



THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND ANATTA



DR. SOE LWIN (MANDALAY)

(1)

**NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO
SAMMA SAMBUD DHASSA**

**TO BUDDHA, DHAMMA, SANGHA,
PARENTS AND TEACHERS,
RESPECTFULLY I PAY HOMAGE BY THIS BOOK.**

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

AND

ANATTA VIEW

DR SOE LWIN (MANDALAY)

(2)

CONTENTS

Preface	- 3
<i>Chapter 1</i> The Buddhist Attitude of Mind	- 5
<i>Chapter 2</i> The First Noble Truth	-10
<i>Chapter 3</i> The Second Noble Truth	-22
<i>Chapter 4</i> The Third Noble Truth	-30
<i>Chapter 5</i> The Fourth Noble Truth	-39
<i>Chapter 6</i> Anatta	-47
<i>Chapter 7</i> Meditation	-57

PREFACE

First of all, I would like to acknowledge the readers that these Dhamma notes are collected from the book of What the Buddha taught written by The Rev. Dr. Walpola Rahula from Sri Lanka (Ceylon), who obtained the B.A. Honours degree in London and won the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Ceylon University.

The book aimed to present to the public of the West is a brief account of the fundamental principles of the Buddhist doctrine. He had tried in this book to give the readers something which he could understand and appreciate because at this time, all traditions are called in questions to face the challenges from the international scientific learning.

His intentions are very noble and can be appreciated clearly. I am so thankful to The Rev. Dr. Walpola Rahula

(4)

that I would like to share the knowledge from the book. I have tried to make the Dhamma collections easy to read and understand.

If there may be mistakes, faults or any problems in this book, only I am responsible for them and if you wish to correct them I am so grateful to and welcome you. I am also thankful to all who have helped in every aspects for this book.

DR SOE LWIN (MANDALAY)

**Dhamma Notes from the book of
What the Buddha Taught by Walpola Rahula**

Chapter I.

The Buddhist Attitude of Mind

One is one's own refuge,

who else could be the refuge? said the Buddha.

He strongly advised his disciples to 'be a refuge to themselves'. He taught, encouraged and stimulated each person to develop himself and to work out his own emancipation (to free), for man has the power to liberate himself from all bondage through his own **effort and intelligence**.

The Buddha says: 'You should do your work, for the Tathâgata only teach the way.' **Buddha discovered and showed the Path to Liberation**, Nirvâna. But we must tread the Path ourselves.

Understanding of the Truth

According to the Buddha's teaching, **doubt** (*vicikkicchâ*) is one of the five Hindrances (*nîvarana*)

(6)

to the clear understanding of Truth. Doubt, however, **is not a ‘sin’**, because there is **no ‘sin’ in Buddhism**, as sin is understood in some religions.

The root of all evil is ignorance (*avijjâ*) and false views (*micchâ ditthi*). It is an undeniable fact that as long as there is doubt, no progress is possible. In order to progress it is absolutely necessary to get rid of doubt. **To get rid of doubt one has to see clearly.**

Human qualities and emotions

People are so fond of discriminative labels to put them on human qualities and emotions common to all. So they talk of different **‘brands’ of charity**, as for example, of Buddhist charity or Christian charity. But **charity cannot be sectarian**; it is neither Christian, Buddhist, Hindu nor Moslem.

The love of a mother for her child is neither Buddhist nor Christian: **it is mother love.** Human qualities and emotions **like love**, charity, compassion, tolerance, patience, friendship, desire, hatred, ill-will, ignorance, conceit, etc., **need no sectarian labels**; they **belong to no particular religions.**

invite to ‘come and see’

And the Buddha says: ‘O bhikkus, I say that the **destruction of defilement and impurities** is meant for a person who **knows and who sees the Ultimate**

(7)

Truth. The teaching of the Buddha is qualified as inviting you to **'come and see', but not to come and believe.**
Eye of Truth (*Dhamma- cakkhu*) has arisen.

see it as it is objectively.

(*yathâ bhûtam*)

The expressions in Buddhist texts referring to persons who realized Truth are: 'The dustless and stainless Eye of Truth (*Dhamma- cakkhu*) has arisen.' 'He has seen Truth, has attained Truth, has known Truth, has penetrated into Truth, has crossed over doubt, is without wavering.' 'Thus **with right wisdom he sees it as it is**'.

With reference to his own Enlightenment the Buddha said: 'The eye was born, knowledge was born, wisdom was born, science was born, and light was born.' It is always **seeing through knowledge or wisdom, and not believing through faith.**

unnecessary metaphysical questions

One day Mâlunkyaputta got up from his afternoon meditation, went to the Buddha, saluted him, sat on one side and said:

'Sir, when I was all alone meditating, this thought occurred to me: There are these problems unexplained, put aside and rejected by the Blessed One, Namely,

(I) is the universe eternal or not eternal,

(8)

- (2) is the universe finite or infinite,
- (3) is soul the same as body or
- (4) is soul one thing and body another thing,
- (5) does the Tathâgata exist after death, or
- (6) does he not exist after death, or
- (7) does he both (at the same time) exist and not exist after death, or
- (8) does he both (at the same time) not exist and not not-exist.

These problems the Blessed One does not explain to me. I will go to the Blessed One and ask him about this matter. If the Blessed One does not explain them, I will leave the Order and go away.

wounded by a poisoned arrow

The Buddha's reply to Mâlunkyaputta, if anyone says: "I will not lead the holy life under the Blessed One until he explains these questions," he may die with these questions unanswered by the Tathâgata.

Suppose Mâlunkyaputta, a man is wounded by a poisoned arrow, and his friends and relatives bring him to a surgeon. Suppose the man should then say: "I will not let this arrow be taken out until I know who shot me; what his name and family may be; whether he is tall or short, etc.

Mâlunkyaputta, that man would die without knowing

(9)

any of these things. Even so, Mâlunkyaputta, if anyone says: “I will not follow the holy life under the Blessed One until he answers these questions such as whether the universe is eternal or not, etc.,” he would die with these questions unanswered by the Tathâgata.’

birth, aging and death

Then the Buddha explains to Mâlunkyaputta that the holy life does not depend on these views. Whatever opinion one may have about these problems, there is birth, old age, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, distress, “the Cessation of which (i.e. *Nirvâna*) I declare in this very life.”

Four Noble Truths

‘Then, what, Mâlunkyaputta, have I explained? I have explained *dukkha*, the arising of *dukkha*, the cessation of *dukkha*, and the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.

Why, Mâlunkyaputta, have I explained them?

Because it is useful, is fundamentally connected with the spiritual holy life, is **(conductive to aversion, detachment, cessation, tranquility, deep penetration, full realization, Nirvâna.)** Therefore I have explained them.’ Let us now examine the Four Noble Truths which the Buddha told Mâlunkyaputta he had explained.

Chapter II.

The Four Noble Truths The First Noble Truth: Dukkha

The heart of the Buddha's teaching lies in the Four Noble Truths which he expounded in his very first sermon to his old colleagues, the five ascetics, at Isipatana (modern Sarnath) near Benares.

The Four Noble Truths are:

1. *Dukkha* (suffering)
2. *Samudaya*, the arising or origin of *dukkha*
3. *Nirodha*, the cessation of *dukkha*
4. *Magga*, the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*

The First Noble Truth: Dukkha

The First Noble Truth (*Dukkha-ariyasacca*) is generally translated as 'The Noble Truth of Suffering', and it is highly unsatisfactory and misleading. It is because of this limited and superficial interpretation, that many

(11)

people have been misled into regarding Buddhism as pessimistic.

neither pessimistic nor optimistic

First of all, Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. It is realistic, for it takes a realistic view of life and of the world. **It looks at things objectively** (*yathâbûtam*) and shows you the way to perfect freedom, happiness, peace and tranquillity.

like a wise and realistic doctor

One physician may gravely exaggerate an illness and give up hope altogether. Another may ignorantly declare that there is no serious illness and that no treatment is necessary, thus deceiving the patient with a false consolation. You may call the first one pessimistic and the second optimistic. (Both of extreme views are equally dangerous.)

But a third physician diagnoses the symptoms correctly, understands the nature and the cause of the illness, sees clearly that it can be cured, and courageously administers a course of treatment, thus saving his patient. The Buddha is like the last physician. He is the wise and intellectual doctor for the ills of the world.

***dukkha* or ‘suffering’**

It is true that the Pali word *dukkha* in ordinary usage means ‘suffering’. But the term *dukkha* as **the First**

(12)

Noble Truth, which represents the **Buddha's view of life and the world**, has a deeper philosophical meaning and suggests enormously wider senses.

It is admitted that the term *dukkha* in the First noble Truth contains, quite obviously, the ordinary meaning of 'suffering', but in addition it also includes deeper ideas such as '**impermanence**', '**emptiness**', '**insubstantiality**'. It is difficult therefore to find one word to embrace the whole conception of the term *dukkha* as the First Noble Truth.

happiness and *dukkha*

The Buddha does not deny happiness in life when he says there is suffering. On the contrary he admits different forms of happiness, both material and spiritual.

There is a list of happinesses (*sukhâni*), such as the happiness of family life and the happiness of the life of a recluse, the happiness of sense pleasures and the happiness of attachment and the happiness of detachment, etc.

'whatever is impermanent is *dukkha*'.

The Buddha says that they are 'impermanent, *dukkha*, and subject to change' (*aniccâ dukkhâ viparinâma dhammâ*). Notice that the word *dukkha* is explicitly used. It is *dukkha*, not because there is

(13)

‘suffering’ in the ordinary sense of the word, but because ‘whatever is impermanent is *dukkha*’.

liberation from pleasure and displeasure

The Buddha was realistic and objective. He says, with regard to life and the enjoyment, that one should clearly understand three things:

- (1) attraction or enjoyment or (pleasure) (*assâda*),
- (2) danger or harmful effect or (displeasure) (*âdinava*)
- (3) freedom or liberation (*nissarana*).

When you see a pleasant, charming and beautiful person, you like him (or her), you are attracted and you derive pleasure and satisfaction from that person. This is enjoyment (*assâda*). It is a fact of experience.

But this enjoyment is not permanent, just as that person and all his or her attractions are not permanent either. When you cannot see that person, when you deprived of this enjoyment, you become sad, you may become unreasonable and unbalanced. This is the evil, unsatisfactory and dangerous side of the picture (*âdinava*). This, too, is a fact of experience.

Now if you have no attachment to the person, **if you are completely detached, that is freedom, liberation** (*nissarana*). These **three things are true with regard to all enjoyment** in life.

(14)

three aspects of *dukkha*

The conception of *dukkha* may be viewed from three aspects

- (1) *dukkha* as ordinary suffering (*dukkha-dukkha*),
- (2) *dukkha* as produced by change
(*viparinâma-dukkha*)
- (3) *dukkha* as conditioned states
(*samkhâra-dukkha*).

(1) All kinds of suffering in life like birth, old age, sickness, death, association with unpleasant persons and conditions, separation from loved ones and pleasant conditions, not getting what one desires, grief, lamentation, distress - all such forms of physical and mental suffering, are included in *dukkha* as ordinary suffering (*dukkha-dukkha*).

(2) A happy feeling, a happy condition in life, is not permanent, not everlasting. It changes sooner or later. When it changes, it produces pain, suffering, unhappiness. This vicissitude is included in *dukkha* as suffering produced by change (*viparinâma-dukkha*).

(3) But the third form of *dukkha* as conditioned states (*samkhâra-dukkha*) is the most important philosophical aspect of the First Noble Truth, and it requires some analytical explanation of a 'being', or as 'I'.

(15)

What we call a 'being' or 'I', according to Buddhist philosophy, is only a **combination of ever-changing physical and mental forces or energies**, which may be divided into five groups or aggregates.

The Buddha says: 'In short **five aggregates of attachment are *dukkha***'. 'O bhikkhus, what is *dukkha*? It is the five aggregates of attachment'. Here it should be clearly understood that *dukkha* and five aggregates are not two different things: **the five aggregates themselves are *dukkha***.

The Five Aggregates

(1) the Aggregates of Matter (*Rûpakkhandha*).

In this term 'Aggregates of Matter' are included the traditional Four Great Elements (*cattâri mahâbbûtâni*), namely, **(solidity, fluidity, heat and motion,)** and also the Derivatives (*upâdâya- rûpa*) of the Four Great Elements.

In the term 'Derivatives of Four Great Elements' are included our five material sense-organs, i.e., the **faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body**, and their corresponding objects in the external world, i.e., **visible form (colour), sound, odour, taste, and tangible things**, and also some **thoughts or ideas or conceptions** which are in the sphere of mind-objects (*dharmâyatana*). Thus the whole realm of matter, both

(16)

internal and external, is included in the Aggregate of Matter.

(2) the Aggregate of Sensations

(Vedanâkkhandha).

In this group are included all our sensations, pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, experienced through the contact of **physical and mental organs** with the external world. They are of six kinds: the **sensations experienced through the contact of the eye with visible forms**, ear with sounds, nose with odour, tongue with taste, body with tangible objects, and mind with mind-objects or thoughts or idea. All **sensations** are included in this group.

(3) the Aggregate of Perceptions

(Saòâkkhandha).

Like sensations, perceptions also are of six kinds. They are produced through the contact of our six internal faculties with the external world. It is the **perceptions that recognize objects** whether physical or mental.

(4) the Aggregate of Mental Formations

(Samkhârakkhandha).

In this group are included **all volitional activities both good and bad**. What is generally **known as karma (or kamma)** comes under this group. The Buddha's own definition of *karma* should be remembered here:

(17)

‘O bhikkhus, it is volition (*cetanâ*) that I call *karma*. Having willed, one acts through body, speech and mind.

Volition is mental construction, mental activity. **Its function is to direct the mind in the sphere of good, bad or neutral activities.** Just like sensations and perceptions, volition is of six kinds, connected with the six internal faculties and the corresponding six objects (both physical and mental) in the external world.

Origin of karmic effects

Sensations and perceptions are not volitional actions. They do not produce karmic effects. It is only volitional actions - such as attention (*manasikâra*), will (*chanda*), determination (*adhimokkha*), confidence (*saddhâ*), concentrate (*samâdhi*), wisdom (*paòòâ*), energy (*viriyâ*), desire (*râga*), repugnance or hate (*patigha*), Ignorance (*avijjâ*), conceit (*mâna*), idea of self (*sakkâya-ditthi*) etc. – that can produce karmic effects. There are 50 such mental activities which constitute the Aggregate of Mental Formations. (volition - the power to stimulate other mental factors)

(5) the Aggregate of Consciousness (*Viòòânakkhanda*).

Consciousness is a reaction or response which has one of the **six faculties** (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) **as its basis**, and one of the six corresponding

external objects (visible form, sound, odour, taste, tangible things and mind-objects) **as its objects**.

For instance, visual consciousness has the eye as its basis and a visible form as its object. Mental consciousness has the mind as its basis and a mental object, i.e., an idea or thought as its objects. Consciousness also is of six kinds, in relation to **six internal faculties** and corresponding **six external objects**.

Seeing does not mean recognizing

It should be clearly understood that **consciousness does not recognize an object**. It is only a **awareness of the presence of an object**. When the eye comes in contact with a colour, for instance blue, visual consciousness arises which simply is a **awareness of the presence of a colour; but it does not recognize that it is blue**. There is no recognition at this stage.

It is **perception**, the third Aggregate that **recognizes that it is blue**. The term ‘**visual consciousness**’ means only a ‘**seeing**’ by the ordinary word. **Seeing does not mean recognizing**. So are the other forms of consciousness.

condition and consciousness

Buddha explained **consciousness as arising out of conditions**: that there is **no arising of consciousness without conditions**’.

(19)

Then the Buddha went on to explain consciousness in detail:

on account of the eye and visible forms arises a consciousness, and it is called visual consciousness;

on account of the ear and sounds

arises auditory consciousness;

on account of the nose and odours

arises olfactory consciousness;

on account of the tongue and tastes

arises gustatory consciousness;

on account of the body and tangible objects

arises tactile consciousness;

on account of the mind and mind-objects, i.e, ideas and thoughts arises mental consciousness.'

a label for the combination of five groups

What we call a 'being', or an 'individual', or, 'I', is only a convenient name or a label given to the combination of the five Aggregates. They are all impermanent, all constantly changing.

They are **not the same for two consecutive moments**. Here A is not equal to (next) A. They are in a flux of momentary arising and disappearing.

'O Brâhmana, it is just like a river, flowing far and swift, taking everything along with it; it goes on flowing and continuing. So Brâhmana, is human life, like a river.'

series of cause and effect

One thing disappears, conditioning the appearance of the next in a series of cause and effect.

There is **no unchanging substance** in them. There is **nothing behind** them that can be called a permanent Self (*Ātman*). But when these five physical and mental aggregates which are interdependent are working together in combination as a physio-psychological machine.

Nothing behind five Aggregates

These five Aggregates together, which we popularly call a 'being' are *dukkha* itself (*samkhâra-dukkha*). There is no other 'being' or 'I', standing behind these five aggregates, who experiences *dukkha*. As Buddhaghosa says: 'Mere suffering exists, but no suffering is found; **(No sufferer behind suffering)** The deeds are, but no doer is found.'

There is **no mover behind the movement**. It is only movement. It is **not correct** to say that **life is moving**, but **life is movement itself**. Life and movement are not two different things. In other words, there is **(no thinker behind the thought.)** Thought itself is the thinker. If you move the thought, there is no thinker to be found. Here we cannot fail to notice how this Buddhist view is diametrically opposed to the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*: '**I think, therefore I am.**'

Beginning of being is unthinkable.

Now a question is whether life has a beginning. According to the Buddha's teaching the beginning of the life-stream of living beings is unthinkable. The believer in God may be astonished at this reply. But if you were to ask him 'What is the beginning of God?' he would answer without hesitation '**God has no beginning**'.

sees *dukkha*, sees Four Noble Truths

This in short is the meaning of the Noble Truth of *Dukkha*. It is extremely important to understand this First Noble Truth clearly because, as the Buddha says, 'he who sees *dukkha* sees also the arising of *dukkha*, sees also the cessation of *dukkha*, and sees also the Path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.'

understanding of suffering

Thus it is wrong to be impatient at suffering. What is necessary is not anger or impatience, but the understanding of the question of suffering, how it comes about, and how to get rid of it, and then to work accordingly with patience, intelligence, determination and energy. In fact the Buddha says that he who sees any one of the Four Noble Truths sees the other three as well. **(These Four Noble Truths are interconnected).**

Chapter III.

The Second Noble Truth Samudaya: The Arising of Dukkha

The Second Noble Truth is that of the arising or origin of *dukkha* (*Dukkhasamudaya-ariyasacca*). The most popular and well-known definition of the Second Truth as found in innumerable places in the original texts runs as follows:

‘It is this **“thirst” (craving, *tanhâ*) which produces re-existence and re-becoming**, and which is bound up with passionate greed, and which finds fresh delight now here and now there, namely,

- 1- thirst for sense- pleasures (*kâma-tanhâ*),
- 2- thirst for existence and becoming (*bhava-tanhâ*)
- 3- thirst for non-existence (self-annihilation, *vibhava-tanhâ*).

In this ‘thirst’, desire, greed, craving, manifesting itself in various ways, that gives rise to all forms of

(23)

suffering and the continuity of beings. But it should not be taken as the first cause, for there is no first cause possible as, according to Buddhism, **everything is relative and inter-dependent.**

other defilements and impurities

So *tanhâ*, ‘thirst’, is not the first or the only cause of the arising of *dukkha*. But it is the most palpable and the ‘all-pervading thing’. Hence in certain places of the original Pali texts themselves the definition of *samudaya* or the origin of *dukkha* includes other defilements and impurities, in addition to *tanhâ* ‘thirst’. Within the necessarily limited space of our discussion, it will be sufficient if we remember that this **‘thirst’ has as its centre the false idea of self arising out of ignorance.**

desire for mind-object

Here the term ‘thirst’ includes not only desire for, and attachment to, sense-pleasures, but also desire for, and attachment to, idea and ideals, views, opinions, theories, conceptions and beliefs (*dhamma-tanhâ*).

According to the Buddha’s analysis, all the troubles and strife in the world, from little personal quarrels in families to great wars between nations and countries, **arise out of this selfish ‘thirst’.** From this point of view, all economic, political and social problems are rooted in this selfish ‘thirst’. As the Buddha told Rattpâla:

(24)

‘The world lacks and hankers, and is enslaved to “thirst” (*tanhâdâso*).’

selfish desire

Every one will admit that **all the evils in the world are produced by selfish desire**. This is not difficult to understand. But now this desire, ‘thirst’, can produce re-existence and re-becoming is a problem not so easy to grasp. Here we must have some idea about the theory of *karma* and rebirth.

Four Nutriments for the existence of beings

There are four Nutriments (*âhâra*) in the sense of ‘cause’ or ‘condition’ necessary for the existence and continuity of beings”

- (1) ordinary material food (*kabalinkârâhâra*),
- (2) contact of our sense-organs (including mind) with the external world,
- (3) consciousness (*viòòânâhara*) and
- (4) mental volition or will (*manosaòcetanâhâra*).

volition is karma,

One these four, the last mentioned ‘**mental volition**’ **is the will to live, to re-exist, to continue, to become more and more**. It creates the root of existence and continuity, striving forward by the way of good and bad actions. It is the same as ‘Volition’ (*cetanâ*). We have seen earlier that volition is karma, as the Buddha himself

(25)

has defined it. Referring to 'Mental volition' just mentioned above the Buddha says:

'When one understands the nutriment of mental volition, one understands the three forms of 'thirst' (*tamhâ*).' Thus the terms 'thirst', 'volition', 'mental volition' and 'karma' all denote the same thing. This is the cause of the arising of *dukkha*, and this is found within the Aggregate of Mental Formations, one of the Five Aggregates which constitute a being.

***kamma* or 'action', 'doing'**
(volitional action)

Now, the Pali word *kamma* literally means 'action', 'doing'. But in the Buddhist theory of karma it has a specific meaning: it means **(only 'volitional action', not all action.)** Nor does it mean the result of karma as many people wrongly and loosely use it. In Buddhist terminology karma never means its effect; its effect is known as the 'fruit' or the 'result' of karma (*kamma-phala* or *kamma-vipâka*).

Volition may relatively be good or bad, just as a desire may relatively be good or bad. So karma may be good or bad relatively. **(Good karma (*kusala*) produces good effects, and bad karma (*akusala*) produces bad effects.)** Whether **(good or bad it is relative)** is within the cycle of continuity (*samsâra*). An Arahant, though he

(26)

acts, does not accumulate karma, because he is free from the false idea of self, free from the 'thirst' for continuity and becoming, free from all other defilements and impurities. For him there is no rebirth.

theory of cause and effect,

The theory of karma is the theory of cause and effect, or action and reaction; it is a **(natural law,)** which has nothing to do with the idea of justice or reward and punishment.

Every volitional action produces its effects or results. If a good action produces good effects and a bad action bad effects, it is not justice, or reward, or punishment meted out by anybody or any power, but this is in **(virtue of its own nature),** its own law. This is not difficult to understand. But what is difficult is that, according to the karma theory, the effects of a volitional action may continue to manifest themselves even in a life after death. Here we have to explain what death is according to Buddhism.

death and rebirth or re-existence

We have seen earlier that a being is nothing but a combination physical and mental forces or energies. What we call death is the total non-functioning of the physical body. Do all these forces and energies stop altogether with the non-functioning of the body? Buddhism says

(27)

‘No’. **Will, volition, desire, thirst to exist, to continue,** to become more and more, is a **tremendous force that moves whole lives**, whole existences. This is the greatest force, the greatest energy in the world. According to Buddhism, this force does not stop with the non-functioning of the body, which is death; but it continues manifesting itself in another form, producing re-existence which is called rebirth.

born and die every moment

Now, another question arises: If there is no permanent, unchanging entity or substance like Self or Soul, what is it that can re-exist or be reborn after death? Before we can go on to life after death, let us consider what this life is, and how it continues now. What we call life is the combination of the Five Aggregates, a combination of physical and mental energies. These are constantly changing: **(they do not remain the same for two consecutive moments.)** Every moment they are born and die. ‘When the Aggregates arise, decay and die, O bhikkhu, every moment you are born, decay and die.’ Thus, even now during this life time, every moment we are born and die, but we continue. If we can understand that in this life we can continue without a permanent, unchanging substance like Self or Soul, why can’t we understand that **(those forces themselves can continue**

(28)

without a Self or a Soul) after then non-functioning of the body?

potentiality within them

When this physical body is no more capable of functioning, energies do not die with it, but continue to take some other shape or form, which we call another life. In a child all the physical, mental and intellectual faculties are tender and weak, but **they have within them the potentiality** of producing a full grown man. Physical and mental energies which constitute the so-called being have **within themselves the power to take a new form**, and grow gradually and gather force to the full. (a form of quality that exists and is capable of being developed in the future)

neither he nor other

As there is no permanent, unchanging substance, **nothing passes from one moment to the next**. So quite obviously, nothing permanent or unchanging can pass or transmigrate from one life to the next. It is a series **that continues unbroken, but changes every moment**. The series is, really speaking, **nothing but movement**. It is **like a flame** that burns through the night: it is not the same flame nor it is another. A child grows up to be a man of sixty. Certainly **the man of sixty is not the same as the child** of sixty years ago, nor is he another person.

(29)

Similarly, a person who dies here and is reborn elsewhere is **neither the same person, nor another**. It is the **continuity of the same series**.

only a thought-moment

The difference between death and birth is only a thought-moment: **the last thought-moment in this life conditions the first thought-moment in the so-called next life**, which, in fact, is the continuity of the same series. During this life itself, too, **one thought-moment conditions the next thought-moment**. So from the Buddhist point of view, the **question of life after death** is not a great mystery. As long as there is 'thirst', the cycle of continuity goes on. It can stop only when its **driving force, the 'thirst', is cut off through wisdom** which sees the Nirvâna.

Chapter IV.

The Third Noble Truth Nirodha: The Cessation of Dukkha

The third Noble Truth is that there is **emancipation, liberation, freedom from suffering, from the continuity of *dukkha*.**

This is called the Noble Truth of the Cessation of *dukkha* (*Dukkhanirodha-ariyasacca*), which is *Nibbâna*, more popularly known in its Sanskrit form of *Nirvâna*.

To eliminate *dukkha* completely one has **to eliminate the main root of *dukkha*, which is ‘thirst’ (*tanhâ*).** Therefore *Nirvâna* is known also by the term (*Tanhakkhaya* ‘**Extinction of Thirst**’).

Now you will ask: But what is *Nirvâna*? It can never be answered completely and satisfactorily in words, because human **language is too poor** to express the real nature of the **Absolute Truth which is *Nirvâna*.**

no words to express Nirvâna

Language is created and used to express things and ideas experienced by their sense organs and their mind. A supramundane experience like that of the Absolute Truth is not of such a category. Therefore there cannot be words to express that experience, just as the fish had no words to express the nature of land.

Nevertheless we cannot do without language. But if Nirvâna is to be expressed and explained in positive terms, we are likely immediately to grasp an idea associated with those terms, which may be quite the contrary. Therefore it is generally expressed in negative term_ a less dangerous mode perhaps.

So it is often referred to by such negative terms as *Tanhakkhaya* ‘**Extinction of Thirst**’, *Asamkhata* ‘**Unconditioned**’, *Virâga* ‘**Absence of desire**’, *Nirodha* ‘**Cessation**’, *Nibbâna* ‘**Extinction**’.

Let us consider a few definitions and descriptions of Nirvâna as found in the original Pali texts:

‘It is the complete cessation of ‘thirst’ (*tanhâ*), giving it up, renouncing it, emancipation from it, detachment from it.’

‘**Calming of all conditioned things**, giving up of all defilements, extinction of “thirst”, detachment, cessation, Nibbâna.’

‘O bhikkhus, whatever there may be things conditioned or unconditioned, among them **detachment (virâga) is the highest.** That is to say, freedom from conceit, destruction of thirst, **the uprooting of attachment,** the cutting off of continuity, the extinction of “thirst”, detachment, cessation, Nibbâna.’

The reply Sâriputta, the chief disciple of the Buddha, to a direct question ‘What is Nibbâna?’ posed by a Parivrâjaka, is ‘**The extinction of desire, the extinction of hatred, the extinction of illusion.**’

‘The abandoning and destruction of desire and craving for these Five Aggregates of Attachment” that is the cessation of *dukkha*.’ ‘The **cessation of Continuity and becoming (Bhavanirodha)** is Nirvâna.’

**annihilation of the illusion or
the false idea of self**

Because Nirvana is this expressed in negative terms, there are many who have got a wrong notion that it is negative, and **expresses self-annihilation.**

Nirvâna is definitely **no annihilation of self,** because there is no self no annihilate. If at all, it is **the annihilation of the illusion, of the false idea of self.**

It is incorrect to say that Nirvâna is negative or positive. The ideas of ‘**negative**’ and ‘**positive**’ are relative, and are **within the realm of duality.** These terms

cannot be applied to Nirvâna, Absolute Truth, which is **(beyond duality and relativity)**.

A negative word need not necessarily indicate a negative state. The Pali of Sanskrit **word for health is ârogya**, a negative term, which literally means ‘**absence of illness**’. But *ârogya* (health) does not represent a negative state.

One of the well-known synonyms for Nirvâna is ‘Freedom’ (Pali *Mutti*, Skt. *Mukti*). **Nobody would say that freedom is negative**. But even freedom has a negative side: freedom is always a liberation from something which is obstructive, which is evil, which is negative. But **freedom is not negative**. So Nirvâna, *Mutti* or *Vimutti*, the Absolute Freedom, is freedom from all evil, freedom from craving, hatred and ignorance, **freedom from all terms of duality, relativity, time and space**.

Pukkusâti (Six Elements)

We may get some idea of Nirvâna as Absolute Truth from the *Dhâtuvibhanga-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikâya*.

This extremely important discourse was delivered by the Buddha to Pukkusâti, in the quiet of the night in a potter’s shed. The essence of the relevant portions of the sutta is as follows:

(34)

no 'mine', or no 'my self'

A man is composed of six elements: solidity, fluidity, heat, motion, space and consciousness. He analyses them and finds that none of them is 'mine', or 'my self'. He understands how consciousness appears and disappears, how pleasant, unpleasant and neutral sensations appear and disappear. **Through this knowledge his mind becomes detached.** Then he finds within him a pure equanimity (*upekhâ*), which can direct towards **the attainment of any high spiritual state**, and this pure equanimity will last for a long period.

mental creation

But then he thinks: 'If I focus this purified and cleansed equanimity on the Sphere of Infinite Space and develop a mind conforming thereto, that is a mental creation (*samkhatam*). If I focus this purified and cleansed equanimity on the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness... on the Sphere of Nothingness ... or on the Sphere of Neither-perception nor Non-perception and develop a mind conforming thereto, that is a mental creation.' Then he neither mentally creates nor wills continuity and becoming (*bhava*) or annihilation (*vibbava*).

As he does not construct or does not will continuity and becoming or annihilation, he does not cling to

anything in the world; **as he does not cling, he is not anxious**; as he is not anxious, he is completely calmed within fully blown out within *paccattam yeva parinibbâyati*). And he knows: **‘Finished is birth, lived is pure life, what should be done is done, nothing more is left to be done.’**

Now, when he **experiences a pleasant, unpleasant or neutral sensation**, he knows that it is impermanent, that **it does not bind him, that it is not experienced with passion**. He knows that all those sensations will be pacified with the dissolution of the body, just as the flame of a lamp goes out when oil and wick give out.

Absolute Truth

Now, what is Absolute Truth? According to Buddhism, the Absolute Truth is that there is **nothing absolute in the world, that (everything is relative, conditioned and impermanent)**, and that there is no unchanging, everlasting, absolute substance like Self, Soul, or *Âtman* within or without.

This is the Absolute Truth. Truth is never negative. The **realization of this Truth, i.e., to see things as they are (*yathâbhûtam*) without illusion or ignorance (*avijjâ*), is the extinction of craving ‘thirst’ (*Nirodha*) of *dukkha*, which is Nirvâna.**

Truth is. Nirvana is.

The only thing you can do is to see it, to realize it.

(36)

There is a Path leading to the realization of Nirvâna. But **Nirvâna is not the result of this Path.** You may get to the mountain along a path, but the mountain is not the result, not an effect of the path. You may see a light, but the light not the result of your eyesight.

no Self

There is another popular question: If there is no Self, no *Âtman*, who realizes Nirvâna? Before we go on to Nirvâna, let us ask the question: Who thinks now, if there is no Self? We have seen earlier that there is **no thinker behind the thought.**

In the same way, it is wisdom (*paòòà*), realization, that realizes. There is **no other self behind the realization. *Dukkha* arises because of ‘thirst’ (*tamhâ*), and it ceases because of wisdom.** ‘Thirst’ and wisdom are both within the Five Aggregates.

Noble Truths within the Five Aggregates

This is real meaning of the Buddha’s well-known statement: ‘Within this fathom-long sentient body itself, I postulate the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world, and the Path leading to the cessation of the world.’ This means that all the Four Noble Truths are found within within ourselves. This also means that there is **no external power that produces the arising and the cessation of *dukkha*.**

(37)

In this life , not after death

In almost all religions the *summmum bonum* can be attained only after death. But Nirvâna can be realized in this very life; it is not necessary to wait till you die to 'attain' it.

He lives fully in the present

He who has realizes the Truth, Nirvana, is the happiest being in the world. He is free from all 'complexes' and obsessions, the worries and troubles that torment others. His mental health is perfect. He does not repent the past, nor does he brood over the future. He lives fully in the present.

no thought of self

Therefore he appreciated and enjoys things in the purest sense **without self-projections**. He is joyful, exultant, enjoying the pure life, his faculties pleased, free from anxiety, serene and peaceful. As he is free from selfish, desire, hatred, ignorance, conceit, and all such 'defilements', he is pure and gentle, full of universal love, compassion, kindness, sympathy, understanding and tolerance.

His service to others is of the purest, for he has no thought of self. He gains nothing, accumulates nothing, not even anything spiritual, because he is **free from the illusion of Self, and the 'thirst' for becoming.**

no sensation itself is happiness

Nirvâna is **beyond all terms of duality and relativity**. It is therefore **beyond our conceptions of good and evil, right and wrong, existence and non-existence**. Even the word ‘happiness’ (*sukha*) which is used to describe Nirvana has an entirely different sense here.

Sâriputta once said:

‘O friend, Nirvâna is happiness!

Nirvâna is happiness!’

Then Udâvi asked: ‘But, friend Sâriputta, what happiness can it be if there is no sensation?’

Sâriputta’s reply was highly philosophical and **beyond ordinary comprehension:**

‘That there is no sensation itself is happiness.’

A child in the kindergarten should not quarrel about the theory of relativity. Instead, if he allows his studies patiently and diligently, one day he may understand it.

Nirvâna is ‘to be realized by the wise within themselves’ (*paccattam veditabbo viòòûhi*). If we follow the Path patiently and with diligence, train and purify ourselves earnestly, and attain the necessary spiritual development, we may one day realize it within ourselves.

Chapter V.

The Fourth Noble Truth

Magga: The Path

The Fourth Noble Truth is that of the Way leading to the Cessation of *Dukkha* (*Dukkhanirodha gâmini-patipadâ-ariyasacca*).

This is known as the ‘**Middle Path**’ (*Majjhimâ Patipapâ*), because **it avoids two extremes:**

one extreme being the search for happiness through the pleasures of the senses (**self-indulgence**); the other being the search for happiness through (**self-mortification**) in different forms of asceticism, which is ‘painful, unworthy and unprofitable’. (seeking-denying))

Having himself first tried these two extremes, and having found them to be useless, the Buddha discovered through personal experience the **Middle Path** ‘**which gives vision and knowledge**, which leads to Calm, Insight, Enlightenment, Nirvâna’.

(40)

This Middle Path is generally referred to as the **Noble Eightfold Path** (*Ariya-Atthangika-Magga*), because it is composed of eight categories namely,

1. Right Understanding (*Sammâ ditthi*)
2. Right Thought (*Sammâ sankappa*)
3. Right Speech (*Sammâ vâcâ*)
4. Right Action (*Sammâ kammanta*)
5. Right Livelihood (*Sammâ âjiva*)
6. Right Effort (*Sammâ vâyâma*)
7. Right Mindfulness (*Sammâ sati*)
8. Right Concentration (*Sammâ samâdhi*)

Practically the whole teaching of the Buddha, to which he devoted himself during 45 years, deals in some way or other with this Path. He explained it **in different ways in different words to different people**, according to the stage of their development and their capacity to understand.

These eight factors aim at promoting and perfecting the **three essentials of Buddhist training** and discipline: namely:

- (a) **morality** (*Sila*) - Ethical Conduct
- (b) **concentration** (*Samâdhi*) - Mental Discipline
- (c) **Wisdom** (*Paòòà*) - realisation of the Absolute Truth.

(41)

compassion and wisdom

According to Buddhism for a man to be perfect there are two qualities that he should develop equally: compassion (*karunâ*) on one side, and wisdom (*pañña*) on the other. Here compassion represents love, charity, kindness, tolerance and such noble qualities on the emotional side. It is **(qualities of the heart)**.

Wisdom would stand for the intellectual side or the **(qualities of the mind)**. That is **the aim of the Buddhist way of life**: in it wisdom and compassion are inseparably linked together.

Right Effort

Right Effort is the energetic will;

(1) to prevent evil and unwholesome states of mind from arising, and

(2) to get rid of such evil and unwholesome states that have already arisen within a man, and also

(3) to produce, to cause to arise, good and wholesome states of mind not yet arisen, and

(4) to develop and bring to perfection the good and wholesome states of mind already present in a man.

Right Mindfulness

Right Mindfulness (or Attentiveness) is to be diligently aware, mindful and attentive with regard to

(I) the activities of the body (*kâya*),

(42)

(2) sensations or feelings (*vedanâ*),
(3) the activities of the mind (*citta*) and
(4) ideas, thoughts, conceptions and things
(*dhamma*).

The **practice of concentration on breathing** (*ânâpânasati*) is one of the well-known exercises, connected with the body, **for mental development**. There are several other ways of developing mindfulness **in relation to the body-as modes of meditation**.

With regard to sensations and feelings, one should be clearly aware of all forms of feelings and sensations, **pleasant, unpleasant and neutral, of how they appear and disappear** within oneself.

Concerning the activities of mind, one should be aware whether one's **mind is lustful or not, given to hatred or not, deluded or not, distracted or concentrated**, etc. In this way one should be **aware of all movements of mind, how they arise and disappear**.

As regards **ideas, thoughts, conceptions** and things, one should **know their nature, how they appear and disappear**, how they are developed, how they are suppressed, and destroyed, and so on.

These four forms of mental culture or meditation are treated in detail in the *Satipatthâna-sutta* (**Setting-up of Mindfulness**).

Right Concentration

The third and last factor of Mental Discipline is Right Concentration leading to the four stages of *Dhyâna*, generally called trance.

In the first stage of *Dhyâna*, desires and certain unwholesome thoughts like sensuous lust, and skeptical doubt **are discarded**, and feelings of joy and happiness are maintained, along with certain mental activities.

In the second stage, all intellectual activities are suppressed, **tranquillity and ‘one-pointedness’** of mind developed, and the feelings of joy and happiness are still retained.

In the third stage, the feeling of joy, which is an active sensation, also disappears, while the disposition of happiness still **remains in addition to mindful equanimity**.

In the fourth stage of *Dhyâna*, all sensations, even of happiness, joy and sorrow, disappear, **only pure equanimity and awareness remaining**.

The last remaining two factors, namely **Right Thought and Right Understanding go to constitute Wisdom**.

Right Thought

Right Thought denotes the thoughts of selfless renunciation or detachment, thoughts of love and thoughts

(44)

of non-violence, which are extended to all beings. It is very interesting and important to note here that **thoughts of selfless detachment, love and non-violence** are grouped **on the side of wisdom**.

This clearly shows that **true wisdom is endowed with these noble qualities**, and that **all thoughts of selfish desire, ill-will, hatred and violence are the result of a lack of wisdom**- in all spheres of life whether individual, social, or political.

Right Understanding

Right Understanding is **the understanding of things as they are**, and it is the **Four Noble Truths that explain things as they really are**.

Right Understanding therefore is ultimately reduced to **the understanding of the Four Noble Truths**. This understanding is **the highest wisdom which sees the Ultimate Reality or Absolute Truth**.

According to Buddhism there are two sorts of understanding: What we generally call **understanding is knowledge**, (an accumulated memory), an intellectual grasping of a subject according to certain given data. This is called '**knowing accordingly**' (*anubodha*). It is not very deep.

Real deep understanding is called '**penetration**' (*pativedha*), **seeing a thing in its true nature, without**

(45)

name and label. This penetration is possible only when the mind is free from all impurities and is **fully developed through meditation. (knowledge understanding and wisdom understanding)**

brief account of the Path

one may see that it is **a way of life** to be followed, practised and developed by each individual. It is **self-discipline in body, word and mind, self-development and self-purification.**

It has **nothing to do with belief, pray, worship or ceremony.** In that sense, it has nothing which may **popularly be called 'religious'.**

It is **a Path** leading to the realization of Ultimate Reality, to complete freedom, happiness and peace through **(moral, spiritual and intellectual perfection).**

In Buddhist countries there are simple and beautiful customs are **ceremonies or religious occasions.** They have little to do with the real Path. But they have their value in **satisfying certain religious emotions** and the needs of those who are less advanced, and **helping them gradually along the Path.**

the Four Noble Truths

The First Noble Truth is *Dukkha*, the nature of life, its suffering, its sorrows and joys, its imperfection

(46)

and unsatisfactoriness, its impermanence and insubstantially. With regard to this, **(our function is to understand it as a fact)**, clearly and completely (*pariòòeyya*).

The Second Noble Truth is the Origin of *Dukka*, which is desire, ‘thirst’, accompanied by all other passions, defilements and impurities. A mere understanding of this fact is not sufficient. Here **(our function is to discard it, to eliminate, to destroy and eradicate it)** (*pahâtabba*).

The Third Noble Truth is the Cessation of *Dukkha*, Nirvâna, (the Absolute Truth), the Ultimate Reality. Here **(our function is to realize it)** (*sacchikâtabba*).

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Path leading to the realization of Nirvâna. (A mere knowledge of the Path), however complete, will not do. In this case, **(our function is to follow it and keep to it)** (*bhâvetabba*).

Chapter VI.

The Doctrine of No Soul: Anatta

What in generally is suggested by Soul, Self, Ego, or to use the Sanskrit expression *Âtman*, is that in man there is a **permanent, everlasting and absolute entity**, which is **the unchanging substance** behind the changing phenomenal world.

According to some religions, each individual has such a separate soul which is created by God, and which, finally after death, lives eternally either in hell or heaven, its destiny depending on the judgment of its creator.

According to others, it goes through many lives till it is completely purified and becomes finally united with God or Brahman, Universal Soul or *Âtman*, from which it originally emanated.

This soul or self in man is **the thinker of thoughts, feeler of sensations, and receiver of rewards and**

(48)

punishments for all its actions good and bad. **Such a conception is called the idea of self.**

no Soul, no Self, or no *Âtman*

Buddhism stands unique in the history of human thought in **denying the existence of such a Soul, Self, or *Âtman*.**

According to the teaching of the Buddha, the idea of self is **an imaginary, false belief** which has **no corresponding reality**, and it produces **harmful thoughts of 'me' and 'mine'**, selfish desire, craving, attachment, hatred, ill-will, conceit, pride, egoism, and other defilements, impurities and problems. It is **the source of all the troubles** in the world from personal conflicts to wars between nations. In short, to this **false view can be traced all the evil in the world.**

***Anatta* or No-Soul**

The doctrine of *Anatta* or No-Soul is the **natural result of the analysis of the Five Aggregates and the teaching of Conditioned Genesis (*Paticca-samup pâda*)**. We have seen earlier, in the discussion of the First Noble Truth (*Dukkha*), that what we call **a being or an individual is composed of the Five Aggregates.**

Buddhist theory of relativity

That is the analytical method. The same result is arrived at through the doctrine of Conditioned Genesis

which is the synthetical method, an according to this nothing in the world is absolute. **Everything is conditioned, relative, and interdependent.** This is the **Buddhist theory of relativity.**

Before we go into the question of *Anatta* proper, it is useful to have a brief idea of the Conditioned Genesis. The principle of this doctrine is given in a short formula of four lines:

When this is, that is

(Imasmim sati idam hoti);

This arising, that arises

(Imassuppâdâ idam uppajjati);

When this is not, that is not

(Imasmim asati idam na hoti);

This ceasing, that ceases

(Imassa nirodhâ idam nirujjhati).

On this principle of conditionality, relativity and interdependence, **the whole existence and continuity of life and its cessation** are explained in a detailed formula which is called *Paticca-samuppâda* ‘**Conditioned Genesis**’,

consisting of twelve factors:

1. Through ignorance are conditioned volitional actions or karma-formations (*Avijjâpaccayâ samkhârâ*).

2. Through volitional actions is conditioned consciousness (*Samkhârapaccayâ viòòânam*).
3. Through consciousness are conditioned mental and physical phenomena (*Viòòânapaccayâ nâmarûpam*).
4. Through mental and physical phenomena are conditioned the six faculties (i.e., eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) (*Nâmarûpapaccayâ salâyatanam*).
5. Through the six faculties is conditioned (sensorial and mental) contact (*Salâyatanapaccayâ phasso*).
6. Through contact is conditioned sensation (*Phassapaccayâ vedanâ*).
7. Through sensation is conditioned desire, 'thirst' (*Vedanâpaccayâ tanhâ*).
8. Through desire ('thirst') is conditioned clinging (*Tanhâpaccayâ upâdânam*).
9. Through clinging is conditioned the process of becoming (*Upâdânapaccayâ bhavo*).
10. Through the process of becoming is conditioned birth (*Bhavapaccayâ jâti*).
11. Through birth are conditioned
12. decay, death, lamentation, pain, etc. (*Jâtipaccayâ jarâmaranam*).

This is **how life arises, exists and continues**. If we take this formula in reverse order, we come to the cessation of the process: Through the complete cessation of ignorance, volitional activities or karma-formations cease; through the cessation of volitional activities, consciousness ceases; ... through the cessation of birth, decay, death, sorrow, etc., cease.

relative, interdependent and interconnected

It should be remembered that each of these factors is **conditioned (*paticcasamuppanna*) as well as conditioning (*paticcasamuppâda*)**. Therefore they are all relative, interdependent and interconnected, and **nothing is absolute or independent; hence (no first cause)** is accepted by Buddhism. Conditioned Genesis should be considered **as a circle, and not as a chain**.

the analysis of being into Five Aggregates

According to the doctrine of Conditioned Genesis, as well as according to the analysis of being into Five Aggregates, the idea of **(an abiding, immortal substance)** in man or outside, whether it is called *Âtman*, **'I', Soul, Self, or Ego**, is considered only a **false belief, a mental projection**. This is the Buddhist **doctrine of *Anatta*, No-Soul or No-Self**.

conventional truth and ultimate truth

In order to avoid a confusion it should be mentioned

here that there are **two kinds of truths**: conventional truth (*sammuti-sacca*) and ultimate truth (*paramattha-sacca*).

When we use such expressions in our daily life as ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘being’, ‘individual’, etc., we do not lie because there is **no self or being** as such, but we **speak a truth conforming to the convention of the world**. But the **ultimate truth** is that there is **no ‘I’ or ‘being’ in reality**.

As the *Mahâyâna-sûtrânlankâra* says: ‘A person (*pudgala*) should be mentioned as **existing only in designation** i.e., **conventionally there is a being, but not in reality**’.

In the *Dhammapada* there are three verses **extremely important and essential in the Buddha’s teaching**.

- (1) ‘**All conditioned things are impermanent**
(*Sabbe SAMKHÂRÂ aniccâ*), and
- (2) ‘**All conditioned things are *dukkha***
(*Sabbe SAMKHÂRÂ dukkhâ*).
- (3) ‘**All *dhammas* are without self**
(*Sabbe SAMKHÂRÂ anattâ*).

Here it should be carefully observed that in the first two verses the word *samkhârâ* ‘conditioned things’ is used. But in the third verse the word *dhammâ* is used.

Why didn't the third verse use the word *samkhârâ* 'conditioned things' as the previous two verses, and why did it use the term *dhammâ* instead?

The term *samkhâra* denotes the Five Aggregates, all conditioned, interdependent, relative things and states, both physical and mental. If the third verse said: 'All *samkhârâ* (conditioned things) are without self', then one might think that, although conditioned things are without self, **yet there may be a Self outside** conditioned things, outside the Five Aggregates. It is in order **to avoid misunderstanding that the term *dhammâ* is used.**

conditioned and non-conditioned things

The term *dhamma* is much wider than *samkhârâ*. There is no term in Buddhist terminology wider than *dhamma*. It includes not only the conditioned things, but also the non-conditioned, the Absolute, Nirvâna.

There is nothing in the universe or outside, good or bad, conditioned or non-conditioned, **relative or absolute**, which is not included in this term. Therefore, it is quite clear that, according to this statement:

'All *dhammas* are without Self',
there is no Self, no *Âtman*,

not only in the Five Aggregates, but nowhere else too outside them or apart from them.

(54)

neither self nor anything pertaining to self

Here the Buddha explicitly states that Soul, or Self, is nowhere to be found in reality, and it is foolish to believe that there is such a thing.

Those who seek a self in the Buddha's teaching quote a few examples which they first translate wrongly, and then misinterpret. One of them is the well-known line *Âttâ hi attano nâtho* from the *Dhammapada* (XII, 4, or verse 160), which is translated as '**Self is the lord of self**', and then interpreted to mean that **the big Self is the lord of the small self**.

First of all, this translation is incorrect. *Âttâ* here does not mean self in the sense of soul. **In Pali the word *âttâ* is generally used as a reflexive or indefinite pronoun meaning 'myself', 'yourself', 'himself', 'one', 'oneself', etc.**

the feeling of 'I AM'

It is the vague **feeling "I AM" that creates the idea of self** which has **no corresponding reality**, and to see this truth is to realize Nirvâna, which is not very easy. There is an enlightening conversation on this point between a bhikkhu named Khemaka and a group of bhikkhus.

an Arahant free from all impurities

These bhikkhus ask Khemaka whether he sees in

(55)

the Five Aggregates any self or **anything pertaining (connecting) to a self**. Khemaka replies ‘No’. Then the bhikkhus say that, **if so, he should be an Arahant free from all impurities**. But Khemaka confesses that **though he does not find in the Five Aggregates a self**, or anything pertaining to a self, ‘I am not an Arahant free from all impurities. O friends, **with regard to the Five Aggregates of Attachment, (I have a feeling “I AM”, but I do not clearly see “This is I AM”.)**’

Then Khemaka explains that what he calls ‘I AM’ is **(neither matter, sensation, perception, mental formations, nor consciousness,)** nor anything without them. But **(he has the feeling ‘I AM’ with regard to the Five Aggregates,)** though he could not see clearly ‘This is I AM’.

He says it is **(like the smell of a flower: it is neither the smell of the petals, nor of the colour, nor of the pollen,)** but the smell of the flower.

Khemaka further explains that even a person who has attained the early stages of realization **(still retains this feeling ‘I AM’.)**

But later on, when he progresses further, this feeling of ‘I AM’ altogether disappears, just as the chemical smell of a freshly washed cloth disappears after a time when it is kept in a box. (perfumed)

(56)

This discussion was so useful and enlightening to them that at the end of it, the text says, all of them, including Khemaka himself, became Arahants free from all impurities, this finally getting rid of 'I AM'.

the light of wisdom

The Buddha's (**teaching on *Anatta*, No-Soul, or No-Self,**) should not be considered as negative or annihilistic.

Like Nirvâna, it is Truth, Reality; and Reality cannot be negative. It is the false belief in a non-existing imaginary self that is negative.

The teaching on *Anatta*

**(dispels the darkness of false beliefs,
and produces the light of wisdom.)**

It is not negative: as Asanga very aptly says:

'There is the fact of No-selfness'.

Chapter VII.

Meditation (or) Mental Culture: Bhâvanâ (cultivation)

The Buddha said: ‘O bhikkhus, there are two kinds of illness. Physical illness and mental illness. There seem to be people who enjoy freedom from physical illness even for a year or two... even for a hundred years or more. But, O bhikkhus, rare in this world are those who enjoy freedom from mental illness even for one moment, except those who are free from mental defilements’ i.e., except Arahants.

The Buddha’s teaching, particularly his way of ‘meditation’, aims at producing a state of perfect mental health, equilibrium and tranquility.

an escape from the daily life

The moment the word 'meditation' is mentioned, one thinks of an escape from the daily activities of life; assuming a particular posture, like a statue in some cave or cell in a monastery, in some remote place cut off from society. **True Buddhist 'meditation' does not mean this kind of escape at all.** The Buddha's teaching on this subject was so little understood, that in later times **the way of 'meditation' deteriorated** and degenerated into **a kind of ritual or ceremony almost technical in its routine.**

culture and development

The word meditation is a very poor substitute for the **original term *bhâvanâ***, which means **mental culture or mental development.** It aims at **cleansing the mind of impurities**, such as lustful desires, hatred, ill-will, indolence, worries and restlessness, skeptical doubts, and **cultivating such qualities** as concentration, awareness, intelligence, will, energy, the analytical faculty, confidence, joy, tranquility, leading finally to **the attainment of highest wisdom which realize the Ultimate Truth, Nirvâna.**

two forms of meditation

There are two forms of meditation. One is the development of mental **concentration (*samatha* or *samâdhi*)**, of **one-pointedness of mind**, by various

methods prescribed in the texts, leading up to the highest mystic states. All these mystic states, according to the Buddha, are **mind-created, mind-produced, conditioned** (*samkhata*). They have nothing to do with Reality, Truth, Nirvâna, but it is not excluded from the field of Buddhist meditation.

The Buddha himself, before his Enlightenment, studied these yogic practices under different teachers and attained to the highest mystic states; but he was not satisfied with them, because they did not give complete liberation, they did not give insight into the Ultimate Reality. He considered these mystic states only as **‘happy living in this existence’** (*ditthadhamma-sukha vihâra*), or **‘peaceful living’**, and nothing more.

Insight meditation

He therefore discovered the **other form of ‘meditation’ known as vipassanâ** (Skt. *Vipaśyanâ* or *vidarúanâ*), **‘Insight’ into the nature** of things, leading to the complete **liberation of mind, to the realization of the Ultimate Truth, Nirvâna**. This is essentially Buddhist ‘meditation’. It is **an analytical method based on mindfulness, awareness, vigilance, observation**.

The most important discourse ever given by the Buddha on ‘meditation’ is called **the *Satipatthâna-sutta* ‘The Setting-up of Mindfulness’**.

meditation associated with our daily activities

The ways of ‘meditation’ given in this discourse are not cut off from life, nor do they avoid life; on the contrary, **they are all connected with our life, our daily activities**, our sorrows and joys, our words and thoughts, our moral and intellectual occupations.

Four main sections of meditation

The discourse is divided into four main sections:

- 1- **body (*kâya*)**,
- 2- **feelings and sensation (*vedanâ*)**,
- 3- **mind (*citta*)**, and
- 4- **moral and intellectual subjects (*dhamma*)**.

It should be clearly borne in mind that whatever the form of ‘meditation’ may be, **the essential thing is mindfulness or awareness (*sati*)**, **attention or observation (*anupassanâ*)**.

mindfulness of breathing

One of the most well-known, popular and practical examples of ‘meditation’ connected with the body is called ‘**The mindfulness or Awareness of in-and-out breathing**’ (*ânâpânasati*). It is for this ‘meditation’ only that a particular and definite posture is prescribed in the text. For other forms of ‘meditation’ given in this *sutta*, you may sit, stand, walk, or lie down, as you like.

(61)

But, for **cultivating mindfulness of in-and-out breathing**, one should sit, ‘cross-legged, **keeping the body erect and mindfulness alert**’. But sitting cross-legged is not practical and easy for people, particularly for Westerners. Therefore, those who find it difficult to sit cross-legged may sit on a chair, ‘keeping the body erect and mindfulness alert’. It is very necessary for this exercise that the mediator should sit erect, but not stiff; his hands placed comfortably on his lap. Thus seated, you may close your eyes. It may be convenient to you.

only observe your breathing

You breathe in and out **all day and night, but you are never mindful** of it, you **never for a second concentrate your mind** on it. Now you are going to do just this. Breathe in and out as usual, without any effort or strain. Now, bring your mind to concentrate on your breathing-in and breathing-out; let your mind observe your breathing in and out; **let your mind be aware and vigilant of your breathing in and out.**

Breathe normally and naturally. The only thing is that when you take deep breaths **you should be aware that they are deep breaths**, and so on. In other words, your mind should be so fully concentrated on your breathing that you are **aware of its movements and**

(62)

changes. Forget all other things, your surroundings and your environment.

difficult to bring your mind to concentrate

At the beginning you will find it extremely difficult to bring your mind to concentrate on your breathing. You will be astonished how your mind wanders about. It does not stay. You begin to think of various things. You hear sounds outside. **Your mind is disturbed and distracted. You may be dismayed and disappointed.** But if you continue to practice this exercise twice daily, morning and evening, you will gradually begin to concentrate your mind on your breathing.

After a certain period, you will experience just that split second when your mind is **fully concentrated on your breathing**, when you will **not hear even sounds** nearby, when **no external world exists for you**. This slight moment is such a tremendous experience for you, full of joy, happiness and tranquility, that you would like to continue it. But still you cannot. Yet if you go on practising this regularly, you may repeat the experience again and again for longer and longer periods.

to develop concentration is essential

This exercise of mindfulness on breathing, which is one of the simplest and easiest practices, is meant to

(63)

develop concentration leading up to very high mystic attainments (*dhyâna*). Besides, **the power of concentration is essential for any kind of deep understanding, penetration, insight into the nature of things, including the realization of Nirvâna.**

useful for health and efficiency

Apart from all this, this exercise on breathing gives you immediate results. It is good for your health, for relaxation, sound sleep, and for efficiency in your daily work. It makes you calm and tranquil. Even at moments when you are nervous or excited, if you practice this for a couple of minutes, you will see for yourself that you become immediately quiet and at peace. You feel as if you have awakened after a good rest.

Another very important, practical, and useful form of 'meditation' mental development is **to be aware and mindful of whatever you do**, physically or verbally, during the daily routine of work in your life.

Live fully in the present action.

Whether you walk, stand, sit, lie down, or sleep, whether you stretch or bend your limbs, whether you look around, whether you put on your clothes, whether you talk or **keep silence**, whether you eat or drink, even whether you answer the **calls of nature (urinate or defecate)** - in these and other activities, you should be

(64)

fully aware and mindful of the act you perform at the moment. That is to say, that you should live in the present moment, in the present action.

Real life is the present moment.

You cannot escape life however you may try. As long as you live, whether in a town or in a cave, you have to face it and live it. Real life is the present moment - not the memories of the past which is gone, nor the dreams of the future which is not yet born. One who lives in the present moment lives in the real life.

neither repent nor brood

When asked why his disciples, who lived a simple and quiet life with only one meal a day, were so radiant, the Buddha replied: 'They do not repent the past, nor do they brood over the future. **They lived in the present.** Therefore, they are radiant.

self-consciousness of 'I'

The moment you think 'I am doing this' you become self-conscious, and then you do not live in the action, but **you live in the idea 'I am'.** You should forget yourself completely, and lose yourself in what you do.

The moment a speaker becomes self-conscious and thinks 'I am addressing an audience', his speech is disturbed and his trend of thought broken. But when he forgets himself in his speech, in his subjects, then he is

(65)

at his best, he speaks well and explains things clearly. All great work - artistic, poetic, intellectual or spiritual - is produced at those moments when its creators are lost completely in their actions and are free from self-consciousness.

to live in the present

This mindfulness or awareness with regard to our activities, taught by the Buddha, is to live in the present moment, to live in the present action. This is also the Zen way which is based primarily on this teaching. Here in this form of meditation, you haven't got to perform any particular action in order to develop mindfulness, but you have only to be **mindful and aware of whatever you may do**. You have **only to cultivate mindfulness and awareness always**, day and night, with regard to all activities in your daily life.

observing feelings from outside

Then there is a way of practicing mental development 'meditation' with regard to all our sensations or feelings, whether happy, unhappy or neutral. First of all, you should learn about your unhappy feeling. Try to examine how it arises, its cause, how it disappears, and its cessation. Try to examine it **as if you are observing it from outside, without any subjective reaction**.

Here, too, you should not look at it as 'my feeling' or 'my sensation' **subjectively**, but **only look at it** as 'a

(66)

feeling' or 'a sensation' **objectively**. You should remove or **eliminate the false idea of 'I'**. **When you see its nature, how it arises and disappears, your mind grows dispassionate** towards that sensation, and **becomes detached and free**. It is the same with regard to all sensations or feelings.

mind meditation

Now discuss the form of 'meditation' with regard to our minds. You should be aware of the fact **whenever your mind is passionate or detached**, whenever it is overpowered by hatred, ill-will, jealousy, or is full of love, compassion, whenever it is deluded or has a clear and right understanding, and so on and so forth.

You are not a judge.

Here is **no attitude of criticizing or judging, or discriminating between right and wrong, or good and bad**. It is **simply observing**. You are **not a judge**. When you observe your mind, and see its true nature clearly, **you become dispassionate with regard to its emotions, sentiments and states. Thus you become detached and free.**

mindful at the every moment

For example, you are really angry, overpowered by anger, ill-will, and hatred. It is curious, and paradoxical, that the man **who is in anger is not really aware, not**

(67)

mindful that he is angry. The moment he becomes aware and mindful of that state of his mind, **the moment he sees his anger, it begins to subside.**

You should examine its **nature, how it arises, how it disappears.** Here again it should be remembered that **you should not think ‘I am angry’, or of ‘my anger’.** You should only be aware and mindful of the state of **an angry mind.**

You are only observing and examining **an angry mind objectively.** This should be the attitude way of you think with regard to all sentiments, emotions, and states of mind.

Fourth form of meditation *(Dhamma anupassanâ)*

Then there is a form of ‘meditation’ on ethical, spiritual and intellectual subjects. All our studies, reading, discussions, conversation and deliberations on such subjects are included in this ‘meditation’. To read this book, and to think deeply about the subjects discussed in it, is a form of meditation.

So, according to this form of meditation, you may study, think, and deliberate on the **Five Hindrances, (Nivarana)**, namely:

(68)

1. lustful desires (*kâmacchanda*)
2. ill-will, hatred or anger (*vyâpâda*)

3. torpor and languor (*thina-middha*)
4. restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*),
5. sceptical doubts (*vicikicchâ*)

These five are considered as hindrances to any kind of clear understanding, as a matter of fact, to any kind of progress. When one is over-powered by them and when one does not know how to get rid of them, then one cannot understand right and wrong, or good and bad.

One may also ‘meditate’ on the **Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*Bojjhanga*)**. They are:

1. **Mindfulness (*sati*)**,
i.e., to be aware and mindful in all activities and movements both physical and mental
2. **Investigation and research** into the various problems of doctrine (*dhamma-vicaya*).
Included here are all our religious, ethical and philosophical studies, reading, researches, discussions, conversation, even attending lectures relating to such doctrinal subjects
3. **Energy (*viriya*)**,
to work with determination till the end

4. **Joy (*pīti*),**
the quality quite contrary to the pessimistic, gloomy or melancholic attitude of mind
5. **Relaxation (*passaddhī*)** of both body and mind.
One should not be stiff physically or mentally
6. **Concentration (*samādhi*),**
as discussed above
7. **Equanimity (*upekkhā*),**
i.e., to be able to face life in all its vicissitudes with calm of mind, tranquillity, without disturbance.

To cultivate these qualities the most essential thing is a **genuine wish**, will, or inclination. Many other material and spiritual conditions conducive to the development of each quality are described in the texts.

One may also ‘meditate’ on such subjects as the Five Aggregates investigating the question ‘What is a being?’ or ‘What is it that is called I?’ or on the Four Noble Truths, as we discussed above. Study and investigation of those subjects constitute this fourth form of meditation, which leads to the realization of Ultimate Truth.