



WHAT DID THE BUDDHA TEACH?

COLLECTED ARTICLES BY
H.H. SOMDET PHRA NYANASAMVARA

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The office of the Supreme Patriarch's Secretary

FOREWORD

Her Royal Highness Somdech Pra Srinagarindra Boromrajajonnani, the Princess Mother, felt that students and government officials who are studying or serving abroad ought to possess a handbook outlining the teachings of Buddhism for use as a manual from which they could learn how to act in accordance with those teachings and how to explain some principles of Buddhism to foreign friends desirous to learn about them. Her Royal Highness therefore requested His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara (Suvaddhano), the Supreme Patriarch to write a simple and practical handbook to those interested in Buddhism. This handbook contains a part of selected collections of What did the Buddha teach?, Sila and Rudiments of Mental Collectedness.

The Office of the Supreme Patriarch's Secretary hopes that this handbook will be of much benefit to the general public, who can study the contents of the booklet and apply them as guidance for good living and also as a religious means to purify their minds so that they may attain even greater happiness and stability in life.

The Office of the Supreme Patriarch's Secretary
July, B.E. 2537 (1994)



WHAT DID THE BUDDHA TEACH ?

Eighty years before the commencement of the Buddhist Era, a great man was born into the world. He was the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Siri Mahā Māyā of Kapilavastu of the Sakka country which is now within the boundaries of Nepal. His name was "Siddhattha". Thirty-five years later, Prince Siddhattha attained Supreme Enlightenment and thereafter became known as the "Enlightened One" or the "Lord Buddha" as he is called in Thai. He proclaimed his "*Dhamma*"¹ or Universal Truth to the people; and, thereafter, the Buddhist religion (the Teachings of the Buddha) and the Buddhist community of disciples came into existence. The community was composed of *bhikkhus* or monks (including samaneras or male novices), *bhikkhunis* or nuns (including samaneris or female novices), *upasakas* or male lay followers and *upasikas* or female lay followers. At present, in Thailand, we have only monks and novices, *upasakas* or Buddhist laymen and *upasikas* or Buddhist laywomen. A monk is a man who has been ordained and

¹ Also called "Dharma" from the Sanskrit.

conducts himself in accordance with the precepts laid down for a monk. A novice is a person under or over 20 years of age who has been ordained and conducts himself in accordance with the precepts laid down for a novice. A Buddhist layman or laywoman is one who has taken refuge in the Triple Gem, i.e. the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*, and observes the precepts applicable to laymen and laywomen. At present we call laymen and laywomen, whether of age or under age, "Buddhamānaka" and "Buddhamānika" respectively, meaning "he or she who believes in the Buddha". Buddhism has spread from its place of birth into the various countries of the world.

The focal point of worship in Buddhism is the *Ti-Ratana* (the Triple Gem) namely the Buddha who by himself discovered, realized and proclaimed the *Dhamma*, thereby establishing the Buddhist religion, the *Dhamma* (Universal Truth) discovered, realized and proclaimed by the Buddha and the *Sangha* or community of those who hear, follow and realize the Buddha's Teachings. Some members of the *Sangha* become monks and help in the dissemination of Buddhism and the perpetuation of monkhood up to the present time.

Everyone who is initiated into the Buddhist religion, whether a layman, a laywoman or a monk, ought to conform to a preliminary rule, namely one must solemnly promise to take refuge in and accept the Triple Gem as one's own refuge or, in other words, to regard the Buddha as one's father who gives birth to one's spiritual life. A Buddhist may associate himself or herself with people of other faiths and pay respect to

objects of reverence of other religions in an appropriate manner in the same way as he or she may pay respect to the father, mother or elders of other people while having at the same time his or her own father. He will not lose his Buddhist religion as long as he believes in the Triple Gem, just as he will remain the son of his own father as long as he does not disown him and adopt someone else as his father instead, or just as he will remain a Thai as long as he does not adopt another nationality. Buddhism, therefore, is not intolerant. Its followers may at will associate with people of other nationalities and religions. Buddhism does not teach disrespectfulness to any one. On the contrary, it declares that respect should be paid to all those to whom respect is due and that the *Dhamma* should not be withheld from the knowledge of others and kept only to oneself. Whoever desires to study and practice the *Dhamma* may do so without having to profess first the Buddhist faith. The *Dhamma* as proclaimed by Buddhist religion, will help to demonstrate that it is "Truth" that will be beneficial and bring happiness in the present life. The essence of the entire Buddhist teachings lies in the Four Noble Truths.

Noble Truth (*Ariya-Sacca*) is short for "truth of the noble ones (or of those who have attained a high degree of advancement)", "truth attainable by the noble ones", "truth by which one is ennobled". It should first be understood that it is not simply truth that is agreeable to the world or to oneself, but truth that is directly born of wisdom. The four Noble Truths are :-

1. *Dukkha* or suffering; which means birth, decay

and death which are the normal incidents of life. It also means sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair which are at times experienced by our body and mind. To be separated from the pleasant, to be disappointed, or to be in contact with the unpleasant are also suffering. In short our body and mind are subject to suffering or, in other words, we may say that our existence is bound up with suffering¹.

2. *Samudaya*; which means the cause of suffering, which is desire. It is a compelling urge of the mind, such as the longing to own what we desire, to be what we desire to be, or to avoid those states to which we feel aversion.

3. *Nirodha*; which means cessation of suffering, which connotes extinction of desire or such longings of the mind.

4. *Magga*; which means the way to the cessation of suffering, which is the Noble Eight fold Path, namely Right Understanding, Right Intention, Right speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

Some people believe that Buddhism is pessimistic in outlook because its teachings deal only with suffering and are of so high a standard that ordinary people are unable to practise it because it advocates extinction of desire, which is very difficult to accomplish. Since such misunderstanding exists, clarification is necessary before the Noble Truths can be dealt with. The Buddhist religion

¹ Some present-day Buddhists are of the opinion that the word "frustration" is a good translation of Dukkha, as it carries a wider meaning than "suffering"

is neither wholly pessimistic nor wholly optimistic. It derives its outlook from truth, i.e. truth which can only be understood through a combination of insight and purity of mind.

According to the history of Buddhism, the Buddha did not enunciate the Four Noble Truths to anyone lightly. He would first feed the minds of his listeners with other points of the *Dhamma* until they became pure enough to be receptive to higher teaching. Then He would expose the Four Noble Truths to them. The other points of the *Dhamma* that are constantly stressed particularly to laymen, are *Dāna* or charity, *Sila* or morality, the natural and logical result of charity and morality which is bliss (meaning happiness and prosperity even in this life), the dangers of sensuality (anything that binds one to love and desire) and the advantages to be derived from the renunciation of sensuality. This method of gradual teaching adopted by the Buddha is comparable to the present day method of education. We may say that the Four Noble Truths were taught at university level; pupils at lower educational levels were taught other points of the *Dhamma* suitable to their understanding. The Buddha would never teach the *Dhamma* beyond the comprehension of his listeners, for to have done so would not have benefited anyone. For those who are in search of knowledge, although they may not be able to comply with the Four Noble Truths, study of this fundamental point of the *Dhamma* would certainly advance their rational knowledge of truth and may make them consider how much they can in practice comply with it in spite of the fact that they are still

unable to rid themselves of desire. Such consideration is possible as in the following instances:-

1. Everyone wants to be happy and never wants to suffer. But why are people still suffering and unable to do away with their own sufferings themselves? Sometimes, the more they try to get rid of them, the more they suffer. This is because they do not know what is the true cause of suffering and what is the true cause of happiness. If they knew, they would be successful. They would eliminate the cause of suffering and create the cause of happiness. One of the important obstacles to this success is one's own heart. Because we comply too much with the dictates of our hearts, we have to suffer.

2. In saying that we comply with the dictates of our hearts, in fact, we mean that we are gratifying desire or those compelling urges of the heart. In worldly existence, it is not yet necessary to suppress desire totally because desire is the driving force that brings progress to the world and to ourselves. But desire must be under proper control and some limit should be set for satisfying it. If desire could be thus restricted, the probability of a happy life in this world would be much greater. Those who start fires that burn themselves and the world are invariable people who do not restrict the desires of their hearts within proper bounds. If we wish to acquire knowledge, we should study hard. If we desire rank and wealth, we should persevere in our duty to the best of our ability. This is tantamount to observing the Noble Eightfold Path in relation to the world, which is at the same time acting in accordance with

the *Dhamma*.

3. But human beings require some rest. Our bodies need rest and sleep. Our minds also must be given time to be empty. If they are at work all the time, we cannot sleep. Among those who take pleasure in forms and sounds there are, for example, some who are fond of good music; but, if they were compelled to listen to music too long, the lovely music constantly sounding in their ears would become a torment. They would run away from it and long for a return of silence or tranquility. Our mind requires such tranquility for a considerable time every day. This is rest for the mind or in other word the extinction of desire which, in fact, amounts to elimination of suffering. Therefore, if one really understands that elimination of suffering is nothing but keeping the mind at rest and that rest is a mental nourishment which is needed every day, then one will begin to understand the meaning of *Nirodha*.

4. We should go on to realize that when our mind is restless it is because of desire. The mind then causes us to act, speak and think in consonance with its agitated state. When gratified, it may become peaceful; but only momentarily, because action dictated by a restless mind may very soon afterwards bring us intense pain and severe punishment or make us conscience stricken and cause us to regret it for a very long time. so let it be known that a person with his mind in such a state is termed a "slave of desire". Then is there a way to overcome desire or to master the desire in our own hearts? Yes, there is the Noble Eight fold Path that leads to the extinction of suffering, namely:

(1) *Sammādiṭṭhi* or Right Understanding, meaning an intellectual grasp of the Four Noble Truths or of the true nature of existence even in a simplified form as outlined in the preceding paragraphs.

(2) *Sammāsankappa* or Right Intention, meaning intention to be free from all bonds of *Dukkha*. Such intention should be free from revenge, hatred, and harmfulness.

(3) *Sammāvācā* or Right Speech, meaning abstinence from lying; from tale-bearing and vicious talk that cause discord; from harsh language; and from vain, irresponsible and foolish talk.

(4) *Sammākammanta* or Right Action, meaning avoidance of killing and torturing, of theft and misappropriation, and of adultery.

(5) *Sammāājīva* or Right Livelihood, meaning rejection of wrong means of livelihood and living by right means.

(6) *Sammāvāyāma* or Right Effort, meaning effort to avoid the arising of evil; effort to overcome evil and demeritorious states that have already arisen; effort to develop good and beneficial states of mind, and effort to maintain them when they have arisen.

(7) *Sammāsati* or Right Mindfulness, meaning dwelling in contemplation of the true stations of the mind, for instance, the *Satipaṭṭhana* or four Stations of Mindfulness which are the Body, Sensation, Mind and *Dhamma*.

(8) *Sammāsamādhi* or Right Concentration, meaning the fixing of the mind upon a single deed which we wish to perform along the right path.

The Noble Eightfold Path is in reality one complete path with eight component parts which may be summed up in three stages of training (*sikkhā*) namely :

Sīla Sikkhā or Training in Morality, which includes Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. In general this means that whatever we say or do, we must say or do in the right way. This also applies to our livelihood. We must reject wrong means of livelihood and live by right ones. If we do not yet have a means of livelihood, for instance if we are students depending on the support of our benefactors, we must spend the money given us properly and not squander in extravagantly. We must learn to control ourselves and refrain from spending it wrongly or improperly on ourselves and our friends.

Citta Sikkhā or Mental Training, which includes Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Generally speaking, the subject of the mind is very important. We must study and train our minds. It is not really difficult to do so if only we can get started. For instance we can begin developing diligence, train ourselves in mindfulness and cultivate our memories by focussing our minds on what is beneficial and by practicing concentration. Such training can be applied to our study since it requires diligence and proper use of our memory and powers of concentration.

Paññā Sikkhā or Training in Wisdom, which includes Right Understanding and Right Intention. Generally speaking, man succeeds in his own development through insight by means of which he makes right decisions. Right intention means right deliberation and

right understanding leads to right decisions. Students in the various fields of study all aim at acquiring wisdom in order to enable them to deliberate rightly and arrive at correct decisions in accordance with reason and reality. The training in wisdom should in particular include the knowledge of *Ti-lakkhaṇa* or the Three Characteristics of Existence and the practice of Brahma-Vihāra or the Four Sublime States of Consciousness.

Ti-lakkhaṇa or the Three Characteristics of Existence

All *sankhāra* or phenomenal (compounded) things are subject to *Anicca* or impermanence, *Dukkha* or suffering and *Anattā* or non-self, which are the three characteristics of existence.

Anicca or impermanence means transience. Everything that has come into existence will eventually have to pass away. Everything exists only temporarily.

Dukkha or suffering consists of continual change. All things are subject to incessant and continual decay. Their owners consequently have to suffer just as much as the things they possess. For instance, one falls ill when one's body is out of order.

Anattā or non-self means void of reality or self-existence. *Anattā* may be explained in three stages as follows :

1. Not to be too self-centered. Otherwise one would become selfish and would be actuated only by self-interest and would not know oneself in the light of

truth. for instance, being too egoistic, one would believe one is in the right or entitled to this or that but in truth one's belief is erroneous.

2. We cannot give orders to anything, including our bodies and minds, to remain unchanged according to our wish. For instance we could not order our bodies to remain always young and handsome and our minds always happy and alert.

3. One who has practiced and attained to the highest level of knowledge will discover that all things including one's own body and mind are devoid of self; or, as the Buddhist proverb puts it, "one becomes non-existent to oneself". some people with great insight have no attachment to anything at all in the world. Nevertheless, during their lifetimes, they are able to conduct themselves in the right manner (without defilements) appropriate to the place and circumstances in which they live.

Brahma-vihāra

Brahma-vihāra or the four Sublime States of consciousness denote for qualities of the heart which, when developed and magnified to their fullest, lift man to the highest level of being. These qualities are :

1. *Mettā*, which means all-embracing kindness or the desire to make others happy, as opposed to hatred or the desire to make others suffer. *Mettā* builds up generosity in one's character, giving it firmness, freeing it from irritation and excitement, thus generating only

friendliness and no enmity nor desire to harm or cause suffering to anyone, even to the smallest creatures, through hatred, anger or even for fun.

2. *Karuṇā*, which means compassion or desire to free those who suffer from their sufferings, as opposed to the desire to be harmful. *Karuṇā* also builds up generosity in one's character, making one desirous to assist those who suffer. *Karuṇā* is one of the greatest benefactions of the Buddha as well as of the monarch and of such benefactors as our fathers and mothers.

3. *Muditā*, which means sympathetic joy or rejoicing with, instead of feeling envious of, those who are fortunate. *Muditā* builds up the character in such a way that it promotes only virtues and mutual happiness and prosperity.

4. *Upekkhā*, which means equanimity or composure of mind whenever necessary, for instance, when one witnesses a person's misfortune, one's mind remains composed. One does not rejoice because that person is one's enemy nor grieve because that person is one's beloved. One should see others without prejudice or preference but in the light of *Kamma* or will-action. Everyone is subject to his own *Kamma*, heir to the effects of his own will-actions. Earnest contemplation of *Kamma* or the law of Cause and Effect will lead to the suppression of egocentric contemplation and result in the attainment of a state of equanimity. *Upekkhā* builds up the habit of considering everything from the point of view of right or wrong and ultimately leads to a sense of right-doing in all things.

These four qualities should be cultivated and

developed in our hearts by generating mettā or loving-kindness to all beings in general and to some in particular. If this practice is repeated often, our minds will become impregnated with them often, thus displacing hindrances such as hatred and anger. Pursued long enough, it will ultimately become a habit which will bring with it only happiness.

Nibbāna is Supreme Happiness

There is a Buddhist proverb which states that “*Nibbāna* is Supreme Happiness”. *Nibbāna* means elimination of desire, not only worldly desire but also desire in the sphere of the *Dhamma*. Action not dictated by greed is action leading to *Nibbāna*.

The Buddha was once asked what was meant by saying that “*Dhamma*” including “*Nibbāna*” may be “realized by everyone personally”. The Buddha's reply was as follows. When one's mind is subdued by greed, hatred and delusion, volition harmful to oneself or others or to both oneself and others will arise, causing physical and/or mental suffering. As soon as such volition arises, unwholesome actions, be it of body, speech or mind, will inevitably follow. One in such a state of mind will never be able to recognize, in the light of truth, what is to his own or others' benefit, nor to the benefit of both. However when greed, hatred and delusion are eliminated, when there is no more volition harmful to oneself or others, or to both, no more unwholesome bodily, verbal or mental actions, when what is to one's

own or others' benefit, or both, is recognized in the light of truth and no more suffering of the body nor even of the mind occurs, this is the meaning of "*Dhamma*" leading to "*Nibbāna*". According to this explanation of the Buddha, realization of the *Dhamma* means realization of one's own mental states, good as well as bad. No matter in what state the mind may find itself, one should realize it correctly in the light of truth. This is what is called realization of the *Dhamma*. It may be asked what benefit can be derived from such realization? The answer is that it will bring peace of mind. When the mind is poisoned with desire, hatred and delusion, it always flows out-ward. If it is brought back to be examined by itself, the fire of desire, hatred and delusion will ultimately subside and peace of mind will ensue. This peace should be carefully discerned and securely retained. This then is realization of peace of mind which is realization of *Nibbāna*. The way to realize the *Dhamma* and attain *Nibbāna* as taught by the Buddha is a natural one which can be practiced by all from the simplest and lowest to the highest level.

The Noble Truths, the Three Characteristics of Life and *Nibbāna* are *Sacca Dhamma*, i.e. Universal or Absolute Truth as realized and taught by the Buddha (as expounded in the First Sermon and in the *Dhammaniyāma* or Fixedness of the *Dhamma*). This may be termed Truth in the light of the *Dhamma*, which may be attained through *Paññā* or insight, and this is the Buddhist way to end all suffering. Buddhism simultaneously teaches the worldly *Dhamma* or *Lokasacca*. This is worldly truth, a "relative reality"

or conventional truth which views the material universe as it really is, i.e. an aggregate of composite factors existing in relation to certain imperfect states of consciousness such as belief in the existence of selfhood and all its belongings. But in the worldly sense it has a conventional identity as exemplified in the Buddha's saying "*A man is his own refuge*". In this connexion, the buddha said "*As the assembled parts of a cart comprise a cart, so the existence of khandhas or composite factors of being comprise a being*". The worldly *Dhamma* includes conduct in human society, for instance, the Six Directions (conduct towards our fathers and mothers, our teachers, our religion, our wives and children and our servants), as well as religious precepts and disciplinary laws. Along with our practice of the *Dhamma* to liberate our minds from suffering according to Absolute Truth, we should also practice the *Dhamma* in the light of worldly or conventional truth. For example, if one is a son, a daughter or a pupil, one should comply with the *Dhamma* in a manner appropriate to one's status and try to study and use the *Dhamma* in the solving of one's daily problems. He should try everyday to apply the *Dhamma* in his study, work and other activities. He who conducts himself in this manner will see for himself that the *Dhamma* is truly of immeasurable benefit to his own existence.



SĪLA - MORAL CONDUCT

Sīla or moral conduct is the principle of human behaviour that promotes orderly and peaceful existence in a community. It yields, in particular, a very special benefit (to be discussed later). Rules of moral conduct are to be found in every religion. They may resemble other codes of conduct to a greater or lesser degree depending on the Teacher or religious system from which they originated. Usually they comprise lists of actions from which to abstain, implying that any actions not covered by the prohibitions are permissible. A good example is afforded by the five *Sīlas* (of Buddhism), namely to abstain from taking the life of sentient beings, to abstain from taking possession of anything that has not been given by its owner, to abstain from sexual misconduct, to abstain from lying or evil speech, and to abstain from intoxicating drinks which are a primary cause of negligence. These five *Sīlas* are the basic principles of Buddhism best known to most people. It is customary for them to be delivered during almost every religious ceremony and those present at the ceremonies generally

make a formal declaration of their intention to comply with them. Thais must have seen or heard monks enunciating the *silas* ever since the time when they were still small children and did not understand them. Consequently it is of interest to consider the extent to which most people realize the importance of the *Silas* and what they think of them, especially as most of the *Silas* prescribe a mode of conduct that is widely different from the general practice of human beings. Some people favour the *Silas* while others do not, as can be gathered from the following instances.

The first *Sila* : The prohibition against taking the life of living beings applies not only to humanity but also to creatures of every kind, both big and small; black ants as well as red ants. Each day a vast number of animals are slaughtered as food, for most people eat meat while vegetarians are not common. In the field of science, animals are used in many researches and experiments. In the administrative field, arms are used in crime suppression. Law enforcement agencies punish law breakers. Belligerents at war use arms to destroy one another. The actions cited here as examples are not regarded as illegal or as running counter to normal worldly practice. Indeed, it may even be considered wrong to abstain from them, as is the case when constables or soldiers fail in their police or military duties. Moreover, nowadays many kinds of animal are known to be carriers of microbes and, thanks to the microscope, germs and many sorts of microbe have been detected. Almost everything contains them – even drinking water. Only the larger impurities are caught by

the filter; microbes can pass through. so numberless microbes pass into our throats with each draught of water. It is the same with medicines. Whenever they are used, either externally or internally, they destroy myriads of microbes. Are these microbes to be considered as living beings in (the sense of) the first *Sīla* or not? If so, perhaps no one can fully comply with it. Besides, some are of the opinion that people who refrain from taking the life of animals should also refrain from eating meat, because it amounts to encouraging slaughter and is no less sinful according to them.

The second *Sīla* : Taking possession of anything that has not been given by its owner or stealing, is also wrong, even legally speaking. However, there is, for instance, the exception of enemy property in the case of war.

The third *Sīla* : Adultery is wrong. One who commits it does not command respect nor inspire confidence. Sexual misconduct involving persons with whom conjugal relations should be avoided according to custom, or those who are prohibited by law, or by the *Dhamma*, is also wrong. So is coercing by physical or even financial means a married or even unmarried person into consenting to such conduct. The purpose of this third *Sīla* is to preserve the respectability of the family of each person concerned and to safeguard its sanctity and inviolability. By the same token, respect of person, place and property should be customary behaviour, as laid down in the book "Ethics of Good People", which says, for example: "Do not intrude into people's homes without invitation. Do not peep into

their rooms from outside". It is proper for us to adopt manners derived from the *Silas* or moral rules, all of which aim at promoting good behaviour and discouraging laxity.

The fourth *Sila*: Lying is generally regarded as wrong. Nevertheless, people very seldom speak quite truthfully to one another and so their word can hardly be relied upon. sometimes they are unable to speak the truth; for instance, they may have to lie to save themselves from harm, and doctors lie to bolster their patients' morale. Lying under these circumstances may be contrary to the *Sila*, but it is not entirely contrary to its purpose. This *Sila* aims at bringing about mutual benefits by adhering to truth and avoiding verbal offences. Similarly, utterances harmful to another's well-being such as, for example, malicious, abusive or slanderous speech intended either to deride others or to vaunt oneself, may be truthful, yet they must be regarded as wrong, because they are contrary to the *Sila*. It is said that the Lord Buddha Himself, besides saying only what was truthful, useful and fitting and laying down the *Sila* against lying, also discouraged malicious, indecent and vain speech.

The fifth *Sila*: In spite of the rule prescribing abstention from intoxicating drinks, their consumption does not decrease and authorized distilleries are working at full blast. Liquor shops are well patronized day and night. At receptions, fairs, etc., there are alcoholic drinks, as otherwise they would be dull and drinkers would avoid them. Alcoholic drinks have thus become an income-earner which brings in a sizeable revenue

each year.

Practices regarded as right and other regarded as wrong may both be contradictory to the *Silas*, as shown by the foregoing instances. All of this indicates that, one increasingly fails to understand the *Silas*, to recognize their importance and to appreciate their meaning for one's existence in this world. That is why each of the following (mixed right and wrong) views has its advocates:

1. The principles of *Silas* should be altered to suit those who have worldly occupations. For instance, some feel that the first *Sila* should be changed to allow killing to the extent permissible by law, i.e. only killing which is not authorized by law should be prohibited. Moreover the fourth *Sila* should, they feel, be made flexible and lying be allowed when it is done to protect oneself or others. So with the fifth *Sila* when intoxicants are taken only occasionally and not to excess.

2. The principles of the *Silas* should be left untouched but no one need pay attention to them. If those who act thus abide by the law, they should be regarded as satisfactory people. After all, law is a sort of *Sila*. It is laid down to ensure the peace and welfare of the public, although it is not entirely based upon the psychological principles and rational morality which are the foundation of the *Silas*, a point with which we shall deal later on.

3. The principles of the *Silas* should be left unaltered, but heeded and observed only from time to time, or only some of them. Most Buddhists belong to the category of people who act in this way. They do

not change the principles of the *Silas*, for they are truly interested in them and comply with them – or some of them – occasionally. For instance, some Buddhists do not take alcoholic drinks during the three-month period of the Rains-residence, but subsequently they start drinking again. If they are fishermen or fishmongers, they disregard the first *Sila* which, if observed, would make fish catching or fish selling impossible, but they may refrain from killing other animals. If they are medical students, they do not entirely follow the first *Sila*, observance of which would render the use of animals for research and experimentation impossible, but they may observe the *Sila* whenever it is practical for them to do so, i.e. when it does not hinder them in their profession or in performing their duties.

4. The principles of *Sila* should remain unaltered and be strictly complied with. Very few hold this view. Moreover, even these may have some doubt in regard to microbes, and those who do not adhere strictly to the *Sila* may raise the same doubt either, from curiosity or to contend that the *Sila* is impracticable. To decide whether microbes are living beings or not (in the sense of the *Sila*), one should consider the life history of the Lord Buddha. Whenever the Lord Buddha fell ill, he allowed Doctor *Jivakakomārabhacca* to apply external remedies or to give him medicine to be taken internally. Monks were also allowed to take or apply remedies to cure their diseases. Hence, we can conclude that the first *Sila* does not apply to microbes. If it did, then we could not eat nor drink anything, nor even breathe, so no one could follow it. *Silas* should be rules conduct

that can be followed by everyone in an ordinary, practical manner without having recourse to the aid of such instruments as the microscope. The use of those instruments should be reserved for people engaged in the medical or scientific professions

With regard to the consumption of meat as food, Buddhists themselves are divided into two factions. One faction regards eating meat as being no less wicked than the act of slaughter. It holds that, were meat not used as food, there would be no cause for the destruction of animals, hence consumption of meat is directly responsible for their slaughter and is therefore wrong. *Ācāriyavadin* Buddhists accordingly observe *Mam̄savirati* or abstention from animal flesh. The other faction, the *Theravādin* Buddhist monks, are permitted to eat meat. Their *Vinaya* or disciplinary rule allows monks to do so under three conditions, namely: if they have not seen or heard the animals being slaughtered and have no reason to suspect that the slaughter was for their benefit as opposed to slaughter for sale in general. (There are also rules prohibiting monks from eating raw meat or the ten forbidden kinds of meat, which include tiger meat and elephant flesh). Buddhists of this category, particularly *Theravādin* monks, are expected to eat without fuss and not be difficult about their food. They must be able to partake of vegetarian food and also of animal food, provided that the three afore-mentioned conditions are complied with and that the meat is not one of the prohibited kinds. They are expected to accept whatever is offered them, whether vegetarian or consisting of meat of the proper kinds. This is not considered contradictory

to the *Sila*, because the heart of such Buddhists, especially of the monks, are pervaded with unbounded kindness and compassion towards animals. Never would they cause animals to be killed. Moreover, against the view that eating meat is wrong, they present the following argument: if meat consumption is morally wrong, then the use of hide, bones, horns of animals should be altogether banned. That, too, should be regarded as wrong. Both factions are still at variance on this subject and some of their members are still carrying on the argument. But there are some who do not argue, preferring to leave the whole matter to the individual's own conscience. One should not compel others to accept one's own views. To do that is also a *kilesa* or mental defilement and therefore to be avoided.

If it is asked what purpose the Lord Buddha hoped to serve by laying down *Silas* which presecrbe such uncompromising abstention that they can be fully complied with only by very few people, it has to be admitted that no one can claim to know His exact intention in so doing; nevertheless, one may gather the reason from many principles enunciated in the *Dhamma*. The Lord Buddha taught us to make a comparison between ourselves and others by saying: "All living beings are afraid of punishment and death. Life is dear to all beings (as well as to us). By putting ourselves in their place, we realize that we, individually, should neither kill nor cause others to kill." By this principle of the *Dhamma*, Lord Buddha wanted us to understand, through entering into one another's feelings, that all living beings love

life as much as we do and have no less fear of death. That is why, as a matter of simple justice, the Lord Buddha laid down the first *Sila*. The second was formulated to promote mutual respect for each other's rights to their own possessions. The third encourages mutual respect for one another's families. The fourth protects our mutual interests by truthfulness. The fifth helps us to avoid carelessness and negligence. If we set store by and careful guard our wealth, our families and good faith, then we should not trespass on the rights of others. All the *Silas* or rules of conduct are based solely on the principle of perfect justice. They demonstrate that Buddhism respects the lives, rights, property and so on, of everyone. This is *Lokasacca* or *Sammutisacca*, namely worldly or conventional truth. If the Buddha had made the *Silas* flexible and adaptable to the wishes of the masses, they would not have been consonant with the nature of perfect justice. Lord Buddha would have shown Himself deficient in compassion towards those animals whose slaughter was thus sanctioned. That would not accord with the character of the Buddha, who was filled with compassion towards all sentient beings. Another reason stated at the beginning, is that the *Silas* promote, in particular, "a very special benefit". This means that the ultimate outcome of adherence to them is freedom from all defilements. The *Silas* are the first steps towards this goal. Total observance of the *Silas*, though there are only five of them, can in itself be a step towards the higher level at which that "very special benefit" is realized.

What is perhaps of particular importance with

regard to the *Silas* is to discover why people are, or are not, interested in observing them. Some reasons are as follows:-

1. Owing to the strictness of Silas, which involve, for example, abstention from taking the life of any living being. Suppose the rules of moral conduct had been laid down in a more accommodating manner, tolerating some of the infringements we have discussed, would such accommodating rules be followed by more people or not? Obviously, no one can say for sure that it would happen, because one gets a general impression that moral rules, in particular those concerning what is regarded as wrong either in the worldly or the legal sense, are all of them—whether the first *Sila* or any other—being constantly violated. This demonstrates that the failure to observe them is not due to their strictness. Usually, one's natural inclination is to suit all actions to one's own comfort and convenience. Every nation has its laws and every religion has its *Silas*. Even where some of the rules are quite flexible and accommodating, it is probable that quite a few people ignore and violate them. Therefore the main reason for violation lies with the individual himself; most people are naturally inclined to disregard or alter the rules to suit their own convenience and are quite capable of doing so.

2. Owing to the individuals themselves. Then what is it in the individual that inclines him to infringe the rules, even though this is generally and legally regarded as wrong? The causes of such behaviour embedded within the individuals themselves are undoubtedly greed (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*) and delusion

(*moha*), which are born in the heart as defilements (*kilesa*) and, in turn, bring about the absence of shame (*hiri*) or dread of evil (*ottappa*). So if change is needed, it should not take place in the principles of the *Silas*, but be a change of heart, meaning decreasing the *kilesas* rather than increasing them in such a way that *hiri-ottappa*—shame and fear of doing evil, appear in the heart. By so behaving, our ability to comply with the *Silas* will become much greater. Better compliance with the *Silas* does not mean abstention from everything prescribed in them. Abstention from what is worldly or legally regarded as wrong is in itself acceptable conduct.

3. Owing to necessity, such as in the following instances :

Infringement of the first *Sila* in order to protect one's property, life, nation, religion and king, as happens in battle or when one is dealing with criminals or enemies. Transgression of the second *Sila* in order to keep oneself alive or because of hunger or real poverty. There seems to be no reason for violating the third *Sila*, since compliance with it would surely not kill anyone. Infringement of the fourth *Sila* for the sake of one's own welfare. Failure to observe the fifth *Sila* because one has to take alcoholic drinks as medicine, or because a medicine prescribed is mixed with alcohol, or just for the enjoying oneself occasionally (in which case, if one becomes drunk, one goes straight to sleep without starting a row). Many of the foregoing instances can be counted as cases of necessity, such as, for example, if one is a fisherman by trade or a medical student. It

is known that King Mongkut requested the Teachers at Wat Bovoranives to instruct monks on the point of disrobing and returning to lay life, to learn the way of following the *Sīlas* in a manner consonant with necessity as explained above, in order to secure for themselves a satisfactory worldly life. When one asks oneself, for instance, whether it is really necessary to kill or to steal, one realizes that this is very seldom the case. Consequently even the mere intention not to infringe the *Sīlas*, except when it is impossible to do otherwise, and to abide by them as far as necessity permits will make us realize that the five *Sīlas* can be followed, to a great extent, without difficulty or loss of any worldly advantage whatever.

4. Owing to a lack of supporting and complementary Dhamma. Lack of *Dhamma* complementary to each of the rules may also be a cause of their infringement. *Mettā* or loving-kindness should be cultivated as (an aspect of) *Dhamma* complementary to the first *Sīla*. *Sammā-ājīva* or Right Livelihood should be practiced as (an aspect of) *Dhamma* complementing the second *Sīla*. *Santutṭhitā* or contentedness with one's spouse is (an aspect of) *Dhamma* that should be developed to complement the third *Sīla*. Truthfulness is (an aspect of) *Dhamma* that should be observed to complement the fourth *Sīla*. Carefulness and circumspection should be adhered to as (an aspect of) *Dhamma* complementing the fifth *Sīla*. Explanations of some of the complementary aspects of *Dhamma* follow. For instance, *mettā* complementing the first *Sīla*, where it exists in any being, banishes all desire to harm. To

say nothing of the *mettā* or loving-kindness shown by parents to their children, even *mettā* towards pets like dogs and cats is enough to bring about the greatest care for them. Without *mettā*, but with *dosa* or aversion instead, these pets might easily be destroyed. Right Livelihood complementing the second *Sīla* can be explained as follows. If one is lazy in work or adopts a wrong mode of livelihood for one's subsistence, one cannot possibly comply with the second *Sīla*. Since we all have to eat every day, each of us has to get his food without fail and therefore must have a means of living, and a right one at that.

5. Owing to absence of leaders who abide by the *Sīlas*. As an illustration, there is a saying in a *Jātaka* which can be summarized as follows: "When a herd of cattle is travelling, if the leading bull strays, the whole herd goes astray. So it is with the people. If the appointed leader practises *adhamma* or unrighteousness, the multitude will also practise it. The whole nation will suffer if that one fails to abide by the *Dhamma*. When a herd of cattle is travelling, if the leading bull keeps to the proper course, the whole herd will do the same. So it is with the people. If the appointed leader abides by the *Dhamma*, the multitude will do likewise. The whole nation will be content if the leader upholds the *Dhamma*. This Buddhist saying is quite clear. The behaviour of the leader is of great consequence to the masses as they will inevitably follow his example.

The above reasons for being or not being interested in the observance of moral conduct may, each of them, be of significance in relation to the *Sīla*. In short,

whether the *Sīlas* are or are not followed by the individuals composing society depends on whether or not they bring about contentment in accordance with the level of the followers.

In this respect, some have voiced the opinion that the *Sīlas* may be looked upon as fundamental principles to be applied in a way suited to one's own status. What is regarded as suitable will be in conformity with the purpose of the *Sīlas* only if it is adopted without prejudice to others and without favour to oneself, for the purpose of the *Sīla* is to avoid harm to others. Besides, they are the first steps towards concentration (*samādhi*) and insight (*paññā*). Since observance of the *Sīlas* should not be literal but should accord with their purposes, it will differ somewhat depending on the status or profession of each individual. For instance, observance of the *Sīla* by the common people who desire peace and contentment for all in the family as well as in the nation, will take one form; that of the monks who desire to attain a higher plane of the *Dhamma* will take another. Both forms will, however, lead to the goal for which observance of the *Sīlas* was established. Furthermore, *Sīlas* or rules of moral conduct are also the principal factor in national growth, the force that brings about economic prosperity and general contentment. Without *Sīlas*, the productivity of individuals will tend to eliminate and destroy itself. Where the productivity of one individual is high but it is detrimental to that of someone else, nothing is added to the community. Rather, the total yield of the community diminishes and consequently it is difficult to promote general progress and

prosperity. Even from this point of view, it can be seen that many people observe the *Silas* in a way suited to their own status, realizing that the *Silas* can bring prosperity to the community.

Generally speaking, people in Thailand know how they should observe the *Silas* or moral rules. They also know that the five *Silas* are in no way an obstruction to prosperity of the individual or the country. The cause for concern does not lie in the fact that too many people strictly observe the *Silas*, but in the fact that too many people infringe them. This goes so far that even those actions which should be eschewed because they are generally or legally considered harmful, are nevertheless still common. What chiefly needs to be set right lies then, in the individual and in the circumstances already dealt with. If everyone were to behave in a way that lessens *kilesas* and generates in the heart enough *hiri-ottappa* and if, at the same time, there are circumstances which make for contentment and comfort, such as freedom to carry on one's livelihood in an atmosphere of peace and security and ability to earn enough for oneself and one's family, then there would be no cause to infringe the *Silas* and people might even be interested in following the *Silas'* complementary *Dhamma*, such as cultivating *mettā* (loving-kindness) towards others and diligence in pursuing their livelihood. If the leaders of administrative officers of all ranks were also interested in the *Silas*, if they were prepared to abide by them and not to discharge their duties in harmful ways but in a manner beneficial to the people's welfare, if every sector of the community were to concur in maintaining

such good behaviour, the standard of morality would surely improve, because the basis of each individual's mind desires to be good, so people readily see the advantages of the *Silas*. If earning one's living becomes difficult or dangerous, solutions to such contingencies must be given first priority. In the Buddhist religion, the Lord Buddha taught that the present benefits should be taken care of first, for instance, by being diligent and working for a living. Then, after that, He advised people to attend at the same time to their future benefit, for instance, by having faith in and abiding by the *Silas*.

When there is an outcry about a state of degeneration resulting from disrespect for moral values, youth as well as adults clamour for those values to be upheld just as is happening at present. But the reasoning set forth in these paragraphs should be remembered and all of us should join hands in trying to improve the situation by getting at the real cause. Monks can only point the way. The task cannot be undertaken by any single group of people. All sectors of the community should cooperate in accordance with their duties. All of us should perform our duties with honesty. Each should examine his own behaviour and make an effort to do away with unwholesome conduct by following the principles of the *Silas*. Then abiding by the rules of moral conduct would not be difficult, that is, it can be done by requesting from a monk the *Silas* or by oneself following them, without receiving them from the monks. What is important is one's determination to abide by the *Silas*, that is to abstain from certain actions. Although such abstention may not be complete in the sense of the

perfect *Silas* and may apply only to actions regarded as wrong and unwholesome in the worldly or legal sense, that is nevertheless better than not to abstain at all.

The prescription of the perfect *Sila*, complete in every respect does not mean that their observance should also be perfect right from the start. No one would be able to manage that. The practice of the *Silas* should be gradual, step by step, from the lower to the higher stages. That is why the following words are used "I undertake the rule of training abstaining from such and such conduct." This amounts to agreeing to train in the *Silas* or moral rules. It also means that observance of the *Silas* is still not yet perfect. It is the same with the study of any branch of knowledge. If one is still learning a subject, it means that one does not know it yet to perfection. Anyone who knows it completely does not have to train in it. A person who is still learning should not be held responsible for ignorance of what he has yet to learn.

Usually, monks do not dispense the *Silas* or moral rules of their own accord or in random fashion. They do so only upon request. When we ask for the *Silas*, it means we are ready to train in them. How many of the *Silas* are to be observed or whether they should be followed temporarily and for how long are matters depending on the will of the person concerned. Buddhism offers a rather flexible way of observing moral conduct which should be quite adequate and cause no trouble or loss to those who do so. This depends upon the faith of the individual.

A force that may incline one to follow the *Silas*

or rules of moral conduct is realization of the benefits to be had from them as taught by the monks every time they give them : “One may attain the right path by observing the *Silas*, wealth of all kinds by observing the *Silas*, the cessation of pain and grief in the heart by observing the *Silas*. Therefore, one should purify one's *Sila* to make it perfect.”



RUDIMENTS OF SAMĀDHI OR MENTAL-COLLECTEDNESS

Mental-collectedness or mental-evenness is included in many sets of Buddhist teachings. As the Three Trainings we find *Sila*, good behaviour, *Samādhi*, mental-collectedness, and *Paiññā*, wisdom or the ability to know. In the Eightfold Path to Enlightenment we find *Sammāsamādhi*, right collectedness of mind as the concluding constituent, and in many other sets of teachings mental-collectedness is also found. In many *Suttas* or dialogues there are also sayings of Lord Buddha which preach development of mental-collectedness. For example, in a certain passage Lord Buddha said: “O monks, develop mental-collectedness, for a man whose mind is collected and intent knows things as they really are”, thus mental-collectedness is very important in the practice of Buddhist teachings. Mental-collectedness, however, should be cultivated not only in religious matters but also in all general work. Collectedness of heart and mind is required in all kinds of work, in the general conduct of one's life as well as in carrying out religious observances. Quite a few people think that

Samādhi, mental-collectedness is only for religious endeavour, i.e. for those who wish to practice as monks, novices and the regular temple-goers. This understanding is incorrect, so the general meaning of *Samādhi* will be given here first.

By *Samādhi*, collectedness, evenness of awareness, is meant ordinarily the steady settling of the awareness on an object of attention. The settling of the mind in this manner is the ordinary meaning of *Samādhi* which is required in all kinds of work to be done: in studying as well as working. To succeed in study one needs mental-collectedness for reading, writing or listening to a lecture given by a teacher or a lecturer. In other words, one should read, write and listen attentively, with a collected and alert mind. This attention or ability to concentrate is a co-ordination of physical and mental activities. For example, in reading, the body must be ready to read. The book must be opened, the eyes must be on the letters and the mind must also read. It won't do if the eyes alone read but the mind does not. If the mind thinks about something else, the eyes that look at the letters will stay fixed. The eyes do not recognise the letters and do not get the message. It is necessary that the mind reads too. When the mind as well as the eyes read, then one gets the message from what one is reading. Understanding what one reads can be called a sort of knowledge-knowledge arising from reading. When the mind and the eyes read in co-ordination, that is in a state of togetherness or collectedness, the reading will be fast, the message will be quickly understood and well-remembered. This reading mind is the mind in the

state of ordinary mental-collectedness, that is the mind is not scattered and is set only on the reading. The same thing happens in writing. To succeed well in writing one must write with one's mind while the hand is writing. If the mind does not write, thinking about many other matters instead, one does not succeed in writing and one does not even form the letters well. The mind must write too, that is it must pay attention to writing while the hand moves. It is the same with listening; while the ears listen the mind must listen too. If the mind does not listen one would not understand the sound that reaches the ears. So the mind must listen, and the mind will listen well only when it is collected and clear; it will listen attentively. Thus, it can be seen that mental-collectedness is needed in studying, reading, writing and listening. It is the same with working: mental-collectedness is needed in doing physical work, also in speaking as well as in planning one's work. With mental-togetherness one succeeds in doing one's work well. Looking at it this way we see that mental-collectedness forms an essential basis for all kinds of work. This is the general use of mental-collectedness which is needed in studying as well as in doing all other kinds of work.

Now we shall talk about the development of mental-collectedness, for in order to put one's mind in a state of mental-orderliness one requires some practice or training. The ordinary mental-collectedness which we all have to a certain degree is not comprehensive enough. The mental power is still weak, struggling and wavering; it can be easily swayed by the various thoughts and

feelings that pass through the mind. These feelings are mental and perceived constantly through the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the skin and the mind itself, namely through the six organs of sense. In this way sensual love, hatred and delusion take turns at occupying the mind. While the mind, which is already fickle, is being disturbed by the various feelings mentioned above, it is difficult to maintain mental-collectedness in studying or in doing any work. It may be seen that sometimes one can hardly concentrate one's attention on reading, writing or on listening to a lecture because one's mind is dashing to various objects of attraction, repulsion and delusion and it becomes so disturbed that mental balance is not possible. This state of mental disturbance renders one unable to read, to write or to listen well and, as a result, the study suffers. It is the same with working: one cannot work well while one's mind is fretting under the power of the feelings and under the conditions arising from the feelings known as kilesa or defilements, such as sensual love, hatred and delusion. The mind that has been trained to be collected tends to be like that. The integrity of such a mind cannot be very strong even while it is not disturbed by any attracting feeling. Consequently, it is advisable that one develops mental-collectedness.

There are two main objectives in the development of collectedness of mind: one is to neutralise or counter-balance the effect of the present arising of feelings and disturbances and the other is to develop more comprehensive mental-collectedness so that disturbances do not arise in the future. Regarding the first objective, the

feeling or the disturbance arising in the mind is sometimes the feeling of sensual love. As the feeling of this love distracts the mind and disturbs the mental-evenness, one must learn to quieten one's mind in the face of sensual love which is detrimental to the study or the work to be done as well as to the keeping of oneself within the boundaries of the law and morality. This is one of the things taught by Lord Buddha: one must learn to have a controlled mind so that it will not be disturbed by attachment to any feelings. Sometimes anger arises in the mind, heating it up and agitating it. This feeling is also dangerous as it is detrimental to one's mental-integration. Thus one should learn to always be collected and to be able to quieten the mind in times of anger. Sometimes delusion comes up; this defilement may appear as dreamy drowsiness, as fretful irritability or as mental uncertainty. One should learn to develop mental-collectedness and free one's mind from delusion.

Now we come to the principle of teaching mental development in Buddhism. During daily life, a way to bring more collectedness to the mind and to quieten the mind when it comes under the power of sensual love, hatred or delusion mentioned previously is to change the feeling for the mind. As it is already known that the feeling of sensual love can give rise to loving fondness, the feeling should be replaced by a feeling free from sensual love. Sensual love may be replaced by loving kindness, *Mettā*, which is pure love found among friends, relatives and among parents and their children. The same method can be used to neutralise delusion. Delusion

is to be replaced by a concrete thought or feeling free from delusion, or by keeping one's wits about oneself. The state of the mind depends on the kind of thought or feeling on which the mind dwells. When the mind dwells upon sensual love, the feeling of love or fondness will arise. If the mind does not dwell on sensual love but on an opposite kind of thought, then equilibrium and tranquility will arise. Similarly, we feel angry because our mind dwells on an angry thought or feeling. When the mind changes its footing and dwells on an opposite thought or feeling, anger will subside. The same thing can be said of delusion: When the mind dwells on a foundation other than delusion, delusion then becomes ineffective. Lord Buddha pointed out various thoughts or feelings to set the mind on when the mind comes under the influence of certain feelings. With this knowledge and also some practice in mental-collectedness, one should know how to calm the mind in times of disturbance and succeed in doing so. This is one of the objectives of mental development which deserves practice.

Secondly, one practises mental-collectedness in order to augment and fortify one's mental power and ability. This is similar to taking physical exercise to increase physical strength. When one takes physical exercise regularly one's physical strength will become better. Similarly, mental-wholeness will become greater with regular exercise of mental-collectedness by employing one of the methods for increasing the establishment of mental-collectedness. The stability of mental-integration can be increased in this way, just as

physical strength can be increased by taking physical exercise regularly. This is the training in mental-collectedness.

Now in the same manner there are two ways in the development of mental-collectedness. One of them is for the neutralisation of the existing mental attachments or afflictions mentioned previously. Those who have had reasonable experience of mental-collectedness should be able to discipline their mind well and will not succumb to the objects of thought arising from sensual love, hatred and delusion. Those people will be able to calm down their minds and keep them safe. The mental objects and defilements will cause no harm to their study or work, nor to law and order or morality. Besides, mental-collectedness is needed in carrying out any work to be done. To begin with, mental-togetherness is needed in studying: it is also needed in reading, in writing and in listening. Mental-integration gives one more capacity for study and work and this will enable one to study better and to work better. What has been said shows the general principles of the practice and use of mental-collectedness, which include the general meaning of mental-collectedness, its development and its application.

Now, here is a brief description of meditation, that is the way to develop mental-collectedness. It is prescribed in the texts that for developing collectedness of mind one should seek a suitable place which is not subject to noise and disturbance. A quiet place in a forest, at the foot of a tree or in a quiet building is suitable for the purpose. The intention is to find any

reasonably peaceful place. One should then go there and sit down with legs crossed traditionally with the right foot on the left foot, hands are put on the lap; the right hand placed on the left hand. The body should be straight. One may, however, sit with one's legs folded to one side, etc. This is up to one's comfort and ease. One should then close the eyes and collect one's faculties together and be aware of the touching sensation of the breath. One can know whether the breathing is in or the breathing is out. If it should be asked where one should be aware of this breathing in and out, the answer would be that an easy spot where one can be aware of this is the outermost point of one's nostrils or the upper lip which the air touches on being breathed in. The inhaled air touches the outermost points of the nostrils and the upper lip while the abdomen expands, and the exhaled air touches at the same spots when the abdomen contracts. Easily feel the air which goes in from the tip of the nostrils to the abdomen which expands, and feel the air going out from the contracting abdomen to the end of the nostrils. First get to know the process of breathing in and out as described above. In breathing in the breath starts from the nostril cavities and goes to the swelling abdomen; and in breathing out the breath leaves the contracting abdomen and flows to the tip of the nose. This is known as the path of the wind (namely the breath). Now it is not necessary to follow the breath down to the abdomen; it is only necessary to rest one's attention upon the tip of the nose so that one knows if breathing is in or out. One should naturally collect one's mental awareness together and be conscious of the

touching sensation of the breath. Initially, in developing this collected awareness, counting may be used as an aid: thus, breathing in 1, breathing, out 1; breathing in 2, breathing out 2; 3 - 3; 4 - 4; 5 - 5. Then back to again, thus, 1 - 1; 2 - 2; 3 - 3; 4 - 4; 5 - 5; 6 - 6. Back to 1 again, thus, 1 - 1; 2 - 2; to 7 - 7. Back to 1 again, thus, 1 - 1; 2 - 2; to 8 - 8. Back to 1 again, thus, 1 - 1; 2 - 2; to 9 - 9. Back to 1 again, thus, 1 - 1; 2 - 2; to 10 - 10. Then back to the beginning and thus 1 - 1 to 5 - 5, and 1 - 1 to 6 - 6 etc. Repeat this counting several times until the mind is reasonably collected and the awareness is reasonably steady. After that it is not necessary to count in pairs; count singly 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 etc. When the mind has become well-collected and the awareness is really even, one should stop counting and one can just be aware of the breath at the tip of the nose or on the upper lip.

The counting method described above is the method taught by the teachers in the treatise of *Visuddhimagga* (the Path of Purity).¹ Other ways of counting may be used, such as 1 - 1 up to 10 - 10 and then come back to 1 - 1 again. One may count beyond 10 - 10, if one wishes. However, the teachers recommend counting up to 10 - 10 only because they think that counting to a much higher number than ten would require too much contrived attention from the mind. So they recommend counting with a limit that does not require too much effort in counting. Another method recommended by the teachers is to say to oneself "*Bud*"

¹ By Venerable Buddhaghosa C. 955 BE (412 AD), Sri Lanka

on breathing in, and "dho" on breathing out. Thus: *Bud-dho Bud-dho* etc. Dham-mo or San-gho may be used in the same way. When the mind has become collected, one stops saying to oneself *Bud-dho* etc., and one is aware of the air touching the tip of the nose or the upper lip. Practice this until the mind remains collected for a long while. What I have told you today is only the first steps of the drill. Let those interested in mental-wholeness and mental-purity (as well as success in study and work) put them into practice.

May all beings be free from enmity.

May they be happy and free from fear.

A note.

The Pāli abstract noun “Samādhi” can be rendered variously as: collectedness, evenness, integration, comprehensiveness, togetherness, orderliness, unity, oneness, balance, singularity, integrity, wholeness or purity of awareness. Also: mental-calm, peace, stillness, clearness, stability, steadiness, unshakability; according to experience and meaning. In English no one word seems to suffice for this deepest level of the mind and of nature, the seat of intelligence, diligence and happiness, the home of Sila, Paññā, and Mettā, the springboard for Vimutti (liberation).

Concentration is one of many abilities (characterised by localised activity) that is enhanced through Samādhi (characterised by lack of activity and lack of localisation).



Best of paths is the Eightfold Path.
Best of truths is the Four Noble Truths.
Best of conditions is Passionlessness.
Best of men is the Seeing One.
This is the only way;
None other is there for the purity of vision.
Do you enter upon this path,
Which is the bewilderment of Māra.
(The Buddha's Words In The Dhammapada)