire-worshipping vessels and other belongings into the river, where they floated away. They asked for ordination and the Buddha ordained them all as monks.

Now the second brother, whose hermitage was situated down river, saw the discarded vessels and other objects and thought some harm had come to his brother. He rushed to Uruvelā with his followers. Seeing his brother and the others had become monks and having been convinced of the supremacy of this kind of chaste life, he and his disciples also asked for ordination, which was given by the Buddha. In a similar manner the youngest brother and his followers became followers of the Buddha and were given ordination.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

The Buddha and his group of new disciples, the former hermits, proceeded after some time to the district of Gayāsisa, by the side of the river Gayā. There he called them together and delivered the Discourse which is known as the *Ādittapariyāya Sutta*, meaning the discourse on burning. In short, he described how all of the senses – sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and also thought are burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fires of lust, hate and delusion; burning with birth, ageing and death; burning with grief, lamentation, bodily ills, sorrow and despair. He taught how freedom from attachment causes the burning to cease. While the Buddha was delivering this Discourse, the monks all attained the highest path and became arahants.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

The Buddha together with his followers proceeded to the town of Rājagaha, and stopped at the grove known as Latthivana. Having heard of the Buddha's arrival in the region, Bimbisāra, the King of Magadha, came with some of his men to call on the Buddha. In order to gain their interest, the Buddha asked Uruvelkassapa why he had given up his practice of the fire ritual. The former hermit explained why he had become a follower of the Buddha, and described his peaceful state without attachment. He then prostrated himself at the Buddha's feet, declaring three times in the presence of the gathering that the Blessed One (the Buddha) was his teacher and that he was the Blessed One's disciple. The newcomers' doubts were cleared and Buddha began to instruct them.

King Bimbisāra praised the sermon and declared himself an *upāsaka* or lay follower for life. He made a gift to the Buddha and his followers of a nearby royal bamboo grove as a serene place where they could retire. Many people in Magadha, on the example of the king, became followers of the Buddha.

Outstanding quality

The Venerable Uruvelkassapa was ranked by the Buddha as foremost among all other monks for having the greatest number of disciples. This was the result of the virtues of generosity and benevolence, giving material help and guidance whenever and wherever they were needed.

Final nirvana

The Venerable Uruvelkassapa is mentioned only rarely after this in the scriptures. The place of his final passing is not known.

3. The Story of Venerable Sārīputta Thera

Family background and name

He was called Upatissa and was the son of the Brahmin Vaṅganta, who was the headman of Upatissagama village, not far from the town of Rājagaha. It seems his name was taken from the place where he grew up. His mother was named Sārī; the name Sārīputta, by which he was later known, means son of Sārī. His family was wealthy and Upatissa was educated in the arts and sciences of his time.

Ordination into Buddhism

Upatissa had a friend, Kolita, from an equally wealthy family, whose father was the leader of nearby Kolutagam village. (He later became the Venerable Moggallāna Thera, whose story is told below.) The two friends enjoyed the entertainments of the nearby town of Rājagaha, attending plays and giving rewards to the actors. However, one day when they went to see an entertainment in the town for which a huge crowd had gathered, both were overcome by a feeling of unhappiness. Looking down at the crowd from a hill, they saw that there was no point in seeking after amusements. In less than a hundred years, all these people would be lost to the world, entering the mouth of the king of death. They both saw that they should strive for freedom from this mortal condition. They went to see a teacher, Sañjaya, and completed their study with him, but were still unsatisfied. They agreed between themselves that if either should gain an understanding of the ultimate truth and attain the freedom for which they had both been striving, that he would tell the other.

The Buddha and his followers were at this time staying in the Bamboo Grove outside the city of Rājagaha. One day Upatissa saw the Venerable Assaji Thera, one of the group of five earliest followers of the Buddha, as he was collecting alms in the town. He was impressed by the monk's calm and noble appearance. Not wanting to disturb him while he was collecting alms, he followed him until he returned from his round. He then asked him who his teacher was and what he taught. Assaji Thera explained that he was a follower of the Sage of the Sākiya clan (the Buddha). He said he could not instruct the young man in detail, but could tell him the essence of the Buddha's teaching. Listening to the monk, Upatissa came to understand the law of cause and effect; that the cause of suffering is desire, and that the extinction of this effect is through the extinction of its cause. That all things spring from causes and cease to exist because of the extinction of those causes. On understanding this, he became a stream enterer. He asked where the Buddha was staying, and then went to find his friend Kolita so they could go together to meet the Buddha.

On hearing from Upatissa what he had learned, Kolita also became a stream enterer. The two friends reported this to their teacher, Sañjaya, and asked him to come with them to the Buddha, but he refused. They gathered other followers and went to the Bamboo Grove and asked for the 'going forth'. The Buddha granted all of them ordination.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Upatissa, later the Venerable Sārīputta, gained full enlightenment after fifteen days, becoming an arahant. (His friend Kolita was fully enlightened after seven days). He was staying with the Buddha at the time in the Sukarakhātā cave in Rājagaha. He reached his goal as the result of hearing the Buddha preach a sermon known as the *Vedanapariggaha Sutta* to a mendicant by the name of Dīghanakha.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Venerable Sārīputta was of great help to the Buddha in spreading his doctrine. He was ranked foremost among all other monks for his outstanding wisdom. Thus when monks came to take leave of the Buddha before going out on a journey to spread his teaching, they were told to go and see the Venerable Sārīputta first so that he could

give them instruction. He is sometimes called Dhammasenāpati, or the ‘Marshal of the Dhamma’ because when the Buddha was asked by Senā who acted as his marshal or general, he replied that it was Sārīputta, who turns the Wheel of the Law. He is sometimes praised along with Venerable Moggallāna. The Buddha is reported as saying to his monks: ‘Associate with Sārīputta and Moggallāna, O bhikkhus (monks); they are wise and helpful to their fellow bhikkhus. Sārīputta is like a mother giving birth to a child, whereas Moggallāna is like a nurse looking after the child. Sārīputta puts his fellow bhikkhus on the path of the stream enterer and Moggallāna advances them to the higher paths.’

Outstanding quality

Venerable Sārīputta was ranked foremost for his wisdom. It was said he could give a discourse on the First Sermon and the Four Noble Truths in as great a detail as the Buddha himself. When people from other religious groups argued against the teachings of the Buddha, Venerable Sārīputta was able to clearly explain the Buddha’s teachings and win over followers. It was said that at meetings of monks, Venerable Sārīputta would sit on the Buddha’s right side, whereas the Venerable Moggallāna would be on his left.

Final nirvana

The Venerable Sārīputta passed away before the Buddha. He bid farewell to the Buddha and travelled back to his home with his brother the Venerable Cunda. He fell ill shortly after his arrival home, but was able to convert his mother so that she became a stream enterer. On the dawn of the following day, he passed away. His brother, the Venerable Cunda, and his relatives, performed the cremation ceremony and Cunda brought his relics (the bits of bone and ash that remained after the body was cremated) back to the Buddha. The Buddha was staying at the Jetavana Grove in the town of Sāvattihī. He ordered that a stupa be constructed and had the relics enshrined there.

4. The Story of Venerable Moggallāna Thera

Family background and name

He was called Kolita, after Kolitagama village, where he was born. The village was situated near to the town of Rājagaha. His family were Brahmins and his father was the headman of the village. His mother’s name was Moggalli.

From boyhood he was a close friend of Upatissa (later to become the Venerable Sārīputta; see his story above). They were of the same age and from equally wealthy families. Both were born before the Buddha, and were thus older than he.

Ordination into Buddhism

The two friends’ stories are similar. They grew unhappy with their lives even though they had wealth and all the possessions they wanted. Visiting Rājagaha to attend an entertainment, they thought about death awaiting all the crowd of people gathered there and decided to try to find a deeper understanding of existence. They took up the life of mendicants together, and both became followers of the teacher Sañjaya. However, having learned all he could teach, they still felt unfulfilled. Upatissa heard the Buddha’s message from the monk Assaji, and told his friend Kolita. Both became

stream enterers, went to the place where the Buddha was staying and become ordained as monks.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Moggallāna attained full enlightenment seven days after his ordination. He had retired to the village of Kalvanamuttagāma in the kingdom of Maghadha for the sake of making efforts to advance his insight. However, he began to feel drowsy due to tiredness. The Buddha approached him and gave him instructions on how to overcome drowsiness. He also gave him instruction on the extinction of desire and attainment of enlightenment. By following the Buddha's instructions, Venerable Moggallāna attained arahantship on the same day.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Both Venerable Moggallāna and Venerable Sārīputta brought the Buddha's message to large numbers of people. The Buddha's praise of them for giving spiritual help to newcomers in the Sangha is described above. They were of great help to the Buddha in spreading the doctrine and establishing the Dhamma in various lands.

Outstanding quality

Venerable Moggallāna was proclaimed foremost among all other bhikkhus with regard to his psychic or supernormal powers. It was said that he could travel to the heavens and ask the celestial beings about the karma that had caused them to be born there, and likewise that he could travel to the dark realms of hell to meet the miserable beings there and ask them about the karma that had driven them to this terrible state. He used his psychic powers to suppress gangsters and other evil forces.

Final nirvana

Venerable Moggallāna Thera passed away in Kālasilā district in the kingdom of Magadha. He passed away before the Buddha, but fifteen days after Venerable Sārīputta Thera. The Buddha performed his cremation ceremony and ordered that a stupa be built to contain his relics at the village of Veluvana.

5. The Story of the Venerable Mahākassapa Thera

Family background and name

He was called Pippali, and was born of wealthy Brahmin parents in the village of Mahātiṭṭha, near Rājagaha, the capital city of the kingdom of Maghadha. His father was called Kapila, and was from the Mahāsāla family. The family probably belonged to the Kassapa gotra or clan, thus the name Kassapa.

Ordination into Buddhism

At the age of 20 he was married to Bhaddakāpilānī, the 16-year-old daughter of a Brahmin family as wealthy as his own. Both husband and wife agreed to turn away from sensual pleasures. They decided to abandon all their riches and take up a homeless life, giving all their property and vast wealth to relatives. They bought yellow cloth and black bowls from the market, and each shaved off the other's hair. They dressed in yellow robes and taking the black bowls to use as begging bowls they left their palatial home.

After walking together for a short period, they consulted each other and both agreed that people might misunderstand a man and woman travelling together in this way, and further each might prove a hindrance to the other's spiritual quest. They decided to go separate ways, and Bhaddakāpilānī arrived at a place where bhikkhunīs, or Buddhist nuns, were living and became a bhikkhunī herself.

The Buddha was at this time staying at Veluvana, near the city of Rājagaha. He had travelled out from there and was sitting in meditation under a banyan tree called Bahuputtakka, on the border between the towns of Rājagaha and Nālandā, when Kassapa first saw him. He was so impressed, he asked the Buddha to become his teacher. The Buddha admitted him to the order, giving him three instructions:

1. You should bear in mind, Kassapa, to be modest and obedient to every bhikkhu, be he an elder, one newly ordained or one in middle standing
2. Hearken to the Dhamma that is wholesome, listening to it and contemplating it
3. Be not without mindfulness of the body, always having the body as the subject of meditation.

This kind of ordination is sometimes called ordination with serious conditions or admonitions.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Kassapa returned to Rājagaha with the Buddha, walking behind him. On the way, when the Buddha wanted to sit beneath a tree, Kassapa took off his outer robe and folded it to make a seat for the Buddha. The Buddha then offered Kassapa his own outer robe to wear.

Kassapa gained arahantship on the seventh day after his ordination.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

The Buddha praised the Venerable Mahākassapa for being exemplary in the practice of contentment and being satisfied with little. Kassapa observed three kinds of austere practices. These were:

1. going out to collect alms for his food
2. dwelling in a forest
3. wearing as a robe rags that he had obtained from rubbish heaps.

The Buddha remarked that Kassapa was content with whatever robe, alms, shelter and medicine he obtained, without craving for more. He praised Kassapa for approaching lay families with a detached attitude, never seeking to become their acquaintance, or being bold or forward. The Buddha said that when a bhikkhu offers teachings thinking that he will impress people so that they will give him abundant offerings, this defiles the sermon. However, when a bhikkhu teaches so that people can hear, understand and willingly practise the Dhamma, the sermon is pure because it is based on compassion and good will. He gave Kassapa as an example of a bhikkhu who teaches in the latter way.

He also gave Kassapa as an example of a bhikkhu who never thought in a self-centred way: for example, may they give to me only and not to others, or may they give me

more and others less, or may they give what is good and not what is poor, or may they give me sooner not later, or with respect not without respect. Because he did not think in this way, he was always content and did not experience any grief or sorrow at what he was given or the way he was given it. Because of this practice of contentment and being satisfied with little, Mahākassapa Thera was widely respected and honoured by lay followers.

The Venerable Mahākassapa lived until after the Buddha's passing away. After the Buddha's cremation, he suggested the convening of a General Council to recite and classify the Master's words, standardising them for succeeding generations. This he said was in accordance with the Buddha's own words: 'Whatever Dhamma I have set forth and whatever Vinaya (Discipline) I have laid down, those shall be your teacher when I am gone'. This meeting, the first of its kind, was called the First Council.

By his painstaking efforts in initiating the First Council, the Venerable Mahākassapa selflessly shouldered the responsibility of preserving the Dhamma for succeeding generations.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha ranked the Venerable Mahākassapa as foremost among all other monks for his austere practices.

Final nirvana

Venerable Mahākassapa lived to be very old. He is said to have been 120 years old at the conclusion of the First Council. He travelled to the Kukkuṭagiri mountains where he passed away.

6. The story of Venerable Mahākaccāyana Thera

Family background and name

He was the son of a Brahmin, who was the advisor of King Caṇḍhapajjota in the city of Ujjenī, in the kingdom of Avantī. His father was named Tirītavaccha, and belonged to the clan of Kaccāna or Kaccāyana. As a baby the future disciple was called Kañcanamānava by his mother, because his skin was golden in colour. He completed the study of the Vedas by the time he reached manhood. On the death of his father, he succeeded him as royal advisor to King Caṇḍhapajjota.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma and ordination into Buddhism

The king heard word of the Buddha's teaching and the good it brought to his followers. He decided to invite the Buddha to preach and establish the Dhamma in his land and sent his royal adviser to meet him. Setting out with seven attendants, Kaccāyana arrived at the city of Sāvattihī, where the Buddha was staying at the Jetavana monastery. While listening to the Buddha's sermon, all eight attained the highest level, arahantship. Kaccāyana then asked the Buddha if they could all be ordained as monks and the Buddha granted all eight ordination.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Kaccāyana Thera invited the Buddha to return with him, but the Buddha replied that the king's wish to establish the Dhamma in his lands would be best fulfilled by

Kaccāyana Thera and the other seven monks preaching the Buddha's message in Ujjenī. This they did and were successful in impressing the king and establishing the Dhamma in his land. Having done so, they returned to the Buddha.

Much later in Sukhandha forest, near the town of Madhurā, Mahākaccāyana Thera was approached by King Avantīputra, ruler of the kingdom of Madhurā, regarding the Brahmins' claim of superiority over other castes. Mahākaccāyana Thera explained that this was an empty claim and that all four castes are equal for the following five reasons:

1. Of the four castes, that caste with the most wealth will dominate the others and those with less wealth will approach them in a subservient way.
2. People of all castes who follow the wrong channels of conduct will after death enter into the realms of misery.
3. People of all castes who follow the channels of right conduct will after death enter into the realms of bliss.
4. People of all castes who commit theft or adultery or carry out any other misconduct will be punished.
5. People of all castes who accept the homeless life of a monk and follow the law of moral conduct and righteousness will be respected, provided for and protected.

Delighted with the answer, the king declared himself a lay follower, taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

Outstanding quality

The Venerable Mahākaccāyana was ranked foremost among other monks in the art of explaining the teachings of the Buddha. He was skilled in giving longer explanations of the Buddha's brief or summarised teachings in order to help others to understand them, and likewise was able to summarise lengthy and detailed teachings for the sake of quick reference or memorising.

Final nirvana

Nothing is known of Venerable Mahākaccāyana's final nirvana except that his passing was after that of the Buddha.

7. The story of Venerable Mogharāja Thera

Family background and name

He was born before the Buddha into a Brahmin family. During his schooling, he studied under a Brahmin called Bāvarī, adviser to King Pasendi. Later Bāvarī became tired of the life of the householder and retired from his office at court to become a hermit. Some of Bāvarī's pupils, including the youth Mogharāja, accompanied him to the forest and dwelt with him in his hermitage.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

The Brahmin Bāvarī heard that a prince of the Sākiya people called Gotama had gained enlightenment and through his teachings had won many supporters. He decided to send 16 of his followers, including Mogharāja, to meet the Buddha, giving each of them a question to ask, using this as a way to measure the Buddha's wisdom.

The Buddha answered each question in turn, setting out his teachings. Mogharāja tried twice to ask his question, but the Buddha indicated that he should wait. He was the fifteenth to ask his question, which was ‘In what matter should I contemplate so that death does not see me?’ The Buddha replied ‘Always be mindful, Mogharāja, contemplating the world as void, and uproot the view of self. In this way you can be beyond the reach of death. It is in this way that death cannot see you.’

At the end of each question, contemplating the Buddha’s words, the first fifteen youths were emancipated from all pollutions and freed from attachment. However the sixteenth person sent, an older man called Piṅgiya, was thinking of Bāvarī and wishing that he could be present to listen to such excellent teaching, instead of fully contemplating the Buddha’s words. Thus, he was distracted by affection for his own teacher and was thereby unable to free his mind from passion and defilement. They all asked for ordination, which the Buddha granted.

Then Piṅgiya took leave of the Buddha and went back to Bāvarī to repeat to him the answers to the questions. After some time he returned to the Buddha and after listening to further instruction attained arhantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

The Venerable Mogharāja Thera played an important role in propagating the teachings of the Buddha, and his life has served as a model for future generations.

Outstanding quality

Mogharāja was declared by the Buddha as foremost among wearers of rough clothing such as robes made of discarded or coarse fabric or of dull colour.

8. The story of Venerable Rādha Thera

Family background and name

He was born in a Brahmin family in the city of Rājagaha.

Ordination into Buddhism

Late in his life Rādha went to a monastery where he performed various duties. One day the Buddha saw him and noticed that he was lean and of sallow complexion. On being asked, he told the Buddha that he wanted to be ordained but there was as yet no one who would grant him this wish. He pined away due to his sorrow.

The Buddha then called the monks together and asked if anyone could recall any beneficial deed done by the Brahmin. The Venerable Sārīputta said that he recalled being given a ladle of food by the Brahmin one day when he was going for his round in the town of Rājagaha. ‘It is good, Sārīputta’, the Buddha said, ‘a virtuous person is to be grateful. You can then give the Brahmin ordination’.

The Buddha, thus, instituted a new method of ordination in which a motion or proposal is made to assembled monks. The proposal must be made once and then repeated three more times. This method of ordination is called *Ñatticatuttha kamma*, meaning the fourfold activity beginning with the submitting of a motion. This was a change from the previous method of ordination, where the person to be ordained

uttered passages taking the Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha) as his refuge. Before Rādha, all monks had been ordained by the Buddha himself, when he uttered the pronouncement beginning ‘*Ehi Bhikkhu*’ (Pali: ‘come, o monk’). From this time onward ordination was carried out through an assembly of monks, with at least five monks required to be present. Detailed prerequisites and procedures were established for ordination.

The person who wishes to be ordained must have a preceptor or *upajjhāya*, who is a competent monk and has been ordained for at least ten years. It is the preceptor’s role to teach and examine the applicant. In Rādha’s case, this role was taken by the Venerable Sārīputta. The new monk is instructed in the preliminary knowledge and duties concerning the monastic discipline and is educated in the Dhamma and the discipline for at least five years, during which he remains with his preceptor.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

After ordination, the Venerable Rādha one day approached the Buddha and asked for a brief sermon by which he would be able to retire from society and be alone and dedicated to mind development. The Buddha giving him the instructions said: ‘Whatever is the tempter, Rādha, you must remove all delight in it. What is the tempter? The five aggregates – form, sensation, perception, thought-emotion, and consciousness are all tempters. They are impermanent, in a state of flux and ownerless. They are destined to decline and decay. Once they have appeared, they are doomed to disappear. You must remove all delight in forms, sensations, perceptions, thought-emotions and consciousness.’

Having been thus instructed, Venerable Rādha took leave of the Buddha and accompanied his preceptor the Venerable Sārīputta to various places until he later attained arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

The Buddha asked the Venerable Sārīputta about Rādha’s character. The Venerable Sārīputta praised him saying that Venerable Rādha was very obedient and docile; he was ready to follow whatever instructions and prohibitions were given him, never being angry or having any ill will. The Buddha cited Venerable Rādha to other monks, saying that they should follow his example. There should not be any feeling of irritation or anger when an instruction was given pointing out their shortcomings. Those wise men who admonish and reprimand, pointing out one’s deficiencies, should be regarded as those pointing out a treasure to one.

Outstanding quality

The Venerable Rādha was praised by the Buddha as being foremost among monks who were able to realise in depth the meaning of even a brief instruction.

Final nirvana

Rādha Thera became a monk when he was already elderly. No details are known of his final passing.

9. The story of Venerable Puṇṇamantānī Thera

Family background and name

He was born of a Brahmin family from the village of Doṇavatthu, near Kapilavatthu, which was also the village of the Venerable Aññakoṇḍañña; his mother, Mantānī, was Aññakoṇḍañña's sister. His given name was Puṇṇa, and he is often referred to as Puṇṇamantānīputra, or Puṇṇa son of Mantānī.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

He was ordained by Aññakoṇḍañña and after a period of strenuous exertion attained arahantship. He was praised for ten virtues: contentment, being satisfied with little, staying in a secluded place, retirement from association, being bent on exertion, and being perfect in precepts, meditation, wisdom, deliverance and deliverance-insight.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

He became well known for these qualities and his abilities as a preacher, and gained many followers, instructing them in these virtues. When the Buddha came from Rājagaha to Sāvattihī, Puṇṇamantānī visited him and was taught the Dhamma in the Buddha's own special apartment (*gandhakuti*). Hearing of his fame, the Venerable Sārīputta wished to talk with him, and came upon him unknowingly in the grove just south of Sāvattihī known as Andhavana, which was used by monks as a retreat. Not knowing who the monk was, he questioned him on the seven practices of purity. Puṇṇamantānī used an analogy to explain how the seven practices of purity lead to absolute extinction. If the king needed to travel on urgent business from Sāvattihī to Sāket, he explained, he might do so with a relay of seven royal cars, each taking him part of the distance. Likewise the seven practices already mentioned with regard to purity is each like a royal car, transmitting a person to absolute extinction in relays. The two elders were delighted when each learned the other's identity and appreciated each other's wisdom.

Outstanding quality

The Venerable Puṇṇamantānī was praised by the Buddha as one of the foremost monks experienced in the art of preaching.

10. The story of Venerable Kāludāyī Thera

Family background and name

He was the son of a minister of Kapilavatthu, and was born on the same day as the Buddha, the two growing up together as close friends. The Buddha's father, King Suddhodana, after his son renounced the world, made Kāludāyī one of his most trusted counsellors. It is said that he was called Udāyī because he was born on a day when the citizens were full of joy, and Kāla because of his slightly dark colour, the two words making the name Kāludāyī.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

When King Suddhodana learned that his son had attained Buddhahood and was preaching to the people of Rājagaha, he wished to see him. He sent several ministers with large retinues to bring the Buddha to Kapilavatthu, but on hearing the Buddha's sermons they became arahants and forgot their mission. He then asked Kāludāyī to invite the Buddha to the town that was his former home, allowing him to join the

Order. Kāludāyī set out for Rājagaha and approaching the Buddha and listening to his sermon, he attained arahantship and was ordained.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

When the most pleasant season arrived, Kāludāyī judged the time was right to pass on the king's invitation to the Buddha to visit Kapilavatthu together with a number of monks. He described the beauties of the city and the season in wonderful verses. The Buddha accepted the invitation and on reaching the city, dwelt outside in the grove of Nigrodha. There he delivered sermons to his father King Suddhodhana and his aunt Pajāpatī, who had acted as his second mother in his early days. He established both of them on the path. Many citizens of Kapilavatthu became followers of the Buddha.

Outstanding quality

He was declared pre-eminent among monks in converting families and motivating them to have faith.

11. The Story of Venerable Nanda Thera

Family background and name

Nanda's father was King Suddhodana and his mother Pajāpatī (also known as Māhapajāpatī Gotamī); he was, thus, the Buddha's half brother. He was called 'Nanda' because his birth brought joy to his kinsmen. He was only a few days younger than the Buddha.

Ordination into Buddhism

During the time that the Buddha was visiting Kapilavatthu, Nanda's wedding to the beautiful Janapada Kalyānī was set to take place. The Buddha was invited to a meal in the palace, and after the meal and the blessing of the couple, the Buddha handed his black begging bowl to Nanda, got up from his seat and left. Nanda thought the Buddha would take the bowl back at any moment, so followed the Buddha without uttering a word. He thought the Buddha might take back the bowl at the head of the stairway, and then at the bottom of the stairway, and then at the end of the courtyard, but the Buddha walked on without looking back or uttering a word. Out of respect, Nanda silently followed him.

When the women of the palace told Janapada that Nanda, carrying the begging bowl, was following the Buddha out of the palace, she rushed to him with tears in her eyes, imploring him to hurry back to her. Though her pleading was like an arrow penetrating Nanda's heart, out of respect he silently carried the bowl, following behind the Buddha until they reached the grove where he was staying with his monks. The Buddha then turned and asked an unexpected question: 'Do you want to be ordained, Nanda?' Nanda's great respect made it impossible for him to refuse, and he heard himself saying 'Even so, Lord'. With this acceptance, the Buddha asked the monks to give ordination to Nanda then and there.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

After his ordination, Nanda was homesick and missed his bride-to-be. He told his fellow monks that he was unhappy in this life and wished to become a layman. When the Buddha heard word of this, he asked if it was true and Nanda replied that it was.

Exercising his spiritual powers, the Buddha then took Nanda to the celestial realm known as Tāvātimsa. On the way, he pointed out a lone female monkey in a burnt field. She was sitting forlornly and her ears, nose and tail had been cut off. The Buddha asked Nanda to remember this sight. On arriving at the Tāvātimsa celestial realm, the Buddha showed Nanda five hundred celestial maidens of unearthly beauty and grace. The Buddha asked Nanda to compare his bride-to-be with these maidens. Without hesitation, Nanda said that in comparison to the heavenly maidens, his bride-to-be was like the forlorn female monkey. The Buddha then surprised Nanda by saying that he would be the guarantor for bringing the celestial maidens to Nanda. In an instant, the Buddha brought Nanda back to the grove.

When the other monks learned that Nanda agreed to remain ordained in order to secure for himself these celestial maidens, they began to make fun of him. He became ashamed and learned the lesson that desire is endless and insatiable. This spurred him to genuinely renounce the world and he retired into seclusion, and through dedicated exertion soon realised the cessation of suffering and attained arahantship. He then went to the Buddha and released him from his promise. The Buddha said that he knew that Nanda's mind would be purged of defilements and that when this happened he would be delivered from the promise he made.

When the other monks heard that Nanda had attained arahantship, they thought that he was only boasting. They reported this to the Buddha who said that previously Nanda was like a house with an ill-thatched roof; just as rain can leak into such a house, so lust penetrates into a mind that is ill trained. However through his efforts to renounce the world and live a chaste life Nanda realised what he had striven for. Just as rain cannot enter a well-thatched house, so lust cannot penetrate into a well trained mind.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Nanda's realisation that desire is endless and insatiable served as an example for others tempted by sensuality. His exertion to realise the cessation of suffering and his success in doing so encouraged others.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha declared Nanda to be chief among his disciples in training himself in self control.

12. The story of Venerable Rāhula Thera

Family background and name

Rāhula was the only son of the Prince Siddhattha (who was to become the Buddha) and his wife Princess Yasodharā. The word '*rāhula*' can mean 'bond' or 'fetter', and it is said that Prince Siddhartha decided to renounce the world on the day of his son's birth, as he saw his son as a new bond attaching him to the life of a householder.

Ordination into Buddhism

When the Buddha returned to visit Kapilavatthu, he was one day invited into the palace of his royal father King Suddhodana. Yasodharā sent their son, Rāhula, to urge the Buddha to formally hand over to him the throne of the Sākiya people. As the Buddha was the eldest son of King Suddhodana, he would have been heir to the

throne. Now that he had abandoned it willingly, she argued, his own son Rāhula should be appointed in his place.

Rāhula greeted his father with words of love and reverence, and when the Buddha had finished his meal, Rāhula followed him as he was leaving the palace. Rāhula then urged the Buddha to hand over formally the throne of the Sākiyas. When the Buddha did not answer, Rāhula persisted in his request that he be given his inheritance and followed behind. The Buddha did not prohibit the young prince from following him out of the palace grounds, nor did anyone else do so. Thus, Rāhula followed the Buddha to the place where he was residing.

On his way back the Buddha thought ‘Whatever treasure this boy is craving for is sure to disappear and to be beset with troubles. I shall give him the sevenfold noble treasure that I acquired under the Bodhi tree (on the day of enlightenment), making him possessor of the noble, transcendental treasure’.

So he sent for Sārīputta and asked him to ordain Rāhula. As the young prince was not yet twenty years old, the Venerable Sārīputta asked by what method he should ordain him. From this day onward the Buddha gave permission to monks to ordain a youth who is not yet twenty as a novice or *sāmanera*. The method of ordination was to be that requiring the applicant to utter the passages taking the Triple Gem as his refuge. This method was no longer used for monks, as it had been replaced by ordination by a motion put forward four times to an assembly of monks (as described above with regard to the Venerable Rādha Thera). The method formerly used for monks was henceforth to be used for ordination of a youth not yet twenty.

The news of Rāhula’s ordination soon reached King Suddhodana, who was overwhelmed with grief as he regarded Rāhula as his only remaining heir. In his grief he could not help thinking of other parents who would be in the same situation, and their feelings of bereavement. With such thoughts in his mind, he went to see the Buddha and relating his sorrow he asked the Buddha to advise other monks against giving ordination to a youth whose parents had not given permission. The Buddha, understanding this feeling, agreed to do so and issued a prohibition to that effect.

Having been ordained, Rāhula Sāmanera followed his preceptor the Venerable Sārīputta and the Buddha to various places. He was a diligent student and it was said he would rise early and taking a handful of sand would say: ‘May I have today as many words of guidance from my teachers as there are here grains of sand’. On reaching twenty he was ordained a monk.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Rāhula gained in spiritual understanding from the guidance of the sermons the Buddha preached to him. One well-known sermon warned Rāhula of the shame of telling a deliberate lie. The Buddha compared the monk who feels no shame in telling a lie to a water vessel from which all the water has been poured out and which is empty and hollow, and said there is no evil such a person would not do. He advised Rāhula to train himself not to tell a deliberate lie even in jest.

The Buddha asked Rāhula ‘What is a looking glass for?’ ‘For looking at oneself’, Rāhula replied. The Buddha then advised Rāhula on the importance of scrutinising oneself to purify all actions, whether verbal, physical or mental.

On another occasion the Buddha instructed Rāhula on the theme of meditation concerning the body, and the five elements: earth, water, fire, wind and space. Having described each element in the make-up of the body, he continued: ‘These five elements, be they inside or outside [the body] are merely each an element. You must realise their nature with your wisdom, seeing them all as they really are, ie being ownerless, not being anybody’s possession, and never having any self (or any abiding principle) within. Having seen this you will be weary of them, being thereby without lust in any item of those five elements. You must develop your mind, Rāhula, making it like those elements of earth, water, fire, air and space. Having done so, Rāhula, whatever pleasant or unpleasant feelings occur in your mind will not be able to take possession of it.’

The Buddha went on with his instruction, saying: ‘You should develop loving kindness, Rāhula, extending goodwill towards all beings’. He advised: ‘Developing loving kindness you will remove hatred; developing compassion you will remove the tendency towards violent crime; developing sympathy you will remove jealousy; developing equanimity you will be able to neutralise the impact of pleasant and unpleasant feelings; developing repulsion of the body you will remove lust; and developing the concept of impermanence you will remove pride and egotism. Also you should develop mindfulness in breathing for, having developed this, you will be able to reap a great benefit.’

Rāhula was also given instruction on insight. With his mind dwelling on the Buddha’s instruction, he gained arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Rāhula’s enthusiasm for learning and diligence in discipline served as a model to others during his lifetime and for future generations.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha declared Rāhula foremost among his disciples for his eagerness for training and study.

13. The story of Venerable Upāli Thera

Family background and name

He came from a family of barbers in Kapilavatthu, and served as barber for several Sākiyan princes, including Bhaddiya, Anuruddha and Ānanda, whose stories follow.

Ordination into Buddhism

When the six Sākiyan princes decided to seek ordination, Upāli accompanied them, and along the way decided to seek ordination himself, travelling with them to the Anupiya Grove where the Buddha was staying. When the seven approached the Buddha for ordination, the princes asked that Upāli be given ordination first. They explained that the hair cutter Upāli had long been their servant and acknowledged that

as Sākiya princes, they were conscious of their own family pride. If Upāli received ordination first, they would have to respect him, to give up their seats for him, to treat him as their elder brother in the Dhamma. In this way they would remove the undesirable quality of pride. The Buddha complied with their wish.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Upāli asked the Buddha if he could dwell in the forest in order to practise meditation. The Buddha replied that this was not the best course. If he were to live in the forest, Upāli would learn only meditation, but if he lived among his fellow human beings, he would gain knowledge both of meditation and the Dhamma. Upāli followed the Buddha's advice, and making the utmost effort was able in a short time to attain arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

The Buddha taught Upāli the *Vinaya Pitaka* (code of monastic discipline), and he is often spoken of as the chief repository for the Vinaya. There are several mentions of occasions where Upāli's decisions on Vinaya rules earned the special commendation of the Buddha. After the Buddha had passed away, when the First General Council was held, Upāli was chosen to recite the Vinaya to the gathering of monks so that they could memorise it and pass it on to their own disciples. The Vinaya in this way became standardised.

Outstanding quality

The Venerable Upāli was praised by the Buddha as being foremost among the disciples with regard to his knowledge and experience in the Vinaya or monastic discipline.

Final nirvana

His passing was after that of the Buddha.

14. The story of Venerable Bhaddiya Thera

Family background and name

Bhaddiya was born a prince in the ruling Sākiya clan in the city of Kapilavatthu. His mother's name was Kāligodhā, and she was a senior Sākiyan noble woman.

Ordination into Buddhism

The Sākiya prince Anuruddha (whose story follows) urged Bhaddiya to step down from his position of authority, hand over the affairs of state to other family members, and to seek ordination together with him. They were ordained with three other Sākiyan princes, Ānanda (whose story follows that of Anuruddha), Bhaggu and Kimbila and also Prince Devadatta of the Koliyā lineage (who later out of jealousy became an enemy of the Dhamma). The royal barber, Upāli (whose story is told above), was ordained at the same time.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Bhaddiya attained arahantship during the first rainy season retreat following his ordination.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

After attaining *nibbāna*, wherever he stayed, be it in a forest, under a tree or in a deserted place, he was often heard saying ‘How happy it is!’ ‘How happy it is!’ (Pali: *Aho sukham*). The other monks reported this to the Buddha, saying that perhaps he was remembering the luxuries and comforts he experienced as a prince. When the Buddha asked Bhaddiya, he explained that in his life as a prince he was always fearful, posting security guards inside and outside the palace, inside and outside the town, and throughout the kingdom. Now he lived on food presented by others, was attached to no place in particular, and never experienced any alarm or fright. This was the meaning of his utterance. His trusting path brought about faith in many people.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha praised Bhaddiya as chief among monks of aristocratic birth (Pali: *uccakulikānam*).

15. The story of Venerable Anuruddha Thera

Family background and name

He was a Sākiya noble born in the city of Kapilavatthu. His father, who was named Amitodana, was the younger brother of the Buddha’s father Suddhodana, and thus Anuruddha was the cousin of the Buddha. His elder brother was called Mahānāma.

Ordination into Buddhism

One day his brother Mahānāma suggested to Anuruddha that as no one in their family had yet been ordained as a follower of the Buddha, one or the other of them should seek ordination. Anuruddha at first said he did not think he could endure such a life, but when Mahānāma explained the heavy responsibilities he would need to take on if he chose to be the head of the household instead, he decided that he would rather be ordained. His mother, however, refused to give her permission. Anuruddha persisted and finally she said that he could be ordained if his cousin and close friend Bhaddiya would agree to be ordained at the same time (thinking to herself that Bhaddiya would never agree). However, Bhaddiya (whose story is told above) eventually did agree to accompany Anuruddha and they and four other princes as well as the barber Upāli went to the Anupiya Grove where the Buddha was staying and the Buddha agreed to their ordination.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

The Venerable Sārīputta gave as a topic of meditation to Anuruddha the thoughts characteristic of a great man. In his pondering Anuruddha associated the Buddha Dhamma with the following characteristics. It is the Dhamma:

- 1) for those who do not seek publicity and are not boastful, not for those who take delight in publicity and who are egotistical
- 2) for those who can be content with whatever is (rightfully) obtained, not for those who are driven to finding ever more and more
- 3) for those who take delight in seclusion, not in association
- 4) for those who are inclined towards exertion, not towards laziness
- 5) for those who have their mindfulness established, not for those who have neglected the development of their mindfulness

- 6) for those who have developed their meditation, not those who have neglected their meditation
- 7) for those who are equipped with wisdom, not those who are divorced from wisdom. The Buddha then told Anuruddha that he should add an eighth item:
- 8) The Dhamma is meant for those who take delight in practices that hasten them toward the cessation of suffering, not for those who take delight in practices that will delay them on the way.

Having instructed Anuruddha, the Buddha gave the instruction to other monks in greater detail, calling the theme the ‘Eight thoughts (or attitudes of mind) characteristic of a great man’.

After a period of exertion the Venerable Anuruddha attained arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

He was able to motivate people from high society to have faith. He was a person who was able to get whatever he wanted, but it was only when he became a monk that he was content. He emphasised the practice of the four bases of mindfulness: to contemplate the body as being merely the body, sensations as being merely the sensations, the conditions of mind as being merely the conditions of mind, and the phenomena as being merely the phenomena. Having developed the four bases of mindfulness himself, he often praised the benefits of doing so to others.

Outstanding quality

Anuruddha attained the celestial or divine eye (Pali: *dibbacakkhu*) enabling him to see heavenly and earthly things that are imperceptible to the physical eye. He was praised by the Buddha as foremost among monks who had attained this quality.

Final nirvana

Anuruddha was present at the Buddha’s final passing at Kusinārā. He maintained a philosophic calm, in contrast, for example, to Ānanda (whose story follows) and consoled the other monks. He later played a prominent part at the First Council. His passing at a great age is said to have taken place at Veluvagāma in the Vajjī country, in the shade of a bamboo thicket.

16. The story of Venerable Ānanda Thera

Family background and name

He was a Sākiya noble and his father was a brother of the Buddha’s father, King Suddhodana. His father is sometimes identified as Amitodana, also the father of Anuruddha, and sometimes as Sukkodana, the youngest brother of King Suddhodana. In either case, Ānanda was a cousin of the Buddha. The name ‘Ānanda’ reflects the joy of his kinsman at his birth.

Ordination into Buddhism

Ānanda was ordained at the same time as five other young Sākiyan nobles and their barber, Upāli. They travelled together to meet the Buddha, who agreed to their ordination. (The stories of three of them are told above.)

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma and work for the propagation of Buddhism

Ānanda was a diligent learner and attained stream entry during the first rainy season retreat after his ordination. He had been helped along the path by listening to the instruction of the Venerable Puṇṇamantānī Thera, a great teacher of the Dhamma (whose story is told above). Ānanda became one of the most eminent and best loved of the Buddha's disciples; however, it was not until many years later, after the final passing of the Buddha, that he attained arhantship.

At an assembly of monks the Buddha asked that a monk be chosen who would attend upon him regularly and who would be reliable and trustworthy. A number of different attendants had served him in the past, but none had been fully satisfactory, some taking leave early, others not coming on time, still others dropping his black bowl and robe on the ground. All the great disciples volunteered to be his personal attendant, but Ānanda held back modestly, until he was asked to fill the role. Having been chosen, Ānanda requested eight conditions from the Buddha. The first four were that the Buddha must not give him any robe or alms-food of a superior kind, that he must not be allowed to stay in the Buddha's dwelling place and he must not be allowed to accompany the Buddha when the Buddha was invited to have a meal. The second four were that the Buddha must agree to go to a place for which he had accepted an invitation, that the Buddha must agree to receive in audience those coming from far away who would be brought in by him, that whenever he (Ānanda) had any doubt regarding the Dhamma, he must be allowed to approach the Buddha with questions and finally whenever the Buddha preached to anybody in his absence, the Buddha must agree to repeat the instruction to him later on.

The Buddha asked what benefits he intended to obtain from the conditions. Ānanda explained that the first four were intended to prevent people from accusing him of looking for material gains by taking the position. The next three were to prevent accusations that his attendance upon the Buddha would be useless to others. The final condition was so that if anyone should ask about the Buddha's instruction at such and such a place, he would be able to tell them. Hearing his reply, the Buddha granted him all eight conditions.

Ānanda, thus, became the Buddha's constant companion for the next twenty-five years. He looked after his needs, for example, bringing him water for washing and sweeping his cell, sleeping near him at night so he was always at hand, and serving as 'secretary' and organiser, thus using the skills he learned as a nobleman to assist the Buddha. He was a peacemaker when there was strife within the Sangha and advocated the cause of Buddhist nuns. He was a respected teacher of the Dhamma, who was consulted by other monks for explanations. So great was his understanding and so retentive his memory that the Buddha referred to him as Guardian of the Dhamma.

Outstanding quality

The Venerable Ānanda was unique among the disciples in having been cited by the Buddha as being foremost among monks in five categories: his wide knowledge of the Dhamma; his memory; his mastery over the order of the teachings and the manifold ways of understanding and explaining them; his diligence in study; and as an attendant of the Buddha.

Ānanda was with the Buddha during his illness some three months before his passing. When Ānanda asked if there was any final teaching or instructions for the Order of the Sangha, the Buddha replied that he had held back nothing, that the Dhamma and Vinaya (discipline) should in future be the monks' guide. He advised: 'So Ānanda, each of you should be an island unto yourself, dwell with yourself as a refuge and with no other as your refuge; each of you should make the Dhamma your island, dwell with the Dhamma as your refuge and with no other as your refuge.' As the time of the Buddha's passing grew near, Ānanda was overpowered with grief. The Buddha said to him: 'Do not sorrow, Ānanda. Have I not told you many times that everything changes and vanishes? How could something that has come into being not pass? For a long time, Ānanda, you have attended on the Tathāgata, gladly, sensitively, sincerely, and without reserve, with deeds, speech and thoughts of loving kindness. You have made great merit, Ānanda; keep on striving and soon you will be free of all imperfection!'

After the Buddha's passing, Ānanda was chosen as one of the 500 monks to attend the First Council, but he was the only monk chosen who had not attained arahantship. With great endeavour, he achieved arahantship on the night before the council was to meet, sitting and walking, sitting and walking in meditation into the early hours, until finally, when he prepared to sleep and had raised his legs off the ground but had not yet put his head on the pillow, his mind was released and he attained full and final enlightenment. Owing to his great knowledge and exceptional memory, he played a key role in the setting down of the Dhamma and Vinaya at the First Council.

Final nirvana

The Venerable Ānanda lived to a great age; the last years of his life were spent preaching and teaching. According to tradition, Ānanda was travelling from Magadha to Vesali, where he expected his final passing to occur. The chiefs of Magadha and Vesali set out to meet him, each wanting the honour of the Venerable Ānanda's passing to come to their kingdom. When Ānanda reached the Rohini River, the chiefs gathered on either side. Not wishing to cause friction between the parties, he caused his body to go up in flames in the middle of the river. His remains were gathered and divided into two portions so stupas could be built to honour him in both kingdoms.

17. The story of Soṇa Kolivisa Thera

Family background and name

His given name was Soṇa and Kolivisa was the name of his clan. He was from the town of Campi and his father's name was Usabhasethi.

Ordination into Buddhism

When the Buddha was staying at Vulture's Peak (Mount Gijjhakūta) in the town of Rājagaha, King Bimbisāra and a large crowd of people went to see him. It is said that Soṇa was unusual in that he had hair growing on his feet, and the king, being curious, sent for him, and he then accompanied the king to hear the Buddha. The Buddha delivered a sermon and afterwards all but one took leave of him. The young man who stayed was Soṇa, who asked if he could be ordained. His parents gave permission and he became a monk.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

After ordination, Soṇa put forth his utmost effort, practising walking meditation until his feet blistered and gave him great pain. Yet, he was not able to make progress on the spiritual path. He began to despair and to think that it might be best to leave the monk's life and gain merit as a householder, while enjoying the pleasures of his family's wealth. The Buddha, having heard of Soṇa's utmost exertion, went to instruct him. He asked Soṇa if he understood how the stringing of a lyre worked while he was still a layman? The Buddha reminded him that when the string of a lyre is too tight, it will not make a good sound. When it is too lax, it will also not sound good. When it is balanced between those two extremes, it makes a good sound. With this analogy he taught Soṇa that his efforts must be balanced. Faith and wisdom must be developed to match each other; so must exertion and meditation (while mindfulness must be the basis, the framework and the core). Being heedful of the Buddha's instruction and endeavouring to balance the development of his faculties, Soṇa continued his efforts and soon attained arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

The Buddha praised Soṇa for his description of the qualities of an arahant, in which he set out six virtues: renunciation of sensual pleasures, seclusion, restraint from violence, extinction of attachment, cessation of desire and the quality of non-bewilderment. Soṇa explained that an arahant is inclined toward these qualities as his lust, hatred and delusion have been abolished.

Outstanding quality

The Venerable Soṇa Koliṇisa was ranked foremost among monks in respect of his strenuous efforts.

18. The story of Venerable Ratthapāla Thera

Family background and name

He was born in Thullakoṭṭhita Nigama, in the state of Kurū, and known by his family name, Ratthapāla (also sometimes spelled Radapāla). This name had been given to the family because, in a past time, when the state suffered economic problems, his family had helped to reverse its fortunes and regain prosperity. His father was a wealthy man and a town official, and Ratthapāla grew up in great luxury and was married when he reached a suitable age.

Ordination into Buddhism

When the Buddha was travelling through the state of Kurū with a retinue of monks, he reached the town of Thullakoṭṭhita, and a crowd gathered to hear him speak. At the end of the sermon they took leave of him, but the youth Ratthapāla remained. Greatly impressed by the Buddha's words, he asked to be ordained. The Buddha explained that he would need to seek permission from his parents before he could become a monk. Ratthapāla returned home and asked for his parents' permission, but they refused. He was their only son and they could not bear the thought of losing him. Having been brought up in comfort and luxury, they did not think he could follow a life of hardship and urged him to gain merit while living comfortably as a householder.

Ratthapāla was insistent and when his parents could not be won over, in his grief he decided to fast to death. His family cooked his favourite foods, but to no avail. They called his friends who tried to tempt him, but he silently maintained his fast. Finally his friends argued that it would be better to give him permission rather than to see him starve. Living in luxury, they reasoned, he had become a weak young man and would be sure to come home once the life of a monk became too difficult for him. Finally his parents gave their consent, asking that he come to see them occasionally after being ordained. Ratthapāla returned to the Buddha, who then granted him ordination.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Ratthapāla was constantly heedful and diligent in the development of insight, and won through to arahantship. One day he asked the Buddha for leave to pay a visit to his parents in his home town. The Buddha allowed him to do so as he knew he had reached a point on his spiritual path where he would not turn back.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

On arrival at his home town, Ratthapāla stayed at a royal grove belonging to Korabya, king of Kurū state. The next morning he visited his family home to beg alms, but he was not recognised and was shouted at. He saw a servant who was about to throw away some stale rice, and asked her to put it in his bowl instead. She recognised his voice, and then his hands and feet, and rushed to his mother with the news that her son had returned. She informed his father, and both rushed out and found him eating the stale rice at the side of a house. His father urged him to come home for a grand meal, but he reminded his father that as a monk he had no home, and in any case the stale rice was his meal for the day. He agreed to come for a meal the next day.

The next day he was served delicious food and shown all the gold and other wealth of the family and urged to stay by his lovely wife, but he was not tempted. After the meal, he preached a sermon to his family on the impermanence of all things, and the futility of wealth and beauty and went back to the royal grove.

There he met the Kurū king, who was visiting the grove, and who was curious to know why Ratthapāla had taken up a homeless life when he suffered neither from old age, failing health, poverty or the loss of his family. Ratthapāla replied that he had become a monk to follow the Dhamma that the Enlightened One had proclaimed, as he was convinced of the truth of the four propositions uttered by the Buddha: 1) that the world is in a stage of continuous flux, 2) that there is no protector or preserver, 3) that we own nothing but must leave all behind us, 4) that our insatiable desire makes us enslaved by craving. After instructing the king, Ratthapāla returned to the Buddha.

Outstanding quality

Ratthapāla was praised by the Buddha as being foremost among monks who renounced the world through faith.

19. The story of Venerable Pindola Bharādvāja Thera

Family background and name

He was born a Brahmin, the son of an adviser to King Udena of Vamsā state, which had Kosambī as its capital. He studied the Vedas and became a teacher.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

It is said that Pindola was greedy and fond of eating. When he travelled to Rājagaha, he saw the gifts and favours given to the Buddha's disciples and asked to be ordained. In time, following the Buddha's instruction, he gained self-control, gave up his practice of over-eating, and eventually became an arahant.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

After winning through to arahantship, Pindola told the Buddha that he was ready and willing to answer the questions of any doubting monks. The preaching of the Dhamma, especially by the Buddha and his most accomplished monks, is often compared to the roaring of a lion because of its power. When Pindola preached the Buddha's teaching, he was said to utter his lion's roar.

Several accounts are given of his supernatural powers. In one a wealthy person of Rājagaha put a sandalwood bowl on a high pole and challenged any holy person to bring it down. Pindola rose in the air and brought it down. The Buddha told him that he had used his powers for an unworthy end.

When the Venerable Pindola was staying in King Udena's royal garden, he met the king and preached a sermon to him.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha declared him foremost among monks as chief of the lion roarers and also praised him for perfecting self-mastery.

20. The story of Venerable Mahāpanthaka Thera

Family background and name

His mother was the daughter of a wealthy merchant of Rājagaha called Dhanasetthi, and his father is said to have been a family servant whom she ran away with. He was called Panthaka as he was born along the way when his mother was returning to her parents' home for his birth. The same thing happened in relation to his brother's birth, so he was called 'Mahā' as the older and his brother 'Cūla' (see below). Both boys were looked after by their grandparents in Rājagaha.

Ordination into Buddhism

He often went with his grandfather to hear the Buddha preach, developed faith in the Buddha's teaching, and asked to be ordained.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

He gained a detailed knowledge of the Buddha's teaching and developed a special proficiency in the four successive levels of formless meditation (the four *arūpajhānas*) winning arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

He was responsible for his brother becoming a monk and impressed many through his proficiency in formless meditation.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha praised him as pre-eminent among monks skilled in the evolution of consciousness (*saññāvivattakusalānam*).

21. The Story of Cūlapanthaka Thera

Family background and name

He was the brother of Mahāpanthaka (see above), and likewise his mother was the daughter of the wealthy merchant Dhanasetthi of Rājagaha and his father the family servant that she ran away with. Like his brother, it is said that his name is derived from his birth along the way as his mother returned to her parents' home. He was brought up in his grandparents' home in Rājagaha.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Mahāpanthaka wanted his brother to experience the rewards of meditation, and convinced his grandfather to allow him to become ordained. However, Cūlapanthaka did not make quick progress. He studied a single stanza for four months, but was unable to learn or understand it. His elder brother thought he must be stupid and urged him to leave the order, but he so loved the Buddha's teachings he did not want to go. Finally, when he was left out of a gathering of monks, he accepted that he would have to return to being a layman. As he was leaving with great sadness in his heart, the Buddha met him and comforted him, giving him a clean piece of cloth and asking him to wipe his face with the cloth and repeat the words '*rajoha-ranam*'. As he carried out the task, Cūlapanthaka noticed that the cloth became dirty, and finally grasped the necessity of getting rid of impurities, and understood the impermanence of things, attaining arahantship. He gained both analytical knowledge (the four *patisambhidā*) and supernatural powers, including the power to cause others to perceive multiple images of himself.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Cūlapanthaka was a model for those who struggled to gain spiritual progress, showing that it is possible for even the most unpromising to break through to enlightenment. He impressed many with his supernatural powers.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha praised him as foremost among monks in the supernatural power of creating mind-born forms (for example, multiple images of himself; in one account he replicated himself in the form of eighty monks).

22. The story of the Venerable Sonakutikañña Thera

Family background and name

His father was a rich merchant in the town of Kuraraghara in the kingdom of Avantī. His mother, Kālī, was a lay follower of the Buddha, who had learned about Buddhism from Mahākaccāyana Thera (see above), who brought the Buddha's message to Avantī. She returned to her family home in Rājagaha for the birth, and is said to have become a *sotāpanna* (ie gained stream entry) while thinking of the Buddha's virtues on the day she gave birth. She named the child Sona (meaning 'golden' and it is said that he was later called 'kutikañña' due to the enormous value of the large gold earrings that he wore).

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

In time Sona returned to Kuraraghara with his mother, and Mahākaccāyana often visited Sona's family home. Later Sona asked if he could be ordained. It was necessary at this time for ten monks to be present for an ordination to be carried out. As there weren't sufficient monks in the southerly kingdom of Avantī, it was necessary for Sona to remain a novice for three years before he was ordained. He studied diligently with Mahākaccāyana as his teacher and eventually gained arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

With Mahākaccāyana's permission, Sona travelled to meet the Buddha. Early on the morning after his arrival, the Buddha woke him and asked him to recite the Dhamma. He recited the *Atthakavagga*, as he had learned it from Mahākaccāyana. The Buddha was pleased with the recitation and asked him if there was any request he would like to make. He asked that permission be given for ordination when five monks are present, one of them versed in the Vinaya (discipline).

On Sona's return, when his mother Kālī heard that the Buddha and others had praised the way he preached the Dhamma, she went to hear him preach. While she was away, thieves entered her house and one of the gang was sent to watch Kālī and kill her if she tried to return. Her female servant came running to her to say that the robbery was in progress, but Kālī refused to be disturbed as she was listening to the Dhamma. Impressed with her piety, the thief sent to watch her was filled with remorse, and begged her forgiveness. Eventually all of the thieves became followers of the Buddha under Sona and asked to be ordained.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha praised the Venerable Sonakutikanna as foremost among those possessing clear utterance.

23. The story of Venerable Lakuntaka Bhaddiya Thera

Family background and name

His family were rich merchants in the town of Sāvattihī. He was named Bhaddiya and because of his very small stature, he was given the title '*lakuntaka*'.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

As he was growing up, Lakuntaka Bhaddiya often went to hear the Buddha preach at the Jetavana monastery near Sāvattihī. He became a follower of the Buddha's teaching and asked to be ordained. He developed *jhāna* (the meditative state of profound stillness that the Buddha himself had practised and urged others to develop as a way of achieving liberation) and reached the third of the four stages to enlightenment (that of *anāgāmi*). Finally he broke through to full arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Lakuntaka was very knowledgeable and was known as an excellent teacher, eloquent and with a sweet voice. The Buddha is said to have held him up as a man who, though small in stature, was of great power, and his attaining of enlightenment shows that it is mindfulness and not the physical body that leads to spiritual progress.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha praised him as foremost among sweet-voiced monks.

24. The story of Venerable Subhūta Thera**Family background and name**

He was the son of Sumana, who was of the Vaisya caste, and was a wealthy merchant of the city of Sāvattihī, and was a brother of Anāthapindika. Anāthapindika had become a follower of the Buddha when he visited him at Sitavana outside Rājagaha. While at Sitavana he became a stream enterer (*sotāpanna*). He invited the Buddha to visit Sāvattihī to preach and built the Jetavana monastery in a park outside the city for him and his community of monks. Anāthapindika was one of the Buddha's wealthiest and most generous lay followers.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Subhūta frequently visited the Jetavana monastery with his brother Anāthapindika and listened to the Buddha's teaching. Having faith in the Buddha's Dhamma, he asked for ordination and this was granted. He studied the Dhamma and discipline and gained analytic insight. He went into the forest to develop meditation in solitude and attained arahantship. He is especially associated with the path of loving kindness.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

He preached the Dhamma and developed the meditation of loving kindness, and through loving kindness brought many followers to the Dhamma. One of Anāthapindika's sons joined the order under him, and visited the Buddha with him.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha praised him as foremost of monks without defilements and worthy of offerings.

25. The story of Venerable Kankhā Revata Thera**Family background and name**

His given name was Revata and he was born into a wealthy merchant family of Sāvattihī. He was called 'Kankhā' because as a monk, before attaining arahantship, he was greatly confused about what was permissible for him to use and what was not.

Ordination into Buddhism

One day he went to the Jetavana monastery outside Sāvattihī along with many others to listen to the Buddha preach. Many people of Sāvattihī followed this practice. The Buddha returned to the Jetavana monastery during the rainy season for almost all of the last twenty years of his life. Revata accepted the teaching of the Buddha, and when the others had left, he asked for ordination, which was granted.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

He practised *jhāna*, or the meditative state of profound stillness, which the Buddha taught as a way of achieving enlightenment. Through meditation he gained arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

His proficiency at meditation was an example to others.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha praised him as foremost of monks who develop meditation.

26. The story of Venerable Kondadhāna Thera

Family background and name and ordination into Buddhism

His was born into a Brahmin family of Sāvattihī and was given the name Dhāna. He studied the Vedas as a young man, and it was only much later in life that he began to listen to the Buddha's teaching of the Dhamma and asked to be ordained. From the day he joined the Sangha, the form of a young woman followed him everywhere he went, visible to everyone else but not to him. When he went to collect alms, people laughingly gave him two portions, saying 'One is for you and the other for your lady friend'. In the monastery the novices and young monks would tease him, referring to him as a 'konda', which some understand to mean a 'ladies man' and others translate as a 'sinner'. Thus, he became known by the name 'Kondadhāna'.

Attainment of Supreme Dhamma

Once when the novices and young monks were teasing him, he abused them and this was reported to the Buddha. The Buddha advised him not to speak harshly to others as retribution will follow and told him that by remaining silent, like a gong with the rim broken off, he would realise enlightenment. The Buddha then explained to him that he was being pursued by karma from a previous life, and that was why others saw a woman following him. King Pasenadi, the ruler of Kosala, heard the story and was interested in finding out more. After a personal investigation, he understood that Dhāna was pursued by bad karma, not a real woman. He provided Dhāna with food so that, no longer needing to beg for alms, he could put all of his effort into spiritual development. Concentrating his mind, he was able to become an arahant. At that point, the figure of the woman disappeared.

Outstanding quality

He was proclaimed by the Buddha to be foremost among monks as the first ticket drawer. The meaning of this is obscure, but it seems to refer to the *salaka bhatta* or ticket system for food or invitations offered to the monastery.

27. The story of Venerable Vangīsa Thera

Family background and names

He was born into a Brahmin family in the Vanga region and was called Vangīsa. He studied the Vedas and later gained repute by claiming that he could tap a skull with his fingernail and thereby determine details of the rebirth of the person whose skull it was. He is said to have practised this technique along with several other Brahmins for three years and the group earned a good sum from those who brought them skulls of deceased family members.

Ordination into Buddhism

When he heard the virtue of the Buddha, he determined to visit him, though the other Brahmins attempted to dissuade him. He went to the Jetavana monastery, where he

was received kindly by the Buddha, who asked him about his ability to say where a person had been reborn by tapping the deceased's skull. It is said that the Buddha gave him the skull of an arahant; Vangīsa gave no answer and instead asked if he could learn the Buddha's teaching and was ordained. The Venerable Nigrodhakappa served as his preceptor and teacher.

Attainment of Supreme Dhamma

The Buddha taught Vangīsa meditation on the thirty-two constituents of the body, and insight meditation. While he was meditating, his Brahmin associates visited him and asked if he had learned the Buddha's 'magic', hoping to turn it to their own ends. Vangīsa replied that he had, but refused to return with them. He continued his meditation and eventually attained arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Vangīsa won a reputation as a poet, and the *Theragāthā* contains numerous verses spoken by him. Some of them are about himself – for example, his attempts to suppress desires and admonitions against conceit because of his facility of speech. He also wrote verses praising the Buddha and his sermons and in praise of colleagues such as Sārīputta, Aññakoṇḍañña and Moggallāna (see above for all three).

Outstanding quality

The Buddha declared him foremost among those pre-eminent in facility of expression (*patibhānavantānam*).

28. The story of Venerable Pilindavaccha Thera

Family background and names

He was born into a Brahmin family in the city of Sāvattihī. His given name was Pilinda and his clan name Vaccha.

Ordination into Buddhism

He sought to escape the cycle of birth and death, becoming an ascetic before the Buddha's enlightenment. The texts say that he acquired the *Cūla Gandhāra Vijja*, or 'Lesser Gandhara Charm', which gave him the ability to fly and the intuition to read the minds of others. After the Buddha's enlightenment, he found the charm no longer worked and wondered if the Buddha had learned a charm greater than his, the *Mahā Gandhāra Vijja*. He went to the Buddha hoping to learn his 'magic'. The Buddha suggested that he enter the Order to learn the Dhamma, and he did so.

Attainment of Supreme Dhamma

The Buddha gave him exercises in meditation suitable to his character, and he developed spiritually. He then practised insight meditation and soon became an arahant.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

The story of Pilindavaccha seems to play off 'magic' against 'knowledge'. It implies that Pilindavaccha regained his supernatural powers, but that the knowledge of the Dhamma was greater. Pilindavaccha is described as beloved of the gods as he had done them a service in a previous life. However he did not get along well with the

villagers or other bhikkhus as he had the habit of addressing everyone as outcaste (*vasala*), which made people angry. One day he met a man carrying a tray of long green peppers. ‘What are you carrying, outcaste?’ he asked. The man, angry at being called an outcaste, replied ‘the dung of mice’. Looking at his tray, the man saw it had become a tray of mouse droppings of instead peppers. He begged Pilindavaccha to right the matter, and he did so. When the other bhikkhus complained to the Buddha that Pilindavaccha called them outcastes, the Buddha called Pilindavaccha and spoke with him. He then explained to the bhikkhus that Pilindavaccha had been a Brahmin in previous lives and that was why he had the habit of calling others outcastes. The Buddha then gave the teaching that one who is without greed or desire, whose anger has been quelled, who is freed from all cares, that bhikkhu may be called a true Brahmin. It is not, thus, the family into which one is born that matters, but the person’s spiritual development.

Outstanding quality

He was declared by the Buddha to be chief among monks beloved of gods and humans.

29. The story of Venerable Kumārakassapa Thera

Family background, name and ordination into Buddhism

His mother came from the city of Rājagaha and was the daughter of a banker. She wanted to seek ordination as a nun, but her parents refused to give their permission and so she was married. Her husband then gave permission, and she joined the order of nuns, finding out only later that she was expecting a child. The nuns were studying with the monk Devadatta, the Buddha’s cousin, and when the other nuns told him of the pregnancy, he declared that she was not a true nun. The Buddha was then consulted, and he asked the Venerable Upāli, the master of the Vinaya or rules of conduct, to decide on the matter. Upāli carried out a thorough investigation and then in the assembly, in the presence of the king, declared that the nun was innocent and that she had become pregnant before joining the order. When the boy was born, the king raised him and at the age of seven he became a novice. He was called Kumāra to distinguish him from other monks called Kassapa, and because he was raised by the king and entered the Order at a young age. At the age of twenty, he was ordained.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Once when Kumārakassapa was meditating in the Andhavana forest, he was visited by his friend from a previous life, who had reached the third stage in the path to enlightenment (that of *anāgamī*) and been reborn as the god Brahma in the *Suddhāvāsā* heaven. His friend gave him a list of fifteen questions that could only be answered by a Buddha. The next morning he approached the Buddha, who answered all the questions. After returning to the forest and dwelling on these teachings and practising insight meditation, he became an arahant.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

The Venerable Kumārakassapa was an eloquent speaker and there are many examples of his abilities. The best known is his discussion with King Pāyāsi, who questioned the doctrine of rebirth as none of his relatives had returned to give evidence. Kumārakassapa said that those who were in hell were like those in prison and had no

option to return. Those in heaven were like those who had been in a dung pit and escaped – they had no wish to go back. Through such arguments he convinced King Pāyāsi. Because of his intelligence and ability to speak well, he was an important and powerful monk in propagating Buddhism.

Outstanding quality

He was praised by the Buddha as foremost among those who had the gift of varied and versatile discourse

30. The story of Venerable Mahākotthita Thera

Family background and names

His name is also spelled as Mahākotathita and Mahākotthika. He was born into a wealthy Brahmin family of Sāvattī. His father's name was Assalāyana and his mother's Candavatī. He studied the Vedas, gaining proficiency.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of Supreme Dhamma

He heard the Buddha preach the Dhamma and asked to be ordained, and this was granted. He studied the Dhamma and the Vinaya (discipline) and also developed insight meditation, and was able to win through to arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

He was extremely skilled in analytical knowledge and the Pali canon records many instances of his discussions with senior monks. These take the form of questions asked by Kothita, often of Sārīputta. The questions and answers range from an analytical examination of terms, to the position of wisdom and right understanding, and to subtle aspects of meditation. One *sutta* records a conversation with the Buddha on *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (sorrow or suffering) and *anatta* (not-self). He was held in high regard by senior monks, and thus the prefix 'mahā' (great) was affixed to his name.

Outstanding quality

He was praised by the Buddha as foremost among monks in analytical knowledge.

31. The story of Venerable Sobhita Thera

Family background and names

He was born into a Brahmin family of Sāvattī. His given name was Sobhitamānava.

Ordination into Buddhism

He listened to the Buddha preach the Dhamma, had faith in his teaching and asked to be ordained, which was granted.

Attainment of Supreme Dhamma

He studied the Dhamma and Vinaya (discipline), developed insight meditation and gained arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

He was known particularly for his skill in remembering previous births.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha declared him foremost among monks in remembering past births.

32. The story of Venerable Nandaka Thera**Family background and names**

He was born into a wealthy merchant family of the city of Sāvathī.

Ordination into Buddhism

He asked for ordination after hearing the Buddha preach the Dhamma and this was granted. Some sources say that he was formally ordained at the ceremony for dedication of the Jetavana monastery.

Attainment of Supreme Dhamma

He developed insight meditation and soon attained arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

The Buddha asked him to preach a sermon to the community of nuns. At first he was reluctant, but finally agreed. On the first day the nuns became stream enterers (*sotāpanna*) and on the second five hundred nuns attained arahantship. Many of the nuns are said to have been young Sākiya women who entered the order with the Buddha's aunt, Pajāpatī. There are also other stories that relate to his skill in preaching. Once when he was preaching to the monks in the waiting hall of the Jetavana monastery, the Buddha was attracted by the sound of his voice (which is said to have been very pleasing). On arriving, the Buddha found the door was locked, so waited outside not wanting to interrupt his sermon. When he eventually knocked on the door, Nandaka expressed his regret for keeping him waiting. The Buddha praised the sermon and said the preaching of such sermons was the duty of all pious monks.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha praised him as foremost among monks in his exhortation of nuns.

33. The story of Venerable Mahākappina Thera**Family background and name**

He was born in the city of Kukkutavatī, the capital of a frontier kingdom that was ruled by his father. On his father's death, he became the rājā (king) under the name of Mahākappina. His chief wife was Anojā, who came from the city of Sagala (possibly modern Sialkot), in what was then Madda kingdom. Each day he sent out men to the city's four gates to stop any learned men who entered there and report back to him.

Ordination into Buddhism

One day traders came from Sāvathī, and were taken to see Mahākappina. He asked them about their country and which teaching they followed. It was from them that he first heard of the Buddha. He rewarded them generously for telling him of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. On hearing of the Buddha's teaching, he renounced the world, as did his ministers, and they set out together to find the Buddha. On hearing of the departure of their husbands, Anojā and the wives of the other ministers also renounced the world and set out, also determined to meet the Buddha. The Buddha met the men and their wives on the banks of the Candabhāgā

river and sitting beneath the branches of a great banyan tree, taught them the Dhamma. The men asked to become monks, and this was granted through the Ehi Bhikkhu method of ordination, where the Buddha directly carried out the ordination, beginning with the words '*Ehi bhikkhu*' (Come, monk). The women asked to become nuns, and this was also granted.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

Some sources say that Mahākappina reached arahantship on hearing the Buddha's sermon on the banks of the Candabhāgā river, and some say he became a stream enterer (*sotāpanna*) on that occasion, attaining arahantship later following insight meditation on his return with the Buddha to the Jetavana monastery.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Mahākappina experienced the bliss of enlightenment and lived happily in this state, but did not teach others until the Buddha instructed him to do so. He preached the Dhamma to other recluses and a thousand became arahants. He went on to teach still others and gained fame as a teacher of monks.

Outstanding quality

He was praised by the Buddha as foremost among teachers of monks.

34. The story of Venerable Sāgata Thera

Family background and name

His parents were Brahmins of the city of Sāvattihī.

Ordination into Buddhism

He listened to the Buddha's sermons and asked to be ordained, which was granted.

Attainment of the Supreme Dhamma

He is known especially for his supernatural powers, which included filling the sky with wonders of light and darkness. When he heard of a Nāga (serpent spirit) of great power living in the Jatila hermitage at Ambatittha, he confronted it and overwhelmed the Nāga. When he went to Kosambī with the Buddha, the local lay people had heard of this great feat and wanted to honour him. When he went to collect alms, they plied him with intoxicating drinks. As he left the town, he collapsed and the other monks carried him back to the monastery and laid him down with his head facing the Buddha. However, he was so intoxicated he turned round so that his feet were facing the Buddha. The next day, realising what he had done, he went to the Buddha and begged for forgiveness. The Buddha used his behaviour as an example of the evil effects of alcohol and used the occasion to pass a rule against the drinking of intoxicating spirits by monks. Sāgata went on to develop insight meditation, and won through to arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

He was known for his expertise in fire contemplation and his meditative attainments, and impressed people with his ability to bring light to dark places and darkness to light places.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha praised him as foremost among monks in ‘*tejodhātukusalānam*’, which has been translated as the contemplation of the heat element and also as the fire element and meditative attainment.

35. The story of Venerable Upasena Thera

Family background and names

He is also known as Upasena Vangantaputta Thera, as he was the son of Vanganta. His mother was Sārī, and his elder brother, whose given name was Upatissa, is better known as the Venerable Sārīputta (see above). They were a Brahmin family, and his other siblings included Cunda, an older brother, Revata, a younger brother, and three sisters, Cālā, Upacālā and Sīsupacālā. As a youth, Upasena studied the Vedas.

Ordination into Buddhism

Following in the footsteps of his elder brother Sārīputta, he listened to the Buddha preach the Dhamma and asked to be ordained, which the Buddha granted.

Attainment of Supreme Dhamma

When he had been ordained for just a year, he ordained another monk with the aim of increasing the Order, and took him along to meet the Buddha. Rather than being pleased, the Buddha rebuked him for acting too hastily. After this, he put his full endeavour into practising insight meditation, and won through to arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Upasena adopted various practices for scrupulous living and gathered round him others who followed his example. They were in time ordained as monks. He had an ability to get along with people from all castes and backgrounds, and enjoyed great happiness in his life under the guidance of the Buddha.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha proclaimed him foremost among monks who was always charming and brought satisfaction to all.

Final nirvana

One day while the Venerable Upasena was sitting in the shade of a tree, a snake fell on his shoulder and bit him. As the venom spread through his body, he called Sārīputta and the other monks and asked that his body be placed on a couch where he would depart from the world. Sārīputta noted that he saw no change in Upasena either in body or his faculties, and Upasena said this was because he had long before quelled any tendencies of ‘I’ and ‘mine’. Then Venerable Upasena gained final nirvana.

36. The story of Venerable Khadiravaniya Revata Thera

Family background and names

He is also known as Revata Thera and was the younger brother of Sārīputta and Upasena (see above). Like them, his father was Vanganta and his mother Sārī, both Brahmins. Revata was the youngest son of the family. Having seen her two older sons renounce the world and wishing to keep her youngest son close to home, his mother decided to arrange Revata’s marriage when he was only seven or eight years old.

Ordination into Buddhism

On the day of the marriage, relatives blessed the young couple and said to the bride ‘May you live as long as your grandmother’. When Revata met the grandmother, he saw that she was old and had lost her physical beauty. With this reminder of what awaits in old age, he left the marriage procession and went to a place in the forest where monks were living. He asked the monks for ordination. Sārīputta had expected that his brother would leave the marriage and had asked the monks to give him ordination if he requested it despite his young age, so they ordained him as a novice. At the age of twenty he was ordained as a monk.

Attainment of Supreme Dhamma

After some time Revata set off to visit the Buddha. His teachers had given him a formula for meditation, and on the way in stopped in an acacia forest (*khadiravana* in Pali) and meditating alone there during the rainy season, he reached arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

He became known as Khadiravaniya Revata as he dwelt in the acacia forest. The Buddha and Sārīputta visited him there. When he travelled to his home village, his nephews, sons of his three sisters, returned with him to the forest. Once when he was visiting the Buddha and Sārīputta, he was staying in a forest outside Sāvattihī. The king’s men, who were tracking a thief, came upon him and took him to the king. When he was questioned, he replied in a series of verses, thereby teaching the king the Dhamma.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha declared him foremost among monks who dwell in the forest.

37. The story of Venerable Sīvalī Thera

Family background and names

His mother was Suppavāsā, daughter of the king of Koliyā. According to tradition, Sīvalī remained in her womb for seven years and seven months, and she was in labour for seven days. The baby was finally born when the Buddha blessed her. She then asked her husband to give hospitality to the Buddha and his monks for seven days.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of Supreme Dhamma

According to tradition, from the time of his birth Sīvalī’s mind was fully developed. Sārīputta spoke with him on the day he was born, and with his parents’ permission, when he was seven days old Sārīputta ordained him as a monk. Sometime later, during the first cutting of the hair ceremony, Sārīputta delivered a sermon on the five constituents. As the first lock of hair was cut, Sīvalī reached the first stage of enlightenment, attaining stream entry. When the second lock was cut, he attained the second stage of once returning. In some accounts he attained arahantship with the completion of shaving his head, while in others he is said to have left home on the same day, meditating in a secluded hut and attaining arahantship.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Sīvalī was loved by gods and humans and known especially as a monk who received many gifts from lay followers, and from the *devas* (gods).

Outstanding quality

The Buddha declared Sīvalī to be pre-eminent among monks as the recipient of gifts.

38. The Story of Venerable Vakkali Thera

Family background and names

He came from a Brahmin family of Sāvattthī and as a young man studied the Vedas.

Ordination into Buddhism and attainment of Supreme Dhamma

On first seeing the Buddha in the city of Sāvattthī followed by his retinue of monks, Vakkali was so taken with his appearance that he never tired of looking at him. He asked to become a monk, and ordination was granted. He spent the full day, other than meal times and when bathing, gazing at the Buddha. Knowing that this was fruitless, the Buddha explained to him that there was nothing to be gained by gazing on his foul body, only by seeing the Dhamma could he make spiritual progress. Still, Vakkali continued to contemplate the Buddha's person. Finally, to aid his progress, the Buddha ordered him to leave the monastery. Vakkali was so hurt that he went to a high peak, apparently to throw himself off it. Accounts vary, but a number say that the Buddha gave him further teaching, and Vakkali jumped but rose in the air and contemplating the Buddha's words gained enlightenment, alighting unhurt below.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha praised Vakkali as pre-eminent among monks in implicit faith.

39. The Story of Venerable Bāhiya Dārucīriya Thera

Family background and names

He was born into a family of merchants in Bāhiya state, and was therefore known as Bāhiya. The name Dārucīriya, meaning 'bark clad', arose from his wearing a garment made of bark. He had been a trader and travelled down the Indus and across the sea many times, returning safely. On his last journey he set out for the land of Suvannabhūmi, but was shipwrecked. Clinging on to a plank, he drifted until he reached the shore near to the port of Suppāraka. Having lost his clothes in the sea, he made himself a garment of bark and leaves, and carrying an earthen bowl, he went about the town begging for alms. People assumed that he was a holy man and gave him great honour. They offered him robes and luxuries, but he refused, and his fame spread. In time, he began to believe that he was an arahant.

Attainment of Supreme Dhamma and final nirvana

A *devata* or god (who was a monk he had known in a previous life) was able to read his thoughts and in order to save him from this mistake instructed him to go to the Jetavana monastery in Sāvattthī, where he would meet the Buddha and be able to seek true arahantship. Arriving in Sāvattthī he was told that the Buddha was in the town begging for alms. He found the Buddha and began to follow him, begging to be given his teaching. The Buddha refused twice saying it was not the right time for teaching. Possibly he was giving Bāhiya time to calm down in order to be able to take in the teaching, as on the third request he taught him how to regard all experiences of the senses as experiences only and no more. Listening to the teaching, Bāhiya immediately understood the truth and gained arahantship. He had not yet been ordained, and so set off to obtain a robe and a black bowl for the ordination ceremony.

However, as he was pulling an old cloth from a rubbish heap, he was gored to death by a cow, and thus never received ordination. As the Buddha was going out from the city of Sāvathī, he saw Bāhiya's body lying on the rubbish heap. He asked his monks to cremate the body and to build a stupa over Bāhiya's remains.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha declared Bāhiya foremost in instantly comprehending the truth.

40. The story of Venerable Bākula Thera

Family background and names

He was born into the family of a wealthy councillor of the city of Kosambī. On the fifth day after his birth, following various ceremonies, his nurse took him to be bathed in the river. However, he slipped out of her hands and into the water and was swallowed by a fish. The fish was soon caught by a fisherman, who sold it to the wife of a wealthy councillor of Benaras. When it was split open, the child was found unhurt. The councillor's wife looked after the child as though it were her own. When the councillor and his wife found out what had happened, they asked the baby's real parents if they could raise the child, but his real parents also wanted to raise him. The king decided that the child should be shared by the two families, and that is how he received the name Bākula, meaning two families.

Ordination into Buddhism

When the Buddha went to teach the Dhamma in the city of Benaras, Bākula, who was then a wealthy elder, heard his sermon and asked to be ordained.

Attainment of Supreme Dhamma

Spending seven days practising insight meditation, Bākula attained arahantship on the morning of the eighth.

Work for the propagation of Buddhism

Bākula lived to a very great age. It is said that he was 80 years old when he became a monk, and he then lived 80 years as a monk, to an age of 160 years. He was never ill and didn't need to take medicine to cure any disease. To help others to maintain good health, he built bathrooms for the monks and donated medicines.

Outstanding quality

The Buddha declared him to be foremost in good health.

4 OBSERVATION OF UPOSATHA DAYS

Introduction

Uposatha study is included in the Intermediate curriculum to help students understand the principles of advanced morality for lay followers and to enable them to apply these principles in their daily lives. The text in this chapter follows the structure of the curriculum material created to support students in gaining an understanding of Uposatha, and incorporated into the *Curriculum for Dhamma Studies for Secondary Level*. To make the text easily accessible to English speakers, the following chapter also draws on the ‘Access to Insight’ website (www.accesstoinsight.org), especially ‘Uposatha Sīla, the Eight-Precept Observation’ compiled and written by Somdet Phra Buddhaghosachariya (Nānavara Thera) translated from Thai by Bhikku Kantasilo. Highly recommended for those seeking further reading is ‘Going for Refuge & Taking the Precepts’ by Bhikkhu Bodhi, @ www.accesstoinsight.org; several short excerpts from this clear and helpful explanation have been included below.

What is Uposatha?

The word ‘Uposatha’ is used for observance days, usually full moon and half moon days, when Buddhists fast and renew their commitment to the Dhamma. This word is also used for the most important building in a Thai monastic complex, the Uposatha Hall, where ceremonies are held.

Buddhists can be divided into four levels of self-training: 1. Those who take refuge in the Triple Gem, undertake the Five Precepts and who give alms; 2. Those who take refuge in the Triple Gem, undertake the five precepts, give alms and regularly practise meditation; 3. Those who take refuge in the Triple Gem, undertake the five precepts, give alms, practise meditation and also undertake the Eight Precepts on half moon and full moon days as part of Uposatha observance. These Buddhists live at home as lay followers. All Buddhist nuns strictly undertake the Eight Precepts at all times and live in a nunnery compound in a monastery. 4. Those who renounce family life and are fully ordained monks who undertake the 227 rules (disciplines) of self-training and live in a monastery.

An example of progression through various levels is set out in the *Dharmapada* commentary in the story of the son of a millionaire from the town of Sāvattthī, who asked a senior monk: ‘How should I practice in order to be free from suffering?’ The senior monk replied: ‘Offer alms to the order.’ He did this, and after a short time, he asked: ‘What merits are there more noble than this?’ The senior monk answered: ‘Take refuge in the Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha) and observe the five precepts.’ He did this and some time later asked again: ‘What merits are there more noble than this?’ The senior monk answered: ‘Observe the ten precepts.’ He did this and after a time asked again: ‘What merits are there still more noble than this?’ ‘If you have done all of this,’ the senior monk answered, ‘You may now become a monk.’ He did as the senior monk advised, and finally he attained arahantship.

Buddhist morality includes: 1. General morality, which applies to all human beings. When anyone does not live according to general morality, this carries a penalty.

General morality for lay Buddhists includes observing the five precepts. 2. Morality for those who have chosen to undertake additional precepts or rules of conduct. They may undertake the eight precepts on Uposatha days or otherwise, observe the ten precepts, or renounce the world to become monks. Breaking these additional rules or precepts is a fault for anyone who has vowed to follow them, but not for those who have not undertaken them.

Both those who lead ordinary lives and those who follow the path of renunciation seek bliss. However, ordinary people often confuse bliss with sensual happiness (*kāyikāsukhā*). This can include sensual happiness that arises from form, sound, smell, taste and sensation, and also happiness based on achieving a high social position or gaining power. Spiritual happiness or mental happiness comes from the mind and is not based on form, sound, smell, taste and sensation, or on worldly attainments. This kind of happiness occurs when the mind is at peace and free from such defilements as lust, hatred and delusion.

Setting aside on Uposatha or observant days one day and one night for study offers the opportunity to better understand the practice of morality and can help a person to become less dependent on the material world and to experience the happiness of the spiritual world. Comparing one's own life with the lives of those who have renounced the world and gained spiritual happiness can bring into focus the difference between seeking happiness through sensual and material pursuits and finding the happiness that comes from Dhamma practice and can make clear which is more real and enduring.

Morality is about understanding principles of right and wrong and living in a way that meets standards of right action or behaviour. This involves controlling what we do and say, and following a high and wholesome path, whose final fruition would be nirvana, the supreme goal of Buddhism. Standards of right action or behaviour are set out in the precepts. All Buddhists should follow at least five precepts in order to live a moral and spiritual life, and some may choose to follow eight precepts, or ten.

The path of right action or conduct that points one in the right direction begins with one taking refuge in the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Before discussing the precepts in some detail, it will be good to fully understand the function of these three refuges. This (described below) will show how they can both protect one from lapses of behaviour that might otherwise occur and encourage one in the way of good conduct or behaviour, thus allowing wholesome things to manifest.

The Triple Gem

The Triple Gem means the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha; these three are the entry point into Buddhism and Buddhists regularly take refuge in them to confirm their commitment. The dictionary defines refuge as a place or state of safety from danger or trouble. The Pali word for refuge is '*sarana*', and going for refuge is '*sarana gamana*'. Taking refuge in the Triple Gem is a way of finding safety from danger and trouble – it involves making a commitment to accept the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha as the guiding ideals of one's life. All Buddhists, whether monks, nuns or lay followers, enter Buddhism in the same way – by going to the

Buddha as the fully enlightened teacher, to the Dhamma as the truth taught by him and to the Sangha as the community of his noble disciples. Those who are already committed to Buddhism renew their commitment by taking refuge in the Triple Gem. They do this by reciting:

Buddham saranam gacchāmi
I go for refuge to the Buddha

Dhammam saranam gacchāmi
I go for refuge to the Dhamma

Sangham saranam gacchāmi
I go for refuge to the Sangha.

1. The first person to say these words

The first person to say these words was the Buddha himself, on the occasion at the Isipatana Forest, near Varanasi (Benaras), when he ordained 60 arahant monks and sent them off to propagate Buddhism. He instructed that one who wished to become a monk must shave his hair and beard, wear a yellow robe, prostrate before other monks and should repeat three times: *Buddham saranam gacchāmi* I go for refuge to the Buddha; *Dhammam saranam gacchāmi* I go for refuge to the Dhamma; *Sangham saranam gacchāmi* I go for refuge to the Sangha.

2. The meaning of the words ‘Buddha’, ‘Dhamma’ and ‘Sangha’

The word or term ‘Buddha’ in its primary sense indicates one who, having cultivated the Dhamma assiduously over many lifetimes, has fully comprehended the truth of existence through realization of the way, thereby attaining perfect enlightenment and *nibbāna* (nirvana).

We may initially think of the man Siddhattha Gotama who was born in a secluded grove at Lumbinī and lived and taught in India in the 5th century BC. It is because of his perfect enlightenment that we turn to him for refuge. This state of Buddhahood was attained by others in the past and will be attained by still others in the future. As Bhikkhu Bodhi notes: ‘It is his Buddhahood that makes the Buddha a refuge.’ Explaining further he says: ‘In brief the Buddhahood of the Buddha is the sum total of the qualities possessed by that person named Gotama which make him a Buddha. These qualities can be summed up as the abandonment of all defects and the acquisition of all virtues.’

The word ‘Dhamma’ means the teachings of the Buddha, which sets out the path by which his followers might attain nirvana. To practice the Dhamma means to train the body, speech and mind in accordance with morality, meditation and wisdom. The method is summed up in the Noble Eightfold Path – right views, right intentions, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

The word ‘Sangha’ can be translated as the community of noble disciples of the Buddha. Buddhist monks have preserved and passed on the Buddha’s teachings in an

unbroken chain for over 2,500 years. They take on the responsibility of practising the path themselves and teaching others. Some within the Buddhist community have gained inner mastery of the Buddha's teaching and it is in these noble persons of virtue and morality that we take refuge and from whom we seek guidance.

The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha are inextricably bound together and we take refuge in all three. The Pali word '*sarana*' means eradicating or extinguishing danger and fear, and the three refuges together offer us protection.

3. The way to go to the Triple Gem for refuge

For the ordinary lay follower of Buddhism, there are two types of going for refuge, the initial going for refuge and the going for refuge on a regular basis. Bhikhu Bodhi describes both as follows:

The initial going for refuge is the act of formally going for refuge for the first time. When a person has studied the basic principles of the Buddha's teaching, undertaken some of its practices, and become convinced of its value for his life, he may want to commit himself to the teaching by making an outer profession of his conviction. Strictly speaking, as soon as there arises in his mind an act of consciousness which takes the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha as his guiding ideal, that person has gone for refuge to the Triple Gem and become a Buddhist lay disciple (*upāsaka*). However, within the Buddhist tradition it is generally considered to be insufficient under normal circumstances to rest content with merely going for refuge by an internal act of dedication. If one has sincerely become convinced of the truth of the Buddha's teaching, and wishes to follow the teaching, it is preferable, when possible, to conform to the prescribed way of going for refuge that has come down in the Buddhist tradition. This way is to receive the three refuges from a bhikkhu, a Buddhist monk who has taken full ordination and remains in good standing in the monastic Order.

After one has decided to go for refuge, one should seek out a qualified monk – one's own spiritual teacher or another respected member of the Order – discuss one's intentions with him, and make arrangements for undergoing the ceremony. When the day arrives one should come to the monastery or temple bringing offerings such as candles, incense and flowers for the shrine room and a small gift for the preceptor. After making the offerings one should, in the presence of the preceptor, join the palms together in respectful salutation (*anjālī*), bow down three times before the image of the Buddha, and pay respects to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, as represented by the images and symbols in the shrine. Then, kneeling in front of the shrine, one should request the bhikkhu to give the three refuges. The bhikkhu will reply: 'Repeat after me' and then recite:

Buddham saranam gacchāmi
I go for refuge to the Buddha;
Dhammam saranam gacchāmi
I go for refuge to the Dhamma;
Sangham saranam gacchāmi

I go for refuge to the Sangha.
Dutiyampi Buddham saranam gacchāmi
A second time I go for refuge to the Buddha.
Dutiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchāmi
A second time I go for refuge to the Dhamma.
Dutiyampi Sangham saranam gacchāmi
A second time I go for refuge to the Sangha.
Tatiyampi Buddham saranam gacchāmi
A third time I go for refuge to the Buddha.
Tatiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchāmi
A third time I go for refuge to the Dhamma.
Tatiyampi Sangham saranam gacchāmi
A third time I go for refuge to the Sangha.

The candidate should repeat each line after the bhikkhu. At the end the bhikkhu will say: *Saranagamanam sampunnam* 'The going for refuge is completed'. With this, one formally becomes a lay follower of the Buddha, and remains such so long as the going for refuge stands intact. But to make the going for refuge especially strong and definitive, the candidate may confirm his acceptance of the refuge by declaring to the monk: 'Venerable sir, please accept me as a lay disciple gone for refuge from this day forth until the end of my life.' This phrase is added to show one's resolution to hold to the three refuges as one's guiding ideal for the rest of one's life. Following the declaration of the refuges, the bhikkhu will usually administer the five precepts, the ethical observances of abstaining from taking life, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech and intoxicants. ...

By undergoing the formal ceremony of taking refuge one openly embraces the teaching of the Buddha and becomes for the first time a self-declared follower of the Master. However, going for refuge should not be an event which occurs only once in a lifetime and then is allowed to fade into the background. Going for refuge is a method of cultivation, a practice of inner development which should be undertaken regularly, repeated and renewed every day as part of one's daily routine. Just as we care for our body by washing it each morning, so we should also take care of our mind by implanting in it each day the fundamental seed for our development along the Buddhist path, that is, the going for refuge. Preferably the going for refuge should be done twice each day, with each refuge repeated three times; but if a second recitation is too difficult to fit in, as a minimum one recitation should be done every day, with three repetitions of each refuge.

The daily undertaking of the refuges is best done in a shrine room or before a household altar with a Buddha-image. The actual recitation should be preceded by the offering of candles, incense and possibly flowers. After making the offerings one should make three salutations before the Buddha-image and then remain kneeling with the hands held out palms joined. Before actually reciting the refuge formula it may be helpful to visualise to oneself the three objects of

refuge arousing the feeling that one is in their presence. To represent the Buddha one can visualise an inspiring picture or statue of the Master. The Dhamma can be represented by visualising, in front of the Buddha, three volumes of scripture to symbolize the Tipitaka, the three collections of Buddhist scriptures. The Dhamma can also be represented by the *dhammacakka*, the ‘wheel of Dhamma’, with its eight spokes symbolizing the noble eightfold path converging upon *nibbāna* (nirvana) at the hub; it should be bright and beautiful, radiating a golden light. To represent the Sangha one can visualise on either side of the Buddha the two chief disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna; alternatively, one can visualise around the Buddha a group of monks, all of them adepts of the teaching, arahants who have conquered the defilements and reached perfect emancipation.

Generating deep faith and confidence, while retaining the visualised images before one's inner eye, one should recite the refuge-formula three times with feeling and conviction. If one is undertaking the practice of meditation it is especially important to recite the refuge-formula before beginning the practice, for this gives needed inspiration to sustain the endeavor through the difficulties that may be encountered along the way. For this reason those who undertake intensive meditation and go off into solitude preface their practice, not with the usual method of recitation, but with a special variation: *Aham attanam Buddhassa niyyatemi Dhammassa Sanghassa*, ‘My person I surrender to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.’ By surrendering his person and life to the Triple Gem the yogin shields himself against the obstacles which might arise to impede his progress and safeguards himself against egoistic clinging to the attainments he might reach. However, this variation on the refuge-formula should not be undertaken lightly, as its consequences are very serious. For ordinary purposes it is enough to use the standard formula for daily recitation.

4. Ineffective refuge, and corruption and breach of the refuge

For a person who takes refuge in the Triple Gem in ignorance or with doubt or wrong views, the taking of refuge is ineffective. As well as not studying or learning about Buddhism, ignorance includes supposing one knows everything about Buddhism already, and also teaching others on that flawed basis. Doubt includes a lack of confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and not being certain whether to follow the teachings of the Buddha or not, or whether bad actions have consequences or not. Wrong views include setting oneself up as a scholar or expert when one is obviously not. In all three cases taking refuge can become purified if a proper teacher is found to give instruction and help overcome ignorance, doubt and wrong views.

A breach of the refuge happens if a person becomes a follower of some other teacher than the Buddha, or begins to follow some path other than that established by the Buddha or comes to see some other spiritual community as superior to the Sangha. If one part of the Triple Gem is breached, then all are breached.

Those who take refuge in the Triple Gem should treat all things relating to it with care and loving kindness, looking after Buddhist monuments and temples and treating

them and their environment with respect, showing respect to images of the Buddha, showing respect for the Dhamma when it is preached, looking after books in which the Dhamma is recorded and offering alms and respect to Buddhist monks.

5. Expressing the unified nature of the Triple Gem

The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha cannot be separated, each is always understood in relation to the others. Commentators of the past have expressed the interconnectedness of these through similes, comparing them to more familiar things to make understanding easier.

The Buddha has been compared to the moon, which shines in the night sky. The Dhamma is like the moonbeams that fall on the earth. The Sangha is like people who go out at night and are refreshed by the moonlight.

The Buddha has been compared to the sun. His teaching are like the sun's rays which light up the world. The Sangha is like the creatures of the earth which get their light and warmth from the sun.

The Buddha has been compared to a cloud that enters the sky after a long period of heat and drought. The Dhamma is like the rain that falls from the cloud. The Sangha is like the earth and all the plants that grow in it, which thrive when watered by the rain.

The Buddha has been compared to a clever charioteer, the Dhamma is like his method for training horses, and the Sangha is like horses that have been well trained.

The Buddha has been compared to a good teacher who guides his students, the Dhamma is his teaching, which points out the right and most direct way to safety, the Sangha is like the travellers who reach their destination.

The Buddha has been compared with a person who knows where a treasure is hidden, the Dhamma is like the map that leads to the treasure, the Sangha is like the person who finds the treasure, which in this case is spiritual knowledge.

6. Consequences of taking refuge in the Triple Gem with an unwholesome spirit

If for improper reasons anyone should take refuge in the Triple Gem to improve his or her social standing or to gain influence or advantage of some kind, he or she will be deemed a hypocrite and bad *kamma* (karma) will result.

7. The Triple Gem is a secure refuge

Those who are faithful in spirit and who have a steady belief in the teachings of the Buddha and follow these in their lives will gain a desirable result. Those who go to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha for refuge, who understand the Four Noble Truths and who follow the Eightfold Path will find a secure refuge.

Uposatha observance

Uposatha means an observance day, or 'holy day'. It is a day when lay followers can have a break from their ordinary chores or work in order to perform religious

activities, to purify the mind of defilements, and to find the path of peace and calm, which leads to supreme happiness. Many lay Buddhists take the opportunity to spend time at a temple in meditation and contemplation, fasting from noon until dawn of the next day as part of following the eight Uposatha precepts (set out below).

Uposatha observances date back to before the time of the Buddha and are mentioned, for example, in the *Gangamāla Jātaka*. It is said that once when the Buddha was residing at Jetavana monastery, he called together the Uposatha observers and told them it was good to observe the Uposatha by offering alms, following the precepts, avoiding anger, developing loving kindness and cultivating merit. He urged them to keep the full Uposatha observances, mentioning that a wise man once kept only half the Uposatha, yet this resulted in his rebirth into a high rank. The laymen and laywomen eagerly asked the Buddha to tell them the story, which was described as follows.

Long ago there was a rich merchant of Benaras who took delight in doing good works. All members of his household, including his wife, his children and all his servants down to the cowherds, kept six holy days or Uposatha days every month. One day a bodhisatta who had been born into a poor family came to the merchant's house searching for work. Though it was usually the merchant's habit to explain to workers that only those who kept the moral precepts could work for him, on this occasion he offered work but forgot to explain what was expected. The bodhisatta worked hard, setting off early for work each morning and coming back late in the evening.

A festival day arrived and the merchant asked his female servant to cook a meal for his workers in the morning so that they could eat early and undertake the Uposatha fast for the rest of the day. However the bodhisatta had risen even earlier and gone off to work; no one told him about the meal or that he was to fast that day. The merchant, his wife and children and all the other workers ate and then each went to his own room to meditate on the moral precepts.

That evening the bodhisatta returned at sunset having worked the full day. The female servant brought him water to wash his hands and offered him a bowl of rice. The bodhisatta noticed that the house was very quiet, with none of the noise usual for this time of day, and asked the servant why this was so. She explained that everyone was keeping the fast, each meditating in his or her own room. When the bodhisatta realised that he was the only person in the household not following the correct moral path, he went to the merchant to ask if he could undertake the Uposatha at that late hour. The merchant explained that the complete Uposatha could not be undertaken but that half the Uposatha could be undertaken. The bodhisatta vowed in his master's presence to keep the fast for the remainder of the day and went to his room to meditate on the precepts.

As the night wore on the bodhisatta felt a sharp pain in his stomach. The merchant brought him medicine and urged him to take it. He refused, however, as he would not break the fast. As the sun began to rise, the pain became so intense he began to lose consciousness. They took him outside and at this moment the king of Benaras was

going round the city in his shining chariot with a large retinue. Seeing the regal splendor as he lay dying, he was subsequently reborn as the king's son, Prince Udaya.

The origin of Uposatha days in Buddhist teaching is found in the *Uposatha Khandhaka Mahāvagga Vinayapitaka*. The Buddha was residing on Vulture Peak Rock near the city of Rājagaha. At that time there were wandering ascetics of other religions who were in the habit of meeting together on the fourteenth and fifteenth half moon days of the lunar month and on the quarter moon of the eighth day. People gathered to listen to their preaching and grew fond of these teachers of other sects and became their followers.

Bimbisāra, the king of Magadha, considered this and said to the Buddha 'Lord, it would be good if the venerable monks also met together on these days'. The Buddha then addressed the monks, allowing them to meet together on the half moons of the fourteenth and fifteenth and the quarter moon of the eighth. So the monks met together on those days, but sat in silence. People came to hear them preach and were annoyed, murmuring 'How can these monks sit in silence dumb as hogs? Ought not the Dhamma be preached when they meet?' The monks heard this and when they told the Buddha, he allowed preaching of the Dhamma on these days.

These two examples show that the observance of Uposatha days was already widely practised at the time of the Buddha and was based on the lunar calendar then as now. The *Gangamāla Jātaka* indicates that a fast was kept from midday on six days a month. The Buddha saw that there were advantages for Dhamma practice on Uposatha days and Uposatha observance took on its own regulations within Buddhism, including seeking refuge in the Triple Gem and lay followers practising the eight precepts.

Three categories of observance

Uposatha can be divided into several categories, differing only as to the days of observance.

1. Uposatha is usually kept by lay men and women from noon on one day until dawn of the next on four days a month: the waxing moon of the 8th day and the 15th day and the waning moon of the 8th day and either the 14th or 15th day.
2. For the Patijagara Uposatha observance is undertaken for additional days. Observance begins on the day before the usual Uposatha day and continues on the day after, lasting three days. Thus, for the Uposatha on the 8th day of the lunar month, practice would begin on the 7th day and continue through the 9th day until the 10th day.
3. Patihāriya Uposatha is observed through the four months of the rainy season. It begins on the 1st day of the waning moon of the 8th month and continues until the full-moon day in the middle of the 12th month.

Before the Buddha's time there was a custom in India that wandering religious teachers would stay in one place for the rainy season. They did not have to cope with muddy paths and also avoided trampling young rice plants, which were just sprouting. Buddhist monks initially travelled from place to place throughout the year, whether the cold season, hot season or rainy season. They were criticised for this practice,

people complaining that they stepped on the fresh, green rice seedlings and trod upon many small insects and other living creatures that multiplied in the rainy season. When the monks told the Buddha this, he gave them permission to stop their wandering during the months of the rainy season. The keeping of the Patihāriya Uposatha may arise from this tradition.

An Uposatha story

Uposatha has been passed down from ancient wise men, who kept this practice to lessen defilements such as lust, anger, greed and pride. According to the commentary on the *Pañca Uposatha Jātaka*, the Buddha once asked a gathering of laymen ‘Are you undertaking the Uposatha?’ When they all answered saying that they were, the Buddha replied that they did well and mentioned the story of how in ancient times the Uposatha had helped to suppress defilements. The laymen asked the Buddha to tell them the story, which can be summed up as follows.

Once upon a time there was a great forest that separated the kingdom of Magadha from two neighbouring kingdoms. A bodhisatta was born into a great Brahmin family of Magadha. When he grew up he renounced the world and went to live in this forest where he made a hermitage for himself. In a nearby clump of bamboo, a wood-pigeon lived with his mate. In an ant hill not far away, a snake made his home. In one thicket a jackal had his lair, and in another a bear. These four creatures used to visit the sage from time to time, and listen to his discourse.

One day the pigeon and his mate left their nest to find food. The hen followed behind and as she went a hawk pounced on her and carried her away. Hearing her cries, the cock turned, just in time to see the hawk kill and devour her. The cock burned with the fire of love for his mate who had been torn from him. He thought: ‘This passion torments me exceedingly; I will not go to seek food until I have found how to subdue it.’ He went to the holy man, and taking the vow for the subduing of desire, lay down at a place nearby.

The snake also thought he would go out to seek something to eat, and headed for a cow track near a frontier village. Just then a bull, a glorious creature white all over, approached, tossing the earth with his horns for sport. The snake was terrified and darted toward the ant hill to hide. But the bull’s hooves trod on him, making the snake so angry that he bit the bull, which died there and then. When the villagers heard the bull was dead, they wept and brought garlands, and buried the bull in a grave. The snake thought, ‘Through anger I have deprived this creature of life, and I have brought sorrow to the hearts of many. Never again will I go out to get food until I have learned to subdue anger.’ He went to the hermitage and taking the vow to subdue anger, lay down nearby.

The jackal likewise went to seek food and found a dead elephant. He was delighted and ate his way into the elephant’s stomach. There he remained eating as much as he liked whenever he felt hungry. After some time the corpse grew dry in the wind and heat and the jackal was unable get out. Shut up in the elephant’s stomach he suffered torments, until one day the rain fell, softening the hide and allowing him to struggle out. He thought: ‘It is my greed that has brought this trouble upon me. I will not go

out to find food until I have learned how to subdue my greed.’ So he went to the hermitage and took the vow for subduing greed and lay down nearby.

The bear likewise suffered due to his greed, being beaten by villagers when he went to seek food, and like the jackal thought: ‘I will never again go out to seek food until I have learned to subdue my greed.’ He also went to the hermitage, took the vow to subdue greed, and lay down nearby.

The holy man had been practising meditation in order to gain spiritual insight, but pride in his noble birth stopped him from making progress. A Pacceka Buddha saw this and realising that he was destined to become a Buddha in this very cycle decided to help him subdue his pride and develop his spiritual attainments. The Pacceka Buddha came down from the high Himalayas and seated himself on the holy man’s slab of stone. Coming out of his hut of leaves, the holy man saw him and full of pride lost his composure and began shouting ‘Curse you, vile good-for-nothing, bald-pated hypocrite, why are you sitting on my seat?’ ‘Holy man,’ the other replied, ‘why are you possessed with pride? I have penetrated the wisdom of a Pacceka Buddha, and I tell you that during this very cycle you shall become omniscient.’ He told him more about his future, adding: ‘Now why are you so proud and passionate? This is unworthy of you.’ To this the holy man said nothing. Then the visitor said, ‘Learn the measure of your birth and my powers by this: if you can, rise up in the air as I do.’ So saying he arose in the air and shook the dust off his feet onto the head of the holy man, and returned to the high Himalayas. The holy man was overcome with grief that he had treated a Pacceka Buddha with such powers in this way. Then he thought ‘Never again will I go out to seek for wild fruits until I have learned how to subdue my pride.’ He meditated to develop his spiritual faculties and attainments, and then came and sat on the stone seat.

The pigeon, the snake, the jackal and the bear came up, saluted him and sat on one side. ‘On other days you never come here at this time, but you go seeking food. Are you keeping an Uposatha fast today?’ he asked. They responded that they were, and each in turn explained why he had undertaken the fast. Then the animals asked the great being ‘Sir, on other days you go out at this time to seek wild fruits. Why is it today that you do not, but observe the Uposatha fast?’ He explained that his own keeping of the fast was to overcome pride.

The *Pañca Uposatha Jātaka* is about the sufferings that people undergo and the mistakes that they make personally and socially due to not developing inner moral strength. The solution to suffering and the dangers of lust, anger, greed and pride is to follow the path of morality. To try to escape through drink, drugs or reveling will only make the suffering and danger worse. To keep the Uposatha in peace with a calm mind will enable us to gain in wisdom and understand how to solve our problems correctly.

The eight precepts of Uposatha morality

Those observing Uposatha morality undertake to follow eight precepts. The first five are the same as the five precepts that lay followers undertake, but the third takes on a special meaning. Precepts six to eight are in addition to the five precepts.

1. *Pānatipātā veramani sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*. I undertake to observe the precept of abstaining from killing.
2. *Adinnādānā veramani sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*. I undertake to observe the precept of abstaining from stealing.
3. *Kāmesu micchāacārā veramani sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*. I undertake to observe the precept of abstaining from sexual misconduct. For Uposatha observation this is altered to ‘*Abramacariyā veramani sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*’; I undertake to observe the precept of abstaining from celibacy’ as those observing Uposatha abstain from sexual activity during the period of observance.
4. *Musāvādā veramani sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*. I undertake to observe the precept of abstaining from false speech.
5. *Surā-meraya-majja-pamādatthānā veramani sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*. I undertake to observe the precept of abstaining from alcoholic drinks, drugs and intoxicants that becloud the mind.
6. *Vikāla-bhojanā veramani sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*. I undertake to observe the precept of abstaining from eating beyond the time limit, ie from midday to the following dawn.
7. *Nacca-gīta-vādita-visūka-dassana mālā-gandha-vilepana-dhārana mandana-vibhūsanatthānā veramani sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*. I undertake to observe the precept of abstaining from dancing, singing, instrumental music and unseemly shows, and from wearing garlands, using scents, and embellishing the body with cosmetics.
8. *Uccāsayana-mahāsayana veramani sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*. I undertake the precept of abstaining from the use of high and luxurious beds or seats.

Brief descriptions of the eight precepts

The first precept, abstaining from killing, means taking the life of any animate being, human or otherwise, regardless of age or kind. It also means refraining from ordering others to kill. Five factors must be present in order for this precept to be broken.

- i. The presence of a living being
- ii. Awareness that it is a living being
- iii. The intention to kill
- iv. The effort to kill
- v. The resulting death of that being

When one of these is absent, the precept is not broken. This applies to the factors given under the other precepts; all must be present for the precept to be broken.

The second precept, abstaining from taking what is not given, means taking in the manner of a thief something that is not offered by its owner. It also includes refraining from ordering others to steal. Five factors must be present in order for this precept to be broken.

- i. Articles owned by another
- ii. Awareness that they are owned by another
- iii. The intention to steal
- iv. The effort to steal
- v. The articles are obtained through that effort

The third precept, abstaining from sexual misconduct, means avoiding improper, unchaste or illicit sexual behaviour. As part of the Uposatha discipline, this precept is amended to mean avoiding all kinds of sexual relations, whether they are wrong conduct or allowable in normal lay life. Abstinence is to be followed for the length of the Uposatha observance.

In normal times outside Uposatha observance, misconduct is that which involves an illicit partner. For women an illicit partner is any man other than her husband. If a woman's husband dies, she is free to remarry a husband of her choice. For men, the texts set out twenty types of women who are illicit partners, which can be grouped into three types: 1. A woman under the protection of her elders or those charged with her care. This includes any girl living with her family or looked after by an institution. 2. A woman who is a close relative or who has taken a vow of celibacy, for example a nun, or any other partner forbidden by law. 3. A woman who is married or engaged to another man. If a man's wife dies, he is free to remarry a wife of his choice.

Four factors must be present in order for this precept to be broken:

- i. An illicit partner, as set out above
- ii. The thought or will to engage with that person in sexual union
- iii. The act of engaging in sexual union
- iv. The acceptance of that union. This last excludes those who are forced into improper sexual relations.

During Uposatha observation, two factors must be present to break the vow of abstinence:

- i. The intention to engage in sexual union
- ii. The act of engaging in sexual union.

The fourth precept, abstaining from false speech, means avoiding telling lies. This precept is broken by the presence of the following four factors:

- i. A falsehood or false matter
- ii. An intention to speak a falsehood
- iii. Effort to speak a falsehood
- iv. Others understood what was said

The fifth precept, refraining from alcoholic drinks, means avoiding any substance that can cloud the mind and cause a person to become heedless. The precept mentions two classes of intoxicants, *sūra* and *meraya*, and there are five types of each. *Sūra* includes alcoholic intoxicants made from flour, sweets, rice, yeast or a combination of ingredients which are distilled. *Meraya* are fermented intoxicants made from flowers, fruits, honey, sugar-cane or a combination of ingredients. The precept does not specifically mention drugs such as opium and marijuana, but both the five precepts as a permanent practice and the observance of the Uposatha are broken by the use of opium, marijuana or other drugs or alcoholic drinks that becloud the mind.

This precept is broken when four factors are present:

- i. Intoxicants
- ii. The intention to consume them

- iii. The activity of consuming them
- iv. The ingestion of the intoxicant

The sixth precept refers to the times that those observing Uposatha are to take food. It is permissible to take food from dawn until noon, but it is not permissible to take food after noon until dawn. This period is referred to as ‘out of time’. This precept is broken when four factors are present:

- i. The time from noon until dawn of the next day
- ii. Food or that which is considered to be food
- iii. The effort to eat
- iv. The swallowing of food through that effort

The seventh precept has two parts. The first, avoiding dancing, singing, music and unseemly shows, means that those observing Uposatha should stay away from such things, which arouse the senses and are impediments to wholesome mental states, causing conflict where there might otherwise be peace. This part of the precept is broken when three factors are present:

- i. Entertainments such as singing, dancing, etc.
- ii. Going to see or listen to these or participating in these
- iii. Watching, listening to or participating in these

The second, avoiding the wearing of garlands and use of scents and cosmetics, also concerns putting aside the use of things that arouse the senses. This part of the precept is broken when three factors are present:

- i. Ornaments to bedeck the body, such as garlands, scents, unguents, cosmetics, etc
- ii. Except in a time of illness, the intention to use such substances
- iii. Using ornaments, perfumes or other such things with the intention of beautifying the body

The eighth precept, which prohibits the use of high and large beds and seats, is about avoiding luxurious things that can lead one to be tempted by lust and sensual desire. This precept is broken when three factors are present.

- i. A high or luxurious bed or seat
- ii. Awareness that it is a high or large bed or seat
- ii. To lie down or sit on that bed or seat

The Uposatha Sutta

The eight precepts of Uposatha morality are set out in the *Uposatha Sutta* as follows. This translation is from ‘*Uposatha Sīla* The Eight Precepts of Observance’ compiled and written by Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacarita (Ñānavara Thera) translated from the Thai by Bhikkhu Kantasilo. It is available on www.accesstoinsight.com.

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Blessed One was residing in Jetavana, the monastery of Anāthapindika, near Sāvattihī. At that time the Blessed One, having called all the bhikkhus together, addressed them thus: ‘Bhikkhus!’ The bhikkhus answered in assent: ‘Lord!’ (The bhikkhus then prepared themselves for the following teaching.)

The Blessed One then gave the following teaching on Uposatha.

‘Bhikkhus. Uposatha is comprised of eight factors which the Ariyan disciple observes, the observation of which brings glorious and radiant fruit and benefit. ‘Bhikkhus. What is the Uposatha which, observed by the Ariyan disciples, brings glorious and radiant fruit and benefit?’

1. ‘Bhikkhus. Ariyan disciples in this teaching reflect thus:

All arahants, for as long as life lasts, have given up the intentional taking of life (*pānatipātā*). The club and sword have been laid down. They have shame (of doing evil) and are compassionate towards all beings.

All of you have given up the intentional taking of life, have put down all weapons, are possessed of shame (of doing evil) and are compassionate towards all beings. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the arahants, and the Uposatha will have been observed by you. This is the first factor of the Uposatha.’

2. ‘Bhikkhus. Ariyan disciples in this teaching reflect thus:

All arahants, for as long as life lasts, have given up taking what has not been given (*adinnādānā*). They take only what is given, are intent on taking only what is given. They are not thieves. Their behaviour is spotless.

All of you have given up the taking of what has not been given, are ones who do not take what is not given, are intent on taking only what is given, are not thieves. Your behaviour is spotless. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the arahants, and the Uposatha will have been observed by you. This is the second factor of the Uposatha.’

3. ‘Bhikkhus. Ariyan disciples in this teaching reflect thus:

All arahants, for as long as life lasts, have given up that which is an obstacle to the Brahma-faring (*abramacariyā*). Their practice is like that of a Brahma. They are far from sexual intercourse, which is a practice of lay people.

All of you have given up that which is an obstacle to the Brahma-faring and behave like a Brahma. Your behavior is far from sexual intercourse. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the arahants, and the Uposatha will have been observed by you. This is the third factor of the Uposatha.’

4. ‘Bhikkhus. Ariyan disciples in this teaching reflect thus:

All arahants, for as long as life lasts, have given up the telling of lies (*musāvādā*). They utter only the truth and are intent on the truth. Their speech is firm and is composed of reason. Their speech does not waver from that which is a mainstay of the world.

All of you have given up the telling of lies. You speak only the truth and are intent only on that which is true. Your speech is firm and with reason. Your speech does not waver from that which is a mainstay of the world. For all of this day and night, in this

manner, you will be known as having followed the arahants, and the Uposatha will have been observed by you. This is the fourth factor of the Uposatha.’

5. ‘Bhikkhus. Ariyan disciples in this teaching reflect thus:

All arahants, for as long as life lasts, have given up the taking of liquors and intoxicants (*surā-meraya-majja-pamādatthānā*), that which intoxicates, causing carelessness. They are far from intoxicants.

All of you have given up the taking of liquors and intoxicants. You abstain from drink which causes carelessness. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the arahants, and the Uposatha will have been observed by you. This is the fifth factor of the Uposatha.’

6. ‘Bhikkhus. Ariyan disciples in this teaching reflect thus:

All arahants, for as long as life lasts, eat at one time only and do not partake of food in the evening. They abstain from food at the ‘wrong time’ (*vikāla-bhojanā*).

All of you eat at one time only and do not partake of food in the evening. You abstain from food at the ‘wrong time.’ For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the arahants, and the Uposatha will have been observed by you. This is the sixth factor of the Uposatha.’

7. ‘Bhikkhus. Ariyan disciples in this teaching reflect thus:

All arahants, for as long as life lasts, have given up singing and dancing, the playing of musical instruments and the watching of entertainments, which are stumbling blocks to that which is wholesome. Nor do they bedeck themselves with ornaments, flowers or perfume.

All of you have given up singing and dancing, the playing of musical instruments and the watching of entertainments, which are stumbling blocks to that which is wholesome. You do not bedeck yourselves with ornaments, flowers or perfume. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the arahants, and the Uposatha will have been observed by you. This is the seventh factor of the Uposatha.’

8. ‘Bhikkhus. Ariyan disciples in this teaching reflect thus:

All arahants, for as long as life lasts, have given up lying on large or high beds. They are content with low beds or bedding made of grass.

All of you have given up lying on large or high beds. You are content with low beds or beds made of grass. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the arahants, and the Uposatha will have been observed by you. This is the eighth factor of the Uposatha.’

‘Bhikkhus. The Uposatha is comprised of these eight factors which the Ariyan disciple observes, and it is of great and glorious fruit and benefit.’

Thus the Blessed One spoke on the Uposatha. The bhikkhus were delighted and rejoiced at his words.

How to undertake the Uposatha precepts

The *Uposatha Sutta* commentary says that those who are going to keep the Uposatha precepts should prepare the day before, ensuring that food is on hand to cook for the morning meal and taking care that arrangements have made in advance.

Many lay people undertake the Uposatha precepts at a monastery. According to the commentaries, we are told that on the morning of the Uposatha day one should ask for the precepts from a monk or nun. If this is not possible, then one should ask for the precepts from a layman or laywoman who knows the ten precepts well. When no one else can be present, a person can undertake the precepts by himself or herself. They should understand the precepts and utter them at the same time as establishing the mental intention to refrain in accordance with that particular precept. According to commentaries by scholars, the practitioner of Uposatha should listen to Dhamma talks and practice meditation, rather than engaging in other activities for the period during which Uposatha is observed.

On an Uposatha day, Uposatha observers bring food such as boiled rice or sweets and other offerings to a monastery near their home or any monastery they choose. After the monks have finished their morning chanting, offerings are made.

Yamaham Sammasambuddham Bhagavantam saranam gato (for males)/*gata* (for females)

I go to the Buddha, the Enlightened One, for refuge from danger

Imina sakkarena tam Bhagavan tam abhipujayami
May I pay homage to the Buddha with this offering

Yamaham svakkhatam Bhagavata Dhammam saranam gato (for males)/*gata* (for females)

I go to the Dhamma, the teaching well expounded by the Exalted One, for refuge from danger

Imina sakkarena tam Dhammam tam abhipujayami
May I pay homage to the Dhamma with this offering

Yamaham supatipannam Sangham saranam gato (for males)/*gata* (for females)

I go to the Sangha, the disciples who have practiced well, for refuge from danger

Imina sakkarena tam Sangham abhipujayami
May I pay homage to the Sangha with this offering

Araham samma Sambuddho shagava Buddham Bhagavantam abhivademi
The Blessed One is pure and fully self-awakened. To the Blessed, Awakened One, I bow down (followed by prostration)

Svakkhato Bhagavata Dhammo Dhammam namassami
The Dhamma is well-taught by the Blessed One. To the Dhamma, I bow down (followed by prostration)

Supatipanno Bhagavato Savaka-sangho Sangham namami

The Community of the Blessed One's disciples have conducted themselves rightly.
To the Community, I bow down (followed by prostration)

After this the undertaking of the *Uposatha Sīla* is requested. The passage widely used to request the undertaking of *Uposatha Sīla* is as follows and is chanted in unison three times:

Mayam bhante tisananena saha attangasamannagatam uposatham yacama

After this the Buddha is venerated by repeating three times:

Namo tassa Bhagavato arahato Samma-sambuddhassa

Homage to the Blessed One, the Self-perfect One, the All Enlightened Buddha.

Next, the Three Refuges are taken, as follows:

<i>Buddham saranam gacchāmi</i>	To the Buddha I go for refuge
<i>Dhammam saranam gacchāmi</i>	To the Dhamma I go for refuge
<i>Sangham saranam gacchāmi</i>	To the Sangha I go for refuge

<i>Dutiyampi Buddham saranam gacchāmi</i>	For the second time ...
<i>Dutiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchāmi</i>	For the second time ...
<i>Dutiyampi Sangham saranam gacchāmi</i>	For the second time ...

<i>Tatiyampi Buddham saranam gacchāmi</i>	For the third time ...
<i>Tatiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchāmi</i>	For the third time ...
<i>Tatiyampi Sangham saranam gacchāmi</i>	For the third time ...

The monk will then say:

‘*Tisarana-gamanam nitthitam*’ or ‘*tisarana-gamanam*’ or ‘*sarana-gamanam*’,
meaning: ‘Completed are the Three Refuges’.

At this point one takes the precepts one by one, as given above.

After repeating the eight precepts, the observer says:

Imam atthamgasamaññagatam Buddhapaññattam uposatham imañca rattim imañca divasam sammadeva abhirakkhitum samadiyami

The Uposatha which was laid down by the Buddha and consists of the eight *sīla* has been determined by me – I will keep it well for one full day and night.

The monk then says:

Imani attha sikkhapadaniajjekam rattindivam uposathasīlavasena tumhehi upasakupasikabhutehi sadhukam akhandam katva appamadena rakkhitabbani

The assembled lay people answer: *Ama bhante*

The monk continues:

Silena sugatim yanti silena bhogasampada silena nibbutim yanti tasma silam visodhaye

This is the end of requesting the precepts. The lay people pay respect to the monk by bowing. The observers then listen to sermons and develop meditation until the observation has ended.

Three types of Uposatha

Gaining merit in Buddhism is divided into three levels: low, medium and high. To gain merit with little will, effort and thoughtfulness is regarded as a low level of attaining merit. To gain merit with a medium amount of will, effort and thoughtfulness is regarded as medium level of attaining merit. To gain merit with a high level of will, effort and thoughtfulness is regarded as a high level of attaining merit. One's intention is always important and even if the intention is weak, it can have some effect, and lead to a strengthening of intention. At the highest level, the intention is to gain merit because one accepts this as a suitable thing, rather than attaining merit for approval or reward.

Likewise, the observance of Uposatha can be divided into three types arranged in order of low, medium and high practice. The three are:

1. Niggantha Uposatha. This is the lowest form. It is used to describe Uposatha as followed by those outside of Buddhism (for example, the religious groups of the Buddha's time, one group of whom was known as Nigghanthas). It can also be used to describe Uposatha practice that is partial or incomplete.

2. Gopala Uposatha. This literally means Uposatha as practiced by hired cowhands. Those who practise in this way are like cowhands who do not own the cows or benefit from their fresh milk and butter, they simply take them out to pasture in the morning and bring them back in the evening and take their wages. They are, in a sense, simply going through the motions. Observers who request the eight precepts and then indulge in idle talk or gossip or spend the day talking about buying and selling or their children and grandchildren fall into this category. Such behaviour is not conducive to wholesomeness and does not lead to reaping the full benefits of happiness and faith that the Uposatha can bring.

3. Ariya Uposatha. 'Ariya' in this sense means 'noble' and this is the highest form of Uposatha practice. Observers spend the day in meditation, and may listen to Dhamma talks or join in faith-inspiring Dhamma conversations. The human mind can easily be muddied with defilements, but it is cleanable with right intention and right endeavour, just as dirty hair can be cleaned with shampoo, a dirty body can be cleaned with soap or dirty clothes with washing powder. The tools to clean a sullied mind include six objects of meditation:

1. *Buddhanussati* – reflections on the qualities of the Buddha
2. *Dhammanussati* – reflection on the qualities of the Dhamma
3. *Sanghanussati* – reflection on the qualities of the Sangha
4. *Nussati* – reflection on one's own morality
5. *Devatanussati* – reflection on such qualities as giving, morality and meditation, which cause human beings to become celestial beings.

Any of these can be the focus of meditation. All of these are classed as *samatha* meditation (calmness meditation). *Vipassanā* meditation (insight meditation) can also be practised.

Many practitioners are unable to reach the high level of Ariya Uposatha. Those who do, even for one day, may see a special source of merit as well as experiencing the happiness that follows from such practice. They will have made the most of this opportunity to be born in the human realm and come in contact with the Buddha's teaching.

The benefits of Uposatha Sīla

Each of the precepts that people observe with a faithful spirit will bear the fruits of greater security and confidence. Keeping the Uposatha observance will help to establish deeper concentration and greater wisdom for the individual, and observing the Uposatha together with other Buddhists will bring greater understanding and equality. As the *Uposatha-atthangika Sutta (Āṅguttara Nikāya)* concludes:

Take no life, nor take what is not given, speak no lie, nor be an alcoholic, refrain from sex and unchaste conduct, at night do not eat out-of-time food, neither bear garlands nor indulge with perfume, and make your bed a mat upon the ground: this indeed is called the eight-part Uposatha taught by the Buddha gone to *dukkha's* end. The radiance of the sun and moon, both beautiful to see, follow on from each other, dispelling the darkness as they go through the heavens, illumining the sky and brightening the quarters and the treasure found between them: pearls and crystals and auspicious turquoises, gold nuggets and the gold called 'ore', monetary gold with gold dust carried down – compared with the eight-part Uposatha, though they are enjoyed, are not a sixteenth part – as the shining of the moon in all the groups of stars. Hence indeed the woman and the man who are virtuous enter on Uposatha having eight parts and having made merits bringing forth happiness. Blameless they obtain heavenly abodes.

Thus, Uposatha observation can create greater equality between people and help them to attain the spiritual growth, peace, security and happiness that they seek.

5 USEFUL TERMS

Anicca Inconstant, impermanent

Arahant, arahat One who is free from defilements and impurities through the realisation of nirvana (The widely known term 'nirvana' derives from Sanskrit; the Pali is *nibbāna*).

Ariya The literal meaning is 'noble'. Any of those who have progressed on the stages of awakening towards insight into nirvana, in short: stream enterers (*sotāpanna*), once returners (*sakadāgāmi*), non-returners (*anāgāmi*) and arahants.

Bhikkhu A fully ordained Buddhist monk.

Bhikkhunī A Buddhist nun.

Bodhisatta One who is striving for awakening. Used to describe the Buddha of our present age and earlier Buddhas before they became Buddhas. (Sanskrit: *bodhisattva*)

Brahmacariya A chaste life of abstinence.

Dāna Giving, especially without expecting anything in return. Giving alms. Generosity.

Dhamma The Buddha's teaching.

Dhammadesana A talk on the Dhamma given by the Buddha or a Buddhist monk.

Dhammassavana Hearing the Dhamma, hearing a sermon or good teaching.

Dhutaṅga Voluntary ascetic practices of shaking off or shedding defilements that monks or other meditators may undertake.

Dukkha Suffering, unsatisfactoriness, discontent.

Jhāna (Sanskrit *dhyāna*) A state of strong mental concentration; a state of mind achieved through higher meditation.

Kāma Sense pleasure, desire for sense pleasure.

Kamma (Sanskrit *karma*) Action, deed.

Kammatthana Subjects of meditation, meditation exercises.

Kāruṇa Compassion, sympathy.

Kusala Wholesome, meritorious, moral.

Mettā Love, universal love, loving kindness, friendship.

Nāma-rūpa (literally name and form) Mind and body or the totality of mental and physical processes or mental and physical energies; mind and matter.

Nibbāna Pali for nirvana. Ultimate reality, absolute truth, literally blowing out, extinction.

Pacceka Buddha One who gains enlightenment without the aid of a teacher, like a supreme Buddha, but unlike a supreme Buddha does not establish a dispensation. It is said that Pacceka Buddhas arise only during periods when the teaching of a supreme Buddha is not known in the world.

Pāñña Wisdom, discernment.

Sacca (Sanskrit *satya*) Truth, truthfulness.

Samatha Meditation leading to calmness or tranquility.

Sangha The community of noble monks.

Sīla A code of morality or code of ethics. The Eight Precepts are known as the *Attha Sīla*. The Five Precepts are known as the *Pañca Sīla*. The *Uposatha Sīla* is the Eight Precepts observed by lay devotees on Uposatha days.

Sutta Discourse, sermon.

Tathāgata One who has found the truth, a synonym for the Buddha.

Tipiṭaka (Sanskrit Tripiṭaka) Three baskets or books, the three main divisions of the Buddha's teaching into *Vinaya* (code of discipline), *Sutta* (discourse) and *Abhidhamma* (higher doctrine, philosophy and psychology).

Upāsaka (male) and **upāsiki** (female) The literal meaning is one who comes or sits near. These terms are usually used for devout and faithful lay followers. They can denote those who undertake the Uposatha observance.

Uposatha Day of special religious observance. The major Uposathas are on the full-moon and new-moon days of the lunar month when the monks recite their code of disciplinary rules and many lay Buddhists undertake additional precepts, listen to sermons and practise meditation.

Uposatha hall The consecrated assembly hall that forms part of monastery or temple complex.

Vera Enmity, hatred and unwholesome things that reap negative consequences.

Vipassanā Meditation leading to insight, insight developmeny.

6 USEFUL RESOURCES

The following were used in compiling this publication, and are good sources for further reading.

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The *Access to Insight* website has an excellent glossary of Buddhist terms and a search facility to help you find out more about subjects that interest you.

2. *Buddhist Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*

http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/dic_idx.html

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