

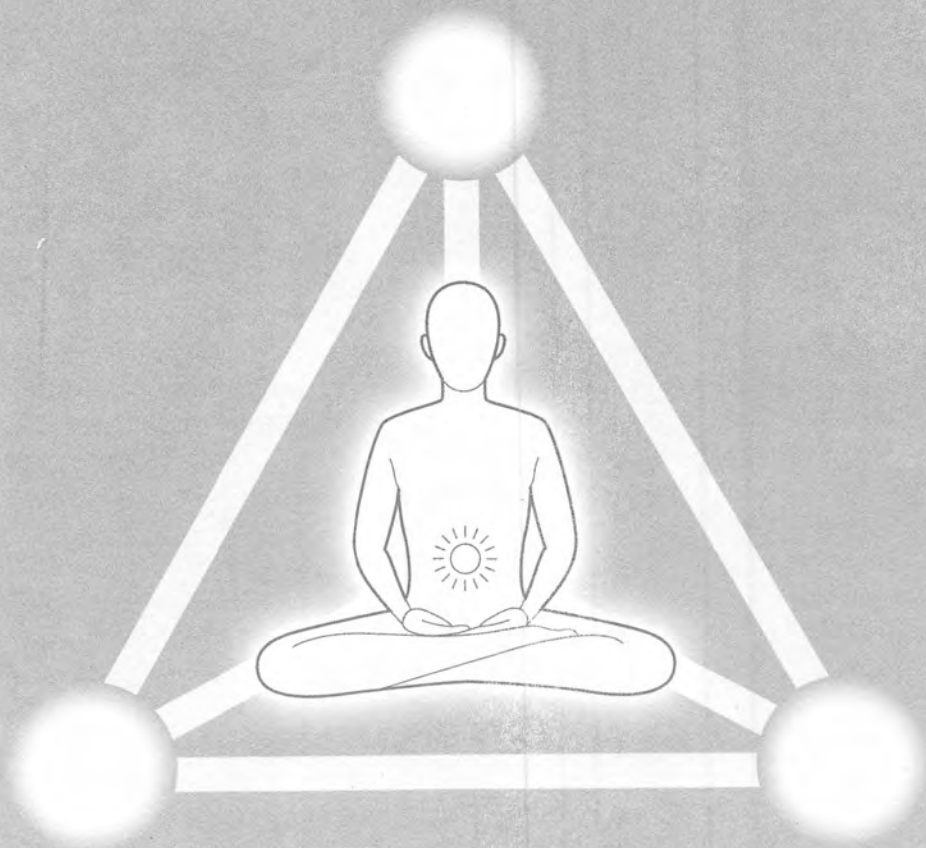
MAN'S PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION



Phrabhavanaviriyakhun

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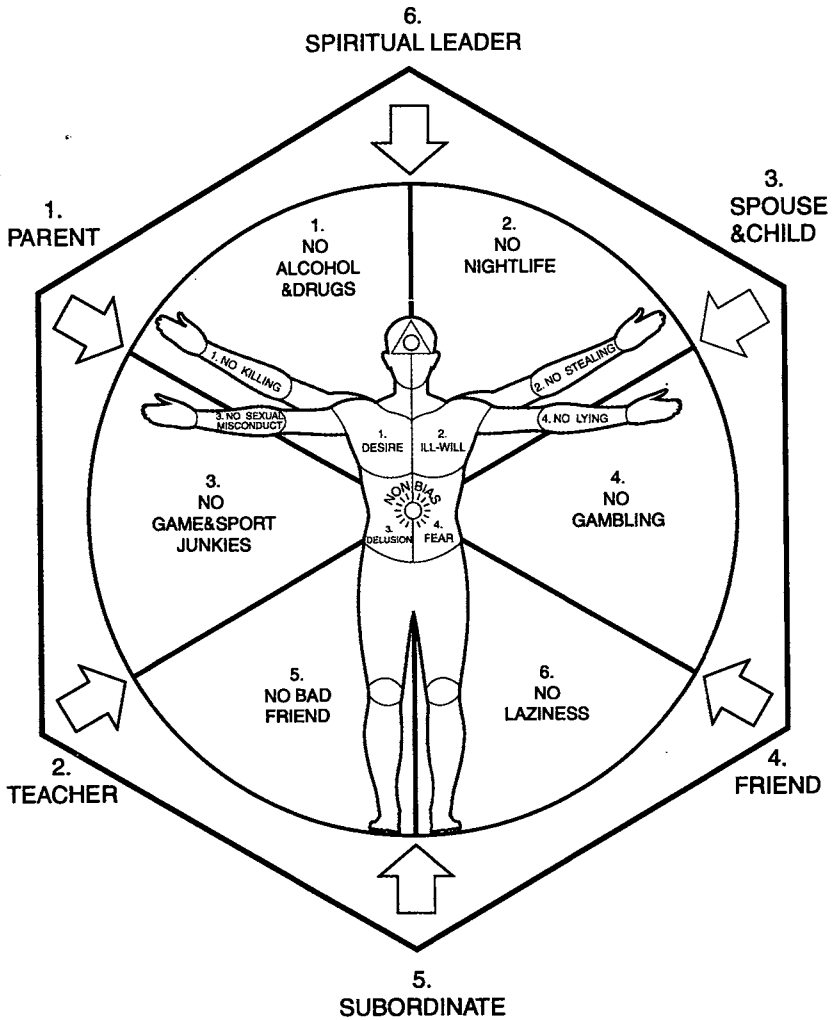
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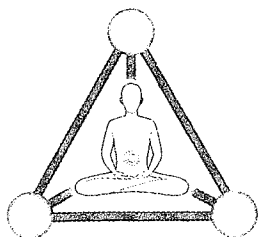


Phrabhavanaviriyakhun

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SAVING HUMANITY





BOOK INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the Most Venerable Phrabhavana-viriyakhun (Phraphadet Dattajeevo) has given many sermons concerning the effective ways of bringing about peace and happiness at the personal and social levels. The Venerable has believed that world peace is necessarily a result of personal inner peace. Throughout these past thirty or so years, the Venerable has researched and studied the teachings of the Lord Buddha especially in regards to the means to creating personal peace. For, without inner peace, world peace can never be.

Personal inner peace is the result of one's correct understanding of the reality of the world and of life through one's 'Right View'. Such understanding brings about 'knowledge' in regards to one's existence on earth, and the ultimate objective of one's life. When we can know for certain why we are here and what we are here to do, this knowledge comforts and guides us to think, speak, and act in ways that are wholesome. Wholesome thought, speech, and action in turn bring about peace and joy both in this life, and in the 'Hereafter'.

On the contrary, the lack of understanding in regards to the reality of the world and of life brings about 'ignorance'. This ignorance sets one on the wrong course and the 'Wrong View'. 'Wrong View' individuals are like a boat without any rudder. They go about their lives haphazardly, and permissively. They are ignorant of the meaning of their existence on earth as well as the true objective of their lives. This ignorance has been the source of all the pervasive personal and social problems that we are witnessing today. Such ignorance not only wreaks havoc everywhere but also has untold perilous consequences in the 'Hereafter'.

The Venerable has been well aware of the danger of such ignorance in all levels of society, and has extorted his audiences to give heed to the 'Right View'. The 'Right View' needs to be instilled in all individual members of society. It is also imperative that all the 'Wrong View' individuals undergo a personal transformation by converting their 'Wrong View' into the 'Right View'. The Venerable has cited the concept of the 'Six Directions' as being instrumental in instilling one's 'Right View' and to integrate it into one's characteristics. The concept of the 'Six Directions' has to do with placing an individual at the center and grouping individuals all around him according to their relationship to him. It is the interrelationship and the mutual responsibilities of an individual and the individuals in his 'Six Directions' that enrich one's life experiences and make one's life truly rewarding.

The Venerable has stressed the importance of the network of the 'Right View' individuals. The network can

serve to link the family institution, the educational institution, and the religious institution together through shared activities. The network also supports the individuals in one's 'Six Directions' to properly fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

Given the fact that 'Right View' individuals are becoming a rarity, as witnessed by the pervasive mayhem and violence in the world today, there is a great need and urgency for a personal transformation to occur en masse. To effect this transformation nationwide, the government must play an active role in building a network of decent individuals by constituting it into a national policy. The government needs to spark the initiation of the network as well as providing qualified personnel and funds for related activities.

The Venerable has made it clear that the government needs to set a priority on moral education. It needs to go hand-in-hand with worldly education in order to produce well-adjusted, responsible, honorable citizens of the future. Decent citizens are the true resources of the country.

The Editorial Committee wishes that the sermons collected in this book can inspire all of its readers to study and practice the 'Right View', and to fulfill their roles and responsibilities of their 'Six Directions'. It also wishes that the giving of alms and aid, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation, on a regular basis would give the practitioners their inner peace. And that in time, the practice should spread worldwide, and world peace is then a matter of course.

The Editorial Committee wishes to express its gratitude to the Most Venerable Phrabhavanaviriyakhun for his dedication to his work and for his permission to compile his sermons in a book form..

Finally, the Editorial Committee wishes to thank Dr. Anunya Methmanus, who has graciously provided the English version of this book.

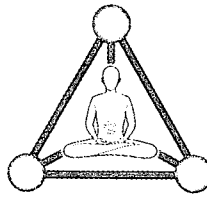
Editorial Committee

Ashram Pandita

February 2005

Abbreviation of Scriptures

A.	Āṅguttaranikāya
D.	Dīghanikāya
It.	Itivuttaka
J.	Jāṭaka
Kh.	Khuddakapatha
M.	Majjhimanikāya
S.	Saṃyuttanikāya
Thig.	Therīgāthā



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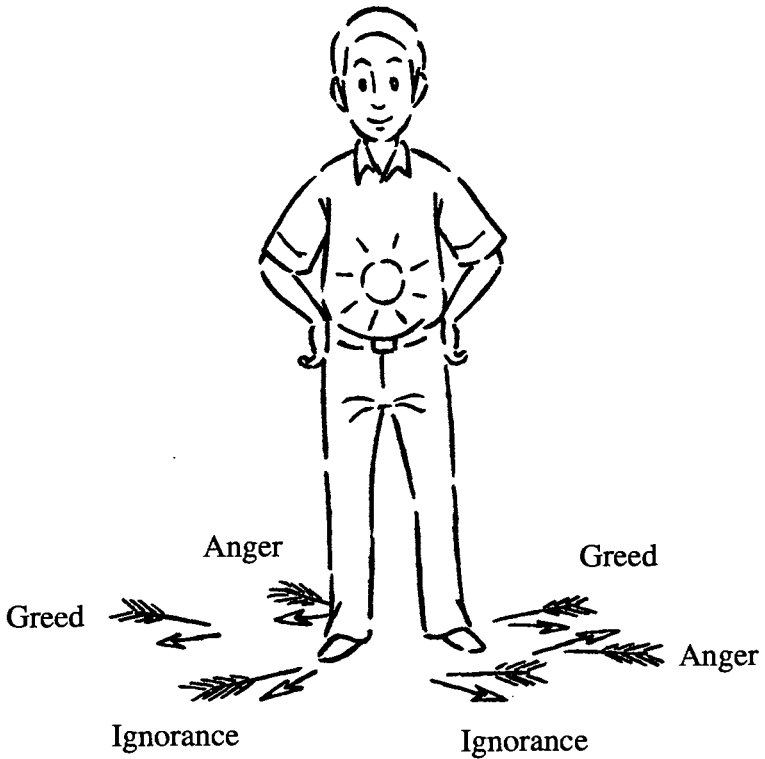
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- CHAPTER ONE -

The Concepts of Personal Transformation



Main Purpose → change & improve habit to increase quality of individual nature,

✓ Important Aspects of Personal Transformation.

The readers have no doubt known about the different kinds of reform such as educational reform, management reform, social reform, etc. The main purpose of a reform is to change and improve upon what was in order to increase its quality and efficiency and to broaden the scope of its benefit. An educational reform takes place because the system as it was had certain lacks and needed to be improved upon so that it can better benefit the people and the country. *Personal transformation in the same token necessarily means the improvement and change of each person for the better.*

The need for an individual transformation has to do with personal nature and habits that have become a problem. Personal nature is here defined as characteristics that are inherent at birth and are not learnt. For example, some people are naturally good-natured, kind and noble. Others are prone to fly off the handle easily, are selfish or are too sensitive. A habit deals with a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition. Being punctual, being disciplined, being responsible at work, are some of the examples of good habits. Some of the bad habits are being irresponsible, taking advantage of others, lacking discipline.

✓ What are the root causes of man's problem nature and bad habits?

✓ First of all, man is made up of body and mind. Both the body and mind can become ill when the immune system is missing or weakened. Illnesses of the body are

(2) Man / Body - Illness of the Body
Mind - " " " "

How to immunize the mind → Immune System
↓ Right View.

✓ { common colds, influenza, pneumonia, etc. The illnesses of the mind come in the form of 'unwholesome attachments' (defilements), namely, greed, anger and ignorance. These attachments were latent in all of us at birth and are the root causes of our transgressions. However, if our mind is properly immunized, in a manner of speaking, these attachments cannot exert their poisonous potency. We can then begin to learn to behave virtuously.

✓ { Therefore, a person that possesses a strong immune system of the mind would have a virtuous nature. On the contrary, one that lacks the immune system or has it in insufficient amount would have a more or less deplorable nature. The individual's nature, in turn is reflected by his behavior, virtuous or otherwise.

✓ What constitutes the immune system of the mind?

{ The immune system of the mind is derived from the right understanding of how the world really works and the reality of life itself. Such an understanding is termed in Buddhism as the 'Right View'. The lack of the immune system of the mind or its insufficiency is termed the 'Wrong View'.

✓ { The individuals possessing the 'Wrong View' cannot help but behave deplorably, causing chaos and havoc everywhere in the world. Therefore, it is imperative to urgently eradicate the 'Wrong View' from the mind and replace it with the 'Right View'. Only through the conversion of the 'Wrong View' into the 'Right View' can there be an impetus to man's personal transformation.

The Harm of the 'Wrong View'.

How harmful the 'Wrong View' is and the reasons for its conversion:

The misconception brought about by the 'Wrong View' state can do serious harm to self, to others, and all the way to the world at large. For the 'Wrong View' individual, the punishment of life in hell can certainly be exacted after death. The Lord Buddha's teachings according to the 'Micchaditthi Sutta' regarding the 'Wrong View' is quoted as follows:

*"Wrongly directing mind and uttering speech wrongly, wrongly doing deed with the body, a person here of little learning who hath done no good deeds here in his short life, when the body breaks up, being weak in wisdom, in purgatory rises up again."*¹

Regarding the harmful effects on others and society at large, the 'Wrong View' crowd is in the habit of persuading others to join in their activities such as gambling and drinking. Complete strangers, after a brief conversation are readily welcome to gamble or drink with them. After just one activity together, friendship could already be struck up. Especially when mutual gains can be had, the 'Wrong View' network can spread like a wildfire. The illegal drug ring that spread nationally before the drastic measures taken by the government to stamp it out worked by means of such 'friendship'.

We do not have to go as far as mentioning a society plagued by a 'Wrong View' crowd, for just one 'Wrong

¹ It., The Threes: Chapter , p.160

View' individual can already wreak havoc on society. The Lord Buddha said that if there appeared only one '*Wrong View*' person upon this earth, worldwide damages could already be wrought. The '*Dhamma*' teaches that:

*"Monks, one person born into the world is born to the loss of many folk, to the discomfort of many folk, to the loss, discomfort and sorrow of devas and mankind. What person? One who has perverted view. He of distorted view leads many folk astray from righteousness and plants them in unrighteousness. This is the one."*¹

Given that the '*Wrong View*' causes terrible harm to both self and others, it is peremptory that the '*Wrong View*' mind undergoes a radical change. The key to this change lies in the complete removal of the '*Wrong View*' from the mind and to cultivate in its stead the '*Right View*'.

✓ **Radically Opposed Views**

The word '*View*' as defined in the '*Dhamma*' has the same meaning as a 'deep level of understanding' (see Note 1).²

The right understanding of how the world works and the reality of life is here reiterated as the '*Right View*'. When the '*Right View*' penetrates deeply into a person's mind, it

¹ A., vol.1, The Book of the Ones: 1-17 Makkhalli, p.29

✓ ² Note 1: According to the Dhamma, there are two levels of understanding: 1) Superficial Understanding - deals with the general understanding of the physical, material world and has a low impact on the mind. Right understanding at this level does not result in being reborn in heaven and wrong understanding does not result in hell. 2) Deep Understanding - deals with an understanding of how the world works and the reality of life itself. It deals with an understanding of Kammic consequences, of virtue and vice. It exerts a strong impact on the mind. Right understanding at this level can result in a heavenly rebirth, while wrong understanding can send one to hell after death.

✓ goes to develop into ideals, principles, attitudes or precepts that govern the person's life. He is then given to Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. Any society replete with or composed mainly of 'Right View' individuals, that society is bound to meet with long-lasting peace and happiness.

✓ On the contrary, *the wrong understanding or misconception of how the world works and the reality of life is termed the 'Wrong View'*. When the 'Wrong View' becomes entrenched in the mind, it governs the individual with false ideals, wrong attitudes and principles. The person is given to Wrong Thought, Wrong Speech, Wrong Action and Wrong Livelihood. His ideas of relaxation and entertainment are necessarily fraught with unscrupulous indulgence of all sorts. His good times are had at the expense of others' suffering and misery, not to mention ultimately his own as well. Instead of experiencing any real happiness through his indulgences, he invariably meets with problems such as getting into fights with his drinking buddies. There are times when the conflict becomes so severe that it erupts into violence and lives are lost. Some suffer terrible financial losses through gambling. Others may contract sexually transmitted diseases.

As a result, any society made up of a large number of 'Wrong View' individuals would meet with chaos from all sides such as juvenile delinquency, crimes, economic problems, etc. Moreover, members of the society could become trapped and enslaved by numerous shady activities if the problems are not corrected in time. Sooner or later, that society would fall into decay. This can happen in spite of the sight of impressive buildings and houses, which are merely external, material progress.

Since the minds are becoming more and more depraved and if the situation reaches the national level, the entire nation could eventually fall. There have been numerous such incidents recorded all throughout history.

It is a fact that the '*Wrong View*' and the '*Right View*' are diametrically opposed. In general, however, the '*Wrong View*' is more potent than the '*Right View*'. This fact can be witnessed by the overwhelming problems in society, which are on the increase all the time.

The pervasive atrocities occurring at every level of society all have their root cause in the '*Wrong View*'. The reason that the world has not yet met with gargantuan disasters the size of the Kali Yuga (the fourth and final age of the Hindu world) is that there are still enough individuals with the '*Right View*' acting as a check and balance. In Buddhism, there was mentioned ten opposing categories of Right and Wrong Views that could be compared in pairs, as shown in Table 1.

The following are the details of these ten opposing

Table 1

The Right View (10)	The Wrong View (10)
<p>1 The Giving of Alms does Bear Fruit.</p> <p>2 The Giving of Aid does Bear Fruit.</p> <p>3 Revering those Who are Worthy of Our Reverence does Bear Fruit.</p> <p>4 Good and Evil Deeds ('Kamma') do Bear Fruit.</p> <p>5 The Reality of 'This World' Exists.</p> <p>6 The Reality of the Hereafter Exists.</p> <p>7 The Debt of Gratitude Owed to One's Mother Exists.</p> <p>8 The Debt of Gratitude Owed to One's Father Exists.</p> <p>9 The Reality of 'Spontaneous Rising' Exists.</p> <p>10 The Accomplished 'Sangha' Who Practice Righteousness and Possess the insight Knowledge of this and the Next World Exist.</p>	<p>1 The Giving of Alms does not Bear any Fruit.</p> <p>2 The Giving of Aid does not Bear any Fruit.</p> <p>3 Revering those Who are Worthy of Our Reverence does not Bear any Fruit.</p> <p>4 Good and Evil Deeds ('Kamma') do not Bear any Fruit.</p> <p>5 The Reality of 'This World' does not Exist.</p> <p>6 The Reality of the Hereafter does not Exist.</p> <p>7 The Debt of Gratitude Owed to One's Mother does not Exist.</p> <p>8 The Debt of Gratitude Owed to One's Father does not Exist.</p> <p>9 The Reality of 'Spontaneous Rising' does not Exist.</p> <p>10 The Accomplished 'Sangha' Who Practice Righteousness and Possess the insight Knowledge of this and the Next World does not Exist.</p>

views presented in pair comparison starting from the first pair of understanding.

✓ 1 The Giving of Alms.

The term 'giving of alms' in general means giving freely without expecting anything in return. Examples include the sharing of food and other necessary items with others, be they relatives, friends, subordinates or bosses. They include the giving of gifts on special occasions, lending things and money to relatives and friends in times of need, lending a helping hand when it is needed.

Other examples include giving useful advice, teaching, imparting the 'Dhamma' wisdom to relatives and friends, wishing them well, and exercising forgiveness on a regular basis.

However, the most important giving of all according to Buddhism is the giving of alms to the Buddhist monks or the 'Sangha' ¹. This special kind of giving earns the giver directly and specifically many 'merits'. Moreover, it is an important way to support Buddhism and keep it alive as a spiritual anchor for the world at large.

Why is 'the Giving of Alms' necessary?

The main reason behind the 'Giving of Alms' is that we all need to depend on each other. None of us can stand completely alone. When a child is young, he is dependent upon his parents. When parents become old or sick, they have their children to depend on. Students cannot learn without teachers imparting their knowledge to them. Husband and wife need to support each other if they are to provide a happy home for the family. A subordi-

¹ Bhikkhu means a Buddhist monk, Sangha means four and more Buddhist monks.

✓ { nate can advance his career through his boss's help and support. A boss's work can progress well because of the help from his subordinates. A business's success is a result of work and cooperation of many. Knowledge of the 'Dhamma' is possible because of the Sangha's instructions. The Sangha, in turn, have the opportunity to remain ordained and spend their efforts in quest of 'Nirvana' because they are maintained by the people.

✓ { Being dependent on each other in these ways fosters closeness, understanding, empathy, consideration for one another, and friendship. We learn to think well of each other and to put oneself in each other's shoes. We have no reasons to think of each other as adversaries. We see no reason to exploit one another. In this way, our selfishness and stinginess is reduced. At the same time, we are enabled to cultivate selflessness, perseverance, forgiveness, in order to preserve the peace and happiness of ourselves as well as the community.

What harm is done when we do not give alms?

Most certainly, the initial outcome is a society filled with indifferent, uncaring individuals busily looking out for number one. This behavior can further develop into selfishness and the exploit of other people starting from insignificant concerns to major concerns. Serious enmity toward each other ensues. At this juncture, the killing of others, even of family members may now be justifiable. At the international level, genocide is justified. The depraved mind can cause havoc the world over via chain actions. The horrible impact of which can be felt directly and quickly now that we are living in a 'global village'.

What is the basis for the mentality of certain individuals that do not give alms?

The root cause of selfishness and indifference is the belief that only material possessions can give them happiness in life. Therefore, it follows that the sharing of wealth is synonymous with giving up what matters most to them. Since no amount of material wealth is ever enough to assuage their sense of lack and insecurity, they can only concentrate on accumulating more and more wealth. They pursue this end without thoughts of natural resources and their rapid depletion.

People who subscribe to such a belief habitually pursue material possessions. This habit coupled with the pre-existed deplorable nature of greed, anger, and ignorance, would only drive them to become greedier and greedier. To these individuals, nothing could be further from their minds than social justice and social responsibility. Furthermore, they can become so engrossed in their pursuit of material gains as to take leave of their sense of personal honor and dignity.

As a result, they form a new code of conduct, however mistaken, based on the belief that material wealth is the stepladder to power and influence. In their reasoning, the more power and influence they have, the more riches would flow in. Such mentality no doubt gave rise to the existence and proliferation of mob bosses and Mafia bosses. These so-called powerful and influential people do not bother themselves with ethics or the law. Their own code of conduct leads them to dishonest thoughts, dishonest words, dishonest acts and dishonest livelihood. *Only one such individual in a society*, given his enormous power and influence, could already wreak havoc

to the rest of society. Such is the terrible harm of not understanding the real purpose behind the need for 'the Giving of Alms'.

For those who believe that 'the Giving of Alms Does Not bear Any Fruit', they belong to the '*Wrong View*'. These '*Wrong View*' individuals do not concern themselves with offering alms to anyone, least of all to the 'Sangha'. They are of the opinion that the 'Sangha' live off society and that they only receive but do not give. The '*Wrong View*' frame of reference so completely blinds them to the fact that it has been the 'Sangha', in their practice of righteousness, who teach people about the significance of being human. The teaching of the 'Dhamma' is worth more than any alms that can ever be offered to the 'Sangha' teachers. But the '*Wrong View*' individuals have never tasted the precious wisdom of the 'Dhamma' because they do not hunger for it. When that is the case, the blame for their ignorance could hardly be placed on the 'Sangha'.

On the contrary, whoever can appreciate that 'the Giving of Alms does Bear Fruit' in the form of benefits both to the giver and receiver and habitually give out of the goodness of their hearts, these individuals are considered to belong to the '*Right View*'. Not only do they practice the giving of alms regularly, they also encourage others to understand the benefits of this particular virtue and to practice it.

Summary

{ The mentality that affords people to believe that the 'giving of alms to fellow human beings and to the 'Sangha' does bear fruit' is one of Loving-Kindness.

✓ When one is happy because one's physical needs are amply met. One can use one's creative talents and abilities to earn one's living. One feels secure and has the '*Right View*' of how the world works and the reality of life. In feeling one's own fulfillment, one wishes others to experience the same happiness. As a matter of course, one shares what one has with others as a way of sharing one's happiness. Such mentality allows one to cultivate a sense of responsibility towards others to a certain level. Once the practice of giving to others becomes a habit, one would automatically realize the benefits that such practice affords. The compassionate individual is said to have the '*Right View*'.

In the reverse, dark-hearted individuals exist by the potency of 'unwholesome attachments' (defilements). Their minds are ruled by greed, anger, and ignorance. These attachments are like a vice that grip and corrode their minds. The mind gives in to miserly thoughts and one uses what one knows for one's own gains. One is given to taking advantage of others and to selfishness. The more one has, the more one wants. One cannot feel secure unless one takes all that one can for oneself. One is ignorant of the 'Dhamma' because one is distant from the source. One formulates one's own perverted worldview. One cannot see that there are real consequences to any act. One does not understand the relationship between cause and effect. One lacks '*Analytical Reflection*' and assumes incorrectly that '*The Giving of Alms does not Bear any Fruit*'. As a result, one does not think to share anything with anyone. Individuals lacking in compassion and any sense of responsibility towards others are said to have the '*Wrong View*'.

2 The Giving of Aid.

What is meant by the giving of aid?

The giving of aid to others in need encompasses many situations. These include the lack of bare necessities, starvation, being handicapped, senility, orphans, disaster victims, all the way to the 'Sangha'.

What is the difference between 'the Giving of Alms' and 'the Giving of Aid'?

The 'Giving of Alms' is the first Right Understanding in accord with the '*Right View*'. It is the sharing of what we have in excess with our relatives and friends to help them out in time of needs. We also give to them as a caring gesture. At times, we also extend the gifts of food and utensils to our neighbors.

When we give aid, however, the recipients are the general public instead of our friends and relatives. We give aid to those who are less fortunate due to a particular circumstance such as natural disasters. Without any giving of aid, the victims would suffer badly. And then there is the giving of aid to the 'Sangha', without which they cannot maintain their livelihood or remain in the monkhood. In cases where they lack adequate physical sustenance, they cannot effectively carry out their duty of teaching the 'Dhamma' to the public. *Therefore, 'the Giving of Aid' is geared toward social and religious aids, while 'the Giving of Alms' is geared toward individual recipients.*

Why is the giving of aid to others necessary?

As mentioned earlier, the giving of social aid is for the purpose of helping those who are destitute or less fortunate to live life in some semblance of happiness. It is a

fact that we are all endowed so differently in so many ways from birth. We have our differences in the degree of physical and mental health, in our socio-economic circumstances, in intelligence and intellect, in the ability to earn a living. Those of us who are less endowed in any of these areas may have less opportunity to succeed in life. Now, if those who are more fortunate and in the position to give aid to others in need neglect to do their part, they could either intentionally or unintentionally be reducing the opportunity for the less fortunate to improve their lot in life. The lack of aid may cause certain less fortunate members of society like the old and the infirm, the orphans, to end their lives alone and neglected. Or it may cause the poor to retaliate by stealing, robbing or committing other crimes in order to survive.

The 'Sangha' who became ordained for the purpose of continuing the religious practice cannot hope to remain in the monkhood without the aid from relatives and the general public. They might eventually have to leave the monkhood altogether in order to earn a living. And without religious heirs, Buddhism cannot continue to be.

Any society that lacks the 'Dhamma' as a vehicle to cultivate the mind, it is certain that members of that society would behave in ways that antagonize each other. They would have the major problem of competing fiercely for what they want. How then could there be any peace and happiness in such a society?

Therefore, *the purpose of giving social aid* to those who are less fortunate is to help them in the following ways:

- 1) To enable them to live in some semblance of adequacy.

2) To give them the opportunity for regular as well as religious education in order that they can learn to become a good citizen of the country.

3) To help them find a solution to the urgent problem that is facing them.

✓ { *The purpose of giving religious aid is to support Buddhism so that it can continue to be.* In addition, it allows the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness the opportunity to sow the seed of the 'Right View' in the mind of society members easily, extensively and continuously.

Why certain individuals do not give aid to others in need?

Those individuals who do not give any aid when they can easily afford to do so may each have his own reason. Generally, there are four types of reasoning:

- 1) Some people believe that giving social aid is the sole responsibility of the government. They feel that their tax money should provide enough for the government to give aid to those who are less fortunate.
- 2) Some people are of the opinion that the less fortunate are that way because of their own laziness. They believe that giving aid to such individuals would only encourage them to be lazy and so they refuse to give any aid.
- 3) Others are just plain miserly and reason that they have riches because they have been skimping and saving all their lives. Were they to donate money to help those in need, their own riches would be lessened. Some people even go further to think that if they give away any money to help others,

when it is their turn to be down on their luck, they would find no one to help them out. With that train of thought, they continue to skimp and save in order to accumulate more and more wealth. Giving aid to others is simply out of the question for such individuals.

- 4) There are those who do not understand the 'Dhamma'. Not only do they not give any kind of social aid, but they also do not give any aid to the 'Sangha'. They view the 'Sangha' as having all the necessities in life without having to work for it the way that lay people have to do.

They harbor such a thought because they have no interest in the 'Dhamma', in spite of the fact that they were born into a Buddhist family. They are ignorant of the fact that the 'Sangha' are forbidden by the religious discipline from making a living. Once ordained as a Buddhist monk or 'Bhikkhu', his primary duty is to study and practice the 'Dhamma' in order to attain enlightenment. It is his subsequent duty to pass on his knowledge and experience to lay people and teach them the way of the '*Right View*', to understand the consequences of righteous and unrighteous acts, to know what is useful and what is not. It is the 'Sangha' who teach lay people about ethics and virtue in order to enable them to lead a moral life while here on earth. By choosing to live rightly, they could be reborn in a heavenly realm once they pass on.

On the other hand, lay people who are busily making a living and do not have the time to study the 'Dhamma' in depth can have access to the knowledge through the teaching of the 'Sangha'. That is, they have a sort of short-

cut to the knowledge of the 'Dhamma'. In return, lay people are responsible for supporting the Sangha's livelihood. In this way, lay people and the 'Sangha' can truly aid each other and enjoy their mutual benefit of peace and happiness.

All in all, people who subscribe to these four types of reasoning do not understand the 'Dhamma'. When coupled with a miserly nature and unwholesome attachments, the thought of giving aid to others in need could not be further from their minds.

✓ **What harm is brought to society when people do not give aid to those in need?**

✓ First of all, it is necessary to understand that even though the government is responsible for giving social aid, the reality of limited funds and functions does not allow it to offer aid to all the cases and in a timely manner. Therefore, it falls on the members of society closer to the situation to help out in cases of the less fortunate and disaster victims. In so doing, it is not only preventing further harm to trickle down to society at large, but it also prevents any harm to eventually come to oneself. The reason is that destitute individuals must all struggle to survive as long as they have the energy to do so. No one is willing to just give up and die. If they cannot find an honest means to secure what they need, they would resort to dishonest means such as stealing, robbing, plotting and scheming, black marketing, selling illegal drugs, sex trade. Once they can resort to all forms of vice, crimes are not far behind.

Any society plagued with 'Wrong View' individuals is hard pressed to find any peace and happiness. Just imag-

ine a wealthy person's mansion surrounded on all sides by slums or merely situated close to a slum. He cannot expect to be happy, for when a fire breaks out in the slum, the mansion will surely not escape unharmed. In the same manner, if those in the position to give aid but neglect to do so, sooner or later they would be harmed as a matter of course. This is the real harm of not giving aid to others in need.

The Buddhist term for social aid is 'Yanna' or the 'Yanna that has been sanctified'. The Lord Buddha said that the '*Yanna that has been sanctified does bear fruit*', that is, good results or benefits, and should be practiced. Whoever believes that the 'Yunna that has been sanctified does not bear any fruit' is mistaken, his belief belongs to the '*Wrong View*'. On the contrary, whoever believes correctly that the 'Yunna that has been sanctified does bear fruit', his belief belongs to the '*Right View*'.

Summary

The mentality that affords people to believe that the 'Giving of Aid to Others in Need does Bear Fruit' is one of compassion. When they see others in need, they cannot bear to sit still and do nothing. The desire to help others better their lot in life causes them to eagerly lend assistance and they do it with deep empathy. They realize the consequences of a good deed. Caring for others in need is a step upward in man's development. Individuals endowed with compassion are considered to have the '*Right View*'.

On the other hand, individuals whose minds are clouded with unwholesome attachments (defilements), therefore, are undeveloped, they are that way because

of their lack of the 'Dhamma'. They are distant from the learned. They are immoral and socialize only with their own kind. The mentality that lacks compassion leads them to believe that the 'Giving of Aid to Others in Need does not Bear any Fruit'. Hence, they do not give. Worse, they might at times even exploit aid items and aid money themselves, leaving less for those that the aid is intended for. Such individuals lacking in compassion and the sense of responsibility for others are said to have the 'Wrong View'.

3 Revering those Who are Worthy of Our Reverence.

What is the definition of 'Reverence'?

In this context, it means the admiration of someone's virtues and abilities. Virtues encompass virtuous personal habits and conducts or such philanthropic acts as giving social and religious aids.

Who are those worthy of our reverence?

Individuals who are worthy of our reverence can be divided into four groups:

- 1) Individuals to whom we owe our gratitude and are still living. The most important of such individuals are our parents. Next come our teachers, our older relatives, our superiors who practice righteousness and our benefactors.
- 2) Our family's and our country's ancestors.
- 3) Individuals replete with moral principles and virtues, who have met with success in life, in business, and have made generous philanthropic contributions for the greater good of society. They are

worthy of our high praises and serve as model members of society.

- 4) The 'Sangha' who practice righteousness and devote their energy, wisdom, and abilities toward transforming the lay people's nature and ground them in the '*Right View*'.

What are the purposes for revering those who are worthy of our reverence?

- 1) The first purpose is to show our gratitude toward our parents and our benefactors and to instill this practice in the younger generations.
- 2) The second purpose is to outwardly demonstrate our respect, our praises, and our adoration toward our family's and our country's ancestors, through whose good and moral deeds, had built and benefited our country. This practice instills in the younger generations the love and pride for their birth place.
- 3) The third purpose is to honor and publicize the exemplary individuals who have devoted their lives to great deeds, hence are suitable role models for the rest of society.
- 4) The fourth purpose is to build a proper value system where high moral standards and virtues reign supreme, instead of rank, position, power, fame, or fortune.
- 5) The fifth purpose is to prevent one from harboring envy, jealousy, and the habit of finding fault with others. It serves to prevent one from feeling superior to others, from fiercely competing with others at work for career advancement or for unethical

gains. This particular practice leads one to notice the good in others and to use them as a role model in further self-development.

- 6) The last purpose is to lend support to the 'Sangha' so that Buddhism can continue and flourish.

What cause some individuals not to revere those who are worthy of our reverence?

There are indeed several causes. For example, some envious and jealous individuals cannot bear to see that there are others who are better than and superior to them. Were these individuals to show any reverence to anyone, it would be like admitting that they are worse than others. As a result, they cannot revere anyone at all. Other individuals who are in the habit of finding fault with others, do not have it in them to search for good in anyone. Aside from finding fault with others in every possible way, they become lost along the way and end up finding fault with the minutest personal traits in others. Ultimately, they end up believing that there is no one on earth worthy of their reverence.

There are yet other individuals who grew up in a severe environment, which lacked warmth coupled with unjust punishment. Or they were unfairly treated by their parents and teachers as they were growing up. Consequently, they grew up to be pessimistic and believed that everyone was conniving. They believe that everyone is cruel deep down and lacks compassion. They believe that all good deeds are done in pretense. With this mentality, they cannot see how anyone, especially their benefactors, can possibly be worthy of their reverence.

Some other individuals harbor unrealistically high ambitions in spite of their low levels of intelligence and abilities. They fall short of every goal as a result. These individuals cannot revere anyone, for in doing so, they believe that it would only downgrade them further.

There might be various reasons for not revering those who are worthy of our reverence. However, the core cause arises from a particular mentality. It is the mentality that is envious, jealous, undervaluing, hence cannot bear to see others better than them.

What are the proper ways to show our reverence?

We can show our reverence through our behavior in accordance with the occasion. To those who are still living, we can offer them flowers and other appropriate tokens of respect in order to show our love, respect, admiration, and to encourage them to continue with their moral and virtuous practices. For the deceased, we can lay flower arrangements at their memorial statues or invite loved ones to come together to make 'merits' according to Buddhist practices. These 'merits' can then be dedicated to the deceased. Or we can publicize their great deeds to make them known to the rest of the world.

The Buddhist term used to describe the bringing of flowers, candles, incense sticks, or other appropriate offerings to those who are worthy of our reverence, is 'Divine Offerings'. The Lord Buddha demonstrated that 'Making a Divine Offering does Bear Fruit', that is, it yields good results and good benefits, therefore, is worth doing.

Whoever is of the opinion that 'Making a Divine Offering does not Bear any fruit', that is, it is useless, hence

unnecessary, his misconception is called the '*Wrong View*'. On the other hand, *whoever believes that 'Making a Divine Offering does Bear Fruit', his correct understanding is called the 'Right View'.*

Summary

The basis behind 'Revering those Who are Worthy of Our Reverence' is the understanding that 'Revering those Who are Worthy of Our Reverence does Bear Fruit' (Making a Divine Offering does bear fruit). It is the 'Muditacitta' or 'congratulating' mentality. It is the mentality that moves one to congratulate others that are experiencing a good fortune. It is the mentality that moves one to praise and support good people who contribute to society and to publicize their good deeds. Not doing these things would have felt wrong. It would be as though one cannot see the good in others. This kind of mentality acts as a shield against any envious or jealous sentiment toward others. The thought of finding fault with others does not occur. It is a mentality that has undergone a higher level of development. A person having a 'congratulating' mentality is said to have the '*Right View*'.

On the other hand, envious and jealous individuals cannot stand to see others better than themselves. As a result, they are moved to slandering and finding fault with others. It is a mentality that is ruled by unwholesome attachments (defilements), hence, undeveloped. They lack the 'congratulating' mentality and subscribe to the '*Wrong View*'.

4 Each Individual's Good and Evil Kammic Consequences.

✓ What is 'Kamma'?

In Buddhism, 'Kamma' means an intentional act, be it good or evil, through physical, verbal or mental means. ✓

✓ What is a Kammic consequence?

A Kammic consequence is a result of a past good or evil deed. A good deed results in a positive Kammic consequence, whereas an evil deed results in a negative Kammic consequence.

✓ What is a good 'Kamma'?

A good 'Karma' encompasses any honest act by physical, verbal or mental means. Therefore, one who practices a good 'Kamma' acts ethically, virtuously, lawfully and is completely devoid of any dishonest or injurious intentions. He thinks and acts in ways that are good and beneficial to self, others, and society at large.

✓ What is an evil 'Kamma'?

An evil 'Kamma' is any dishonest act by physical, verbal or mental means. A person who commits a bad 'Kamma' acts unethically, unvirtuously, and unlawfully. He has dishonest, injurious thoughts. He acts in ways that cause suffering and harm to self, others, and society at large.

What are the criteria used in Buddhism to judge a good and evil 'Kamma'?

The criteria used to judge which 'Kamma' is good are termed in the 'Dhamma' as 'Kusalakammapatha' or the

'Wholesome Course of Action'. The criteria are used to judge acts through physical, verbal and mental means as follows.

1) A good *'Kamma'* conducted through physical means encompasses any physical act that excludes the transgression of the first three Precepts, namely,

- 1.1) To intentionally abstain from killing as well as any other forms of injury to fellow human beings and animals. Examples include bodily harm, confinement, and torture. Not only does one abstain from killing and harming others, but one is also kind and compassionate to all.
- 1.2) To intentionally abstain from covetousness. Examples include stealing, robbing, cheating, corruption, trespassing. Not only does one abstain from covetousness, one also earns an honest living.
- 1.3) To intentionally abstain from adultery. One also practices self-control and is not sexually obsessed. One takes the time to study the *'Dhamma'* and behave in a chaste and appropriate manner.

2) A good *'Kamma'* through verbal means can be accomplished by adhering to the fourth Precept and can be divided into four categories as follows.

- 2.1) To intentionally abstain from false speech, while at the same time speak only truth. Moreover, one is also in the habit of keeping one's words and promises.
- 2.2) To intentionally abstain from making sarcastic remarks that cause a rift among the listen-

ers, while at the same time speak words that encourage loving harmony among the people.

- 2.3) To intentionally abstain from using foul language, while at the same time utter only gentle, kind, and encouraging words.
- 2.4) To intentionally abstain from telling tales and slandering, while at the same time speak words that are of use to others. Moreover, one does not repeat untrue stories or spread rumors, which can bring about harm and injury.

3) A good '*Kamma*' by mental means encompasses honest thoughts, from which arise honest speech and actions. This type of '*Kamma*' can be divided into three categories as follows.

- 3.1) The absence of covetous thoughts, which results in the absence of greed, the absence of unfair competition for gains, while at the same time one is content with what one has.
- 3.2) The absence of vengeful thoughts. Not only that, one also wishes others well and is always forgiving.
- 3.3) The understanding of the '*Right View*' through the study and practice of the '*Dhamma*'.

It can be seen from the above mentioned that the '*Wholesome Course of Action*' does provide detailed criteria for judging what constitutes a good '*Kamma*'.

What can one do to make sure that one can habitually live by the '*Wholesome Course of Action*'?

The family and the school can instill into children from an early age the understanding of the '*Right View*' until

it becomes a force of habit. Once children start to grow up, they need to pay attention to the study and practice of the 'Dhamma' on a daily basis and without slack. Most importantly, they need to avoid at all cost all 'Causes of Ruin' or 'Apayamukha'.

What is the meaning of 'Causes of Ruin' or 'Apaya-mukha'?

The literal meaning of the term 'Apayamukha' is the 'Gateway to Ruin' and implies that whoever engages in such a practice is the cause of woes and ruin to oneself and others.

In Buddhism, the 'Causes of Ruin' can be divided into six major groups as follows.

1. Alcohol addiction and drug addictions.
2. A penchant for the night-life.
3. Game and sport junkies.
4. Gambling addiction.
5. Be friending evil individuals.
6. Laziness.

The criteria used to judge whether a 'Kamma' is evil or not, are termed in the 'Dhamma' as 'Akusalakamma-patha' or '*Unwholesome Course of Action*'. The 'Kamma' is conducted through physical, verbal, and mental means as follows.

1) *An evil 'Kamma' committed through physical means* includes the breaking of the first three Precepts, namely,

- 1.1) To intentionally kill a fellow human being and animals. To injure and torture by various methods.

1.2) To intentionally covet other people's possessions by stealing, by violating their right of ownership.

1.3) To intentionally commit adultery.

2) *An evil 'Kamma' committed through verbal means* includes the breaking of the fourth Precept and can be divided into four groups as follows.

2.1) To intentionally tell lies.

2.2) To intentionally make sarcastic remarks and cause a rift in the listeners.

2.3) To intentionally use foul language.

2.4) To intentionally slander.

3) *An evil 'Kamma' committed through mental means* includes dishonest thoughts that lead to dishonest, unethical and eventually depraved actions. This type of evil 'Kamma' can be divided into three groups as follows.

3.1) Covetous thoughts that lead to greed and unjust gains at the expense of others.

3.2) Vengeful thoughts that include the desire to avenge those who opposed one or because of a conflict of interest. Being unforgiving is another trait included here.

3.3) Tenaciously upholding the 'Wrong View', which leads to deplorable habits and nature.

The 'Unwholesome Course of Action' or 'Akusalakammapatha' provides detailed criteria that can be used to judge whether a 'Kamma' is evil or not.

Are there other criteria that can be used to judge whether a 'Kamma' is evil or not besides the 'Unwholesome Course of Action' ?

Indeed the six 'Causes of Ruin' as mentioned earlier can be used as well. Individuals that engage in any of the 'Causes of Ruin' can be considered as ones who seek entertainment at the demise of others. Sex trade is one example. Some individuals cause their own ruin by indulging in alcoholic drinks and addictive drugs. Individuals who operate a gambling den, a brothel, a nightclub, etc., bring ruin to other people. Those who are too lazy to earn an honest living bring ruin to themselves and others. It can be concluded that whoever engages in any of these 'Causes of Ruin' as a user, a seller or an operator, intentionally commits an evil 'Kamma'.

Moreover, the Lord Buddha had taught the ways in which an individual can use to evaluate a 'Kamma' by considering the cause and final effect of each action. This is something that anyone can do on his own by considering the following:

- 1) The cause of the action as taught by the Lord Buddha in the following quotation:

"Absence of lust, absence of malice, absence of delusion are the causes (which prevent the arising) of actions. An action done without lust, not born of lust, not caused by lust, not originated by lust is profitable, it is praiseworthy, it has happiness for its result, it conduces to the ending of (further) action, not to the arising thereof" ¹

- 2) The final effect of that action as taught by the Lord

¹ A., vol.1, *The Book of The Threes*: 108(b). *Three causes*, p.241-242.

Buddha in the following quotation:

"But that deed is well performed Which, having been done, is not repented. The result of which one experiences Joyfully with happy mind" ¹.

The same principles apply to an evil 'Kamma' as follows.

- 1) To consider the cause of the action as taught by the Lord Buddha in the following quotation:

"An action done in lust, born of lust, caused by lust, originated by lust is not profitable: it is blameworthy, it has sorrow for its result, it conduces to the arising of (further) action, not to the ceasing of action." ²

- 2) To consider the final effect of that action as taught by the Lord Buddha in the following quotation:

"That deed is not well performed Which, having been done, is then repented, The result of which one experiences Weeping with a tearful face." ³

What is the main point of the 'Law of Kamma'?

*
✓ { The main point of the 'Law of Kamma' is that 'a good deed does yield a good result and an evil deed does yield an evil result' as stated in the Dhammic Proverb as follows.

"Whatever a 'Kamma' a man does, the same he in himself will find; the good man, good; and evil he

¹ S., vol.1, Part 1: 22(2) Khema, p.154.

² A., vol.1, The Book of the Threes: 107 (a), Three causes, p. 241.

³ S., vol.1, Part 1: 22(2) Khema, p. 153.

*that evil has designed; and so our deeds are all like seeds, and bring forth fruit in kind."*¹

This particular Dhammic Proverb contains four main points as follows.

- 1) Whoever conducts a 'Kamma', whether good or evil, would most certainly receive the consequences of that 'Kamma'. Therefore, if one should meet with woes afterward, one must realize that the problems or woes happen as a result of his own evil action. He must not lose sight of this fact and blame others for their problems.
- 2) Whoever does a good deed would most certainly meet with a good outcome.
- 3) Whoever commits an evil deed would most certainly meet with an evil outcome.
- 4) The fruit of a 'Kamma' can be compared to a fruit tree. Whatever fruit tree is planted would yield its particular fruit. A banana tree yields only bananas and not any other kind of fruit. This point clearly supports and affirms the second and third points above.

The fruit of both good and evil 'Kamma' is therefore determined by the 'Law of Kamma'. This law is a law of iron and judges each deed most fairly without any need for further interpretation.

Why is it that certain individuals doubt or do not believe in the 'Law of Kamma'?

Very often there are individuals who have been known to break the Precepts and the law on a regular basis, yet

¹ J., vol.2, No.222: Cula-Nandiyā Jataka, p.140.

they do not have to serve any sentence for their wrongdoing and remain at large. Moreover, they appear to possess all their creature comforts and wealth. Some individuals retain a prominent position with the government or in a political party. Some others are powerful black-market bosses. On the other hand, there are some decent individuals who never break the Precepts nor the law but meet instead with unfortunate incidents such as a natural disaster, being slandered, being murdered, etc. These occurrences cause many people to doubt and disbelieve in the 'Law of Kamma'.

Why is it that the fruit of 'Kamma' as taught by the Lord Buddha does not appear as expected?

First of all, there is one truth that must be confirmed here. The fruit of 'Kamma' as taught by the Lord Buddha is true without exception. That is, a good 'Kamma' does bear good fruit and an evil 'Kamma' does bear evil fruit. However, the appearance of a Kammic fruit in each individual is a highly complex and convoluted matter. Therefore, it gives the delusion that the 'Law of Kamma' does not really apply. One needs to understand that each individual is constantly accumulating both good and evil 'Kamma' on a daily basis. Each 'Kamma', whether good or evil, is not done only once but repeatedly. The fact is that the time and place for the manifestation of a Kammic fruit is a function of its intensity and force and all Kammic fruit constantly jostles against each other for its own manifestation.

In other words, during a certain period in a person's life where a good 'Kamma' is especially intense and forceful, it would manifest its fruit with the complete exclusion of all other evil Kammic fruit. The evil Kammic

fruit in the meantime must wait for the good Kammic fruit to run its course before it can steal a chance to manifest itself. These occurrences serve to explain the vicissitudes in life. In addition, there are three time periods where a 'Kamma' can manifest its fruit. They are:

The First Period — A 'Kamma' that bears its fruit in this lifetime.

The Second Period — A 'Kamma' that bears its fruit in the next life.

The Third Period — A 'Kamma' that continues to bear its fruit over the course of all the future lifetimes until 'Nirvana' is reached.

What are the benefits of understanding the 'Law of Kamma' ?

There are six main benefits as follows.

1) *The realization that everyone has a mind.* As mentioned earlier that a 'Kamma' means an intentional action. This intention comes from the mind and causes a person to act out the intention through physical and verbal means.

2) *The realization that death is not the end.* When a person dies, he loses only his physical body, which is cremated or buried. A soul-less body would decompose and disintegrate. However, the mind or the soul lives on and continues to search for a new abode. As long as the mind still retains any residual unwholesome attachments (defilements), it would continue indefinitely to participate in the process of rebirth.

3) *The realization that nobody can avoid the fruit of his own 'Kamma'.* When an individual commits an unlawful act, if the witness or evidence is lacking, the law cannot incriminate him. Or if he is incriminated but goes into

hiding in the forest or goes abroad, he might be able to get away with his crime. However, there is no hiding from one's evil fruit of 'Kamma'. Whoever commits an evil deed would most certainly receive the just evil fruit, as taught in the 'Dhamma' in the following quotation:

*"Neither in the heaven above, nor in the depths of the sea, Nor in a cavern of the mountains, should one there enter; Nowhere on earth can the place be found Where a man can escape from the consequences of an evil deed."*¹

4) The realization that good 'Kamma' has its own just rewards. One of the rewards is a happy life on earth. Once he passes on, he would continue to reap his rewards in a heavenly realm. Should the individual's mind at the time of death be devoid of all unwholesome attachments (defilements), he would most assuredly attain 'Nirvana'. This truth was told to us by the Lord Buddha in the following quotation:

*"Some are reborn on earth, evildoers go to hell, The righteous go to heaven, Arahants pass to Nibbana (Nirvana)."*²

5) The realization that whether to be good or evil, it is entirely each individual's decision and it is not up to anyone or anything else. A quotation from the 'Dhamma' regarding this truth is as follows.

"Deeds are one's own, brahman youth, beings are heirs to deeds, deeds are matrix, deeds are kin, deeds

¹ Dhammapada Commentary. Part 2: PAPA VAGGA, p.291.

² Dhammapada Commentary. Part 2: PAPA VAGGA, p.286.

*are arbiters. Deed divides beings, that is to say by lowness and excellence. "*¹

6) *The correct understanding of the first five statements allows one to develop a sense of shame in committing any sin and a fear of the consequences of the sinful act.*

Why do people in society often commit evil deeds?

The main cause of such evil deeds is the lack of shame and fear of the evil act and its consequences. This phenomenon is caused by a lack of understanding in the 'Law of Kamma'. It could be that the individual was not properly brought up at home since his early age. And upon growing up, he never studied the 'Dhamma' or perhaps he did but not in any depth. He simply cannot believe that the penalty of an evil 'Kamma' could possibly result in a rebirth in hell. Nor does he believe that the generous reward of a good 'Kamma' could result in a rebirth in a heavenly realm. After all, he has seen neither heaven nor hell. Some perverse individuals even go so far as to assume that they could avoid the fruit of their evil 'Kamma' in the same way that they could avoid being caught by the authority. These false beliefs coupled with the unwholesome attachments deeply rooted in one's nature make one dare to commit evil 'Kamma' without any regard for the 'Law of Kamma'. Should such an individual happen to hear the Sangha's sermon on the fruit of 'Kamma', he thinks in his deplorable way that it is all just a ploy. A ploy to use hell as a deterrent and heaven as an enticement. A ploy that is designed to discourage people from committing evil deeds and to encourage them to do only good deeds. Were he to be-

¹ M., vol.3, *Culakammavibhangasutta*, p. 248.

lieve and obey what he hears, he would lose all opportunities to meet with the desired prosperity, power, and influence. Worse, he could end up being an underdog to all the other influential and wealthy individuals out there in society.

It can be concluded that those who habitually commit evil 'Kamma' do so because of their disbelief in the 'Law of Kamma'.

Once an individual has begun to commit evil deeds for a time, he becomes used to doing them. Eventually, the practice turns into a habit and he now has the audacity to commit all sorts of evil deeds and with such a connivance that he could escape the jurisdiction of the law. He does whatever it takes to build up his wealth and influence. Along the way, he has learnt that the more power and influence he has, the more he can increase his wealth and influence. He also believes that with increasing clout, he could be shielded from any incrimination by the law. He completely forgets about the 'Law of Kamma'. Consequently, individuals with such an ingrained nature cannot help but lack the responsibility to uphold their own and others' honor and dignity.

Whoever does not believe in the 'Law of Kamma', in the Kammic fruit of good and evil deeds, is considered as having the 'Wrong View'. On the other hand, *whoever believes in the 'Law of Kamma', in the Kammic fruit of good and evil deeds, is considered as having the 'Right View'.*

Summary

✓ { The determinant of each individual's correct understanding regarding the Kammic fruit is the view that the 'Law of Kamma' is true and constantly operating. It is an understanding born of equanimity of the mind. The

individual with such an understanding is able to calmly, wisely, and correctly contemplate the great divide between good and evil 'Kamma'. He is able to comprehend the truth that *behind a good deed stands a good heart. A good heart is a heart that is devoid of greed, anger, and ignorance. Therefore, the end result of such a deed is predictably good and can certainly bring about one's happiness.*

This individual also understands that behind an evil deed stands an evil heart. An evil heart is a heart that is filled with greed, anger, and ignorance. Therefore, the end result of such a deed is woes and suffering. This individual knows that the result of a good or bad deed is universally just and is according to the 'Law of Kamma', which operates in the world.

The mentality of such an individual allows him to correctly consider the results of both his good and bad deeds. He uses the 'Dhamma' as his guiding light. He demonstrates his accountability to the 'Dhamma' by endeavoring and disciplining himself as well as others around him to obey the 'Dhamma'. He is without any self-serving bias in his understanding. Altogether he can be considered as having the '*Right View*'.

✓ On the other hand, a mind that is corrupted with the power of unwholesome attachments (defilements) cannot distinguish between good and evil 'Kamma'. The mind is self-servingly biased. Even when the individual or his cronies commit an evil deed, he is still convinced that the deed is a good one. Therefore, he goes on to do evil deeds without any regard to the 'Law of Kamma', which continues to operate in spite of his disbelief. An individual with such biases and without the 'Dhamma', is considered to have the '*Wrong View*'. It is not surprising that the concern of social justice could not be further

from his mind.

5 The Reality of 'This World'.

What is the meaning of 'The World' first of all?

According to Buddhism, 'The World' means that, which undergoes decay, ruin and disintegration. There are three Worlds altogether, and they are defined in the 'Dhamma' as follows:

1) *The Physical World*. Which means the physical bodies of human beings and animals. The physical body is composed of the body and the mind.

2) *The World of Creatures*. Which means all of the beings whose minds can still be affected by sight, touch, sound, taste, smell, noise or material things. Or beings that can feel and move on their own. Such creatures include Devata (celestial beings), Brahma (inhabitants of the higher heavens), Humans, Mara (demons), Peta (hungry ghosts), Asurakaya (Asura demons), animals, and hell creatures. The 'Dhamma' is concerned mostly with human beings.

3) *The World of Opportunities* (sometimes referred to as the Earth Vessel). Which means the place where human beings can live, earn a living, conduct good and evil deeds. It encompasses the landmasses, the bodies of water, and the sky.

What is the meaning of 'This World'?

The term 'This World' envelopes the above three Worlds.

What are the main views regarding 'This World'?

There are three main views regarding 'This World' that

need to be considered:

- 1) All the creatures of 'This World' are uniquely different.
- 2) The causality of these differences.
- 3) The correct understanding about 'This World'.

1) *All the creatures of 'This World' are uniquely different.*

The reader may have noticed that the earth creatures, especially human beings do differ widely from each other. The differences occur in appearance, socio-economic background, wisdom and intellect as well as habits and nature.

As far as appearance is concerned, some individuals are healthy and robust. Others are handicapped. Some individuals are not only beautiful, wise, intellectual, but were also born into a family with a high socio-economic standing. At the same time, not only are some individuals ugly and feeble-minded but were also born into a poverty-stricken family and live a life of extreme hardships. Some individuals are amiable, decent and worthy of company. While others are mean and bestial and pose a threat to others in society. These differences have been seen throughout every tribe, every race and every country all through the ages.

2) *The causality of these differences.* Why are we so different from each other? The real cause is 'Kamma', as taught in the Buddhist proverb: "*Kamma divides creatures into crudeness and refinement*". Which means that our past 'Kamma' or deeds, whether good or bad, whether in the distant past (from one's past life up to the time of conception in the mother's womb) or the near past (from birth up to the present moment), work together to form what and how one is today. Therefore,

take heed not to make the mistake of thinking that the differences among the creatures of the world is a matter of chance or astrological birth sign, or the magical work of some divine beings, or the dirty tricks of certain mean individuals. In truth, each individual possesses his own particularly unique 'Kamma', which causes him to be uniquely different.

3) *The Correct Understanding about 'This World'*. What must one understand about 'This World'? There are at least four different aspects of 'This World' that everyone must try to understand.

3.1) *The Causality of 'This World'*. It means that whatever condition one finds oneself in, in terms of appearance, economic standing, living environment, levels of wisdom and intellect, all the way to one's habits and nature, all share the same cause. And that cause is 'Kamma' or one's past deeds, as indicated in a Buddhist proverb as follows: "All creatures possess their own Kamma"

That is, whoever had accumulated past good deeds and 'merits' in one's past life, would inevitably be born into desirable circumstances. Moreover, the past 'merits' would continue to send forth their blessings during this lifetime. Whoever had accumulated past evil deeds by breaking the Precepts, after having served one's sentences in hell (immediately after their deaths); should one have the opportunity to be born a human being again, would encounter hardships in this life as a result of one's residual past evil 'Kamma'. The Lord Buddha taught about the lightest punishment that can be inflicted by past evil deeds in the following quotation:

“Monks, taking life, when pursued, practiced, increased, brings one to hell, to an animal’s womb, to the Peta realm; what is the very trifling result of taking life is shortening of a man’s life.

Monks, stealing, when pursued....., brings one to hell.....; the very trifling result is a man’s loss of wealth.

Monks, fleshly lusts, when pursued....., brings one to hell.....; the very trifling result is a man’s rivalry and hatred.

Monk, lying, when pursued....., brings one to hell.....; the very trifling result is the slandering and false-speaking of a man.

Monk, backbiting, when pursued....., brings one to hell.....; the very trifling result is the breaking up of a man’s friendships.

Monk, harsh speech, when pursued....., brings one to hell.....; the very trifling result is an unpleasing noise for a man.

Monk, frivolous talk, when pursued....., brings one to hell.....; the very trifling result is unacceptable speech of a man.

Monk, drinking strong drink, when pursued, practiced, increased, brings one to hell, to an animal’s womb, to the Peta realm; what is the very trifling result of drinking strong drink is madness for a man.”¹

3.2) *The Uncertainties of ‘This World’.* The implication is that once one was born into a human form and into whatever life’s circumstances, one’s situation can always change. In the first case, an individual

¹ A., vol.4, *The Book of the Eights*, Chapter 4: x(40). *Very trifling*, p.169.

who was born healthy and robust may become sickly later on, especially when the individual is not careful and does not take good care of his health. He can also contract certain diseases out of his own ignorance, for the power of unwholesome attachments (defilements) breeds carelessness in a person. In another case, an individual who was born an heir to a fortune may later become a pauper or become bankrupt. Or an individual who was born into poverty may in time become wealthy. Likewise, a handicapped individual may become famous because of some great contributions that he has made to the world.

What is the causality of these uncertainties?

The uncertainties in our lives are all caused by our past 'Kamma'. One's past 'Kamma' includes his past life's as well as his present life's 'Kamma' up to the very present. As mentioned earlier, the manifestation of our past 'Kamma' or deeds is a highly complex matter, and is beyond our normal understanding of cause and effect. Only when an individual attains a deeper knowledge through a highly evolved meditative state can he truly ascertain the accurate sequence of cause and effect.

3.3) *The Goodness of 'This World'*. It specifically implies the physical body of a human being, precisely because the body is a vehicle that can be used to accumulate good deeds and everlasting 'merits' in various ways. The human body is different from other creatures of the world, whether they have many or few or no legs, which still cannot be used to accumulate the good 'Kamma' in the ways that a human being can. Therefore, whoever commit-

ted suicide was indeed a most pathetic individual. He could not while still living fathom the true worth and opportunity of his human form. Neither could he realize how fortunate he was indeed to have been born a human being in the first place. The truth is that the chance of being born a human being is extremely rare. The Lord Buddha had given us an analogy in order to demonstrate this rarity in the following tale:

*"Monks, it is like a man who might throw a yoke with one hole into the sea. An easterly wind might take it westwards, a westerly wind might take it eastwards, a northerly wind might take southwards, a southerly wind might take it northwards. There might be a blind turtle there who came to the surface once in a hundred years. What do you think about this, monks? Could that blind turtle push his neck through that one hole in the yoke? It is more difficult than that, do I say, monks, is human status once again for the fool who has gone to the Downfall."*¹

For these reasons, even a handicapped body is still worthwhile, for it can still be used as a vehicle for accumulating good deeds and everlasting 'merits'. Moreover, it is certainly of more worth than a normal body, of which owner uses it toward evil ends.

The World of Opportunities implies that the world in which we live is highly beneficial to us. Since it is our abode, it gives us the opportunities to accu-

¹ M., vol.3, *Balapanditasutta*, p.214-215.

multitude good 'Kamma' in a wide manner. Parents give to their children to demonstrate their love and responsibilities for the children. An individual shares his material wealth with friends and relatives as a means to lessening his own selfishness. One gives to social aid in order to reduce the miserliness in his heart and to cultivate Loving-Kindness in its stead. We revere those who are worthy of our reverence as a sign of our gratitude for our benefactors and for noble-minded individuals. The most important of whom are the 'Sangha', who point us the way to heaven and are the fertile field in which we can cultivate our everlasting 'merits'. 'Merits' earned by giving to the 'Sangha' are worth more than any other types of giving.

The Lord Buddha had validated the world as a 'Happy State of Existence', a plane of existence good enough even for the celestial beings to be reborn into. Once reborn into a human form, one can gain one's treasure in the form of one's faith in the 'Dhamma-Discipline' as stated in the following quotation:

*"The state of man, monk, is for devas reckoned a going to the happy bourn. Since one who has become a man acquires faith when the dhamma-discipline is set forth by the Wayfarer, this thing is reckoned a gain good to win."*¹

However, any individual that uses the world as a stage for playing out his evil acts, is indeed to be pitied. He does it out of his own ignorance. It is

¹ It., *The Threes: Chapter 4, p.172.*

this kind of habits and nature that need to be successfully transformed.

3.4) *'This World' has a time limit.* Which means one's time on earth is limited by death. In this day and age, our average life span is about 75 years, which is very brief in comparison to an existence in other realms of reality. Yet, not everyone lives to be 75 years old. Some die as children, others in their middle ages.

Death is a certainty for all, only the date and time of death is uncertain. It all depends on one's accumulated evil 'Kamma' in both the past and present lives. Past-live evil 'Kamma' that can cut short one's life-span is the breaking of the First Precept. This Precept involves the intention to abstain from any killing as well as any other forms of injury against fellow human beings and animals. In addition, present evil deeds such as careless driving, drinking and driving, can also play a role in shortening one's life-span.

Why must we understand the concept of 'This World'?

The correct understanding of the four aspects of 'This World' as described above enables one to develop an investigative mind and a desire for self-improvement. Hence, when one realizes a certain faulty habit in oneself, one is determined to rid oneself of the bad habit. But first and foremost, one feels responsible for the honor and dignity of one's own humanity. Therefore, one constantly transforms oneself and tries to develop good habits in the place of old ones. He accomplishes these worthwhile causes by accumulating good 'Kamma' in accordance with the 'Wholesome Course of Action' while

at the same time completely avoiding all the 'Causes of Ruin'.

When one consistently conducts only good 'Kamma' until it becomes second nature, any residual bad nature that is molded by the unwholesome attachments within oneself would wither and in time loses its potency. The practice is rendered more effective if one at the same time surrounds oneself with decent individuals, the learned and the wise, and with true friends. Concomitantly, one continues to study and practice the 'Dhamma'. Such earnest endeavors over many lifetimes allow one to continue accumulating everlasting 'merits' to the point of 'perfection', in the same manner as the 'Perfection' accumulated by the 'Bodhisattvas'. In time, the residual unwholesome attachments hidden deep within one's nature would wither away just like seeds, which are kept in storage for so long that they dry up and can no longer generate new seedlings. These are the reasons why we must understand the concept of 'This World'.

On the contrary, when one does not understand the concept of 'This World', one is likely to fall prey to the unwholesome attachments (defilements), which dictate one's actions. In time, habits and nature are formed such that one is driven to commit evil deeds on a regular basis. As a result, some individuals may meet with terrible woes starting already in this lifetime. Other individuals, whose accumulated 'merits' in their past lives are still exerting their benevolent influence, may be able to continue amassing his fortune albeit by dishonest means. Some may become a mob boss with influence at a community, national or even international level. They have lost all sense of responsibility for the honor and dignity of their own humanity. These types of individu-

als can wreak havoc for the rest of the world without feeling any sense of wrong. Moreover, they lack the wisdom to comprehend the eventual penalties of their evil deeds. Which could mean a rebirth in the hell realm, that could last for billions and billions of years.

From all that has been said about the world so far, the reader can appreciate that '*The World of Physical Bodies*', '*The World of Creatures*', and '*The World of Opportunities*', which are grouped together as '*This World*', gives great benefits to each individual life in infinite ways. The most important benefit is that it is a benevolent plane of existence, where one can increasingly accumulate good 'Kamma'. Good 'Kamma' in turn, earns everlasting 'merits', which contribute finally to 'Perfection'. One can continue to accumulate 'merits' and 'Perfections' until one eventually completes the 'Path' and attain the blessed 'Nirvana', in the same manner as the Lord Buddha and His Perfected Disciples (the Arahants).

It was mentioned in the 'Dhamma' that there are certain groups of individuals, whose minds are imprisoned by the power of unwholesome attachments entrenched within their nature. They cannot understand the Reality of 'This World' as described earlier. Their misconception belongs to the '*Wrong View*'. On the contrary, the wise individuals with a bright, clear mind can appreciate with their own wisdom and intellect the Reality of 'This World'. They understand that 'This World' is beneficial to them in infinite ways. Their correct understanding belongs to the '*Right View*'.

Summary

{ The main point about 'This World' deals with the understanding that "This World has its own *raison d'être*

and is highly beneficial". It is the state of mind of an individual, who has unshakable faith in the fruit of 'Kamma', and how the fruit can manifest itself across a number of lifetimes. He has faith and trust in the Lord Buddha's teachings or the 'Dhamma'. Once he puts into practice what he has learnt from the 'Dhamma' until it becomes a force of habit, he can realize that indeed *'a good deed does yield good fruit and an evil deed does yield evil fruit'*. He realizes that whether the 'Kamma' is good or evil, it sends forth its fruit over the course of days, months, and years in ways that are clearly evident to him. Consequently, he believes that the fruit of 'Kamma' could be experienced over many lifetimes.

The main evidence of the fruit of 'Kamma' is borne by our unique differences at birth and throughout the courses of our lives. The differences are seen in terms of sex, family status, appearance, wisdom and intellect, etc. They include desirable traits such as a brilliant mind, and inferior, repugnant ones such as stupidity, mental retardation, physical and brain abnormalities. These phenomena are the Reality of 'This World'.

✓ When an individual has faith and trust in the 'Law of Kamma', he naturally has the wisdom to reflect further that being born in a human form is of great benefits. The reason is that the human vessel can be used to accumulate all kinds of good deeds in the way that other creatures cannot. Most fortunate indeed that once born, an individual can be exposed to Buddhism and later befriends the learned and the wise, who act as true friends and help guide him to the Path of Light. Neither does he fall among deplorable individuals nor sink into the various 'Causes of Ruins'. He realizes that he is on the right path and that the good 'Kamma' from his previous

life has continued to send forth its fruit into his current life. With this realization, he sees the benefit and the motivation of continuing to accumulate his good 'Kamma' for his own happiness in this life and the life to come. This realization then is the true meaning of the phrase 'This World is beneficial'.

The individual, who has unshakable faith in the Kammic fruit that can span across lifetimes, is said to have the '*Right View*'. He naturally feels a strong responsibility for his personal conducts through physical, verbal, and mental means. He is disciplined and abides by the 'Dhamma'.

On the contrary, the individual whose mind is darkened by the power of unwholesome attachments (defilements), disbelieves in the truth about the multiple lifetime effect of 'Kamma'. He believes that death is the end of everything and conveniently disbelieves in 'merits' and sins. He is not ashamed or fearful of sin. He is capable of all sorts of evil deeds without any regard to the Precepts or the law. He would rather break the law and risk going to jail for his own gains. Such an individual is said to have the '*Wrong View*'.

6 The Reality of the 'Hereafter'

What is meant by the 'Hereafter'?

The 'Hereafter' means two different states as follows.

- 1) The life following physical death.
- 2) The dwelling place of the life following physical death.

1) *The life following physical death.* Which means that when human beings and the rest of the earth creatures

die, it is not the end of everything. The only thing that ends is the physical body, which is cremated or buried. The mind still retains its integrity and resides in the non-physical form. This non-physical form moves out of the physical body at the point of death. As long as the mind still harbors any unwholesome attachments, it has to undergo a rebirth in a new realm of reality. The realms of reality after physical death are termed in the 'Dhamma' as the 'Hereafter'. Therefore, life does continue after physical death.

What is life in the 'Hereafter' like for former human beings?

We have learnt from the 'Law of Kamma' that all creatures possess their own particularly unique 'Kamma'. We are all the heirs of our own 'Kamma'. Our 'Kamma' is the cause of everything that concerns our life. Therefore, how we fare in the 'Hereafter' is dependent on our total 'Kamma' in the physical life. There is a saying, which goes 'one's Kamma is his own'. From the knowledge of the 'Law of Kamma', one can to a certain extent predict whether his life in the 'Hereafter' would be a happy or unhappy one.

One Buddhist scripture stated that there are two groups of destination in the 'Hereafter' for all former human beings. These are the '*States of Unhappiness*' ('Duggati') and the '*States of Happiness*' ('Sugati')

The '*States of Happiness*' imply a group of destination where the rebirth and its accompanying lifestyle are virtuous. This group of destination includes: 1) the Human Realm, 2) the Celestial Realm, 3) the Brahma Realm.

The '*States of Unhappiness*' imply a group of destination where the rebirth and the accompanying lifestyle are full of suffering and tortures. This group of destination includes: 1) the Hell Realm, 2) the Animal Realm, 3) The Hungry Ghost Realm, 4) The Asura Demon Realm.

Based on the 'Law of Kamma', it can be deduced that an individual who has accumulated good 'Kamma' or has earned a large number of 'merits' during his earth years would end up in one of the '*States of Happiness*'. The exact '*State of Happiness*' is further determined by the amount of good deeds and the number of 'merits' that the individual has accumulated right up to death. If the good deeds or earned 'merits' outweigh the sins by an amount insufficient for a rebirth in the Brahma Realm, but sufficient for a rebirth in the Celestial Realm, the individual would have his rebirth in heaven. Once there, he is privileged to enjoy a blissful existence for aeons. If however, the accumulated good deeds are not at the level needed for a rebirth in the Celestial Realm, the individual would be reborn as a human being.

An individual who has committed many evil deeds or sins would naturally gravitate toward the '*States of Unhappiness*' upon his physical death. Here again, the particular '*State of Unhappiness*' is determined by the amount of the evil deeds committed up to one's death. For certain, an individual who breaks the 'Precepts' regularly would gravitate toward the Hell Realm. However, if the accumulated evil deeds are in a lesser amount, the individual would be reborn as a hungry ghost, an Asura demon, or an animal.

It is clear that a rebirth in the 'Hereafter', whether it is in the 'States of Happiness or Unhappiness', all occur as a result of one's good and bad 'Kamma' that have been accumulated

before one's death.

Now, once a celestial being has used up his accumulated 'merits', he must de cease and be reborn into the Human Realm. The same rule applies to the creatures of the '*States of Unhappiness*'. Once the creature has served its sentence of evil deeds, it would have the chance to be reborn in the Human Realm. In both cases, the state of one's rebirth on earth depends mainly upon his residual good or bad 'Kamma'. The residual 'Kamma' is the 'Kamma' that one has left after one's life in the 'Hereafter'. These residual good and bad 'Kamma' would jostle with each other to send forth its fruit over the course of the new human life. During the period that the fruit of the residual good 'Kamma' is taking effect, the individual would experience a good fortune. In the same manner, the period where the residual evil 'Kamma' is taking effect, one would experience nothing but trouble. These are the reasons that explain why a powerful individual in a highly visible position can remain at large, in spite of his blatant openness to corruption or evil deeds. And why an underprivileged individual, despite his many good deeds, does not appear to experience any lucky break in life. For the latter individual, he must take heart and continue to accumulate his 'merits'. For one day, when his 'merits' can be reckoned with, the good 'Kamma' would have enough might to break through and manifest its benevolent fruit. The Lord Buddha had these encouraging words to say:

*"One should not think lightly of good and say,
It will not come nigh unto me. Even a water-
vessel is filled by the falling of one drop after
another; Even so a wise man fills himself with*

*good, Though he gathers it little by little."*¹

In regards to both good and bad 'Kamma', it may be said that today's 'Kamma' is tomorrow's past 'Kamma'. This year's 'Kamma' is next year's past 'Kamma'. And this life's 'Kamma' is the future life's past 'Kamma'. Therefore, never doubt that the determining factor of our life in the 'Hereafter' is definitely our present life's accumulated 'Kamma'.

2) *The dwelling place of the life following physical death.* It is natural that when life appears, there needs to be a nurturing and supporting structure for its continued existence. For example, when a blade of grass appears, there needs to be soil and nutrients in the soil to support its existence and growth. When the Physical World and the World of Creatures appear, there needs to be a world of opportunities.

Can we choose our dwelling place in the 'Hereafter'?

To use the word 'choose' is somewhat inappropriate here. We can however wish for a dwelling place in the '*States of Happiness*' and follow up the wish with as many good deeds or accumulated 'merits' as possible so as to be worthy of the place. In that case, our wish might be fulfilled. For those who have committed a great deal of evil deeds or accumulated many sins, would find their own dwelling place befitting their deeds in the 'Hereafter' as a matter of course. They do not have to wish for it at all.

As mentioned earlier, there are two groups of destination in the 'Hereafter'. They are the '*States of Happiness*' and the '*States of Unhappiness*'. The chance to end up in

¹ *Dhammapada Commentary, Part 2: PAPA VAGGA, p.274.*

one of the '*States of Happiness*' depends entirely on one's own '*Kamma*' in this life.

It is true that all of us still harbor a certain degree of the unwholesome attachments (defilements). Normally, we all conduct both good and evil deeds or accumulate a mixture of '*merits*' and sins. The difference is in the amount of good and evil deeds that each individual conducts throughout his life. Generally, an individual that has accumulated more sins than '*merits*', his sins would propel him to one of the '*States of Unhappiness*' immediately after death. An individual that has accumulated more '*merits*' than sins, his '*merits*' would draw him to one of the '*States of Happiness*' immediately after death. There is an exception to this rule. If the individual in the latter category is in a sad frame of mind at death, he would be propelled initially to one of the '*States of Unhappiness*'. Only a bright, clear mind can gain the entrance to the '*States of Happiness*', as taught by the Lord Buddha in the following quotation:

"Even so, monks, a bad bourn is to be expected when the mind is stained, a good bourn is to be expected when the mind is not stained".¹

Therefore, the dwelling place in the '*Hereafter*' for each individual is not fixed. It could be the '*States of Happiness*' or the '*States of Unhappiness*'. The two deciding factors are each individual's accumulated deeds all throughout his life and his state of mind prior to his last breath.

¹ M., vol.1: *Vatthupamasutta*, p.46.

The Appropriate Preparation for the 'Hereafter'.

Does Buddhism teach about the preparation for the 'Hereafter'?

The Lord Buddha had in many instances indicated the ways to prepare for the 'Hereafter'. His teachings were concerned with the specific aim to live a worthwhile life, which can then serve as an assurance for a happy existence in the 'Hereafter'. His teachings on the subject matter were contained in the 'Samparayikattha'¹ or the Sources of Happiness in the Future Life. These include:

- 1) Achievement of faith.
- 2) Achievement of virtue.
- 3) Achievement of charity.
- 4) Achievement of wisdom.

1) *Achievement of faith.* Which means being filled with faith, that is, faith in the Enlightened Knowledge of the Lord Buddha. One has faith in the 'Dhamma' or the Lord Buddha's teachings in their entirety. One demonstrates this faith by studying the 'Dhamma' in order to gain an in-depth understanding. He then uses what he learns as the guiding principles for conducting his life with discipline and without flaws.

Which part of the 'Dhamma' must one thoroughly study and comprehend?

The part of the 'Dhamma' that one must study and understand at a deep level is the 'Law of Kamma'. The fundamentals of this Law that one must believe and commit to memory are as follows.

¹ A., vol.4, *The Book of the Eights, Chapter 6: IV(54).* Longknee, the Koliyan, p.187-191.

1.1) *The belief that the 'Law of Kamma' is real and operating.* It is the belief that an intentional act, whether good or evil, sends forth its fruit throughout the courses of one's multiple lifetimes. It is the belief that the fruit one's desire can be effected through one's actions alone, not by chance or by luck.

1.2) *The belief in the fruit of 'Kamma'.* It is the belief that a good Kammic fruit comes from a good cause, and an evil Kammic fruit comes from an evil cause. For example, drunkenness (the fruit) comes from drinking alcoholic drinks (the cause). Being born into poverty (the fruit) comes from one's miserliness in one's past life (the cause), which did not allow one to give to the 'Sangha'. Wisdom (the fruit) comes from one's eagerness to study the 'Dhamma' with the 'Sangha' (the cause).

1.3) *The belief that one's 'Kamma' is one's own.* It is the belief that one is responsible for the way one's life turns out. It is not the doing of any divine being or vicious ghost or any other mystery identity. For example, the reason that one suffers from a chronic, incurable disease is one's habitual transgression against animal lives in a previous life. Therefore, each individual is totally responsible for his own 'Kamma', and no one is exempt from such responsibility.

2) *Achievement of Virtue.* Which means being committed to the Precepts. That is, one strictly adheres to the Precepts. At the very least, one habitually keeps the Five Precepts and on occasions the Eight Precepts. Keeping the Eight Precepts regularly is an excellent way to accumulate one's 'merits' and to further develop one's 'Right View'. It is therefore highly beneficial to observe the Eight Precepts regularly.

If each individual member of society is in the habit of keeping the Five Precepts, he would not only be developing a sense of responsibility toward the honor and dignity of his own humanity but of others' as well. Such a society-wide practice would create lasting peace and happiness for the society as a whole.

Besides the benefits mentioned above, keeping the Five Precepts regularly is considered to be a superior form of alms-giving. The reason is the states of no harm, no enmity, and no transgression.¹ Moreover, the practice brings with it three blessings to the practitioner,² which are: 1) the praise of society, 2) the source of wealth, 3) the access to the '*States of Happiness*' in the '*Hereafter*'.

3) *Achievement of charity*. Which means being committed to sharing one's material wealth. One has the habit of sharing what one has with one's relatives and friends. One enjoys giving aid to the less fortunate, to disaster victims. One enjoys giving to charitable organizations. One delights in giving alms to the '*Sangha*'. The habit of giving affords one to develop Loving-Kindness and to feel uplifted. These attributes in turn allow one to give freely and without hesitation. In this way, miserliness has no hold on him.

What is the harm of miserliness?

First of all, it is necessary to understand that miserliness is the unwillingness to share what one has or to help others out. This unwillingness has a root cause in the fear of poverty. A miserly individual not only refuses to give any alms himself, but he also forbids oth-

¹ A., vol.4, *The Book of the Eights*, Chapter 4: IX(39). *Yields*, p.167-168.

² H., *The Threes: Chapter 3*, p.165.

ers to give as well. He forbids especially his family members and those close to him. He gives his convincing arguments by discounting and discrediting those who are at the receiving end of the alms. He does not take exception even to the 'Sangha' who serve as the fertile field for 'merits'-making. If those whom he forbids to give go against his dictate, he would retaliate with ire and become physically and verbally abusive. Such deplorable acts do not only darken his mind, but also fertilize the unwholesome attachments inherent within him. The end result is increasing malicious behavior through increasing selfishness, increasing greediness, etc.

All these sinful deeds have their origin in miserliness, the fruit of which is hell in the 'Hereafter'. The Lord Buddha's teachings on this subject were quoted as follows.

*"When fear of hunger or of thirst makes niggard souls afraid, in this world and the next those fools shall fully be repaid. Therefore, give alms, flee covetise, purge filth of greed away, in the next world men's virtuous deeds shall be their surest stay."*¹

*And, "The bad are born in hell below, in heaven the good have birth."*¹

4) *Achievement of wisdom.* Which means being filled with wisdom.

What is wisdom?

Wisdom means knowing and understanding at both the Superficial and Deep Levels.

¹ 20J., vol.4, No.450: Bilari-Kosiya-Jataka, p.40-44.

What are the sources of wisdom?

According to Buddhism, there are three sources of wisdom.¹

- 1) Wisdom as a result of reflection.
- 2) Wisdom as a result of study.
- 3) Wisdom as a result of mental development.

1) *Wisdom as a result of reflection.* Which means the wisdom arrived at by logical thinking. This type of wisdom is inherent at birth except for the mentally retarded. Still, how each individual thinks, whether rightly or wrongly, evil or good, depends on many factors. These include one's fed information, one's upbringing, one's surroundings, one's life experiences, one's habits, etc. These variables cause the differences in this type of wisdom among individuals.

2) *Wisdom as a result of study.* Which means the wisdom arrived at through being educated. The educators can be one's teachers, people with whom one comes into contact, the media, etc. The information received through listening, reading, and other means provides the impetus to a keener intellect. As a rule, a more highly educated individual would have more of this type of wisdom than his less educated counterpart.

An individual who possesses a high level of this type of wisdom may have the ability to become very successful in the world. However, if he lacks the knowledge of the 'Dhamma', it could cause him to behave deplorably and maliciously, thus cause harm to society. In this case, the individual is far more inferior to another individual, albeit with little formal education, but possesses a high

¹ D., vol.4, *Sangiti Suttanta: The Recital*, p.212.

level of the 'Dhamma' knowledge. The 'Dhamma' knowledge possessed by the latter individual motivates him to behave with temperance. After all, the factors used to decide an individual's destination in the 'Here-after' are the accumulated good and bad deeds. They are not the level of education, fame, honor, and position, which are but a make-believe in the human world.

3) *Wisdom as a result of mental development.* Which means the wisdom arrived at through meditation. Meditation is the method used to calm and still the mind, which normally goes wandering all over the place. Meditation is the source of deep wisdom and knowledge. This type of wisdom is so much more beneficial to the practitioner than the above two types of wisdom.

What benefits can meditation offer us?

The benefits of meditation can be given in the order of increasing levels as follows.

3.1) *The first level of benefits.* At this level, meditation offers calmness of the mind. The mind does not continue to wander off aimlessly. Consequently, the practitioner is able to develop the concentration needed to complete any task.

3.2) *The second level of benefits.* At this level, the mind is trained to become still. Once it is still, it could return to its original dwelling place at 'The center of the body'. A still mind is pure, clear and bright. When the mind is in this state, we can experience happiness and hopefulness. We are filled with good wishes for all. We feel encouraged to continue accumulating good and noble deeds.

3.3) *The third level of benefits.* If the mind is kept still at the center of the body for a prolonged period of time,

the mind would become very bright. The longer the mind can be kept still, the brighter it would become. It is this very brightness that can penetrate and disperse the unwholesome attachments inherent in one's nature. Initially, the attachments are weakened. With diligence and practice, the mind can go so far as to render them impotent. The phenomenon is analogous to when we are in a completely dark room, and we cannot see anything in the room. But when we switch on the light, darkness would disappear totally. Now we can see everything in the room clearly and when we spot some unpleasant, undesirable objects in it, we know how to get rid of them.

The clarity and brightness of the mind at the center of the body allows the practitioner to see the truths about life. The most important of which are the Four Noble Truths. One now has the wisdom and the knowledge to correctly understand life and the world in which we live. One knows in one's own mind the causes of happiness and suffering. This knowledge leads one to right understanding, which prompts one to do only good deeds and to abstain completely from every evil deed. The resulting benefits received are the practitioner's source of encouragement to continue practicing meditation with mindful diligence. The purpose of the practice is to constantly increase the clarity and brightness of the mind. In this way, the inherent unwholesome attachments would not have the chance to manifest their evil influence. Such is the true meaning of the wisdom as a result of mental development, of which aim is to penetrate and disperse the evil forces of the unwholesome attachments, and to end all suffering.

However, this third level of meditation may not be easy

to achieve for the lay person who must earn a living and take care of a family. Nevertheless, achievement at the second level of meditation can already experience the benefit of a bright, clear mind. The state of mind that is a source of wisdom. The wisdom to appreciate the great benefits of faith in Buddhism. The wisdom to appreciate the benefits of such good deeds as the giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, the practice of meditation. When one conducts these deeds regularly, one can gain the wisdom to appreciate the need to discipline oneself and to do only good deeds. In this way, one's mind is clear and bright, which serves to guide one unerringly to the '*States of Happiness*' in the '*Hereafter*'.

These four achievements are the brief versions of the ways to prepare for the '*Hereafter*' as taught by the Lord Buddha. One can also call them '*The Correct Preparations for Death*'. Everyone must be prepared in these ways regardless of age, for our life span is only as long as breathing in and breathing out. Should we breathe in and not breath out or vice versa, we are already dead. If we are not prepared, there is a good chance that we would end up in the '*States of Unhappiness*' after death.

It was stated in a Buddhist scripture that there were a great number of individuals, whose unwholesome attachments (defilements) inherent within them had caused them to believe wrongly. These individuals assumed that the '*Hereafter*' did not exist, and that death was the absolute end. They assumed that their lives ended in ashes or the grave. This assumption belongs to the '*Wrong View*'. On the contrary, *the wise and the learned individual, possessed of an illuminated mind, can see through his wisdom that the 'Hereafter' exists. The individual understands the truth about the 'Reality of the Hereafter'. He*

understands that death is not the absolute end, moreover, that the destination of life after death may be uncertain. For one may end up in the 'States of Unhappiness' or in the 'States of Happiness'. Such understanding belongs to the 'Right View'.

Summary

✓ The main point regarding the 'Hereafter' is the understanding that 'death is not the end, death is followed by rebirth'. It is the understanding that accompanies the firm belief of the 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle. As long as some amount of the unwholesome attachments (defilements) still remains, every living creature must be reborn. The life form and the place of rebirth are determined by the accumulated good or evil 'Kamma', 'merits' or sins during one's life on earth. If there is a large number of accumulated merits, one would certainly be reborn in one of the 'States of Happiness'. Which include the Brahma Realm, the Celestial Realm, and the Human Realm. If there are a large number of accumulated sins, one would surely be reborn in one of the 'States of Unhappiness'. Which include the Hell Realm, the Hungry Ghost Realm, The Asura Demon Realm, and the Animal Realm. The 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle within the 'Samsara', which continues indefinitely, is appropriated by one's competing good and bad 'Kamma'.

An individual with a firm belief in the 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle within the 'Samsara' would mindfully conduct only good deeds so that he could accumulate as many 'merits' as possible for his life in the 'Hereafter'. Such an individual has the 'Right View'. He feels responsible for his conduct in every facet of his life, and that it should be in accordance with the teachings in the

✓ { 'Dhamma'.

On the contrary, an individual with the belief that death is the absolute end, that life ends in ashes or the grave, would not be mindful in doing good deeds. He is not interested in the accumulation of 'merits' for his future lives. Moreover, he may even have the audacity to do evil deeds, and have no shame in or fear of sins. Such an individual is said to have the '*Wrong View*'.

7 A Debt of Gratitude Owed to One's Mother.

Does one owe a debt of gratitude to one's mother?

An individual with a normal intelligence and a proper upbringing could appreciate the enormous gratitude that he owes to his mother.

In what ways does one owe a debt of gratitude to one's mother?

Most individuals would answer by launching on the pain and hardships borne during the mother's pregnancy and delivery. What comes next is the great pains the mother took to look after her child. Then it is the expenses the mother goes through for the child's schooling. After that, it is the additional gift of material wealth that the mother gives to her child after he graduated from school, got a job and decided to start his own family. Practically all individuals would describe how they owe a debt of gratitude to their mothers in these ways.

Is there any individual who does not feel a debt of gratitude to his mother?

The answer is yes and there are quite a few such individuals around. One of the reasons is the blind spot in one's understanding due to the power of the unwhole-

some attachments (defilements) inherent in one's nature. Another reason is the conduct of the mother, the father, and other members of the family. For example, one may be angry with the mother for being too strict, which caused one to be criticized and punished for even the smallest mistakes. One feels unreasonably mistreated and limited. One feels unable to pursue one's own things. There are times when one feels like running away from home and going somewhere to live with someone else.

Another individual may feel angry because he was not treated fairly by the mother. He saw how the mother exercised favoritism among his siblings. She did not love her children equally. It appeared that her most favorite child could do no wrong and could get away with everything. While he, the least favorite child, could do nothing right. Even when he did something well, all he got were sarcastic remarks. As soon as he made a mistake, his mother would pounce on him immediately. She would punish him and embarrassed him. When it came time to divide up the family's inheritance, he did not get his fair share either.

Individuals who feel a deep anger against the mother in these or other circumstances tend to view the mother in a negative light. Every time they think of their mothers, all they see are their mothers' wrathful expressions. All they hear is the repeated scolding.

There are yet individuals who have not felt the love and warmth of the family since birth. The reason may be that they were born into a dysfunctionally large family of wife, concubines, and their respective children. They had to experience all sorts of problem since their

childhood. Moreover, they were the targets of the mother's anger and frustration, whenever she was having a problem with the rest of the family.

There are other circumstances where one may not be born into a large family, but the mother was a kept woman. One had never known who one's father was. One did not receive any real attention from the mother but was left in the care of a malicious nanny since one's infancy. When one grew up, one might not suffer the abuses at the hand of the nanny anymore. But the painful experience of neglect and abuse left the individual with an inferiority complex in regards to his personal life.

These individuals who lack the love and warmth of the family since their childhood tend not to feel any indebtedness to the mother. They feel that their birth was merely the outcome of the mother's sexual pleasure.

What does Buddhism have to say about the debt of gratitude owed to one's mother?

✓ { According to the Buddhist teachings, there are four main reasons for the debt of gratitude owed to one's mother.

1) Providing life. The mother does this by carrying her pregnancy to full-term until her child is born. Once the child was born, the mother takes great pains to look after him until he grows up. This is a life-giving process and the child owes a great debt of gratitude for it. After all, the mother could have chosen to abort her child or leave him to die after he was born. Such occurrences appeared in the news quite often.

✓ 2) Providing a genetic prototype. We all know that there are tens of thousands of species on earth. Each species has a different appearance. But no matter how big and strong or beautiful these other creatures might be, their bodies cannot be used as a vehicle to accumulate good and noble deeds in the way that a human body can. We were born in a human form only because our mothers provide the genetic materials to us. It is, therefore, our great good fortune to be born, and it was our mothers who gave it to us. This is the second reason why we owe a debt of gratitude to our mothers.

✓ 3) Providing a behavioral prototype. Suppose after we were born, we by chance fell into the care of other animals and were never around any human being. Suppose our caretaker was a female chimp and she went on to bring us up in the way that she would her own baby chimps. Would we behave more like a chimp or a human being under the circumstance? The odds are that we would not behave any differently from any other chimps. The reason is that the mother chimp has already instilled in us the behavior pattern of a chimp.

In the same manner, we learn to be a human being through our mothers' teaching and training. Our mothers teach us about love, consideration, and kindness. They teach us to share what we have with others, and to help others in need. They teach us to respect and admire one another, especially those who are good and noble. They teach us to discriminate between good and evil, and to choose to do only good deeds. In other words, our mothers were the first persons to have imprinted those positive attributes on us. This is the third reason why we owe a debt of gratitude to our mothers.

Although there are instances where some mothers fall short as a behavioral prototype, all in all they still deserve their children's gratitude.

4) Providing patronage. In Buddhism, parents are considered to be their child's patrons. As such, they are considered to be the rarest people on earth. The reason the mother is her child's patron is that she lends him unconditional support starting from pregnancy, infancy, and throughout the growing-up years. She nurtures her child in spite of the lack of any foreknowledge of how he would turn out. She gives her support for the sake of the child's wellbeing and growth. She teaches and trains the child to be a decent individual without tiring. She does her best to send her child to school so that he can receive the highest possible level of education.

✓ Were a mother to be compared to a banker, she would have to be the most generous banker. The reasons are that she does not charge any interest, she is not at all concerned if the loan would ever be repaid. Moreover, once her child leaves the nest, she would if she could provide whatever funding he might need to get started in his own life. She exercises the utmost kindness and generosity toward her child in ways that are difficult to find anywhere. And this is the fourth reason why one owes a debt of gratitude to one's mother.

Why is it necessary to understand this debt of gratitude?

Understanding this debt of gratitude can be beneficial to both the child and especially the mother.

Once a mother understands her important role and how her role incurs a debt of gratitude from her child,

she would become a conscientious mother and takes her responsibilities seriously. After all, gratitude must be earned and does not come free.

In regards to 'providing life', the mother-to-be must be ready for this role prior to conception. Otherwise, she might contemplate an abortion or leave the baby out to die after it was born. In that case, she is breaking the First Precept by committing murder. The penalty of which is a rebirth in the Hell Realm. After the severe sentence was served, the residual evil fruit can still reverberate through many of her future human lifetimes.

Therefore, it is crucial that every woman understands this life-giving role. She should not allow herself to indulge in her amorous passion and to regard her sexual activities as fun and play only. Which is the mentality that appears to be the latest trend in this age of information.

In regards to 'providing a genetic prototype', *the mother-to-be must pay special attention in selecting a decent man to father her child*. The mother-to-be needs to understand that the soul of the newborn-to-be would first enter the father before moving on to the mother at the time of conception.

The Lord Buddha had this to say in regards to the 'Law of Kamma': "*All creatures share the Kamma of the clan*". Which means that the soul of the newborn shares some characteristics with its father. If the father-to-be is a decent sort, he stands a good chance to father a decent child. But if the father has a depraved nature, it is likely that he would father a child of similar nature. Or if the father-to-be is a heavy drinker, there exists the possibility of fathering a retarded child or a child with a mental

disorder.

Therefore, the mother-to-be needs to carefully consider the kind of man that she would end up with. She needs to do this for the chance of giving birth to a decent, obedient child.

In regards to 'providing a behavioral prototype', the Buddhist faith considers a decent human being as one possessing the '*Right View*' and the '*Shame and Fear of Sin*'. One is ashamed of sin and is fearful of its dire consequences. An individual learns to become decent through the regular study and practice of the '*Dhamma*'. Therefore, *the mother-to-be must first of all develop the 'Right View' and the 'Shame and Fear of Sin' through the regular study and practice of the 'Dhamma'.* Then she would be ready to serve as a behavioral prototype for her unborn child.

The mother, who arouses anger in her child to such an extent that he is not able to appreciate how he owes her anything, has a flaw in her development of the '*Right View*', and the '*Shame and Fear of Sin*'.

In regards to 'providing patronage', *the mother-to-be needs to make ready for the event* in at least three ways.

- 1) Ensure that she and her husband have a stable source of income. The income must be enough to provide for themselves and the child to come.
- 2) Ensure that she has the ability to raise her child in the ways of the world and the '*Dhamma*'.
- 3) Ensure that she has the ability to provide a sense of wellbeing and warmth within the family nucleus. She must not be someone's concubine or kept mistress. She must not be involved in any vice. She must not leave her child in the care of someone else

for a longer period than the time she herself spends with him.

On the part of the child, once he has the wisdom to reflect deeply, he would understand indeed how great of a debt of gratitude he owes to his mother. Accompanying this understanding would be a desire to reciprocate in kind. Such understanding and desire is truly a noble 'Kamma'.

How does a child reciprocate in kind?

There are two time periods of reciprocity:

1) *The time period when the mother is still living.* The child can seek to help lighten his mother's load in various areas as the mother sees fit. If the child is still living at home, he should take care of his mother in terms of meals and other comforts. When she is ill, even while living apart, he needs to take special care of her. In her elderly years, he needs to care for her and must never neglect her. He does these things willingly because he well knows the efforts and selflessness it took for his mother to raise him.

In addition, if the mother has not yet had any faith in Buddhism, the child should persuade her to do so. This way, she still has the chance to accumulate good deeds and 'merits' in preparation for her long travel in the 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle within the 'Samsara'. One should persuade the mother to regularly give alms, to keep the Precepts, and to meditate. These practices not only have the benefit of accumulated 'merits', but also have the benefit of keeping her mind clear and bright. The latter is an important attribute that leads to the 'States of Happiness' once she passes on.

2) *The time period after the mother's passing.* The child needs to arrange for a funeral befitting the mother's honor and virtue. Later on, he needs to make 'merits' and dedicate them to her on a regular basis. If she obtained a rebirth in a realm where the 'merits' could reach her, the benefits of the 'merits' would be gained by both the giver and the receiver.

✓ A Buddhist scripture stated that there were a large number of individuals, whose minds were clouded over with the power of their inherent unwholesome attachments. These individuals failed to see that they owed their mothers a debt of gratitude. This incorrect understanding belongs to the 'Wrong View'. On the contrary, *the learned and the wise individuals can appreciate that they owe a great debt of gratitude to their mothers. They seek always the opportunity to reciprocate in kind. This correct understanding belongs to the 'Right View'.*

Summary

✓ The main point regarding motherhood is that one owes a great debt of gratitude to one's mother. Such is the mentality of the individual possessing the principle of reciprocity. Granted, some mothers may not have fulfilled all the four roles as described earlier. But at the very least, one owes one's mother in two ways, which are 'providing life' and 'providing a genetic prototype'.

✓ As for the remaining two roles, which are 'providing a behavioral prototype', and 'providing patronage', should the mother be deficient in these roles, the deficiency still cannot negate the fulfillment of the first two roles.

A mother may be flawed in some ways as a result of the inherent unwholesome attachments within her. These attachments cause her to possess the 'Wrong View'

in the flawed areas. As her child, he should not find fault with her flaws or use them as causes for his anger. He should instead use these flaws as lessons so that he would not make the same mistakes when it is his turn to be a parent.

Moreover, it is the dutiful child that reciprocates as best as he can, and to help rid the '*Wrong View*' from his mother's mind. Such endeavors serve to increase his sense of responsibility up a notch. This individual is considered to have the '*Right View*'.

On the contrary, an individual that bears anger against his mother, constantly finds fault with her and shows her no sign of reciprocating, he is that way because his mind is clouded over by the inherent unwholesome attachments within him. Such an individual is considered to have the '*Wrong View*'.

8 The Debt of Gratitude Owed to One's Father.

Does one owe a debt of gratitude to one's father?

The debt of gratitude that is owed to one's father arises from the same four roles

as the mother's. These are:

- 1) Providing life.
- 2) Providing a genetic prototype.
- 3) Providing a behavioral prototype.
- 4) Providing patronage.

Does one owe a debt of gratitude to an irresponsible father?

Every father has his child's gratitude, despite his irre-

✓ } sponsibility. At the very least, he has fulfilled the two important roles of 'providing life' and 'providing a genetic prototype'. Without the father, it would be impossible for the child to be born at all.

✓ } However, an irresponsible father causes problems and suffering for others and society. This is considered an evil 'Kamma'. The irresponsible father would certainly suffer the negative consequences of his irresponsibility in his future lives. Some may have met with the terrible consequences in this life already.

What problems are caused by an irresponsible father?

The problems caused by an irresponsible father may be different in each case but on the whole have serious implications as follows.

1) The child of an absentee father feels a certain lack of love and warmth in his life. Some children may have developed an inferiority complex as a result. The problems incurred in this situation may deter an individual's mental and emotional development. As a result, he may not meet with success and progress in life.

2) Should the child have a stepfather and they do not get along, he may run away from home and become homeless. He may go down the wrong road and lose the chance for a decent life.

3) If the mother is poor, she cannot provide adequately for the child. She cannot afford to send him to school, or if she can, it is not to a good school. The child may in time develop a sense of hopeless anger and pessimism.

4) Any one of the above problems can cause the child to grow up as an unproductive adult. Some may be-

come aggressive. Some may become involved in all sorts of vice. As an operator of a dubious business, he may build up a wide network of unethical individuals. As a consumer of the different types of vice, he would meet with ruin and cannot be a contributing member of society.

The above four examples demonstrate the possible ill effects borne by some children of irresponsible fathers. These ill effects would also impact society as a whole. Therefore, all the men in this world, beware of the pitfalls. A life spent recklessly, doing harmful deeds to self and others out of one's foolishness, just to gratify one's sexual impulse momentarily, such a life would certainly result in unimaginably horrid punishments for aeons in the Hell Realm.

What sort of things should a man beware of?

Besides the sin of being an irresponsible father, there is the sin of promiscuity, which includes adultery and other sexual escapades. He would reap the most horrific Kammic fruit as a result of his actions. The respective Kammic consequences are unimaginably horrible punishments in the Hell Realm, rebirths in the Animal Realm, a rebirth as a homosexual in the Human Realm, a rebirth as a prostitute or a malicious woman, a rebirth as a regular woman. In the last case, although the woman might possess good personal attributes but she still cannot escape the fruit of the residual evil 'Kamma'. It would continue to steal a chance to wreak havoc in her life. This situation was demonstrated in an example according to the 'Isidasi'¹ and is presented here in an abbreviated

¹ *Thig., vol.2, The Group of Forty Verses: Isidasi, p.41-44.*

version.

"There was once a lady 'Arahant' (one who has attained Nirvana) named 'Isidasi'. Seven days after she had been ordained, she was able to attain The Threefold knowledge, which enabled her to recall seven of her previous lives. Upon being asked by a fellow lady 'Arahant' about her life prior to her decision to become ordained, Isidasi had these stories to relate. In the first of the previous seven lives, she had been a wealthy goldsmith. As a youth, the goldsmith had had an affair with a married woman. For this sin, the goldsmith had ended up in the Hell Realm after he had died. The sentence involved being repeatedly burnt to death by a hellfire for aeons. After having served the sentence in the Hell Realm, he had a rebirth as a male monkey. The infant monkey had lived for only seven days when an alpha male bit off his genitals. The wound resulted in his death. The next rebirth took the form of a goat born to a one-eyed nanny-goat. The billy-goat had been castrated and had carried children around for twelve years before he died. In the fourth life, she had been born a male calf. He had been castrated when he was a year old. He had been worked very hard all of his life. He had become blind and ill of health.

In the third life, she had been born a homosexual to a poor maid and had lived to be only thirty years old. In the last life, she had been born a girl to the family of a wagon builder. The family had been deeply in debt, and eventually had all their possessions as well as the girl seized by their creditor, the

caravan master. When the girl had turned sixteen, the caravan master's son took her for his concubine. This man had already been married and his wife was a good, virtuous woman. Out of jealousy, the girl had done all she could to turn the husband against his wife.

In the present life, she was born an only daughter to a wealthy man in the city of Ujjeni. When she was of a marriageable age, her father arranged for her to become the daughter-in-law of another wealthy man in the city of Saketa. Despite all of her efforts to please and serve her husband, her husband had hated her and had left to live elsewhere. She had been returned in shame to her own family after just two months of marriage. Later her parents arranged for her a second husband, who was also a wealthy man. After one month, despite all of her efforts to please and serve her husband, she was again returned to her family. Back home once again, her parents tried to talk a nice beggar into becoming her husband. This time after just a fortnight, her husband took leave of the wealthy man and returned to being a beggar”.

As a result of all that had happened, when she had the chance to offer alms to a lady ‘Arahant’ named ‘Jinadatta’, she made the decision to ask her parents’ permission to become ordained. She eventually attained Nirvana and became a lady ‘Arahant’.

The main purpose of this poignant story is to forewarn all the promiscuous men of the consequences of their misdeeds. They need to realize the severe and intermi-

nable punishments awaiting them in the 'Hereafter'. The story also serves to remind each man of his responsibility as a behavioral prototype for his child.

The 'Agganna Suttanta'¹ described how a man can be reborn a woman and vice versa. If a woman wishes to be reborn a man, and does her best to emulate all the good qualities of a decent man in this life, her wish can come true for her. If a man wants to be reborn a woman, all he has to do is break the Third Precept, which deals with unbridled amorous passion, and suffers the horrible punishments first.

It was mentioned in a Buddhist scripture that there were a large number of individuals whose minds were clouded over with the unwholesome attachments inherent within them. These individuals failed to see how they owed anything to their fathers. Such an incorrect understanding belongs to the 'Wrong View'. On the contrary, *the learned and the wise individuals appreciated what a great debt of gratitude they owed to their fathers. Their correct understanding belongs to the 'Right View'.*

Summary

✓ The main point regarding fatherhood is that 'one owes a great debt of gratitude to one's father'. Such is the mentality of a child that is filled with the desire to reciprocate in kind. One realizes that without a father, one would not have a chance to be born at all. Which means that one would not have a chance to accumulate new 'merits'.

When one contemplates the 'Law of Kamma' and the 'Reality of this World', one can see that the real reason

¹ D., vol.4, Agganna Suttana, p.77.

behind the father's failure to fulfill his last two roles is one's own past evil 'Kamma'. For it is one's own past evil 'Kamma' that causes one to have such a father. Once one realizes this truth, one would possess the wisdom not to hold anything against the father or to be ungrateful to him. Otherwise, one is committing an evil deed, the sin of which would be carried over to the next life.

Moreover, one needs to understand that the failure of the father to fulfill all of his responsibility is caused by the father's '*Wrong View*'.

It is right to think that one owes the father a debt of gratitude in any case. It is one's duty to try as best as possible to reciprocate in kind. And should one day, one can be instrumental in helping one's father to completely remove his '*Wrong View*', it would have been the highest form of reciprocity indeed.

Besides, one should take the father's faults as a reminder so that one does not behave similarly when it is time for one to be a father. Such is the mentality that lifts one's sense of responsibility up a level and one is considered to have the '*Right View*'.

On the contrary, an individual whose mind is darkened by the power of the unwholesome attachments within him cannot see how he owes his father anything. He shows no sign of reciprocating. This individual would in time fail in his responsibility as a parent as well because of his undeveloped mind. Such an individual is considered to have the '*Wrong View*'.

9 The Means by which a Creature Comes into Being.

How do the creatures of the world come into being?

The 'Dhamma' teaches that there are two places that the creatures of the world are born into. These include birth in the Human Realm, and birth outside the Human Realm.¹

Birth in the Human Realm is divided into three types as follows.

- 1) From the egg. Which includes such animals as birds, turtles, geckos, etc.
- 2) From the womb. Which includes mammals like human beings, cats, elephants, etc.
- 3) From the moisture in foul places like carcasses, dirty water, rotten food.

Which includes worms, microbes, and other one cell creatures that cannot be seen by the naked eye, but are visible through a microscope.

There is only one form of birth outside the Human Realm. It is the 'Spontaneous Rising' into an adult form. It is the type of birth that does not require any parentage. The rising is propelled by the force of past positive and negative 'Kamma'. The force of positive 'Kamma' propels one to be reborn in the '*States of Happiness*'. While the force of negative 'Kamma' propels one to be reborn in the '*States of Unhappiness*'.

Is the Human Realm a State of Happiness or Unhappiness?

The Human Realm is a '*State of Happiness*' for humans

¹ M., vol.1, Mahasihanadasutta, p.97

but is a '*State of Unhappiness*' for animals. It is the only place that a human can accumulate good '*Kamma*' to the fullest extent. The reasons are:

1) That the human form is strong and robust. It is hence perfect for performing all sorts of good deed.

2) That the Human Realm has been and will be the place of Enlightenment for all the Buddhas all throughout the ages past and future. This has given humans the opportunities to hear the '*Dhamma*' directly from the Lord Buddha or from the Arahants while they were still on earth. Upon the passing of the Lord Buddha and the Arahants into '*Nirvana*', the Dhamma-Discipline had been passed onto the '*Sangha*'. The '*Sangha*' have carried on the work of teaching and training humans to develop the '*Right View*', and to perform only good deeds in order to obtain a rebirth in the '*States of Happiness*' in the '*Hereafter*'.

3) The Human Realm is the fertile field for cultivating '*merits*'. This fertile field is represented by the '*Sangha*', who practice righteousness. Cultivation of the '*field*' comes in the form of alms-giving to the '*Sangha*'. Giving to the '*Sangha*' represents the highest form of giving, therefore, earns the maximum '*merit*'. This truth was taught in the '*Dakkhinaṅgavagga*'¹ in the following quotation:

".....Now, Ananda, there are these fourteen offerings graded as to individuals.....When a gift has been given to an animal, it is expected that the offering (yields) a hundredfold; when a gift has been given to an ordinary person of poor moral habit, it

¹ M., vol.3, *Vibhangaṅgavagga*: *Dakkhinaṅgavagga*, p.300-305.

is to be expected that the offering (yields) a thousandfold. When a gift has been given to an ordinary person of moral habit, it is to be expected that the offering (yields) a hundred thousandfold. When a gift has been given to one who is beyond and without attachment to sense-pleasures, it is to be expected that the offering (yields) a hundredthousand fold of crores (a crore is a unit of value equal to ten million rupees). When a gift has been given to one faring along for the realization of the fruit of stream-attainment, it is to be expected that the offering (yields) what is incalculable and immeasurable. So what can be said of the stream-attainer? What can be said of the one faring along for the realization of the fruit of once-returning...of the once-returner...of one faring along for the realization of the fruit of non-returning...of the non-returner...of one faring along for the realization of the fruit of perfection...? So what can be said of a Tathagata, perfected one, fully Self-Awakened One?....."

Due to the three reasons stated above, the Human Realm is considered to be a 'State of Happiness' for all the Celestial Beings that deceased from the Celestial Realm to be born a human being. It is a 'State of Happiness' for all the other earth creatures that have served their sentences and can now be reborn as a human. The Human Realm presents the best opportunity for accumulating maximum good deeds. The opportunity is given to all equally.

However, if upon being born a human, one chooses to ignore the Dhamma-Discipline especially in regards to the 'Law of Kamma'. One chooses to live life recklessly

and indulge in accumulating evil 'Kamma'. In that case, he would not have the chance to reach the '*States of Happiness*'. Already, the world is like a '*State of Unhappiness*' for him. And the terrible fate of the '*States of Unhappiness*' is awaiting once he departs from this world.

Why is it necessary to learn about the 'Spontaneous Rising'?

There are many reasons but the two most important ones are:

1) The knowledge in the 'Spontaneous Rising' causes us to develop the 'Shame and fear of Sin' in one's mind. This development will cause us to be ashamed of sin and to be fearful of its devastating consequences both in this life and the ones to come. In other words, one is fearful of the Hell Realm. Therefore, the knowledge motivates one to concentrate on conducting only good deeds until it becomes a habit. One does not allow one's mind, body, and words to commit any evil deed both in private and in public.

2) The knowledge in the 'Spontaneous Rising' motivates us to enthusiastically study and practice the 'Dhamma', which includes the meditation practice. Through such learning, we can gain an insight into the Lord Buddha's teachings, especially in the areas of the fruit of 'Kamma', the Hell Realm, the Celestial Realm, the Reality of this World, The Reality of the Hereafter. We learn that everything in our life is determined by our own overall 'Kamma'.

Although one's practice of the 'Dhamma' may not reach the level of ultimate knowing, still the happiness and calmness experienced through the brightness of the mind

during meditation can confirm one's faith in the 'Dhamma'. This faith helps us to increasingly practice the 'Dhamma', and to maintain the 'Right View'. As a result, one becomes a good role model for one's children and relatives as well as others in society through such regular activities as *the giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, the practice of meditation. The knowledge of the 'Spontaneous Rising' is instrumental in helping the practitioner to reach the 'States of Happiness' more easily.*

Can anyone prove that 'Spontaneous Rising' is a real phenomenon?

The phenomenon can be proved when the right method is used. It is crucial that when the proof of a particular phenomenon is required, one needs an investigative method suitable for the task. For example, to prove the existence of certain microbes, a microscope having the appropriate resolution is needed. If the study of Mars is required, one would use a telescope. If a microscope is used instead of a telescope, for certain no sign of Mars would be found. In the same manner, the phenomenon of 'Spontaneous Rising' can be proven by using a method prescribed in the Buddhist teachings. The method is called the Celestial Eye. It is the only method of proof.

How is the Celestial Eye developed?

The Celestial Eye can be developed through the rigorous practice of meditation. It is a practice where one's mind is kept quiet and still and directed to the center of one's center of the body. The center of one's body is the original dwelling place of the mind, when it was pure and calm. When the mind can be kept quiet and still and directed to the center of one's body for a prolonged

period, the mind becomes very clear and very bright. The longer the period, the clearer and brighter the mind would become. When the mind becomes as brilliantly bright as the brightness of a multiple midday sun at the center of the body, it is the very mind that has the ability to penetrate the reality of 'Spontaneous Rising' of all the world's creatures. It is the very mind that can witness the 'Spontaneous Rising' into both the '*States of Happiness and Unhappiness*'. It is the mind that can witness the atmosphere and the environment of both heaven and hell.

It is very important that individuals who have not yet developed their ability of Celestial Eye to such an elevated level rush to doubt the Lord Buddha's teachings regarding the rebirth by 'Spontaneous Rising'. On the contrary, they should think highly of the Lord Buddha. They should think of Him as the most noble of friends and the Patron of the world. For the Lord Buddha had bestowed upon us His teachings or the 'Dhamma' without being asked. The Lord Buddha was not under any obligation to give us anything, yet He did so without expecting anything in return. The Lord Buddha gave us this most precious gift out of His unfathomable compassion and best wishes for humankind. He did not want us to have to suffer the torments of the '*States of Unhappiness*'. He wished for us the blissful happiness of the '*States of Happiness*'. He wished for us to eventually attain the absolute release from the continuous 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle. He wished for us to attain the state of permanent bliss or 'Nirvana' in the same way that He and His Arahants had done.

These ample reasons should have already given us cause to have faith in the 'Dhamma' in its entirety. They

should motivate us to conduct only good 'Kamma' by 1) *giving of alms*, 2) *keeping of the Precepts*, and 3) *practice of meditation on a daily basis for as long as we live*. Granted, we may not have the desire to develop the Celestial Eye just for the sake of proving that 'spontaneous rising' is a real phenomenon. However, with regular practice and experience, the Celestial Eye would be developed as a matter of course. And when that happens, we would realize the whole truth of the 'Dhamma'.

On the contrary, if we continue to have doubts, our faith in the 'Dhamma' would not occur or would be on shaky ground. In that case, we are susceptible to living life recklessly and dancing to the tunes of the unwholesome attachments. We need only to get drunk often to meet with various problems in life. Moreover, we would not be able to escape from the fate of the '*States of Unhappiness*' once we die. In any case, when one gets drunk, one is certain to break other Precepts as well. The behavior only serves to multiply one's problems and suffering already in this life. One hardly has to wait for the torments to come in the 'Hereafter'.

It was mentioned in a Buddhist scripture that there were a large number of individuals whose minds were darkened by the power of the unwholesome attachments deep within them. Hence, they disbelieve the phenomenon of 'Spontaneous Rising'. Their disbelief belongs to the '*Wrong View*'. On the contrary, the wise and the learned individuals believe that 'Spontaneous Rising' is a real phenomenon. This belief belongs to the '*Right View*'.

Summary

✓ The main point regarding 'Spontaneous Rising' is the

belief that it is a real phenomenon. It is the mentality of those who believe in the reality of heaven and hell. Another point has to do with the fact that the 'Spontaneous Rising' phenomenon cannot be seen by the naked eye. It can however be seen through the Celestial Eye that is developed through an elevated level of meditation.¹ It is crucial that just because we cannot yet see these realities for ourselves, we must not hasten to deny them. We should rather go in search of truth by practicing meditation until we can achieve the level needed to witness these realities. Then we would possess a miraculous tool with which to clearly prove the existence of these realities.

✓ The 'Dhamma' teaches that just to be on the safe side, we need to continue with our good deeds. These include the regular *giving of alms*, the regular *keeping of the Precepts*, and the regular *practice of meditation*. When our mind is increasingly developed as a result of such practices, despite our lack of the Celestial Eye just yet, we would still possess the wisdom to realize that 'Spontaneous Rising' pertaining to heaven and hell is a reality. We can then exercise caution in the way we live our life. Individuals with such faith possess the '*Right View*' and by virtue of their faith are developing their sense of responsibility to a higher level.

On the contrary, individuals whose minds are clouded over with the power of unwholesome attachments, would not be interested in studying and practicing the 'Dhamma'. They can only believe what they can see with their own anatomical eyes. What they cannot see, they

¹ D., vol.2, *Payasi Suttanta*, p.357.

cannot believe. They do not concern themselves with conducting good 'Kamma'. They live life recklessly and habitually carry out evil acts. Such an undeveloped mind possesses the '*Wrong View*'.

10 The 'Sangha' Who Practice Righteousness, See Clearly with their Own Wisdom the Realities of this World and the Hereafter, and Teach about them to Others.

What is the meaning of the above statement?

✓ The meaning is twofold. Firstly, the phrase 'see clearly with their own wisdom the realities of this World and the Hereafter' means that the 'Sangha' can train themselves to develop the Celestial Eye as well as the Eye of Wisdom to penetrate the truth about life in the 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle in the 'Samsara'. Secondly, 'The Sangha who practice righteousness' means the rigorous discipline the 'Sangha' use to keep the Precepts and to practice meditation to the point of attaining wisdom and the Celestial Eye.

✓ The accomplished 'Sangha', after having witnessed the truth about the 'Samsara', and about the terrible danger awaiting in the never-ending 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle, feel such compassion for all humankind that is still steeped in ignorance. The compassionate 'Sangha' wish to impart their knowledge to all so that they too can know the truth. They want to do this in the hope that when the lay people know the truth or understand and have faith in the truth as taught by the 'Sangha', they would lead their lives with prudence and with decency. They would endeavor to conduct only good 'Kamma' as a means to continuously accumulate 'merits'. They would

avoid all evil because they realize the terrible consequences of suffering and punishments in this life and the life in the 'Hereafter'.

The accomplished 'Sangha' possess genuine love and compassion for their fellow human beings. They dedicate themselves as true and noble friends to mankind without expecting anything in return. They wish the human race only happiness, and they wish to end all suffering.

Who are the accomplished 'Sangha'?

The first of the accomplished 'Sangha', the Exalted Master and Ultimate True Friend was none other than our Lord Buddha. He had been filled to overflowing with compassion and had taught so many individuals in His time. Some of these individuals include the Arahants (His Perfected Disciples) who carried on the work of spreading the Lord Buddha's teachings.

Although the Lord Buddha and all the Arahants had entered 'Nirvana' over twenty five hundred years ago, there still remain some religious heirs. These religious heirs are the accomplished 'Sangha' who study, practice, and know the Dhamma-Discipline by heart. They subsequently endeavor to impart their knowledge to others.

Granted, we might not be able to ascertain the accomplishment level attained by each Bhikkhu or monk who plays the role of friend and master to us. Yet, there are reasons to believe that there still exists a number of 'Bhikkhu's or Sangha' who practice righteousness to the extent of possessing the deepest wisdom of this and the next world. The evidence can be borne by their teach-

ing method, which allows the students to attain for themselves the knowledge of hell, heaven, the fruit of good and evil 'Kamma', the 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle, etc.

Therefore, when we mention the accomplished 'Sangha', we mean the following individuals:

- 1) The Lord Buddha, the Exalted Spiritual Master of the entire Buddhist population.
- 2) The Lord Buddha's Perfected Disciples (the Arahants).
- 3) The 'Sangha' who practice righteousness and possess a great knowledge of the 'Dhamma'. The 'Sangha' who possess the Celestial Eye, are able to know about this and the next world and teach about them to others. The 'Sangha' who are still living today.

Why did the Lord Buddha mention the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness?

Through the analytical thinking of the '*Right View*' starting from the first to the tenth view, it can be seen that the Lord Buddha intended for humankind to develop an ever-increasing understanding of the truth about life and the world. These understandings or views can be summarized as follows.

✓ 1) *The correct view that each individual was born for the purpose of conducting only good 'Kamma'.* The different good deeds are ways to accumulate 'merits' for the good of this and the next world. Ultimately, the highest good of all is 'Nirvana', a supreme state beyond the never-ending cycle of 'birth-death-rebirth'. Those who commit evil 'Kamma' accumulate unwholesomeness and sins. Their minds become darkened and lead to harm

and punishments in this and the next world. It violates the real purpose and the real value of being born human.

2) The correct view that wholesome 'merits' have the power to conquer the dictate of the unwholesome attachments. The habit of accumulating good deeds through the regular study and practice of the 'Dhamma', the giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, and the meditation practice, allow one's mind to become pure, clear, and bright. With more rigorous practice of meditation, the mind can become increasingly brighter until it attains the brightness of a midday sun. The mind at that state is extremely bright and is able to deeply penetrate the truth regarding the uncertainties of the world, and of life itself.

Deep understanding of the truth through the use of the Celestial Eye helps us to develop a stronger conscience. That is, one has an increased shame and fear of sin. At the same time, one develops the wisdom to teach oneself to be vigilant and to avoid any wrongdoing. One chooses to conduct only good deeds. As a result, one's mind becomes increasingly clear and bright and the unwholesome attachments have no chance to manifest themselves. It is in the same way as when the green grass is covered over by stones and cannot grow.

3) The correct view that a mind which is pure can penetrate the realities of this and the next world. The mind can be kept constantly still by the keeping of the Precepts and the practice of meditation to an elevated level. (Generally, the 'Sangha' have a greater opportunity for such a rigorous practice than the lay people because the 'Sangha' do not have to concern themselves with earning a living). Through continuous practice, the brightness that is tens and hundreds of thousand times the

brightness of a midday sun can become a permanent fixture of the mind. This spectacular internal condition gives rise to the 'Eye of Wisdom' which can see the truth regarding the different realms of reality especially, the Four Noble Truths. However, the level of accomplishment in this area is a function of each individual's endeavors.

✓ 4) The correct view that each lay person must seek and find the accomplished 'Sangha' or the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness. From what has been said so far, the reader can appreciate how the 'Right View' is the only gateway to happiness in life. To fully develop the 'Right View' within us, we need to deepen our study and practice according to the teachings in the 'Dhamma' until it becomes a force of habit.

✓ In this endeavor, we do need an appropriate teacher to point us the way. Although the Lord Buddha and the Arahants had all entered the state of 'Nirvana' years ago, there still remain to be found some religious heirs who practice righteousness. As long as Buddhism is still around in this world, there would be such religious heirs. It is just that one needs to actively search for them.

It was mentioned in a Buddhist scripture that there were a large number of individuals whose minds were covered over with the unwholesome attachments within them. These individuals believe that the 'Sangha' who practiced righteousness could not be found. They did not believe in heaven or hell or the realities of this and the next world or the 'Law of Kamma'. Their wrong beliefs belong to the 'Wrong View'. On the contrary, *the learned and the wise individuals believe that there truly are the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness. Their correct belief*

belongs to the 'Right View'.

Individuals of Buddhist faith must have learnt by now that as long as there are the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness vigilantly according to the Dhamma-discipline, the line of the accomplished 'Sangha' would continue. These 'Sangha' can penetrate the different depth of realities depending on the different levels of accomplishment. Therefore, individuals who intend to develop their minds need to search for these accomplished 'Sangha'. Once they are found, the individuals can come under the Sangha's tutoring and diligently practice what they learn until they too have a chance to see the different realms of reality for themselves. The individuals who practice the 'Dhamma' with faith are considered to have the '*Right View*'. They behave in ways that are responsible to themselves and to the world at large. With continuing practice, they have the opportunity to advance further and further.

On the contrary, individuals whose minds were covered up with their unwholesome attachments disbelieve that there once were a Buddha and His Perfected Disciples. They disbelieve that the Exalted Master could penetrate the whole Truth regarding the different realms of reality and had selflessly imparted His knowledge to many. These individuals disbelieve in this and the next world. They disbelieve in the 'Law of Kamma', in 'Spontaneous Rising', in heaven and hell. They are not interested in conducting good 'Kamma', hence they live a reckless life. These individuals possess the '*Wrong View*'. They do not feel responsible for their actions through physical, verbal, and mental means. They live for the purpose of committing sinful deeds and causing harm to themselves and to others.

Summary

What are the benefits of studying the 'Wrong View' and the 'Right View'?

The most important benefit is that the student learns about the goals and responsibilities of being human. These include the abstinence from all evil 'Kamma', and the dedication to good 'Kamma'. Only then can one meet with happiness and success in this life, and later spend aeons in bliss in the Celestial Realm. Should anyone be able to accumulate an especially great amount of good 'Kamma', and to rid oneself of all unwholesome attachments, one would be released from the never-ending cycle of 'birth-death-rebirth'. One is then forever released to enjoy the eternal bliss in Nirvana, in the same manner as all the Perfected Arahants have done.

Toward these ends, a '*Right View*' individual would set three respective life goals in which to live by. These life goals include:

- 1) Life goals at the elementary level. Which means that one first establishes oneself in the areas of employment, home ownership, a sufficient income with leftover for savings. One is not homeless or debt-ridden.
- 2) Life goals at the middle level. Which means the accumulation of good and noble deeds. These are the only assurance to reach the '*States of Happiness*' after one's death.
- 3) Life goals at the high level. Which means sacrificing one's life for the purpose of attaining the absolute release and '*Nirvana*'.

Aside from setting these worthwhile goals, one also

sees the enormous harm of the 'Wrong View'.

As a result, all the 'Right View' individuals set their own goals in which to live by. They see the tremendous harm of the 'Wrong View' and its disastrous consequences in this and the next life. Their 'Right View' would continue to develop in their minds, along with the 'Shame and Fear of Sin', and other noble qualities. The important thing is that one develops a strong responsibility toward the honor and dignity of one's own humanity. This strong responsibility cannot help but spread to those around him all the way to the world at large. Such development empowers, protects, and encourages one to increasingly conduct good 'Kamma'. One has the firm belief that the accumulation of good, noble deeds can wean one from all evil deeds. One feels a strong shame of sin and a real fear of the evil consequences of sin. When the good and noble practices become a force of habit, the effect is a clear, bright mind. One feels calm and is not anxious. One sees the inestimable worth of the Dhamma-Discipline and is eager to increase the study and practice of the 'Dhamma' with the firm belief that:

*"Heedfulness is the way to the Deathless (Nirvana),
heedlessness is the way to death. The heedful never
die, but they that are heedless are, as it were, dead
already" ¹*

These are the important benefits of studying the 'Wrong View' and the 'Right View'. Besides the direct benefits to the student himself, the learning can result in the prosperity of society as a whole.

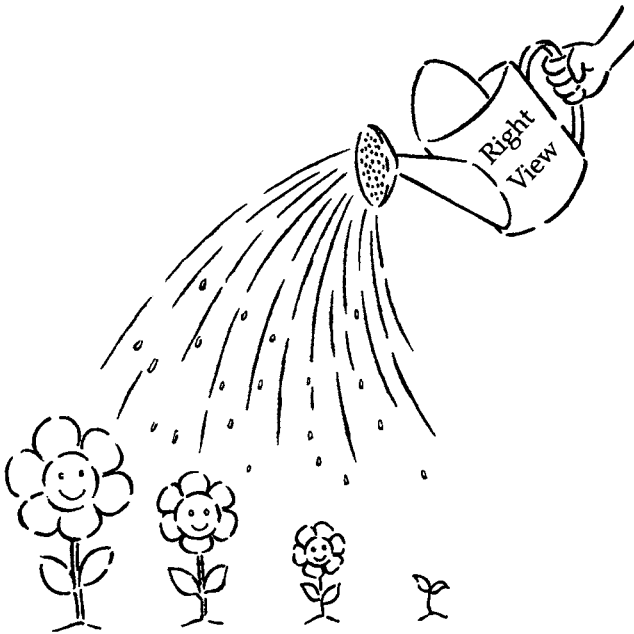
Therefore, whoever realizes that he still harbors some

¹ Dhammapada Commentary, Part 1: YAMAKA VAGGA, p.293.

degree of the '*Wrong View*' should convert himself completely to the '*Right View*'. Whoever has the '*Right View*' firmly planted in his mind, should act the part of a true friend to the relatives and friends still mired in the '*Wrong View*'. He should try to help them remove their incorrect views, and to develop instead the '*Right View*'. When the '*Right View*' is practiced until it is steeped into one's habit, it would become the source of a strong conscience and a strong responsibility in all areas of one's life.

– CHAPTER TWO –

Desirable Personal Attributes



The Two Levels of Understanding.

As mentioned in the first chapter, there are two levels of human understanding. These include the superficial and the deep levels as follows.

The Superficial Level of Understanding. It is an understanding of the general physical phenomena of the world. These include the physical sciences of matter and energy, geography, geology, the studies of soil and the atmosphere, meteorology, the study of flora and fauna. They encompass the physical healing of the body which includes physical therapy, massages, exercises, etc.

The superficial level of understanding has a low impact on the mind. Right understanding at this level does not result in heaven and wrong understanding does not result in hell.

Once one has obtained this level of understanding, it tends to stick around and is not easily forgotten. The reason is that one constantly uses such understanding in the operation of one's daily life until in time it becomes a habit. For example, when one appreciates the value of physical exercises, one tends to search for different exercise routines until the right one is found. The exercise routine is then incorporated into one's daily life until it becomes a habit. With habitual exercise, the result is a healthy body.

The Deep Level of Understanding. It deals with the understanding of the world and the reality of life. There are ten main points which include 'the giving of alms does bear fruit', the 'Law of Karma', 'the reality of this world', 'the reality of the Hereafter', etc. This level of understanding has a huge impact on the mind. When there is right understanding, there is a good chance for

the right thought, right speech, and right action. The fruit of these right paths is an all-around success and happiness in the practitioner's life. When it comes time to pass on, surely the 'States of Happiness' are awaiting them. If one harbors a wrong understanding at this level, one would already experience problems in this life because of one's own wrong thought, wrong speech, and wrong action. When one's time on earth is up, one could end up in hell. The ten main categories of understanding is termed the 'Right View', which was described in detail in Chapter 1.

It is true that the 'Right View', once learnt and understood would in time fade from memory due to disuse. The question is how can one retain in memory on a permanent basis the 'Right View' and practice it until it becomes a force of habit. *၁၇၀၂၈ ပ. ၂၅၅*

The Need to Instill in Us the 'Right View'.

Why is it necessary to instill in us the 'Right View'?

Whoever has the 'Right View' instilled in him until it becomes a force of habit would gain the wisdom and the knowledge of the 'Law of Kamma'. He sees the end results of breaking the Precepts, of harboring Partiality, of becoming involved with the 'Causes of Ruin'. At the same time, he can appreciate the value of each individual and the importance of the environment.

The wisdom and knowledge can lead the individual to:

1. Be able to control the mind such that the 'Wrong View' could not have any hold on him.
2. Develop an ever-increasing sense of responsibility toward self, others, etc.

These are the reasons for the need to instill in one the ,
'Right View ' until it becomes a force of habit.

The 'Right View ' is the Means to Cultivating a Good Conscience and a Sense of Responsibility.

In what areas can the 'Right View ' be used to effectively develop one to become conscientious and responsible?

The 'Right View ' can be used to develop one to become conscientious and responsible in the following areas:

1. In the area of one's own humanity.
2. In the area of others' humanity.
3. In the area of the morality of one's personal finance.
4. In the area of the environment.

1. Being Conscientious of and Responsible for One's Own Humanity.

What are the views and the actions of an individual who is conscientious of and responsible for his own humanity?

Such an individual maintains the view that whoever allows himself to act according to the power of the 'unwholesome attachments' cannot be noble-minded. When one gives in to the dictates of these attachments, the result is the loss of the honor and dignity of one's humanity, and one subsequently behaves more like animals. With this understanding, the '*Right View*' individual is determined to cultivate the conscientious responsibility for the honor and dignity of his own humanity. And far be it from him to commit the four deeds of the 'unwholesome attachments'.

What are the four deeds of the 'unwholesome attachments'?

The four deeds of the 'unwholesome attachments' are as follows.

1) *Killing*. Which means the killing, the injury, and the various transgressions aimed at the physical body.

2) *Stealing*. Which means taking others' belongings for one's own through stealing, robbing, fraud, violation of the ownership right, causing damages to others' properties, etc.

3) *Sexual Misconduct*. Which means adultery, promiscuity, etc.

4) *Lying*. Which means all forms of false speech.

Why are these four deeds called the 'deeds of unwholesome attachments'?

The word 'deed' implies an intentional act as described in Chapter 1. 'Unwholesome attachments' imply wickedness or the evilness of the mind. Which include greed, anger, and ignorance. These states are inherent within us at birth and are the causes of all our nefarious actions.

Therefore, the 'deed of unwholesome attachments' means any intentional act driven by the power of the 'unwholesome attachments'.¹ For instance, when one becomes greedy, one is capable of taking advantage of others through fraudulent acts. When one gets into a rage, one is capable of harming or killing others. When one indulges in one's dark passion, one is capable of such atrocious acts as different forms of self-injury, and even

¹ D., vol. 4, *Sigalovada Suttanta: The Sigala Homily*, p.173-184.

suicide. When one feels overwhelmed with greed, anger, and ignorance all at the same time, one is capable of committing all the four 'deeds of the unwholesome attachments'.

Only one's '*Right View*' can protect one from falling prey to the dictates of the 'unwholesome attachments'. Therefore, whoever commits any or all of these 'deeds of unwholesome attachments' does so as a result of giving in to his '*Wrong View*'. The '*Wrong View*' fuels one to act like a beast without any regard for the honor and dignity of one's own humanity.

On the contrary, whoever is steadfast in one's '*Right View*' is cognizant of one's conscientious responsibility for the honor and dignity of one's own humanity. One is habitually mindful of one's '*Right View*' and one intentionally keeps one's 'unwholesome attachments' under control.

It can be concluded that whoever has the 'Right View' firmly planted in one's mind, would become conscientious of and responsible for the honor and dignity of one's own humanity. The responsibility causes one to completely abstain from the 'four deeds of unwholesome attachments'. This is the responsibility that constitutes the first desirable personal attribute.

What evil fruit awaits one who commits the 'four deeds of unwholesome attachments'?

The 'four deeds of unwholesome attachments' refer to the breaking of the first four items of the five Precepts.¹ Such deeds exact suffering and punishment in accor-

¹ Five precepts include 1) to abstain from killing, 2) to abstain from stealing, 3) to abstain from sexual misconduct, 4) to abstain from lying and 5) to abstain from intoxicants causing heedlessness.

dance with the 'Law of Kamma'. If the fruit of the evil 'Kamma' shows up within one's lifetime, it can be readily understood. It is a totally different matter should the fruit be manifested in a future life.

At any rate, there had been stories of many individuals, whose evil Kammic fruit showed up in a future life. These stories were recorded in the Buddhist scriptures and are worth studying. They are cited here as case studies.

Case Study No. 1: The Kammic Fruit of Aggression.

This incident occurred while the Lord Buddha was staying in the town of Kapilavatthu.¹ At the time, the Venerable Anuruddha came into town with his retinue of five hundred monks. When his relatives knew of his visit, they all came to see him except for Princess Rohini.² When the Venerable Anuruddha did not see his sister among the visiting relatives, he inquired after her. He was told that the reason for his sister's absence was due to an embarrassing skin disease. The Senior Monk then invited his sister to come and visit him and to make 'merits' for herself. He advised Princess Rohini to sell off the jewelry that she was wearing, and to donate the money to go toward the building of a dining hall for the 'Sangha'. Princess Rohini readily complied, and a two-storied dining facility was erected. She later swept and cleaned the facility herself, the result of which was the immediate alleviation of some of her skin condition.

Once the dining facility was made ready and every-

¹ *Dhammapada Commentary. Part 3 KODHA VAGGA, p.95-97.*

² *Princess Rohini was the daughter of King Amithotana, who was the younger brother of King Suddhodana, the father of the Lord Buddha. King Amitodana had two sons named Mahanama, Anuruddha, and a daughter named Rohini.*

thing was prepared, Princess Rohini invited the, 'Sangha', which was presided over by the Lord Buddha for a meal. When the meal was over, the Lord Buddha inquired after the identity of the hostess and found that it was Princess Rohini. Still, she was not present at the banquet due to her embarrassing skin condition. The Lord Buddha then asked to see her.

Once Princess Rohini came to the Lord Buddha's presence and after having paid homage to Him, the Lord Buddha began to address her and tell her about the past 'Kamma' responsible for her present condition. During one of her past lives, she had been the wife of the King of Benares. In that life, the Queen had been extremely jealous of one of the King's court dancers and ordered the dancer to appear before her in her private court. Once there, the Queen mocked her and sprinkled poison ivy powder all over the dancer's body. At the same time, the Queen had given order to have more poison ivy powder surreptitiously sprinkled on the dancer's bed, blankets, clothes, and other personal items. The exposure to the poison ivy caused the dancer to suffer tremendous itchiness. She had scratched herself raw and blisters had formed all over her body, some were bleeding. The dancer had suffered horribly for many days as a result.

After having told Princess Rohini about this particular past 'Kamma', The Lord Buddha added, 'Rohini, the 'Kamma' which had been done in that life out of anger and jealousy, albeit being trivial, should have never been carried out at all in the first place'.

When the Lord Buddha's sermon was over, many individuals there including Princess Rohini were able to obtain the first stage of holiness (the Fruit of Conversion). As a result, her skin condition cleared up imme-

diately.

Princess Rohini's past 'Kamma' was caused by anger and jealousy, and was accountable as a form of 'Killing'. Although the physical aggression act was minor and not life-threatening, it could still send forth its fruit across many lifetimes. Consequently, Princess Rohini had to suffer such an awful skin condition that she was too embarrassed to be seen in public.

It was indeed her great good fortune to have had a true friend and brother in the Senior Monk, the Venerable Anuruddha, who made it possible for her to come to the presence of the Lord Buddha. The result of which miraculously changed her life for the better.

Case Study No. 2: The Karmic Fruit of 'Killing'

During the time of the Lord Buddha, there was a lay person who had obtained the Fruit of Conversion. His name was Maha Kala.¹ He was in the habit of keeping the Eight Precepts eight days a month. During these days, he would listen to the sermons of the 'Dhamma' all throughout the night at the great hall of Jetavana.

One night during his vigil, some thieves broke into a house in town. As the thieves were gathering up their spoil, the homeowner came upon them. In fright, the thieves ran helter-skelter with the spoil from the house. As the homeowner and his household staff were closing in on the thieves, some of them left part of the spoil on the wayside and ran for their lives. One of thieves escaped through the way leading to the pool in front of the great hall of Jetavana. While there, the thief dropped his load for a faster getaway.

¹ 1 *Dhammapada Commentary, Part 2: ATTA VAGGA*, p.359-362.

At dawn, Maha Kala left the great hall to bathe his face at the pool. Some of the household staff who had been chasing after the thieves found part of the spoil near Maha Kala. They mistook him for a thief and proceeded to beat him to death.

After the incident, all the young 'Sangha' and novices who came for water that morning at the pool saw that Maha Kala had been unjustly murdered. Later, they went to have an audience with the Lord Buddha and to report on the sad news.

The Lord Buddha said to them, 'It is true that Maha Kala did not deserve his death based on this life's deeds, but did so based on his past life's Kamma'. When the monks requested the Lord Buddha to expand on Maha Kala's particular past 'Kamma', The Lord Buddha recited it as follows.

During one of Maha Kala's past human existences, there was a band of thieves lying in wait to ambush travelers in the thick bushes of a frontier village in the Kingdom of the King of Benares. The King posted an official at the village to provide a safe passage for the travelers.

One day, a man arrived in a small carriage with his beautiful wife, to ask the official to escort them across to the other side. Since the official had designs on the man's wife upon setting eyes on her, he wanted the husband to be disposed of so that he could make the woman his wife. The official falsely advised the travelers to take shelter at the gatehouse for the night, and to wait until morning to cross the forest. He insisted the couple to stay in spite of their unwillingness to tarry, since it was still early enough to journey on.

During the night, the official told his servant to hide

one of his gems in the couple's small carriage. In the morning, the official pretended to wail about his lost gem, and commanded his underlings to search the small carriage. The official and his underlings found the planted gem and beat the poor traveler to death. They unceremoniously disposed of the body afterward. This official had been Maha Kala's past life. At death, he had gone directly to Avici Hell (the lowest hell) and had been repeatedly burnt to death for aeons and aeons. Once released from hell, he had been reborn as a human being. But because of the residual, 'Kamma' of 'Killing', he had been beaten to death for the past one hundred lifetimes.

From the above two case studies, the reader can appreciate that the, 'deeds of unwholesome attachments', no matter how slight or grotesque, exact a punishment far worse than the original deed. For this reason, whoever is firmly grounded in the, '*Right View*', naturally has the deep understanding and the knowledge of the 'Law of Kamma'. One endeavors at all times to avoid all deeds of, 'unwholesome attachments'. Only the, '*Wrong View*' individuals would stubbornly persist in challenging the 'Law of Kamma', and they do so to their ultimate demise.

2. Being Conscientious of and Responsible for Others' Humanity.

What is the behavior of an individual who is conscientious of and responsible for others' humanity?

The behavior of such an individual is marked by the *absence of partiality*.

Partiality implies an action that causes an undeserv-

ing individual to receive benefit while a deserving individual to receive nothing. Or it causes an individual who deserves a little to receive a lot and vice versa.

There are four causes of partiality.¹

- 1) Partiality caused by desire.
- 2) Partiality caused by ill-will.
- 3) Partiality caused by delusion or stupidity.
- 4) Partiality caused by fear.

1) *Partiality caused by desire.* Which means the partiality caused by love or a special bond between individuals. It causes the practitioner to conduct deeds that are unjust, and improper. The practitioner offers unfair advantage to a particular individual because he is a favorite, a relative, a friend, a business partner, etc. Partiality caused by desire is the root cause of corruption at every level of society.

2) *Partiality caused by ill will.* Which means the partiality caused by personal wrath, and personal vengeance. It causes the practitioner to conduct unjust deeds. The practitioner makes certain that the individual deserving of benefit to receive less than what he deserves or to receive nothing at all. Or he finds the individual guilty just because he has a legal share of the benefit. Partiality caused by ill will is the root cause of all the plotting and scheming behind someone's back seen in society.

3) *Partiality caused by stupidity or delusion.* Which means the partiality caused by foolishness and stupidity. It causes the practitioner to conduct unjust deeds as a result of his short-sightedness and narrow-mindedness. When stupidity is combined with the other three causes

¹ A., vol. 2, *The Book of the Fours: vii(17)*. No-bourn, p.18.

of partiality, it amplifies the malice of the unjust act to a high level. In this case, the individual deserving of the benefit may receive nothing or the undeserving individual may receive everything. Or it causes an individual deserving of a penalty to go free, while the innocent individual to receive a full penalty. The partiality caused by stupidity leads to the disrespect for the rules and regulations of society, and for the law. It is the root cause of unrest in society.

4) *Partiality caused by fear.* Which means the partiality caused by the fear of future harm to oneself. It causes the practitioner to conduct unjust deeds as a result of his cowardice, and his desire to save his own skin. It causes the individual deserving of the benefit to receive none, and the individual undeserving of the benefit to receive all. It causes the guilty individual to go free, and the innocent individual to be penalized. *Partiality caused by fear is the means to harm brought about by mobsters and crime organizations through the demand of protection money, and other forms of extortion, the setting up of false testimonies, etc.*

Whoever possesses one or all four causes of partiality does so because the 'Right View' has not been firmly planted in his mind. This gives way to the 'Wrong View' and one becomes constantly dominated by it. Therefore, he cannot appreciate the problems and sufferings wrought on others as a result of his partial practices. For the practitioner, besides incurring the sins that follow him from this life to the next, he is also destroying the rules and regulations, the harmony, the peace and happiness of others in society. Hence, partial individuals lack the conscientious responsibility for the honor and

dignity of others' humanity.

On the contrary, 'Right View' individuals can appreciate the harm and the danger of partial practices. As a result, they are careful not to conduct any unjust deed.

It can be said that an individual who is firmly grounded on the 'Right View' would be conscientious of and responsible for the honor and dignity of others' humanity. He abstains from all partial practices. This is the responsibility that constitutes the second desirable personal attribute.

What is the fruit of partial practices?

On the part of the victim, for certain there would be suffering and havoc. For the partial individual, he would come under severe criticism and would be repugnant to all that uphold justice. In certain cases, he may incur a vengeance from the victim. And the vengeance that binds them would cause them to act out in a painful drama throughout their future existences.

In any case, the practice of partiality is an evil deed. The practitioner would certainly meet with the fruit of his evil, 'Kamma'. Although one may not encounter the evil fruit in this life, he would most certainly do so in the next one. The Buddhist scriptures contain many such accounts. Two of the accounts would be used here as case studies as follows.

Case Study No. 1: The Kammic Fruit of a Judge Who Rendered Unjust Verdicts.

Once the Lord Buddha was staying at Veluvana monastery in the city of Rajagaha.¹ His two Perfected Disciples, the Ven. Lakkhana and the Ven. Maha Moggallana,

¹ S., vol. 1, Lakkhanasamyutta, p.817.

were staying at Vulture Peak. Each morning, they would go on their almsround in the city of Rajagaha. One day, after having returned from their almsround, and after having had their meals, they had an audience with the Lord Buddha as was customary. They paid homage to the Lord Buddha and were appropriately seated. the Ven. Lakkhana took the opportunity to ask the Lord Buddha about what the Ven. Maha Moggallana had seen while traveling down from Vulture Peak that morning. the Ven. Maha Moggallana then related the following story to the Lord Buddha.

“Exalted One, while coming down from Vulture Peak, I saw a Peta (hungry ghost) with testicles, each the size of a large clay pot, the Peta was floating in midair. When it touched ground and started walking, it hoisted its testicles onto its shoulders. When it sat, it sat right on its testicles. All the while, there were flocks of vultures, crows, and hawks, following the Peta around and viciously pecking at it. The Peta had screamed out constantly in great agony.”

The Lord Buddha had said to the Disciples, “Behold, Disciples who possess Celestial Eye and the Inner Knowledge. Therefore, you were able to bear witness to this occurrence. I have seen this very Peta before but have not revealed it to anyone, for I saw no benefit in revealing this fact at the time. Moreover, those who disbelieved me might have suffered tremendously as a result of their disbelief.

Monks, this Peta had once been a judge who had taken bribes and had delivered unfair verdicts. He had been a judge in this very city. Because of this sin, he had been

repeatedly burnt to death in hell for millions of years. His residual sin caused him to be reborn a Peta with such a grotesque condition.”

Case Study No. 2: The Kammic Fruit of Just Two Good Deeds among All the Bad Deeds.

The Lord Buddha while staying at the Great Hall of Jetavana, had preached a sermon about the fruit of keeping the Eight Precepts for just half a day. He related the following account to the congregation: ¹

Once, there was a King living in the city of Benares called Bramadatta. He was a righteous King and ruled his kingdom with righteousness. He regularly gave alms to the ‘Sangha’ and to the needy and strictly kept the Precepts. On every Holy Day (or Fast Day, which occurs once a week) he would keep the Eight Precepts. He would encourage his subjects and his court officials to keep the Eight Precepts on these days as well. The King had an adviser on court matters who was in the habit of taking bribes, extorting money from the public, delivering unjust verdicts, and never observed the Eight Precepts.

On one particular Buddhist Holy Day, the King ordered all of his court officials to come before him. He asked if they were keeping the Eight Precepts² on that day, to which question everyone including the adviser answered in the affirmative. After having told a

¹ J., vol. 5, No. 511: KIMCHANDA-JATAKA, p.1-5.

² Eight Precepts include 1) to abstain from killing, 2) to abstain from stealing, 3) to abstain from sexual misconduct, 4) to abstain from lying, 5) to abstain from intoxicants causing heedlessness, 6) to abstain from untimely eating, 7) to abstain from dancing, singing, music and unseemly shows, from wearing garlands, smattering with scents, and embellishment with unguents, and 8) to abstain from the use of high and large luxurious couches.

lie in front of everyone, the adviser left the palace.

Later on that day, a high-ranking official challenged the adviser about his blatant lie. The adviser made an excuse by saying that when he returned home that evening, he would not partake of any dinner. This entitled him to half a day of keeping the Eight Precepts. He made good on his word and did abstain from an evening meal on that day. Therefore, the wicked adviser had the chance to conduct his first decent deed then.

One day, a woman took her case before the adviser. She had to stay overnight to see him. The next day was a Buddhist Holy Day and the woman was intent on observing the Eight Precepts as she did usually. As she made ready by rinsing her mouth with some clean water, someone had brought a gift of ripe mangoes for the adviser. Knowing that the woman was getting ready for the Buddhist Holy Day, the adviser offered the mangoes to her and told her to eat them first. This was the adviser's second decent deed.

When the adviser died, he was reborn a male Celestial Being amidst a gold mansion, and was surrounded by a retinue of sixteen thousand nymphs. These circumstances were his to enjoy by night. However, the accumulated bad deeds turned him into a Peta (hungry ghost) in the morning dwelling in the Ambavana mango-grove. As a Peta, its body was very tall and very thin, the shape of a palm tree. It was lit up with many lights like a Butea tree in full bloom. Its fingernails were the size and shape of a large broad-blade pickax, which it used to pick at the flesh off his back to feed itself. All the while it screamed with horrendous pain. When the sun went down, the Peta form disappeared to be replaced by the glorious form of a male Celestial Being with all of the

accompanied privileges once again. On and on for aeons, this cycle of life continued for him.

The Lord Buddha said that the Peta was able to enjoy the Celestial status with all of the trappings and the retinue of nymphs as a result of keeping the Eight Precepts for just half a day. The Peta was able to dwell in the mango-grove as a result of his charitable gift of mangoes to the woman. However, because of the sins of taking bribes, and of delivering unjust verdicts, the Peta had to pick at his own flesh to feed itself.

These two case studies were accounts of individuals involved in the keeping of justice but each carried out his duty in a partial, unjust manner. Their lives in the 'Hereafter' differed because of the differences in the details of their behavior in their previous existence.

At any rate, any good or bad deed, however slight, does have unimaginably far-reaching consequences. For example, the adviser observed the Eight Precepts for just half a day, the result was the Celestial status complete with all of the accompanied privileges during the night time. Still, the sins committed by these two individuals may have appeared minor to those not of the '*Right View*', but one can appreciate that the fruit was truly horrid. For this reason, the wise of old cautioned us, "Do not commit even the smallest of sin, but rush to perform even the smallest of good deeds."

3. Being Conscientious of and Responsible for the Morality of One's Personal Finances.

What is the behavior of an individual who is conscientious of and responsible for the morality of his personal finances?

The behavior of such an individual is characterized by the complete abstinence from all the 'Causes of Ruin'.

The six 'Causes of Ruin:

- 1) Substance addiction, which includes alcohol, and other forms of substance addiction.
- 2) A penchant for the nightlife.
- 3) Game and sport junkies.
- 4) Gambling addiction.
- 5) Keeping the company of wicked or evil individuals.
- 6) Laziness.

These causes are considered the 'Gateway to Ruin'. They provide no benefit whatsoever. Moreover, the lifestyles of these practices destroy the morality of personal finances, and wreak havoc for all concerned. The Lord Buddha had given us some examples of the harm wrought by each of the 'Causes of Ruin' as follows.¹

1) The harm wrought by substance addiction.

- 1.1) The loss of money.*
- 1.2) The loss of temper.*
- 1.3) The loss of health.*
- 1.4) The loss of reputation.*

¹ D., vol. 4, *Sigalovada Suttanta: The Sigala Homily*, p.173-184.

1.5) *The loss of future prospects.*

1.6) *The loss of a normal brain function.*

2) *The harm wrought by a penchant for the nightlife.*

A penchant for the nightlife means the habitual search for nightly, erotic entertainment in bars, pubs, massage parlors, discotheques, nightclubs, etc. It causes the following forms of harm:

2.1) *One loses self-protection.* These nocturnal places are the haunts of 'Wrong View' individuals that are full of wickedness. Temper can flare and danger can be ignited in these places. Individuals who frequent such places are unnecessarily exposing themselves to danger. Besides wasting money and time that could have been spent doing good deeds, one may easily lose one's life in the process.

2.2) *One loses the protection for one's spouse and children.* A parent that has a penchant for the nightlife sets a poor example for the children. One exposes oneself and ultimately one's family to the possible danger inherent in this habit.

2.3) *One loses the protection of one's material possession.* While out carousing into the night, one's property may be broken into by thieves, for example.

2.4) *One arouses the suspicion of others in the community.* Since nocturnal activities are the habit of criminals, one that goes out carousing all night may well be mistaken for a criminal.

2.5) *One can become a scapegoat.* No decent individuals would go out carousing at night. Those who do so are not considered decent and can easily incur the blame or suspicion for any crime that occurs.

2.6) *The habit causes suffering for all concerned.* It goes without saying that one who has a penchant for the nightlife spends a lot of money uselessly. Besides not being able to save any money, the practice can cause one to get into debt as well. It is certain that sooner or later, those who have a penchant for the nightlife would encounter money problems.

3) *The harm wrought by a game and sport junky.*

The occasional enjoyment of such forms of entertainment for the purpose of rest and relaxation is not considered harmful. What is harmful is the obsession to the point of addiction of such entertainment. Addiction causes one to indulge in the habit at the expense of earning one's livelihood, and money problems are not far behind.

The 'Right View' individual can appreciate that economical pressure is the main force that drives desperate individuals to commit evil deeds in order to survive. When the game and sport junkies succumb to this force out of desperation, personal disasters are sure to ensue.

4) *The harm wrought by gambling addiction.*

Nobody engaged in all forms of gambling does so to lose, all expect to win. Ultimately, whether win or lose, all gamblers end up as losers.

4.1) Individuals who win at a gambling incur a ready retribution, since they win at the expense of the losers. In cases where the stake is very high, the loser could well plot and plan to get his money back. If one cannot win back what one lost through gambling means, one might resort to violent means.

4.2) Those who win may well squander their win-

ning. Those who lose may become penniless or go into debt. Ultimately, most gamblers end up with nothing.

4.3) When penniless and deep in debt, a gambler would lie his way out of any tight situation. His words become meaningless and when he may at times speak truth, nobody would believe him.

4.4) The condition and behavior of a gambling addict incurs contempt from the general public, friends and relatives alike.

4.5) A gambling addict has a poor marriage prospect. We all know that a gambling addict is an indecent sort, and can hardly be a suitable marriage partner for any decent person except for a fellow gambling addict.

The reader can appreciate that all gambling addicts encounter money problems on a regular basis. They are considered to lack the conscientious responsibility for the morality of their own finances.

5) The harm of keeping the company of evil individuals.

The human mind is more easily swayed toward evil than good. When one befriends a wicked individual, one is easily led to join in the friend's immoral activities. These include:

5.1) *Being led to join in various gambling activities.*

5.2) *Being led to promiscuous practices.*

5.3) *Being led to join in drinking binges.*

5.4) *Being led into committing outright frauds.*

5.5) *Being led into conning and cheating others.*

5.6) *Being led into a criminal gang.*

Wicked individuals are grounded in the 'Wrong View'. Their minds are subsequently clouded over and dark-

ened. They are not interested or do not believe in the 'Law of Kamma'. They are capable of committing all the 'four deeds of unwholesome attachments'. They can get involved in some or all 'Causes of Ruin'. They are biased, unjust, and irresponsible. Therefore, the worst of all the 'Causes of Ruin' is 'keeping the company of evil individuals'.

6) The harm wrought by laziness at work.

Working to earn a living is everyone's responsibility. One works to earn enough to provide for one's needs, for helping friends and relatives out in times of need, for the giving of alms, and for one's savings.

Individuals who are lazy at work, who do not finish a task, who are tardy at earning a living, who pass the time idly, can be considered to be brain-dead and dead to good deeds. Some individuals cannot be bothered to earn a living in spite of their poverty. They choose rather to survive by taking advantage of others through different means. They become a parasite of society. They think nothing of destroying the environment and the natural resources just for their own gains.

Other individuals inherited a fortune and waste their time indulging in all 'Causes of Ruin'. They cause the deterioration of morality in general and the morality of their personal finances in particular. Laziness at work is therefore one of the 'Causes of Ruin' in one's life.

What is the behavior of a lazy individual?

The Lord Buddha mentioned six examples of such behavior as follows.

6.1) It is too cold to work.

6.2) It is too hot to work.

6.3) *It is too late in the afternoon to work.*

6.4) *It is too early in the morning to work.*

6.5) *It is too early in the evening to work.*

6.6) *They feel too parched to work.*

Whoever is in the habit of procrastinating can come up with all sorts of excuses to get out of work. It is clear that lazy individuals cannot accomplish anything good in life, therefore, they are not good people.

The reader by now can appreciate the harm of the six major 'Causes of Ruin'. Individuals firmly planted in the 'Right View' realize the awful harm of the 'Causes of Ruin' and abstain completely from them. Only the 'Wrong View' individuals would indulge in the 'Causes of Ruin' in the same manner as moths being attracted by the fire and flying into it to their death.

It can be said that *individuals who are firmly grounded in the 'Right View' would naturally be conscientious and responsible for the morality of their own personal finances. This is the third desirable personal attribute.*

What harm and danger awaits those who lack the conscientious responsibility for the morality of their own personal finances?

Such individuals tend to indulge in some or all of the 'Causes of Ruin' and would without doubt meet with disastrous consequences in both this and the next life. There were accounts of many individuals recorded in the Buddhist scriptures. Only a couple of them will be cited here as case studies.

Case Study No. 1: The Wealthy Man Who Became a Beggar as a Result of Alcohol Addiction.

Once the Lord Buddha was staying at the Isipatana forest.¹ One day, He saw an elderly beggar standing with his wife at the entrance of the dining hall. They were waiting for leftovers from the 'Sangha' and the novices. At the sight of them, the Lord Buddha smiled. The Venerable Ananda asked the Lord Buddha the reason for His smile. The Lord Buddha told the Venerable to look at the elderly couple, He then told 'Ananda' the following story.

The elderly beggar was once the son of a wealthy man in the city of Benares. The wealthy man's fortune was worth 800 million rupees. Because of the great wealth, his parents did not encourage the son to be trained in any profession except for playing some musical instruments, singing, and dancing for his own pleasure.

His wife also came from a wealthy family and similar training background.

When both sets of parents died, the couple inherited a combined fortune worth 1,600 million rupees as well as many real estate properties.

In time, through his curiosity and the coaxing of bad company, the wealthy young man began to drink alcoholic drinks. He started spending his fortune by indulging in all sorts of entertainment, drinking and carousing with a large entourage of indecent, conniving men.

As the couple had only expenses but no income, in time they managed to squander away all of their fortune. Once the cash ran out, they began to sell off their real

¹ *Dhammapada Commentary, Part 2: JARA VAGGA, p.346-348.*

estate properties, their carriages, their heirlooms, and eventually their home. Finally, they ended up being the beggars that they were then.

The Lord Buddha went on saying that if the man had learnt to apply himself to business in his youth, he would have become the wealthiest man in Benares. Should he later become a monk, he would have attained the 'Arahatship'. And his wife would have attained the 'Fruit of the Third Path'.

And had the man not squandered away his fortune and learnt to apply himself to business in his middle years, he would have become the second wealthiest man in Benares. Should he later become a monk, he would have attained the 'Fruit of the Third Path'. And his wife would have attained the 'Fruit of the Second Path'.

Had the man not squandered away his fortune and learnt to apply himself to business in his late years, he would have become the third wealthiest man in Benares. Should he later become a monk, he would have attained the 'Fruit of the Second Path'. And his wife would have attained the 'Fruit of Conversion'. But now, he had squandered away his fortune and lost the chance to attain any level of spiritual achievement.

If we were to consider this case further by the 'Law of Kamma', we could say that the couple had both accumulated 'merits' in the forms of the keeping of the Precepts, and the giving of alms in their previous existence. Hence, they were each born into a wealthy family in the present existence. However, the lack of meditation practice in their previous life caused their parents to lack the wisdom to have them trained in any worthwhile profession. And caused them not to seek to be trained either.

Moreover, during the present existence, the couple did not accumulate any new 'merits'. Worse, they indulged in the 'Causes of Ruin', and the husband eventually became addicted to alcohol. In the 'Hereafter', they would both be destined for the '*States of Unhappiness*'. They would both receive a most horrid punishment in hell that would last for millions of years.

Once they served their severe sentences in hell and finally had a chance for a rebirth into the Human Realm, they would be reborn into poverty, since they had not accumulated any 'merits' through the giving of alms in their present existence. They might end up being a beggar since infancy. For the husband, besides being reborn into poverty, he might be reborn retarded as well due to the residual evil 'Kamma' of alcohol addiction.

Case Study No. 2: Patricide as a Result of Keeping the Company of an Evil Individual.

During the era of the Lord Buddha, there was a king of the Magadha region named 'Bimbisara'. King Bimbisara was a devout Buddhist. He had studied and practiced the 'Dhamma' until he attained the Fruit of Conversion.¹ Whenever the king went to have an audience with the Lord Buddha, he always brought along with him his young son and heir 'Ajatasattu'.

Now, 'Devadatta' was one of the Lord Buddha's six royal relatives, who left all their worldly goods to become monks. In time, four of the princes were able to attain the 'Arahatship', while the fifth prince, 'Ananda', attained the Fruit of Conversion. However, 'Devadatta' managed merely to attain the lower level of Magical Power.

¹ *Dhammapada Commentary, Part 1: YAMAKA VAGGA, p. 230-242.*

While the Lord Buddha was staying at the city of Kosambi, He and His Perfected Disciples had been greatly honored with many gifts of riches. However, 'Devadatta' did not receive anything at all.

Having felt inferior to and jealous of the Lord Buddha and His Perfected Disciples, 'Devadatta' began to plot a scheme to obtain gifts of riches for himself. He was planning to use King Bimbisara's young son to get what he wanted. The reason he picked 'Ajatasattu' was that he was still young, naive and impressionable. With the plan in place, 'Devadatta' set off immediately for the city of Rajagaha.

Using his Magical Power, 'Devadatta' changed his form into a small child whose body was wrapped around by many snakes. He flew and landed right on young Ajatasattu's lap. When the youth became frightened, 'Devadatta' turned his form back to that of a monk, and stood in front of the youth. The trick worked on the youth like a charm. From that day onward, the youth offered 'Devadatta' many gifts of riches.

As a result, 'Devadatta' began to have big plans for himself. He went to the Lord Buddha while the Lord Buddha was preaching a sermon to a king and a large number of believers. He asked the Lord Buddha to resign on account of His advanced age and let him rule over all the 'Sangha' in the Lord Buddha's place. When the Lord Buddha did not give in to his request, and blamed him for his impertinence, 'Devadatta' went away with a vengeful heart.

Later on, 'Devadatta' did his best to persuade 'Ajatasattu' to murder his own father and took over the throne. He reasoned that in this way, 'Ajatasattu' would

be sure to rule the kingdom and enjoy the privileges of a king while he was still young, since nobody could be sure how long one would live. And for his own part, 'Devadatta' would murder the Lord Buddha and proclaimed himself the next Buddha.

In his naivete and ignorance, 'Ajatasattu' went along with Devadatta's evil scheme, and planned to kill his father himself. At the first trial, the youth's nervousness and clumsiness caused the court officials to become suspicious. They reported their suspicion to the king. Instead of punishing his son for his treachery, the pious king, when knowing of his son's desire, decided to abdicate right away and let his son have the throne.

Once on the throne, 'Ajatasattu' had no more reason to dispose of his father. But 'Devadatta' in his malice continued to convince 'Ajatasattu' to murder his father to prevent any possible harm that might come to the new king in the future. As a result, King Bimbisara was put in prison. He was tortured by having his soles slit open, and starved until he eventually died.

On the day that King Bimbisara died, a court messenger sent two messages to the king's minister. One contained the news about the birth of the king's newborn, and the other the news of his father's death. The minister decided to present the former news to the king first.

Upon hearing about the birth of his newborn, the king was filled with love for his infant to overflowing. In that instant, he realized the love that his father must have felt for him. He wanted his minister to release his father from prison immediately. Alas, upon hearing about his father's death, he was so overcome with emotion that he wept.

From then on, the king remained grief-stricken and unable to sleep day or night. He longed especially for a true friend.

One day, the Lord Buddha went to stay at the Ambavana Park which belonged to the court doctor in the city of Rajagaha. The Lord Buddha went there with a group of 1,250 monks. The court doctor advised King Ajatasattu to have an audience with the Exalted One on one full-moon evening.

After the Lord Buddha had conversed with the king about the 'Dhamma' until he realized the 'Law of Kamma', the king asked to have the Triple Gem (The Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha) to be his refuge. At the same time, he pledged his support for the Buddhist Faith for the remaining of his life. Afterward, he confessed his sin of patricide to the Lord Buddha.

When the king had departed, the Lord Buddha told His Disciples that had the king not committed patricide, he would have attained the Fruit of Conversion that night. As a result of his faith in the Triple Gem and his confession to the Lord Buddha, his sentence in the 'Hereafter' would be reduced to 60,000 years in hell, instead of aeons and aeons of horrendous agony in the Avici Hell.

If we were to consider King Ajatasattu's life according to the 'Law of Kamma', the Reality of this World, the Reality of the Hereafter, and the Causes of Ruin, we could surmise that the king had accumulated a good deal of 'merits' in his previous existences. The 'merits' were in the forms of alms-giving, and the keeping of the Precepts. Such 'merits' caused him to be born into a royal family. But because of his grave sin of patricide, he would be destined for the 'States of Unhappiness' in the 'Here-

after' albeit having his sentence reduced tremendously by the grace of his faith in the Triple Gem, and the confession of his sin to the Lord Buddha.

The root cause of the king's serious sin was his close association with an evil man like 'Devadatta'. For these reasons, one needs to be aware of the fact that *keeping the company of an evil individual is truly the ultimate cause of ruin.*

4. To be Conscientious of and Responsible for the Environment.

There are two aspects of the conscientious responsibility for the environment.

1) To be conscientious of and responsible for those around us.

2) To be conscientious of and responsible for the natural environment.

1) To be conscientious of and responsible for those around us.

It is a fact that nobody can exist alone. We are all dependent on one another starting from those we have been close to since birth to those who are complete strangers to us.

Nonetheless, whether one associates with a large number of people or just a few, those around us can be placed into six different groups. The Buddhist scriptures defined these groups as the 'Six Directions' as follows.

1.1) *The Front, which includes one's parents.*

1.2) *The Right, which includes one's teachers.*

1.3) *The Rear, which includes one's spouse and children.*

- 1.4) *The Left, which includes one's relatives and friends.*
- 1.5) *The Below, which includes one's colleagues and subordinates.*
- 1.6) *The Above, which includes the 'Sangha', who teach the people of the world to live up to the honor and dignity of their humanity.*

From the above description of the 'Six Directions', it is clear that each one of us stands at the center and interacts with those around us. They, in turn, also interact with us. If the interactions proceed smoothly, all concerned can experience some semblance of happiness due to the lack of conflicts. If one properly fulfills one's responsibilities toward the concerned individuals in each direction, one is said to be conscientiously responsible for those around him. Or one is conscientiously responsible for the 'Six Directions' in one's life.

What is the behavior of an individual who is conscientious of and responsible for the 'Six Directions' in his life?

The Lord Buddha had defined in the scriptures the responsibilities that one must take for the individuals in the 'Six Directions' of one's life and vice versa. The detail of which will be given in Chapter 4. Suffice it to say for now that an individual who is firmly planted on the 'Right View' would naturally be able to properly fulfill his responsibilities for those in his 'Six Directions'.

2) To be conscientious of and responsible for the natural environment.

The natural environment that supports our livelihood can be either close to us or far away from us. The natu-

ral environment that is close to us includes our home, the land, the air, the roads, the canals, the rivers, the trees around and near our house, pests, insects, etc. The natural environment that is far away from us includes the sea, the ocean, the forest, the mountain, the wild animals, etc.

What is the behavior of an individual who is conscientious of and responsible for the natural environment?

Individuals who are firmly grounded in the '*Right View*' would naturally feel responsible for the natural environment. They realize how important the environment is to their survival. They fully participate in the conservation of the local flora and fauna, and all the other natural resources. They start with keeping their houses and gardens clean. They take care not to pollute the air and the waterway. They are not involved in any illegal logging, etc., etc.

It can be said that all the damages done to the environment have all been caused by the '*Wrong View*' individuals, given their wrong thought, wrong speech, wrong action, and wrong livelihood.

What harm is caused by the lack of conscientious responsibility for the environment?

Greed, anger, and ignorance are the root causes of such irresponsibility. These 'unwholesome attachments' drive their slaves to manifest all sorts of destructive behavior. Under the influence of greed and ignorance, one thinks nothing of deriving one's wealth from illegal logging among other wicked activities. Such irresponsibility has extensive repercussions on the ecosystem. The damages,

once done, are difficult or impossible to repair.

Some 'Wrong View' individuals are the slaves of anger and ignorance. They are driven to cause problems wherever they are. Some may resort to bodily harm or worse with the intention to hurt others. Ultimately, one cannot escape from the problems that one has caused. Such is the behavior of one who lacks the responsibility for all concerned in the 'Six Directions' in one's life.

There has been a constant stream of news broadcast concerning the problems, which arise out of the lack of responsibility for the environment. However, such news is not prevalent only in this day and age but had been so in times passed as well. There were many such accounts recorded in the Buddhist scriptures, only a couple of them will be given here as examples. Case Study No. 1 deals with the sin committed against one of the 'Six Directions' in one's life. Case Study No. 2 deals with the destruction of the natural environment.

Case Study No. 1: What goes around comes around.

Once, the Lord Buddha was staying at the hall of the Jetavana monastery when the following incident regarding a hunter named 'Koka' took place.¹

One morning, the hunter 'Koka' left for the forest with his pack of dogs. On the way he passed by a monk on his almsround. Feeling angry from his ignorant thought that he had met a curse of a man. He thought further that because of the encounter, he would surely not catch anything that day. The monk, unaware of any malice toward him, went on his round in the village as usual. When he was finished, he headed back to the monas-

¹ *Dhammapada Commentary, Part 2: PAPA VAGGA, p.282-284.*

tery.

The hunter went around the forest all day without finding anything and decided to head home. On his way, he happened to see the monk again, and concluded in his malicious way that the monk was the sole cause of his failure that day. So he decided to set the dogs on the monk and did not budge even when the monk pleaded for mercy. Instead, he commanded the dogs to attack the monk, who hastened to climb up onto a tree. The monk found a branch about two meters up from the ground to perch on. The dogs were yelping at him from the ground below. When the dogs could not reach the monk, the hunter used the arrow to viciously pierce the monk's feet. The pain so overwhelmed the monk that in his struggle to avoid the arrow, he accidentally lost his robe. It landed on the hunter and covered him from head to toes.

Right away the dogs rushed at the covered figure, thinking the monk had fallen off the tree. They attacked the hunter so ferociously that after a while only the hunter's bones were left. As the dogs backed away from the scene, the monk broke a twig and threw it at the dogs. They looked up, saw the monk, and realized that they had just devoured their own master. So they ran off into the forest.

The monk climbed down from the tree and went directly to have an audience with the Lord Buddha. He related the whole experience to the Exalted One and was concerned if he had broken any Precept as result of the incident.

The Lord Buddha listened to the monk's account then said, "You have not broken any Precept and the sacred-

ness of your monkhood is still intact. The hunter had meant to harm an innocent man totally unprovoked, therefore, he had met with disaster himself. Not only in this life that the hunter committed an atrocious act against an innocent person and found himself at the receiving end of his own viciousness. He had done so in his previous existence as well.,”

After having revealed to the ‘Sangha’ the hunter’s particular past ‘Kamma’, the Lord Buddha went on to say,

“Whoever harms an innocent, righteous, individual would receive the intended harm himself. In the same manner that the fine dust is blown against the breeze back to the originator.”

The reader may well appreciate that the ‘Bhikku’ (monk) who practices righteousness is one of the lay people’s ‘Six Directions’. The Lord Buddha had assigned the ‘Bhikku’ to be in the ‘Above Direction’, since the ‘Bhikku’ had been given the responsibility to teach the lay individuals about human decency and about one’s life objective and to show the lay people the way to the Celestial Realm in the ‘Hereafter’.

As for the ‘Bhikku’ in this story, the hunter had no way of knowing whether the monk had practiced righteousness. Neither could he prove that the ‘Bhikku’ was deficient in his Precepts keeping, or behaved inappropriately in any way. He was also ignorant of what harm might befall him as a result of his evil act. What then caused the hunter to behave as he did?

The cause came from his illogical reasoning, which arose as a result of the deeply entrenched ‘Wrong View’ in his mind. It drove him to get so furious without any just cause and to harm the ‘Bhikku’ without any reason.

Ultimately, he managed to hurt only himself. What goes around does come around indeed!

Case Study No. 2: Greed and Ignorance Are the Causes of Personal Destruction.

Once, the Lord Buddha was staying at the Jetavana monastery in the city of Savatthi. A group of itinerant merchants went to have an audience with the Exalted One and to make an offering of 'high merits'. They had asked for His blessings prior to leaving for their trade route with a caravan of 500 wagons.¹

During their travel, the itinerant merchants had gotten lost in a parched land as they ran out of food and water. They came across a great banyan tree that was above the residence of a King Serpent or Phya Naga (a Celestial being that can take the form of a King Serpent as well as the form of a human, resplendent with jewels). Being unaware of this fact, the merchants began to unhitch their wagons to rest beneath the great tree.

Upon observing the green, luscious leaves of the banyan tree, the merchants thought they might be able to extract some water from a branch of the tree. They chopped down a branch on the eastern side and immediately a stream of water the size of a palm-tree trunk came gushing out. The merchants merrily bathed themselves and drank to their fill.

The merchants then proceeded to cut down a branch on the southern side, hoping to find more miraculous treasure. As soon as the deed was completed, there issued forth from the cut-mark an abundant number of delectable dishes. As a result, the merchants were able to completely satiate their hunger.

¹ J., vol. 3: MAHA-VANIJA-JATAKA, No. 493, p.221-223.

With the hope of finding more treasure, they proceeded to cut down another branch on the western side. This time many beautifully attired women appeared, and they entertained the merchants all around.

Now they proceeded to cut down a branch from the northern side, this time seven kinds of gems came pouring out. There were enough gems there to fill all 500 of the merchants' wagons. With the treasure, the grateful merchants departed for the city of Savatthi immediately. After having hidden their treasure in a secure place, they went to have an audience with the Lord Buddha with the intention to request the Exalted One's indulgence for an offering of 'high merits' the following morning. They intended to dedicate the 'high merits' to the tree divinity (Rukkha Deva) that provided them with such treasures and happiness.

The next morning, after having His meal, the Lord Buddha asked the merchants to which Rukkha Deva they intended to dedicate their 'merits'. The merchants then went on to recount the entire incident to the Lord Buddha. When the merchants were finished with their story, the Lord Buddha praised them for not being over-greedy and for knowing how much was enough. As a result, they were able to leave in safety with the treasure. Unlike another group of merchants long ago in the past, who were overcome by greed and had lost both the treasure and their lives as a result. Wanting to know more about this incident, the merchants prayed the Lord Buddha to tell it to them.

A long time ago, another group of merchants had had exactly all the same experiences as this present group with the same banyan tree. However, this other group of merchants were over-greedy and ignorant. They were

not satisfied with just 500 wagonsfull of treasure, and wanted to cut down the whole tree altogether to see what other treasures might appear. The wagon master had known that such action would forebode ill for all of them. So he knelt down and begged his companions not to cut down the tree. They paid no heed to the wagon master.

The King Serpent that owned the miraculous tree had known of the merchants' greed and evil intention beforehand. He had ordered his troop to be prepared and to kill all but the wagon master.

As soon as the tree was cut down, the Naga troop that consisted of 25 armored men, 300 archers, and 600 men with shields, rushed out from the ground. They caught all the men except for the wagon master, tied them up, and executed them all. Later they helped the wagon master to drive all 500 wagons laden with treasure back to the city of Benares. After having helped the wagon master to stow away all of the treasure, the Nagas in the form of men took their leave and returned to their dwelling place in a realm beneath the earth surface.

When the Lord Buddha was finished with the story, He went on to reveal that the King Serpent or Phya Naga had been reborn in this life as 'Venerable Sariputta', one of His Perfected Disciples. And the wagon master was His own past life.

The reader can appreciate from the above account how greed and ignorance led the merchants to their own demise in the end. In the present days, it is also greed and ignorance that led certain powerful individuals to destroy the environment in various ways for their own gains. The destructive activities include illegal logging, the encroachment of national parks, illegal hunting of wild animals, air pollution from the mines and facto-

ries, illegal dumping of toxic waste into canals and rivers, etc.

These are the activities of individuals that lack the conscientious responsibility for the environment. Such a lack was a result of greed, selfishness, and stupidity coupled with the 'Wrong View'.

Although the 'Wrong View' individuals may benefit a great deal from their abominable acts without being caught in this life, the 'Law of Karma' dictates that they would certainly be most severely punished in the 'Hereafter'.

Summary

There are quite a few personal attributes that are considered desirable in a decent individual. *But the most important and the most basic of all attributes comes from having the 'Right View' firmly planted in one's mind until it becomes a force of habit.*

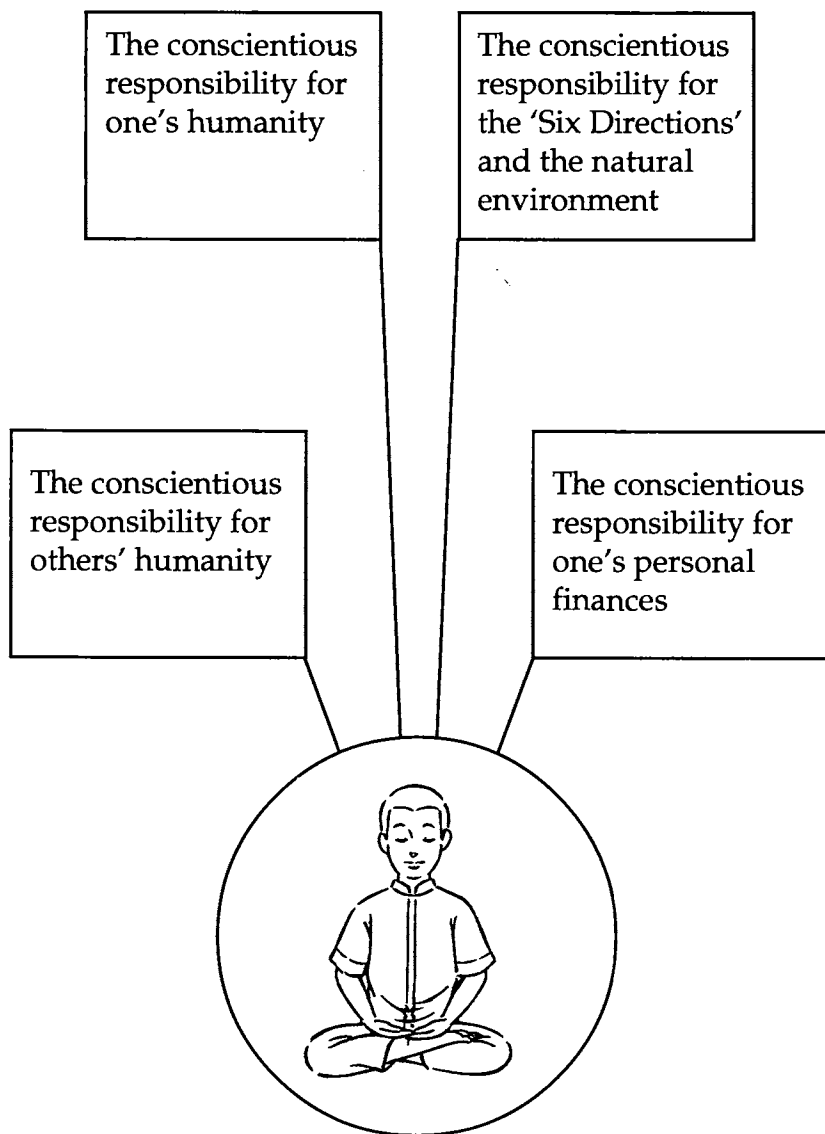
This basic attribute is the origin of other desirable personal attributes. However, *the mere understanding of the 'Right View' is not enough and cannot lead to the development of other desirable attributes. Moreover, it can be easily supplanted by the 'Wrong View'.*

The basic attributes obtained from practicing the 'Right View' until it becomes a force of habit, in turn give rise to a quality called human decency. It is a quality that allows one to become conscious of and responsible for the following four areas.

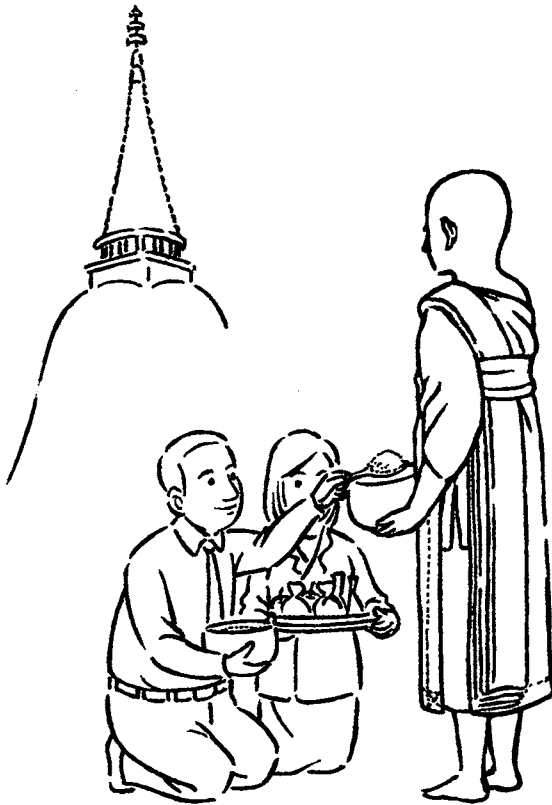
- 1) The conscientious responsibility for the honor and dignity of one's humanity, which is demonstrated by the complete abstinence from 'killing', 'covetousness', 'promiscuity', and 'false speech'.

- 2) The conscientious responsibility for the honor and dignity of others' humanity, which is demonstrated by the complete abstinence from partial practices. These partial practices are caused by personal desire, hatred, stupidity, and fear.
- 3) The conscientious responsibility for the morality of one's personal finances, which is demonstrated by the complete abstinence from all 'Causes of Ruin'. These include substance addiction, the nightlife, game and sport addiction, gambling addiction, keeping the company of evil individuals, and laziness.
- 4) The conscientious responsibility for the environment, which encompasses two areas as follows.
 - 4.1) The individuals around us as defined by the 'Six Directions'. These are the individuals in our life to whom we owe our duties and the accompanying responsibilities.
 - 4.2) The natural environment, which is demonstrated by our conservation efforts of all natural resources.

The desirable personal attributes can be outlined in the following diagram.



*The Enduring Quality of
Human Decency*



The Objective of a Human Life

From the Aspects of Man's Personal Transformation described in Chapter 1, the reader can clearly appreciate that the conduct of good deeds leads to the happiness of both the conductor and others in society. On the contrary, wicked or evil deeds wreak havoc to both the evil-doer and society at large. The '*Right View*' individuals intentionally choose to conduct good, decent deeds. While the '*Wrong View*' individuals are mired in all forms of wickedness. Therefore, a wise individual who wishes happiness and advancement in life would endeavor to transform himself into a good and decent person. Such endeavor requires the constant practice of the '*Right View of Ten*' until it becomes a permanent fixture of the mind.

The practice of the '*Right View of Ten*' allows the individual to develop a far-reaching vision, which makes him realize the true objective of being human. All human beings were born for the sole purpose of accumulating '*merits*' of good deeds and to further one's spiritual advancement. It goes without saying that one must abstain from all evil deeds. Only then could one find some semblance of happiness in this life. What is certain, however, is the unimaginable bliss that awaits one in the '*Hereafter*'. Should one be able to stake one's life for the sole purpose of accumulating '*merits*' of good deeds, and of making great strides toward one's spiritual advancement to the point of freeing the bondage of the '*unwholesome attachments*', one would attain '*Nirvana*'. '*Nirvana*' is a state of supreme eternal bliss, and it is totally removed from the continuous '*birth-death-rebirth*' cycle in the '*Samsara*'.

With these aspirations in mind, the '*Right View*' individual has the wisdom to lay out his life objective in the following consecutive levels:

1. *One's life objective at the primary or ground level.* It deals with establishing oneself financially. It deals with a stable job and a regular income. It deals with home ownership. It deals with an income sufficient for one's needs, and for one's savings.

2. *One's life objective at the secondary or sky level.* It deals with the accumulation of 'merits' in the form of good deeds in preparation for the '*States of Happiness*' in the '*Hereafter*'.

3. *One's life objective at the tertiary or above the sky level.* It deals with the staking of one's life for the sole purpose of making a great leap in one's spiritual advancement in preparation for '*Nirvana*'.

The Means to Achieving One's Life Objective

From the study and the examination of the '*Dhamma*', the '*Right View*' individuals can comprehend how a lay individual is capable of achieving his life objective at the first two levels without undue hardship. To do so the practitioner needs to be conscientious of even the smallest of his deeds or '*Kamma*' and of its significance. The life objective at the tertiary level is most difficult for a lay individual to achieve. The reason is that such a level of spiritual achievement takes tremendous and devoted efforts even for the '*Sangha*'. Moreover, such achievement requires continuous, unwavering efforts accrued over many lifetimes as an ordained monk. Still, we all must endeavor to do our very best toward this most pre-

cious end, however many lifetimes it takes.

What can a lay individual do to achieve the primary and secondary levels of his life objective?

The Lord Buddha had given a sermon in the Book of the Eights,¹ instructing the 'Right View' individuals on the ways to achieve the first two levels of one's life objective.

The four ways to conduct one's life in order to achieve the primary level of one's life objective:

1. *To diligently earn one's livelihood.*
2. *To safeguard one's earning.*
3. *To keep only the company of decent individuals.*
4. *To spend wisely.*

The four ways to conduct one's life in order to achieve the secondary level of one's life objective.

1. *To have faith in the enlightenment of the Lord Buddha.* One has an unwavering belief in all the teachings of the 'Dhamma', especially in regards to the 'Law of Kamma'. One believes that 'to each his own Kamma'. One believes that each individual's 'Kamma' is the cause of his birth, his life circumstances, and the particularly unique differences among individuals. One possessing such faith would naturally choose to conduct only good 'Kamma', and abstain completely from all evil 'Kamma'.

2. *To keep the Five Precepts meticulously.* Not only that, one is also enthusiastic about keeping the Eight Precepts whenever possible. The keeping of the Precepts is the natural outcome of a firm faith in the teachings of Bud-

¹ A., vol. 6, *The Book of the Eights*, Chapter 6: IV(54). Longknee, *The Koliyan*, p.187-191.

dhism. One realizes that the keeping of the Precepts is a form of the accumulated 'merits'. Its benevolent benefits are material wealth, peace, and happiness for the practitioner.

3. *To readily give of alms to individuals in need whenever possible.* One is willing to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of the majority, and for the spreading and continuation of Buddhism. The most important thing is that one seeks to rid oneself of any trace of miserliness. As a result of one's firm faith in the Buddhist teachings, one would naturally want to be giving. One realizes that the more one gives of alms, the more the accumulated 'merits' one would earn.

4. *To gain discernment through the deep understanding of the 'Dhamma'.* One believes and practices the 'Dhamma' until it becomes a force of habit. One would naturally adopt the 'Right View' and become firmly planted in it. As a result, one can appreciate the great harm and retribution of the 'Wrong View'.

At the same time, one possesses enough 'Dhamma' wisdom to apply what one learns to one's daily conduct and to the earning of one's livelihood. One applies the 'Dhamma' wisdom to solving one's life and work problems in a beneficial manner, and in such a way that the problems do not recur. Therefore, one can meet with smooth success and a happy life. One can then be considered as having realized the primary and secondary levels of one's life objective.

The practical route to achieve the first two levels of one's life objective requires simultaneity.

It means that while one is working toward establishing oneself financially (the primary level), one needs to

study and practice the 'Dhamma' and accumulate one's 'merits' (the secondary level) all at the same time. The primary level achievement brings forth the beneficial results in this life, while the secondary level achievement sends forth its fruit in the '*States of Happiness*' as well as in one's future existences in the Heaven Realm.

Why must the first two levels be practiced simultaneously?

1) *The first reason is that one's time of death is unknown.* Nobody knows in advance when he would die. Were one to wait until one is established financially or until one is retired before one keeps the Precepts and gives of alms, one would indeed be living life in a reckless manner. Should one die in the meantime at a young age for whatever reason, one would forever lose the chance to accumulate any 'merits', which send forth its blessing in the 'Hereafter'.

2) *The 'merits' that one has accumulated would accompany him wherever he goes.* The practice and achievement of the secondary level of one's life objective is the direct accumulation of 'merits'. Although one may not yet possess the Celestial Eye to see the real substance of 'merits', one can already witness the result through one's sense of wellbeing while conducting the deeds of charity. One feels clean and pure through one's faith and pious practices. And when the practice of meditation is incorporated into one's daily life, one would feel especially tranquil and is not easily disturbed or irritated. As a result, one naturally has the concentration and the wisdom to work effectively and productively. These are but some evidences of the fruit of 'merits' that one can now readily witness for oneself.

Even though these 'merits' are being accumulated for one's life in the 'Hereafter', their benevolent effects are not confined to the future existences only. They can already exert their special blessing toward the earning of one's livelihood in such a way that success can come more easily.

Therefore, the simultaneous practice of the secondary level of one's life objective along with the primary level automatically effects the speedy achievement of the primary level. The reason is that as soon as we start accumulating our 'merits', their fruit shines forth and gives benevolent effects to everything that we do afterward.

3) *The power of the accumulated 'merits' can overcome any obstacle in life.* The accumulation of 'merits' for the purpose of achieving the secondary level of one's life objective, besides helping to ground the practitioner firmly in the 'Right View', it goes to help develop other personal qualities as well. Qualities such as one's tolerance, persistence, analytical faculty, diligent endeavor, and selflessness, can be further improved. These personal qualities render the individual to have what it takes to overcome any obstacle in his work in a wise and ethical manner.

For these reasons, the reader can appreciate how valuable it is to simultaneously practice and achieve the primary and secondary levels of one's life objective.

The four ways to conduct one's life in order to achieve the primary level of one's life objective:

1. To diligently earn one's livelihood.

This subject contains the following main points.

1) *Not to earn a living in the five forbidden trades:* ¹

- 1.1) *The trading of weaponry.* The reason it is forbidden is that the weapons can be purchased to cause harm to self and others.
- 1.2) *The trading of humans.* The reason it is forbidden is that the human victim loses his freedom and liberty, therefore, causing his status to be reduced to that of an animal.
- 1.3) *The trading of animal meat.* It encompasses the raising of animals for slaughtering, and the selling of the animal meat. The reason it is forbidden is that it involves 'killing'.
- 1.4) *The trading of addictive substances.* The reason it is forbidden is that the consumption of such a substance causes the consumer to behave recklessly and dangerously.
- 1.5) *The trading of poisonous substances.* The reason it is forbidden is that poisonous substances can cause extensive harm to human and animal lives.

The reader can realize that whoever is involved in any of these areas of trading is taking part in causing problems and difficulties in society. The important point is that in certain area, the trader breaks the Precepts directly. In other areas, the trader causes others to break the Precepts.

An individual involved in one of these forbidden areas of trading might be able to acquire great material wealth, but his participation in the trade is considered an evil 'Kamma'. If he has not already met with its destructive fruit in this life, he definitely cannot escape it

¹ A., vol. 3, *The Books of the Fives: vii(177). Trades*, p.153.

in the 'Hereafter'. His destination will be the '*States of Unhappiness*' where he would receive horrific punishments for a period lasting from hundreds of thousands to millions of years.

2) *To earn an honest living with due diligence.* An honest living can be any trade or profession, excluding the five forbidden areas of trading. The engagement of any trade or profession must be carried out with honesty, which means the absence of deception, fraud, etc. While at the same time the engagement is carried out with due diligence in order to establish oneself financially. Laziness can cause one to fail at achieving the primary level of one's life objective.

3) *To constantly update one's knowledge and information.* One is enthusiastic about finding new information, new technology to apply to one's work in the areas of administration, production, and services. One is enthusiastic about improving the speed, the capacity, and the quality of one's production facility, for example. One looks to cut production cost and to remain competitive in one's business.

4) *To find a decent business partner.* In order to grow, an entrepreneur might need to find a business partner. It is important to select a partner who is good and decent. Otherwise, a wrong judgment of character can cause one to be taken advantage of, to be cheated out of one's profits. Or one's business might fail altogether.

In addition, although one may not have a financial stake in the business, one still should not participate in any work involved in the forbidden areas of trading. Before making a decision to join any company, it is important to investigate the quality of the senior management of

the firm first. Were one to work for unethical individuals, one may be overpowered to the point where one's 'Right View' may start to erode away. For example, if one is ordered to mix the fake product with the good, to do it means that one is breaking a Precept. To refuse, one would not be able to remain in the job, or one may be framed or harmed because one has become a witness to a fraudulent act. Such is an example of the dangerous nature of becoming involved in an unethical workplace.

Therefore, choosing to work with ethical individuals, choosing a good and decent business partner is crucially important. If we and our colleagues are good, and ethical, and have the ability to make money, we should be able to meet with success without undue hardship.

The Lord Buddha had graciously instructed us on the three types of individuals who are and are not capable of acquiring material wealth as follows.¹

4.1) *An individual blinded in both eyes.* It means an individual who is incapable of earning his own livelihood. Or an individual possessed of wealth but is incapable of making it grow. He is incapable of understanding the 'Dhamma', or the consequences of moral rights and wrongs.

An individual blinded in both eyes is intellectually incompetent. Some are deaf and mute. Some are mentally retarded. Individuals blinded in both eyes whether rich or poor in this life, would for sure be destitute in their next human existence simply because they lack the understanding needed to accumulate any 'merits'.

It is clear that an individual blinded in both eyes can-

¹ A., vol. 1, *The Book of the Threes*: 29. Blind, p.111.

not be depended upon. On the contrary, he needs help from us. If we are in the position to help them, we should do so as a part of our '*Right View*'.

4.2) *An individual blinded in one eye.* It means an individual who has the wherewithal to acquire wealth as well as to make the existing wealth grow, but he is incapable of understanding the '*Dhamma*'. As a result, the means to acquiring his wealth can be honest or dishonest. Mostly, however, the means is dishonest, unethical, and illegal. It is no surprise then that the thought of accumulating any '*merits*' cannot be further from his mind.

An individual blinded in one eye is concentrated solely on acquiring wealth in any which way. He has no conscience and does whatever it takes for his own gains.

Therefore, such individuals are vicious and make a very poor choice as a business partner, and it is best to keep them at a distance.

4.3) *An individual with two seeing-eyes.* It means an individual who is capable of acquiring and growing his wealth. He is capable of a deep understanding of the '*Dhamma*'. At the same time, he has the wisdom to accumulate '*merits*' by the giving of alms and aid to others.

Such individual is good and decent. He acquires his income with diligence and honesty. Even if he is not wealthy, he would at least be able to establish himself financially. He is not in debt and he has a happy home-life. He is interested in giving to charity causes and is always seeking to accumulate new '*merits*'. Such individual is destined for the '*States of Happiness*' in the '*Here-after*'. And once deceased from the Celestial Realm, he

would be reborn into the Human Realm an ethical, wealthy individual as a result of his pious deeds in the present existence.

It is obvious that of these three types of individuals, the individual with two seeing-eyes is the only choice for a business partner or a colleague at work. One needs to keep a distance from an individual blinded in one eye at all cost. For certain, the individual blinded in both eyes is incapable of being one's business partner or colleague.

5) *To build a network of decent trading partners.* Entrepreneurs, professionals, and traders, all deal with selling and purchasing in their work. One needs to be cognizant that only decent trading partners can help and support the success of one's business. Therefore, one needs to select only individuals with two seeing-eyes as one's trading partners.

6) *Learn the nitty-gritty of what makes a business work and what makes it fail.* In general, the reasons for a business success or failure can be divided into two categories as follows.

6.1) The crude, visible category.

6.2) The refined, invisible category.

6.1) *The crude, visible category.* The crude, visible reasons for a business failure can be the problems in the general management of the business, the production system, marketing, public relations, quality and pricing, etc.

Once it is realized that the business is not doing well or is operating at a loss, a wise businessman would do his best to analyze the problems encountered in each area and to find the appropriate solution to each problem.

As a result, the problem can be fixed and the business can continue to operate. In time, it can turn in a good profit.

However, there are cases where all of the problems have been fixed and the business is still not improving and may even go downhill. When comparing notes with other business owners in the same type of business, the owner of the problem business finds that he has been doing everything correctly. Yet while other business owners are profiting from their businesses, he is experiencing the reverse situation.

When such is the case, it appears that there is more at work than just all the visible, tangible causes. One now needs to turn to the refined, invisible causes to get at the reasons behind the business problem.

6.2) *The refined, invisible category.* The refined, invisible reasons cannot be readily accessed by ordinary wisdom. They are the fruit of one's 'Kamma' in a past existence. The Lord Buddha had revealed to us the fruit of one's 'Kamma' that could be sent forth across a multiple lifetimes. Such fruit can be grouped into four categories as follows.¹

6.2.1) *The current loss in a business profit is caused by totally reneging on one's commitment to support a 'Bhikku' during one's past life.* It means that after having pledged one's support to a 'Bhikku', when the time came for the 'Bhikku' to need the pledged support, one refused to give it. Such individual would in the next existence meet with failure in whatever business he is involved in. The reason is that he had cheated himself out of any 'merits'

¹ A., vol. 2, *The Book of the Fours: IX(79). Trade*, p.91-92.

that he might have had through fulfilling his pledge to support the 'Bhikku'.

6.2.2) *The current small business profit is caused by partially reneging on one's commitment to support a 'Bhikku' during one's past existence.* It means that an individual gave to the 'Bhikku' in an amount less than what he had originally pledged. In the next existence, he would always make a profit in the amount less than expected in whatever business he runs.

6.2.3) *The current decent business profit is caused by making 'merits' in the pledged amount during one's past existence.* It means that an individual had willingly given alms to a 'Bhikku' in the amount as pledged even when it was difficult for him to do so. In his next existence, he would overcome whatever obstacles that he may encounter in his business and would still turn in a profit in the amount expected.

6.2.4) *The current large business profit is caused by making 'merits' in the amount above and beyond what was pledged during one's past existence.* It means that an individual had striven to give as much as he could or above and beyond what he had pledged to a 'Bhikku'. Such individual is destined for the '*States of Happiness*'. Upon his rebirth into the Human Realm, in whatever business he chooses to do he would make a larger profit than expected.

The understanding of the 'Kamma' allows one to understand all the real causes of a business success or failure. Although one may not yet possess the ability to recall anyone's past life events, one can still derive such wisdom through one's faith in the Lord Buddha's teachings.

Therefore, when a business owner does not meet with the expected success, in spite of having fixed all the problems in the crude, visible category, one needs to appreciate that the real reason for it can lie in the refined, invisible category. With the insight, one needs to continue to persevere in one's endeavor to earn a living and to simultaneously accumulate new 'merits'. Although success may not occur immediately in this lifetime, it would at least definitely be assured in one's future existences.

A business owner who has met with the expected or above the expected success should not rush to conclude that his success is due entirely to his own abilities. One needs to understand that without the support of one's past 'merits', one's abilities alone cannot bring about such success. Therefore, it behooves one to continue accumulating new 'merits', to ensure that one's so-called 'luck' would continue to hold.

The main points about 'diligently earning one's livelihood' is that one is firmly planted on the '*Right View*' and possesses 'two seeing-eyes'. One is hard-working and works with a network of individuals with 'two seeing-eyes'. All of these factors along with one's past 'merits' would then work together to bring about one's business success.

2. To safeguard one's earning.

The main points in safeguarding one's earning are as follows:

1) *The safe keeping of one's material wealth.* One needs to keep what one acquires in ways that are honest, ethical, safe, and away from disaster such as theft, fire, flood, etc.

In addition, one needs to keep one's wealth safe from being liquidated through a lawsuit, a filing of bankruptcy, etc. Otherwise, what one has acquired might be lost and one may meet with unexpected hardships. Worst of all, one would not be able to offer alms or aid to anyone in need, and continue to accumulate one's 'merits'.

2) *The caring for one's belongings.* It means that one keeps track of all of one's belongings so that as soon as something is lost, one knows to look for it.

Tools and household equipment suffer wear and tear through use. Besides using them with care, one needs to fix whatever is broken or to have it fixed by a professional.

3) *Knowing the correct way to store one's wealth.*¹

3.1) *Storing one's wealth in a crude, utilizable form.* The storage methods may have changed with time, but all of the earthly storage methods come with an attached risk. In many cases, the owner of the stored wealth is the least able to utilize it.

For example, in the past some wealthy individuals had buried their material wealth deep underground close to the water table. In time, the location of the buried treasure was shifted. Or the owner forgot the location of the buried treasure. Or it was moved by the Naga Serpents. Or it was stolen by the Asurakaya demons. Or it was dug up by some wayward posterity. Worst of all, once the owner of the treasure died, the treasure became lost and useless to anyone including the owner himself.

Nowadays, an individual of wealth no longer buries

¹ Kh., 8, *The Treasure-Store Discourse*, p.8.

his treasure in the ground. He has, however, many options at his disposal. One may keep one's money in a state-insured bank. One may invest in a stock market. One may invest in real estate, etc. Still, events such as the monetary devaluation can occur. Stock markets can crash. And there have been many real estate scams. These events pose a real risk to one's accumulated wealth and can make it shrink or disappear suddenly in some cases.

It can be concluded that no earthly means of wealth storage is truly secure. When an individual invests a lot of money in real estate properties for the purpose of speculation and passing it on to his posterity, the individual himself cannot derive any real use or benefit from such wealth while living. Once he passes away, the struggle among the posterity for the possession of the inherited properties can at times occur and in certain cases, mortal wounds have been inflicted in the struggle.

3.2) *Storing one's wealth in a refined form.* The method calls for the conversion of material wealth into 'merits'. These are accumulated through the giving of alms, the giving of aid, etc. One can give to the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness. One can provide funds to renovate and maintain the temples, the shrines, etc. One can help support one's parents, relatives, and friends. One can give to charity causes, etc. This method of storing one's wealth is the only truly secure way, for 'merits' cannot be stolen or destroyed.

Individuals with the '*Right View*' firmly planted in their minds do not only give of alms and aid whenever they are in the position to do so, they also keep the Precepts and practice meditation on a regular basis. Such pious

practices earn the 'merits' that help to speed one's career or business success, provided that one does not possess an interfering past evil 'Kamma'. If there exists an interfering past evil 'Kamma', the pious practices would at least help one to succeed in establishing oneself financially. Such are the personal benefits obtainable through one's 'merits'. It is clear that any society filled with the '*Right View*' individuals would only meet with success and happiness.

Moreover, one's accumulated 'merits' continue on to build up one's great riches in the Celestial Realm in the 'Hereafter'. When the celestial existence ceases, and one is reborn into the Human Realm, one would be endowed with good looks, wealth, and quality personal traits. Along the way, should one meet with a 'true friend' that helps point him to the right direction, one would surely meet with immediate success in his career or business. The success would be sustainable and his wealth would continue to grow. Therefore, the achievement of the first two levels of one's life objective would be certain to take place, which in turn, should give one the inspiration to diligently accumulate more and more 'merits'.

The '*Right View*' individuals who appreciate the above two different ways of storing their material wealth, and act accordingly, the result is that they would be more and more firmly grounded in the '*Right View*'. At the same time, they know how to keep what they earn in a way that is secure and is truly beneficial. *Such is the definition of safeguarding what one earns.*

The Lord Buddha had taught us the above two ways of storing our wealth in order that we could achieve the first two levels of our life objective simultaneously. We are taught to acquire our material wealth in order to

achieve the primary level of our life objective. The simultaneous conversion of part of our wealth into 'merits' is the tenet of the secondary level of our life achievement.

Nonetheless, there are a large number of individuals who do not know how to safeguard what they have acquired. Such individuals display the four behavior patterns as follows: ¹

- 1) They do not look for what is lost.
- 2) They do not repair what is broken.
- 3) They do not exercise thrift in their spending.
- 4) They appoint an unethical individual to be in charge of their wealth.

The first two behavior patterns are self-explanatory. The third behavior pattern is that of a spendthrift, which leads one to have nothing leftover for savings. Some may even go into debt as a result of their spending habit.

Any individual who is in the position to appoint someone to administer his fortune is necessarily fabulously rich. Still, no matter how wealthy an individual is, someone with an unethical nature may well cause the loss of his fortune in time. The means may include the misappropriation of the funds over a period of time through carelessness, corruption, etc. Therefore, the appointment of an unethical individual to administer one's fortune is the same as appointing an individual blinded in one eye to bring ruin to it.

The main points pertaining safeguarding what one has acquired, as mentioned above, involve the diligent and honest means in keeping one's material wealth in two

¹ A., vol. 2, *The Book of the Fours*, Chapter 26: V(255). *Profit of the family*, p.254-255.

different ways. These include the crude, utilizable form and the secure, refined form.

The crude form of safekeeping one's wealth can be carried out through various forms of savings and investment available today. However, each option comes with its associated risks and no option is completely risk-free.

The refined form of safekeeping one's wealth involves the conversion of one's material wealth into 'merits'. The 'merits' can be earned and accumulated through the giving of alms to the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness, to one's parents, relatives, and friends. The 'merits' can also be earned and accumulated through the giving of aid to those in need and to charity causes.

The accumulated 'merits' are the only secure form of safekeeping one's material wealth. They cannot be stolen or destroyed. Moreover, they have the benevolent effects of keeping one secure, safe, and prosperous in both this and the next life.

3. Keeping the company of decent individuals (Kalayanamittata) as well as building a network of decent individuals.

There are three main points regarding this topic.

1.) The individual must first qualify as a decent individual by teaching and training himself in the ways of the '*Right View*'.

2.) In selecting one's company regardless of age and economic status, one needs to look for qualities such as the moral conduct, faith, generosity, and insight. In short, one keeps the company of individuals whose life objective includes the preparation for the '*States of Happiness*' in the '*Hereafter*'.

3.) One looks to observe, study, and absorb the four noble achievements of those whose company one keeps. These include the achievements of faith, of virtue, of charity, and of discernment. The practice helps one to become more and more firmly grounded in the '*Right View*'.

When most of the members of a community share a firm faith in Buddhism, they would endeavor to study and practice the '*Dhamma*'. They would keep the Precepts, and practice selflessness through the united efforts to give aid to those in need, and to support the Buddhist faith on a regular basis. Under this ideal condition, a network of decent individuals is naturally formed.

Why must there be an effort to build a network of decent individuals in a community?

Some individuals may believe that it is enough for them to study and practice the '*Dhamma*', and to ground themselves and their children in the '*Right View*'. They may wonder why there must be an effort to build a network of decent individuals as well.

The reason is that in reality and all through the ages, every community has consisted of decent and no so decent individuals. Given just one indecent individual, it can already wreak havoc for the community, the society, and even the entire world. There have been many such examples in the history book.

Immoral individuals naturally and without any effort form a network of like-minded individuals through their ruinous activities like drinking and gambling. If they are to intentionally form a network through various

forms of public relations, they can do so very quickly. The network can spread like a wildfire.

The reader can appreciate by now that indecent individuals are blinded in one eye, and habitually harbor the '*Wrong View*'. They are unethical. They are shameless and fearless in regards to sin because they disbelieve in the '*Law of Kamma*'. They are solely materialistic and are out to self-servingly acquire their material wealth any way they can.

Immoral individuals associate with one another through shared gains, but the instant a conflict of interest erupts, they may easily inflict mortal harm to each other.

One may well imagine being a lone ethical business partner in a community where a network of indecent individuals is operating. And the difficulty one would have in finding a decent business partner in that community. One may be in a situation where one is taken advantage of on all sides by the network members, who are 'blinded in one eye'. Under the circumstances, one may be forced to gradually adopt the '*Wrong View*' of those around him and eventually abandon one's '*Right View*'. One may decide to become part of the existing network in order to survive and acquire the desired riches. If that is the case, one may have achieved the primary level of one's life objective. But the prospect of achieving the secondary level of one's life objective does not look promising.

It is obvious from the above scenario how important and necessary it is to build a network of decent individuals within one's community while it is still possible.

How is a network of decent individuals built?

The Lord Buddha had given His teachings on this subject in a few of the scriptures. The details may vary somewhat from scripture to scripture, but the fundamentals are the same. The teaching cited below has been taken from the *Mahanama Sutta*.¹

1) First and foremost, one becomes good and decent through one's faith and trust in the Triple Gem (the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha).

2) One regularly and meticulously keeps the Five Precepts.

3) One supports and nurtures oneself through one's faith, one's moral conduct, and one's generosity. These pious practices allow one to achieve the secondary level of one's life objective. Moreover, one takes the time to visit the temple and listen to the teaching of the 'Dhamma' on a regular basis. One not only listens but makes it a habit to reflect on the material in the sermon in order to gain a deeper understanding of it. One follows up what one learns by practicing it in one's daily life. Above all, one regularly practices meditation and keeps improving on it.

4) One serves as a true friend to others by inviting them to follow one's pious practices. One invites them to study and practice the 'Dhamma' as taught at the temple in order that others can begin to achieve faith, virtue, and charity. One encourages others to achieve discernment through the regular practice of meditation.

If others are interested and are willing to practice as invited, they would eventually form the 'Right View' in

¹ A., vol. 4, *The Book of the Eights, Chapter 3: Mahanama, The Sakayan*, p.149-150.

their minds. The '*Right View*' mentality would develop in them an affinity for kind deeds, and for decency. They would grow to love the 'Dhamma'. When this happens, there is a common ground on which everyone can meet. And everyone now uses the same language, so to speak.

Once the majority of the community speaks the language of the 'Dhamma', it means that a strong network of decent individuals has already been formed. There now exists a strength and a common bond of human decency within the community. There is mutual help given to each other in earning one's livelihood. The practices can be passed on to the next generation. The culture would continue to be improved upon and would last as long as there are good role models. Eventually, the culture would develop to the point, where there is no more room for any '*Wrong View*' individuals within the community. Regardless of how competitive the world of technology becomes, the '*Right View*' individuals would always have the intellect and the insight to make the best of their environment without breaking any Precept, and without having to sink to the level of the '*Wrong View*' individuals.

In the process of building a network of decent individuals, it is imperative that one must first be firmly planted on the '*Right View*'. The next step lies in persuading others in one's close circle to do the same. Once everyone in the circle has practiced the '*Right View*' until it becomes one's second nature, once everyone in the circle has developed an affinity for the study and practice of the 'Dhamma', then the network of decent individuals has indeed been formed.

Building a network of indecent individuals is natural

and easy. It happens as a matter of course due to the 'unwholesome attachments' inherent in each individual from birth. However, it is very difficult to build a network of decent individuals, since it takes a great deal of effort. The reason is that building such a network goes against one's inherent 'unwholesome attachments'. Nonetheless, however difficult it might be, the '*Right View*' individuals must be determined to build such a network within their community. A network of decent individuals is the means necessary in establishing the community's prosperity. At the same time, it serves to close the gateway to the '*States of Unhappiness*' for the community members in the 'Hereafter'.

How does a network of decent individuals benefit its members?

The detailed benefits of such a network are as follows.

1) *The network serves as a fence.* When the members of the community belong to the '*Right View*', it is as though each community member is protected by a secure fence. The reasons are that one does not have to be afraid of robbers and thieves, one does not have to worry that one's children may fall prey to a drug dealer or some other 'Causes of Ruin'. One does not have to fear that one's wife or daughter might become a rape victim. One does not have to worry that one's son or husband might be shot to death because of a conflict of interest.

2) *The network provides one the opportunity to achieve one's life objective.* As a member, one is surrounded by individuals with two seeing-eyes. One is supported by the community members in earning one's livelihood, and can meet with financial success without undue difficulty.

At the same time, the community environment is conducive to accumulating one's 'merits', and to furthering one's spiritual achievement. One is subsequently enabled to achieve one's primary and secondary levels of one's life objective.

3) *The network is a source of empathy.* A decent individual is one who has accumulated a great deal of 'merits' in one's past and present existences. One so blessed with 'merits' naturally possesses material wealth and noble wealth.¹ (Individuals possessing only material wealth are not considered decent or blessed with 'merits'. They are said to be blinded in one eye).

The material wealth of a decent individual includes all forms of personal possessions such as cash, investment, jewelry, heirlooms, real estate properties, etc. His moral wealth includes such personal qualities as the achievement of faith, the achievement of moral conduct, the achievement of generosity, the achievement of discernment, etc.

Therefore, keeping the company of a decent individual is in a way a form of wealth storage. Should one by any chance encounter a problem in life, this true friend can be counted on for help materially and morally.

The building of a network of decent individuals can be compared to a storage of great wealth within the community. Under such circumstances, no one needs to suffer either materially or morally.

Such storage of wealth may not be of a public nature like a pond or a lake that is at everyone's disposal. But it

¹ *Noble wealth refers to the high moral standard that a decent individual upholds. It consists of seven parts, which include faith, moral conduct, the shame of sin, the fear of sin, profound learning, generosity, and wisdom*

is of more worth than a pond or a lake, for each individual in himself is a source of wealth. Should he encounter a problem that he cannot deal with alone, he has the community storage of wealth to depend on. This type of stored wealth knows to convert itself into 'merits' through the giving of aid to a deserving individual. It is in total contrast with the mentality of an individual blinded in one eye, who seeks to gain at others' hardship by for example, charging an exorbitantly high interest on a much needed loan.

The reader can better appreciate how a decent individual can be considered as a source of stored wealth in the context of the Buddhist teachings. The Lord Buddha had placed the responsibility of distributing the community's stored wealth on the lay individuals. The wealth should be made accessible to the 'Sangha', and the community members in times of need. This practice allows one to achieve generosity, and earn the 'merits' that continue to shed their blessings all throughout one's future existences.

4) *The network serves to ground its members more firmly in the 'Right View'.* Members of the network involve themselves with only good, kind deeds, and stay as far as possible from any indecent act. They earn an honest living while simultaneously accumulating new 'merits'. They understand the truth about financial and spiritual growth. Such understanding and regular practice allows one's 'Right View' to be more highly developed.

Building a network of decent individuals requires one to first study and practice the 'Dhamma' in order to achieve the 'Right View'. During the course of one's spiritual development, one also seeks out other 'Right View'

individuals from whose virtuous nature, one can learn and develop further. At the same time, one builds an extensive network of decent individuals through constructive activities such as the promotion of education, the promotion of moral conduct through *the giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, the practice of meditation*, etc. The members can participate in other activities that aim to promote and support the Buddhist faith such as maintaining the temple ground, encouraging lay individuals to be ordained as monks or novices, supporting the 'Sangha'. There are also social aid activities within one's community for different occasions.

One needs to be cognizant of the fact that building a network of decent individuals within the community is truly worthwhile. It is a form of wealth storage that increases the sense of wellbeing within the community members. In such a thriving community, there would be no space for depraved individuals. 'Wrong View' individuals and all 'Causes of Ruin' would just disappear from the community, just like diseases and illnesses cannot attack a strong, healthy individual. Moreover, the network of decent individuals is a source of true friends, effectively leaving false friends to fall by the wayside.

4. To spend wisely.

What are the main points of spending wisely?

The Lord Buddha had described in the *Dighajanu Sutta* two points about spending wisely as follows.

1) *One understands the balance of income and expenses.* It means that one's spending is necessarily less than one's earning so that one has money leftover for one's savings.

2) *One is neither a spendthrift nor a miser.* A spendthrift is excessive with his spending, with nothing leftover for his savings. Moreover, he may incur debts as a result of his habit. On the other hand, a miser skimps, and saves, and lives unnecessarily shabbily. Therefore, a miser may be mistaken for being destitute and untrustworthy. Worst of all, miserliness causes one to be very selfish and uncharitable. It causes one to have no friends. All the savings can do neither the miser nor the community any good.

The points stated above stress the importance of money management in that one should have money leftover for one's savings. One may ask what is the point in having any savings.

There are two forms of wealth storage, which include the crude, utilizable form, and the secure, refined form. The crude form of wealth storage is considered risky and becomes totally useless to the owner once he dies. The refined form of wealth storage is the only way to secure one's wealth. It has the benefit of blessing one with happiness and success in this life, and working absolute wonders in the 'Hereafter'.

The true meaning of spending wisely is the management of one's savings in such a way as to give the maximum benefits.

What are the ways to manage one's savings in order to give the maximum benefits?

The Lord Buddha had described five different ways as follows.¹ :

1) *To spend on nurturing oneself, one's family and sub-*

¹ A., vol. 3, *The Book of the Fives: I(41). On getting rich*, p.37-38.

ordinates.

2) *To spend on building a network of decent individuals within the community.* This is one way to distribute and save one's wealth in the form of true friends, for true friends are worth more than any other resources.

3) *To spend on safeguarding one's wealth and for emergency purposes.* A wise individual knows how to keep his wealth safe, and to save for rainy days. Wealth in itself attracts danger to its owner. For example, a wealthy grandmother may be poisoned to death by a grandchild because of his greed. If the grandmother had been poor, the same harm might not have come to her.

Saving for emergency purposes such as money to arrange for one's bail in case one is mistakenly arrested, etc., is also necessary.

4) *To spend on five different charity causes.*

- ° 4.1) To aid one's relatives in times of need.
- 4.2) To host one's guests.
- 4.3) To make 'merits' and dedicate them to the deceased.
- 4.4) To pay taxes.
- 4.5) To make 'merits' and dedicate them to the celestial beings in order to besiege their protection.

5) *To spend on making the most worthwhile 'merits'.* It means the offering of alms to the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness. Giving to the 'Sangha' earns the maximum 'merits', much more so than those earned in the above four ways.

For certain, the above five ways of spending does deplete one's earning. But instead of feeling anxious, we

should feel grateful for the earned 'merits', and for our wise financial management. In time, when we acquire more wealth, again we would know how to manage it. We have already known how to spend our money in ways that give us the maximum benefits.

When it comes time to pass on, one can recall with great pleasure how one has fulfilled the responsibilities of his humanity. One can recall how one has spent what one earns on nurturing oneself, and others who are deserving. One can recall how one supports the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness. One can recall that whatever one needs, one has already received it. One can recall how one has fulfilled all of one's responsibilities and has spent one's life according to the teachings of the 'Dhamma'. One can recall how one has indeed achieved the first two levels of one's life objective. And now one realizes that one's destination in the 'Hereafter' is surely the '*States of Happiness*'.

In managing one's savings for one's maximum benefits, one must strive for the achievement of charity. Since the more one gives out of one's generosity, the happier one would be in this life. Moreover, the practice allows one to achieve simultaneously the primary and the secondary levels of one's life objective.

The Network of Decent Individuals is the Key to One's Success and Prosperity.

The reader should bear in mind that the network of decent individuals must have at least the following three characteristics:

- 1) The individual himself is first of all decent, and is firmly planted in the '*Right View*'. That is, one must first

possess the qualities of a true friend.

2) Each member of the network must also be decent and is firmly planted in the '*Right View*'. Those who are lacking would know it and would be determined to develop their '*Right View*' through the close association with their true friends in the network.

3) Members of the network regularly carry out activities to support the Buddhist faith, and to benefit the community as a whole. They carry out activities to strengthen and expand the network, and to further develop each member's '*Right View*' to the fullest possible.

If the reader goes back to review the section on achieving one's primary life objective at the beginning of the chapter, the reader would realize that the network of decent individuals plays the most important role in the other three aspects. These include earning one's livelihood diligently, safeguarding one's earning, and spending wisely.

Regarding the first aspect, if the community is filled with individuals blinded in one eye, and true friendship is lacking, the members of the community would be hard-pressed to earn an honest living. There have been recent examples in the Thai society regarding this point. Although many individuals appreciate that drug dealing is immoral, illegal, is punishable by the seizure of one's personal assets and by death, there are still a great number of individuals who have become involved in this crime. They are like moths destroying themselves by flying into the fire.

This is the reason that earning one's livelihood honestly can take place only in a community or society with a network of decent individuals. Otherwise, the en-

deavor to earn an honest living would meet with failure. Chances are that any material success may only be obtainable through dishonest means.

Safeguarding one's earning is the direct consequence of earning one's livelihood. An individual who fails at earning his livelihood would naturally have nothing to safeguard. Should one's livelihood be earned through dishonest means, such earning comes with its own attached demise. Loss through being confiscated, through fire, robbery, etc., makes it impossible to keep what one earns.

On the contrary, an individual who earns an honest living is blessed with two seeing-eyes. He knows to safeguard what he has acquired in a crude, presently utilizable form. And he knows to safeguard his wealth in a refined form as 'merits', which would bless him with success and prosperity in this and the next life.

Therefore, safeguarding what one has honestly acquired can take place only in a society containing a network of decent individuals.

An individual blinded in one eye may turn to the 'Causes of Ruin' to drown his sorrow should he fail at earning his livelihood. Such behavior would only make him worse off financially. Unfortunately, even if an individual blinded in one eye meets with financial success, he would not think of accumulating any 'merits' in preparation for his future existences. Blinded in one eye, he is without any knowledge of the 'Dhamma'. He thinks only of accumulating more and more material wealth through whatever means he can. Such individuals can only wreak havoc throughout the society at large.

This is the reason that spending wisely can only take

place in a society containing a network of decent individuals. It is obvious to the reader by now that only the network of decent individuals can be the key to society members' success in achieving the primary and secondary levels of one's life objective.

Characteristics of False and True Friends.

Some characteristics of decent and indecent individuals can be given according to the description of true and false friends in the Sigalovada Suttanta¹ as follows.

The Four Characteristics of False and True Friends

False Friends

1. False friends have ulterior motives.
2. False friends are only good talkers.
3. False friends are flatterers.
4. False friends lead us to ruin.

True Friends

1. True friends lend us support.
2. True friends are there for us through good and bad times.
3. True friends give useful advice.
4. True friends are loving and considerate.

The Lord Buddha had described the differences between false and true friends in the four ways as above. The diametrically opposed characteristics between false and true friends are one of the reasons that a decent individual may not be able to see through another individual who is a false friend. Even if one does guess it, one may be willing to be giving anyway. It is characteristic of a true friend to support and share what he has

¹ D. Vol. 4, *Sigalovada Suttanta The Sigala Homily*, p. 173-184

with others out of the kindness of his heart. Even when he is taken advantage of, he may believe his friend to be needy and is willing to give what he can. In certain cases, one may fall prey to a false friend's scheme such that one may lose everything as a result.

Since a false friend belongs to the '*Wrong View*' and harbors enmity at the core of his being, he is ready to harm and ruin anyone. It is no wonder that a false friend would possess all four characteristics as mentioned above. He does not hesitate to pull others down into the gutter with him. A naive, decent individual may not be able to resist a false friend's charming persuasion initially. With persistent persuasion, one may give in little by little by for example, taking an occasional drink or indulging in a bit of gambling. In time, the occasional indulgences may become habitual.

One's '*Right View*' which serves to admonish him to stay away from such ruinous activities soon gives way to the much more powerful 'unwholesome attachments' laying dormant within him. In this way, the individual's '*Right View*' is gradually supplanted by the '*Wrong View*'. At this point, without a true friend to help guide him, he stands to lose whatever decency he may have left.

For these reasons, the Lord Buddha had known that it was not enough to know the characteristics of a true and false friend. One needs to be able to totally separate one from another.

The Versatile Grid as a Tool.

This versatile grid contains the detailed behavior patterns of a true and false friend. It serves as a good reference of what a true friend should and should not be.

	Characteristics	Behavior Pattern 1	Behavior Pattern 2	Behavior Pattern 3	Behavior Pattern 4
1	A false friend has ulterior motives	He thinks only of his own gain.	He gives very little but wants a lot.	He helps a friend out only as a way to help himself.	He has friends so that he can take advantage of them.
2	A true friend lends his friends support.	He takes care of his friend when the friend has been reckless.	He takes care of his friend's material wealth when the friend has been reckless.	He can be depended on in times of need.	He gives more than what is asked of him.
3	A false friend has the gift of the gab.	He rambles on about the past.	He rambles on about the future.	He gives what is useless.	He finds excuses not to help out a friend in need.
4	A true friend is there through good and bad times.	He reveals his secrets to his friend.	He conceals his friend's secrets.	He sticks around in times of need.	He is willing to give his life for his friend.
5	A false friend is a flatterer.	He goes along with a friend about to commit a bad deed.	He goes along with a friend about to conduct a good deed.	He praises a friend to his face.	He gossips about his friend behind his back.
6	A true friend gives useful advice.	He forbids his friend from committing sinful deeds.	He admonishes his friend to side with decency.	He teaches his friend new things.	He guides his friend toward the path of heaven.
7	A false friend leads one down the road to ruin	He coaxes his friend into taking a drink.	He coaxes his friend into frequenting the nightlife.	He coaxes his friend into abandoning himself to all forms of entertainment.	He coaxes his friend into gambling.
8	A true friend is loving and considerate.	He shows empathy when a friend is down.	He is happy for his friend's happiness.	He comes to his friend's defense when he is put down.	He chimes in when someone sings his friend's praises.

From this versatile grid, the reader can appreciate that a false friend's behavior patterns are repugnant and harmful. There are at least sixteen behavior patterns that can be used to identify a false friend. A true friend's decency and benefits can be grouped into at least sixteen behavior patterns as well.

Should an individual use the versatile grid to identify those around him, he can selectively eliminate all the false friends and keep only the true friends.

However, in real life, it would be nearly impossible for anyone to display all sixteen behavior patterns of a false friend. Even a false friend needs to display some trace characteristics of a true friend. Someone displaying purely all sixteen behavior patterns of a false friend would not be acceptable anywhere, and would have a really tough time surviving. In that case, for the purpose of survival, the individual would need to develop some characteristics of a true friend.

In the same token, it would also be nearly impossible to find an individual who displays all sixteen behavior patterns of a true friend. For even those who are firmly planted in the '*Right View*' still harbor some forms of the 'unwholesome attachments'.

Therefore, in applying the versatile grid, one needs to exercise one's judgment in terms of which characteristics are more dominant in a friend. Those who display more characteristics of a true friend can be reservedly associated with. One needs to be on guard and makes sure that one does not allow one's friend to persuade one to become involved in any 'Causes of Ruin' or any other indecent, illegal activities. At the same time, one seeks to help one's friend to appreciate and develop the

'Right View' so that they can improve themselves morally. After all, we all need each other.

However, should one find any individual who displays more characteristics of a false friend, one needs to keep a distance from him. One cannot hope to convert such an individual while one is still in an early stage of one's spiritual development. One needs to stay away from such individuals, otherwise one can easily be infected with their 'Wrong View'. To help such individuals, one needs first to have already attained sufficient spiritual strength and wisdom.

The Maximum Benefits of the Versatile Grid.

How can one apply the magic grid for one's maximum benefits?

If one applies the versatile grid as a tool to separate false from true friends only, one is not yet gaining the maximum benefits from it. To derive more benefits, one needs to use the magic grid in the following two ways:

1) Use the versatile grid to inspect one's own behavior patterns.

2) Use the versatile grid to inspect the behavior patterns of those around us.

1) Use the versatile grid to inspect one's own behavior patterns.

This is the most important undertaking because people in general are in the habit of finding fault with others but not with themselves. Even when one is aware of one's unbecoming behavior, one may continue to do it over and over again without mending one's way. For

example, one may be in the habit of gossiping about one's friends behind their backs to show that one is far better than one's friends.

At times, one knowingly continues to do what is morally wrong or illegal such as drinking, forging someone's signature, giving false testimonies, etc. Individuals who do not correct their mistakes cannot be decent in this or the next life.

Whoever uses the versatile grid to inspect his own behavior patterns would realize what qualities are still missing in him. He is then determined to mend his way and develop into a decent individual complete with all the desirable personal attributes. In this way, his '*Right View*' would be more strongly developed.

2) *Use the versatile grid to inspect the behavior patterns of those around us.*

Those around us are indicated by the individuals in our '*Six Directions*', especially our parents and our family elders. These individuals tend to love and mean us well, although their behavior patterns may be incorrect. They may enjoy drinking, gambling, etc. Under the circumstances, it is easy for an individual to absorb these false friends' characteristics and become just like one of them.

However, when we realize that the negative behavior patterns of those close to us would bring harm and punishment to them in both this and the next life, we need to find ways to help them change and better themselves. We endeavor to do so in order that our family and our relatives can love a secure, happy life.

The Added Benefits of the Versatile Grid.

The versatile grid is useful in identifying false and true friends, in inspecting one's own behavior patterns as well as those of the individuals in one's 'Six Directions'. It is certain that one would find the good and bad points of each individual concerned. Once some positive characteristics are found to be missing, it behooves one to correct and improve oneself as quickly as possible. Otherwise, the undesirable behavior patterns can become ingrained throughout many future existences and would bring only harm to oneself.

How does one go about correcting one's behavior patterns?

There are two ways to do it.

1) *To maintain one's decent characteristics and to pass them on to each other.* Starting with oneself, what decent qualities one possesses should be maintained and passed on to others. At the same time, when one sees the decent qualities in others that one is still missing, one rushes without any delay to imbibe those qualities and practice them until they are incorporated into one's behavior patterns.

2) *Keep one's indecent characteristics from spreading to others.* When one finds that one still harbors certain undesirable behavior patterns, one needs to remove them completely. While at the same time, one takes care not to spread one's faulty habits to others. For example, if one is in the habit of drinking, one needs to try and stop. One does not encourage one's friends to drink, but points out the harm of drinking instead. One must be determined to abstain totally from future drinking.

Members of society need to study the versatile grid thoroughly and apply it to promote their own self-improvement and that of their loved ones. Everyone needs to prevent his undesirable behavior patterns from spreading to others, and to share only decent qualities with each other. In this way, everyone can strongly develop his '*Right View*' and therefore, can be determined to develop the qualities of a true friend. There would not be any room for false friends when that happens. Such are the added benefits of the versatile grid.

The characteristics and behavior patterns of a true friend, the versatile grid for identifying true and false friends, and the added benefits of using the versatile grid, all go to clearly demonstrate the important role of a true friend. A true friend plays the crucial role of encouraging us to be decent, and to be firmly planted in the '*Right View*'.

Summary

The '*Wrong View*' is a natural phenomenon and can dominate one's mind without any special training. It is in the same manner as weeds that can grow so abundantly without being tended to, and is very difficult to remove completely.

The '*Right View*' has to be taught and trained repeatedly. Upon hearing about it many times, one can still not remember all the details that are contained in the '*Right View of Ten*'.

Even if one does understand the '*Right View of Ten*' without harboring any doubts, such understanding is inadequate. It is only an understanding, and has not yet been incorporated into one's characteristics and behav-

ior patterns. One can still easily display one's 'Wrong View' and behaves like a false friend when circumstances permit.

It is only when the 'Right View' has been firmly planted in one's mind and incorporated into one's characteristics and behavior patterns that one can develop an insight. With this insight, one finally realizes the true objective of being born a human being. *One realizes that the initial stage of that objective is to accumulate 'merits' in order to advance one's spiritual development. And the final stage of the objective is to eventually remove all the 'unwholesome attachments', to be freed from the bondage of the birth-death-rebirth cycle, and to attain 'Nirvana'. Such insight leads one to set for oneself the three levels of one's life objective.*

The Lord Buddha had given detailed description of how to achieve the three levels of one's life objective. However, one needs to first endeavor to achieve the first two levels of one's life objective and accumulate a great many lifetimes' worth of 'merits' before one can achieve the third and highest level.

There are four ways to follow in order to achieve the primary level of one's life objective. *These include earning one's livelihood diligently, safeguarding what one earns, keeping the company of decent individuals, and spending wisely.*

In fulfilling these four ways of achieving the primary level of one's life objective, one needs to apply the relevant teachings of the 'Dhamma' to each stage. The means to earn one's livelihood must be honest. One can safeguard what one earns in the crude, presently utilizable form and in the secure, refined form.

Instead of spending for the purpose of one's ultimate

entertainment in the ways that have been popular in the world, the 'Dhamma' teaches one to spend part of their income on charity causes. The sincere giving brings with it sublime pleasure to the giver, it is the form of pleasure that stays and lasts until one's last breath.

The most important aspect of achieving the primary level of one's life objective is in the building of a network of decent individuals within one's community. The network accordingly enables the community members to fulfill the other three endeavors in achieving the primary level of one's life objective.

There are also four ways to achieve the secondary level of one's life objective. *These include the achievement of faith, the achievement of virtue, the achievement of charity, and the achievement of wisdom.*

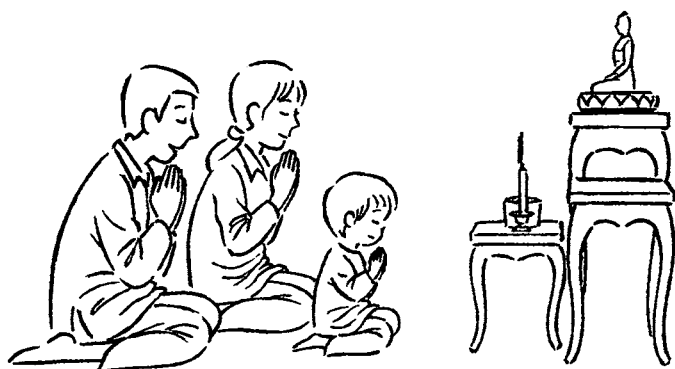
The primary and secondary levels of one's life objective are necessarily carried out at the same time. One's time of death is unknown, and it is extremely risky to wait to accumulate one's 'merits' until a particular time.

Any community containing a strong network of decent individuals would contain more true friends than false friends. Or it may not contain any false friend at all. In such a community, the members can live by the teachings of the 'Dhamma'. They can collectively give to the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness, and to worthwhile charity causes. They can live with love and consideration for one another. Some may be wealthy, others may not be so. But for certain, at the very least each community member would be able to establish himself financially. At the same time, each individual's 'Right View' can be strongly developed, and one generation of such individuals provides a good role model for the next

generation. Having passed on to the '*States of Happiness*', they have left a most worthwhile heritage for the generation to follow. In this way, the desirable personal attributes can continue to form part of each community member's personal characteristics.

— CHAPTER FOUR —

*The Making of a decent
individual*



Desirable Personal Attributes

The previous three chapters stressed how desirable personal attributes begin with having the '*Right View*' firmly and permanently planted in one's mind. To do so, the '*Right View*' needs to become a force of habit, and eventually forms one's personal characteristics. Such practices form the foundation on which desirable personal attributes can be developed. These attributes include the four areas of conscientious responsibility as described in chapter two. The conscientious responsibility helps one to develop a sense of responsibility in all areas of one's life. Along the way, one also learns to be a true friend, and appreciates the significance of accumulating one's 'merits' on a continuous basis.

However, not all 'true friends' are created equal. Each differs as a result of one's learning, one's ability, one's talents, one's life experiences, and one's upbringing. Each individual true friend differs according to his accumulated 'merits' throughout his past existences.

There had been examples of such unique differences in the Lord Buddha's Perfected Disciples even though all were true friends to all humanity. The Lord Buddha had appointed each of His Perfected Disciples a particular position according to each one's talents. For example, one Perfected Disciple had been given the title of excellence in 'Ascetic Practices', and another the title of excellence in 'Eloquent Sermons'

The Principles of Instilling the Desirable Personal Attributes in Children

The '*Wrong View*' can be compared to weeds that grow without having to be cultivated. The '*Wrong View*' is the fundamental cause of one's wrong thought, wrong

speech, wrong action, and wrong livelihood. It causes one to commit all sorts of indecent deeds, and to become indecent individuals. The '*Wrong View*' is inherently natural and never needs to be taught.

On the other hand, the '*Right View*' prompts one to cultivate right thought, right speech, right action, and right livelihood. The '*Right View*' encourages one to conduct good deeds, and to accumulate one's 'merits'. However, unlike the '*Wrong View*', it is *impossible to possess the 'Right View' without having to be earnestly and diligently taught and trained*. Therefore, from the moment of birth, one needs to be seriously taught the '*Right View*'. Otherwise, one's mind would lack the proper immune system against all wickedness wrought by the '*Wrong View*'. Moreover, without the '*Right View*', one cannot develop one's desirable personal attributes, and one cannot be the decent individual that the world needs.

What are the principles involved in instilling the desirable personal attributes in children?

There are three main principles to follow in order to effectively instill the desirable personal attributes in children.

- 1 The teacher/trainer must consider and select the relevant topics from the teachings of the '*Dhamma*'.
- 2 The teacher/trainer must be qualified to do his job.
- 3 The teacher/trainer must know how to go about the teaching and training of the next generation children.

1 Considering and selecting the relevant topics from the teachings of the 'Dhamma'.

What should be the main points of the selected teachings?

The main points of the selected teachings of the 'Dhamma' must deal with the development of a deep understanding that leads one to desire the giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation. These habitual practices build the foundation for the right understanding of the world, and the reality of life as a result of one's '*Right View*'.

The selected topics from the teachings of the 'Dhamma' are as follows.

- 1) The three ways of making 'merits'.
- 2) The ten ways of making 'merits'.
- 3) The tenfold wholesome course of action.
- 4) The tenfold unwholesome course of action.
- 5) The four actions of depravity.
- 6) The four forms of partiality.
- 7) The six causes of ruin.
- 8) False friends – true friends.
- 9) The shame and fear of sin.
- 10) The four principles of service and social integration.
- 11) The Lord Buddha's biography.
- 12) The Principal Instruction.
- 13) The Triple Gem.
- 14) The Four Noble Truths.
- 15) The four Modes of Birth.

- 16) The four comforts.
- 17) The four virtues conducive to growth.
- 18) The four bases of success.
- 19) The Right View of Ten.
- 20) The Wrong View of Ten.
- 21) The four virtues of a layman.
- 22) The true accounts of the Lord Buddha's past lives, and those of His Perfected Disciples.

2 The qualification of the teacher/trainer.

What is meant by the qualification of the teacher/trainer?

The teacher/trainer of the children in this context implies the parent, the guardian, the nanny, the teacher, other adults, as well as the 'Sangha'. One becomes qualified through one's self-development in the area of quality attributes, which are needed for the teaching and training of the children.

Why must the teacher/trainer become qualified?

The reason is that a large number of individuals who teach and train the next generation in the Thai society, are themselves lacking in certain quality personal attributes. This situation has caused problems for the society and has practically established itself as a tradition of sort. *There have been many parents and teachers, who are unwilling to take the time to respond to the questions that the children might have.* Some children are curious and smart. Therefore, they ask a lot of questions. The adults to whom the questions were addressed tend to feel annoyed. Instead of taking the time to respond to the

children's queries, these adults cut them short by criticizing the children for talking nonsense, and for talking too much. Some adults may even become enraged and holler at the children for asking any question at all.

What harm is caused by the negative reaction of the adults?

The negative reaction of the adults does not promote the child's creative thinking and self-expression. It also blocks the analytical thinking of both the child and the adults. This behavior pattern can cause the child to become emotionally and intellectually lethargic. In time, the child may lack the impetus to question or find out anything for himself. He may turn out to be gullible and end up making many mistakes in his life. Worst of all, such behavior pattern can get passed from one generation to another.

Why is it that most adults are not willing to take the time to deal with their children's curiosity?

The reasons could be due to:

1) The adult concerned may lack any knowledge about child psychology, and child development.

2) The adult concerned may be lacking in his analytical thinking. He may have always done things by rote. What he has done might have been decent but he has never taken the time to study the cause and effect of things, and the reason for why things are the way they are.

3) The adult concerned may lack the information necessary to respond to the child's questions. He may cut short the child's questioning by being irritated so the child would not know of his ignorance of the subject.

The fact is that children ask questions out of their natural curiosity. Their questions should not have been above any adult's ability to answer. If the adult is truly ignorant about a particular subject, he could have postulated a likely answer or ask for time to find out the answer. This way, the adult is earning the child's trust and respect. The child, in turn, understands that it is all right not to know everything, and that there are ways or places to look for answers and information.

How does the teacher/trainer become qualified?

One particular topic in the 'Dhamma', which is called 'the Four Virtues Conducive to Growth' is a topic that adults must study and apply to their duty as a teacher/trainer. The topic consists of four parts as follows.¹

1) *To keep the company of a decent individual, which means finding a good teacher.* When applied to this context, it means that the parent or guardian must be the child's teacher/trainer. (The child has no need to look elsewhere for a teacher.) One must be able to teach and train one's child in all areas of decency. (Which corresponds to 'teaching the Doctrine' in the Ten Ways of Making Merits). At the same time, one serves as a good role model in all things decent. One teaches the child about the damages wrought by the 'Causes of Ruin'. In doing so, one must not engage in activities like drinking, smoking, or gambling. One must not frequent the nightlife, indulge in all forms of entertainment, or keep the company of indecent individuals. One must not be lazy, and must earn an honest living. However, if one is still involved in one or a few of the 'Causes of Ruin', one's

1 A., vol. 2, *The Book of the Fours: (246) Growth in wisdom*, p.250-251.

words cannot inspire the child's obedience. And in time, the child may become involved in the 'Causes of Ruin' himself.

2) *To listen to the teachings of the 'Dhamma', which means to believe in the teacher's words of instruction.* In this context, it means that a child is obedient to his parent's teachings when his parent has earned his respect. Therefore, those individuals whom the child does not listen to, need to go back and consider themselves thoroughly, before putting all the blame on the child.

What needs to be done in order to earn the respect of one's child?

To earn the child's respect and obedience, the parent needs to spend time to teach and explain everything clearly to him. The parent needs to provide the child the reasons for the way things should be. In teaching the 'Dhamma' to the child, the parent needs to give concrete examples that facilitate the explanation of the cause and effect of, and the reason for a particular deed. The parent must endeavor to deal intelligently with any question the child might have. The parent must spend every effort to teach and train the child to think and reason for himself.

3) *To possess an analytical thinking, which means to analyze what is heard.* When a child listens to a subject that has to do with worldly or moral concerns, he would consider what he has heard and may wonder why something is such and so. It means that the child is developing his analytical faculty. Therefore, in discussing the teachings of the 'Dhamma' or any other subject, one should not become irritated at any of the child's questions. In fact, should the child have no question, it is up

to the parent to pose the child certain questions. This is to make certain that the child understands the topic being discussed, and to teach and train the child to continue sharpening his analytical faculty.

4) *To practice the 'Dhamma', which means to practice what has been taught.* When the child understands the subject taught until he can ascertain for himself the *what* and *why* of things, he then implements what he has learnt in an earnest manner. For example, when he has been taught that the cause of being born retarded is the residual evil 'Kamma' of drinking from his previous existence. And that the residual 'Kamma' was what remained after having served a most severe and horrible sentence for aeons and aeons in hell. Once the child has understood and accepted the logic of the lesson, he can conclude for himself that he would never, ever touch a drop of alcoholic drinks. This is the example of practicing the 'Dhamma'.

Summary of the 'Four Virtues Conducive to Growth'. The principles involved in the qualification of the teacher/trainer have to do with the teacher/trainer's readiness to be a good role model, and to pass on his moral values to the next generation children. When the teaching and training are carried out correctly, it earns the respect and obedience of the children that one is in charge of. The youngsters in turn know how to consider and analyze what has been taught to them. They can conclude for themselves what they need to incorporate into their thinking and behavior patterns afterward.

If every parent is a wise teacher/trainer in the context described above, it can stem the tide of conflicts between parents and children, and prevent the problem from

spreading to the community and national levels.

3 The teaching and training of the children.

How does one go about teaching and training the children?

In preparing for the work, one's plan should consist of the *practical training* as well as the *theoretical training*.

1) The practical training.

What is the purpose of the practical training?

The main purpose of the practical teaching and training is to instill in the child the familiarization with the conduct of good deeds. When one is used to doing good, decent deeds since one's childhood, there is hope that one would not easily become reckless, and make the mistake of committing indecent deeds later on in life. The reason is that one's sense of shame and fear of sin would serve to remind and prevent one from making such a mistake. The pious deeds of the *giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation*, can help one to improve one's 'Right View' all throughout one's life.

How is the practical training carried out?

The practical training is implemented through the various activities in one's daily life. Such activities include dining together, working together, playing together. Activities to develop one's spirituality include the preparation and the offering of food to the 'Sangha', the keeping of the Five Precepts, praying, meditating, and attending the temple activities such as listening to the sermons, etc.

Children who participate in these activities would pick up the rules and regulations, the manners, with which to associate with others. They increasingly learn about their parents' behavior patterns, and those of other adult participants. In these ways, they would develop an insight, which helps them to adjust their thinking and behavior patterns in order to get along well with everyone. Some children may be able to conclude on their own that right thought, right speech, and right action can enhance their socialization process. These daily and routine activities allow one to develop the disciplines necessary as the basic building block of a good, decent member of society later on.

On the other hand, there are children who cannot adjust themselves easily in the company of others because of their problem behavior patterns such as a quick temper, verbal aggressiveness, and a penchant for picking a fight with other children. Problem children would not be welcome in any social circle, and it is up to their parents to teach and train them more intensively.

What are the effects of the practical training?

If the practical training has been carried out according to the teachings of the 'Dhamma' as mentioned above, there are two general effects that can be expected.

1.1) Children that have undergone the practical training would develop an affinity for good deeds, and an aversion to anything indecent. They would gain pleasure from performing all forms of 'merits', but would be fearful of sin. They would know how to be giving both materially and emotionally. They would be patient and slow to anger. They would gladly sacrifice their time and creature comforts for activities that benefit the pub-

lic. They would have consideration for others. They would know to honor and admire individuals who are good and decent. They harbor no jealous feeling. They appreciate the importance of team spirit, and endeavor to be a true friend to those around him. Most importantly, they know the benefits of meditation and practice it regularly and diligently.

These behavior patterns characterize the practitioner as a good and decent individual. He would naturally earn the love and respect from all those who come into contact with him. A community composed of such individuals can be considered to be cultivated and noble indeed.

There is one caution. Activities that are aimed to promote the development of one's personal decency must not be the '*Wrong View*' type of activities such as gambling, drinking, etc. The teacher/trainer needs to bear in mind that the development of personal decency must be based on the principles outlined in the '*Dhamma*' as described earlier. Moreover, the teaching and training must have a psychological basis as well.

What is meant by the psychological basis for learning?

The psychology of human learning involves the four steps as follows: *acknowledgement, memorization, thought process, and knowledge*. One's mind first acknowledges things and events that come in contact with one's sense organs, which include the eye, ear, nose, tongue and the skin.

Once a child acknowledges something, he saves it in his memory. He then thinks about it and the knowledge is gained. The whole process provides an understand-

ing, which later on becomes his view.

For example, a child sees (acknowledges through his eyes) a Buddha's image in a temple hall, and he sees the people come and worship it. He then memorizes the scene, and thinks about it. Afterward, he concludes for himself that the Buddha's image is there for people to worship (knowledge).

Another child may think about the same scene and wonder why people worship the Buddha's image. He then goes about finding an explanation. Once he receives it, he gains the knowledge, which becomes an understanding. The understanding in time becomes his view.

If the child receives the right information, he would develop the right knowledge, the right understanding, and the right view. He would then regularly worship a Buddha's image until it becomes a habit, which develops into a moral practice later on.

Therefore, a child's characteristics are formed from *the process of acknowledgement, memory, thought process, and knowledge*, over and over again all throughout his life.

In this way, the right acknowledgement leads to the right memory. The right memory leads to the right thought process. The right thought process leads to the right knowledge and understanding.

The superficial level of the child's right understanding eventually forms the child's good habits. The deep level of the child's understanding eventually becomes the child's '*Right View*'. Part of the '*Right View*' that adheres to one's mind throughout many existences is the view about the '*Reality of this World*' as described in Chapter One.

On the contrary, if the child's acknowledgement,

memory, thought process, and understanding are more about acts of indecency, the situation may lead the child to form some bad habits. If uncorrected, the bad habits may turn into a full-fledged '*Wrong View*', which can also adhere to one's mind throughout many lifetimes.

For example, when a child sees the adults around him regularly drink and make merry. He saves the scene in his memory. He thinks about it and gains the knowledge that drinking is fun and has a social value. He may conclude further, for example, that non-drinkers do not know how to have fun, are not sociable and cannot advance in their careers. The child may wish to grow up quickly so that he can do the same thing that the adults around him do. He may gain the wrong understanding that he needs to drink to be sociable and acceptable. Should he do this once he is old enough to drink, the activity may in time turn into an addiction. This activity may easily lead to other vices, and he may end up harboring the '*Wrong View*' without realizing that there might be other alternatives.

Therefore, the teacher/trainer needs to pay a special attention to what he wants his child to learn in order to cultivate the highest moral standard, to form the noblest habits, and to have the '*Right View*'.

The social values, the personal characteristics and the views of the members in the community, the society, or the nation, make up its respective moral standard and culture.

Nowadays, the older generations tend to lament similarly that the Thai culture is deteriorating faster and faster each day, especially as seen in today's youth. One may then ask about the cause of such deterioration, and may

wonder if it may have come from the adults themselves.

There have been a large number of adults who have not conscientiously thought about what they want to expose to their children. Some may even insist on feeding their children the wrong things. For these reasons, parents need to have an understanding of child psychology and child development, among many other things.

1.2) The children that have been well trained in the practical part would more easily understand the theoretical part to follow. With both parts of training, they would feel confident and encouraged to continue with their conduct of good deeds.

2) *The theoretical training.*

What is meant by the theoretical training?

The theoretical training involves the teaching of the selected topics of the 'Dhamma' as outlined earlier in the chapter. For best results, these topics need to form part of the school curriculum under the subject of 'Morality' throughout the primary, secondary, and undergraduate levels.

What is the purpose of the theoretical training?

2.1) To further improve the understanding of the practical training. The practical training has more to do with instilling in the child some desirable attributes during his pre-school years. Therefore, it is now the teacher's responsibility to relate the practical part to the theoretical parts for the child. This practice is to emphasize the relevance of the teachings of the 'Dhamma' to one's personal conduct in order that the child would continue with his practices with a real conviction.

2.2) To help the child appreciate the values of the

'Dhamma' and how the teachings can be beneficially applied to one's real life situation. The child learns to understand how the teachings of the 'Dhamma' can serve as one's anchor and refuge in life. Therefore, each teacher regardless of the subject that he is responsible for teaching, needs to be well-versed in his knowledge of Buddhism. Such knowledge can help the child further his practical training. The teacher of 'Morality' must at least have a thorough understanding of the twenty or so selected topics given at the beginning of the chapter. This is so that he can lead the discussion of the 'Dhamma' with his students, and be able to answer any question that his students may have.

2.3) To help the students gain the correct and deep understanding of the teachings of the 'Dhamma' in both the theoretical and practical parts. The students' deep appreciation of the 'Dhamma' enables them to live their lives according to the teachings. At the same time, they can explain and pass on the details of what they know to others in such a way that the listeners can gain their own understanding of the 'Dhamma'. When the students grow up, they can pass on the knowledge and training to their own children and grandchildren later on. In this way, the teachings of Buddhism can continue to benefit the followers, and assist all humanity to escape from suffering and meet with a sense of wellbeing. Most importantly, all would come to realize the ultimate purpose of one's life.

How should the selected topics be incorporated into the school curriculum?

Regardless of how the topics are grouped together for each educational level and how many topics are taught

at one time, the contents of the topics need to correspond to the practical part of *the giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation.*

In regards to the '*Right View*', it should be incorporated into the curriculum from the tenth grade to the twelfth grade. The teaching method and detailed contents can vary from grade to grade by grouping the topics differently in the order of difficulty. For example, for the tenth grade, the '*Right View*' can be taught along with the '*Wrong View*', the '*Tenfold Wholesome Course*', and the '*Tenfold Unwholesome Course*'. For the eleventh grade, the '*Right View*' can be taught along with the '*Three Ways of Making Merits*', the '*Ten Ways of Making Merits*', the '*Four Actions of Depravity*', the '*Four Forms of Partiality*', '*False Friends—True Friends*', and the '*Six Causes of Ruin*'. For the twelfth grade, the '*Right View*' can be taught along with the '*Four Modes of Birth*', '*The Shame and Fear of Sin*', the '*Four Principles of Service and Social Integration*', and the '*Four Qualities of a Lay Individual*'. The topics can be arranged accordingly for the undergraduate level.

These are but examples only. The teacher needs to exercise his good judgment in making sure that the topics relate well to each other and their relevance to the practical part. This way, the students can gain a deep understanding and appreciation of the topics learnt and can easily apply them to their daily conduct.

To give an analogy, jigsaw pieces in themselves are not interesting. Only when the whole picture can be seen that one is motivated to attempt putting the jigsaw pieces together. If one were to attempt putting the pieces together without seeing the complete picture first, one

would be hard-pressed to succeed.

In the same manner, the student of the 'Dhamma' who studies each topic on its own without relating it to the rest of the topics, and without understanding its relevance to living his life, he cannot really appreciate the practical benefits of what he has learnt. Therefore, he may not be really interested in the contents, and regard them as something to study in order to pass his examination. In time, the detail of the topic would just fade from his memory.

Therefore, being able to see the whole picture and the relationship of the topics, including their practical relevance to one's real life situation, is the great responsibility of each teacher, but especially of the teacher of 'Morality'.

How should the theoretical teaching proceed?

The theoretical teaching should proceed by means of group assignments. The students can be divided into groups according to the number of topics contained in the syllabus. Group discussions of the researched material can be carried out in terms of well-rehearsed questions and answers. The contents of the discussion should be relevant to the topics discussed.

During each group discussion, students in other groups should be allowed to ask questions and present their opposing views if they have any, within the time frame given. At the end of each group discussion, the teacher of the course needs to succinctly summarize the main points of each topic. He needs to correct any misunderstanding on the part of the panelists in order to make sure that every student correctly understands each point of the discussed topic.

Where can one research the relevant theoretical material?

Nowadays, it is quite easy to research the theoretical material especially for schools in major cities. The sources of information include the Thai version of the Tipitaka (the three parts of the Buddhist Scriptures) in book form and through the Internet. The sources also include the scholarly 'Sangha', books on various 'Dhamma' topics, one's parents, scholars of the Buddhist teachings, and the teachers of 'Morality'.

Therefore, it behooves every teacher of 'Morality' to be well-versed in the various topics contained in the 'Dhamma'. The teachers should also have sufficient experiences in practicing *the giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation*.

However, any school lacking a teacher of 'Morality' should ask for help from the nearby 'Sangha'. In the meantime, the school needs to develop or find a proper teacher. A teacher of 'Morality' is just as necessary to have as teachers of other school subjects.

It may not be necessary to introduce the material of the 'Dhamma' just yet during the initial part of the practical training. However, when it comes time to carry out the theoretical training, the teacher must not neglect the practical training but to emphasize it. The two types of training need to go hand-in-hand in order to further instill the decent attributes in the students. In this way, the students' 'Right View' would have a chance to be deeply rooted in their mind.

The Means to Develop One's Desirable Personal Attributes

It is well understood that soon after birth, an infant needs to take vaccine against many infectious diseases. Otherwise, the infant may become infected and may die as a result. Some diseases like polio can cripple the surviving victim.

For the mind, there must be an adequate buildup of immunity. The immune system for the mind can be built up through the teaching of the 'Dhamma'. The most basic teaching that everyone requires is the '*Right View*'. And the most fundamental attributes of human decency can only be obtained through the diligent practices of the '*Right View*'.

The Individuals Occupying the 'Six Directions' in One's Life are the Key Factor of the Development of One's Right View

What needs to be done so that the '*Right View*' can be instilled into all society members?

The Lord Buddha had given us a systematic approach to instill in each individual the '*Right View*'. The approach assigns each individual to take up a position at the center. Those around him are divided into six different groups based on each group's relationship to him. (Please note that regardless of the number of those around him, it may be large or small, can all be fitted into one of these six groups). Each group of these individuals can be assigned a position in a particular direction with respect to the individual at the center. These positions are termed the '*Six Directions*', and the details are as follows.

1. The Front, which means one's parents or legal guardians.
2. The Right, which means teachers and college professors.
3. The Rear, which means one's spouse and children.
4. The Left, which means one's relatives and friends.
5. The Below, which means one's colleagues and subordinates.
6. The Above, which means the 'Sangha'.

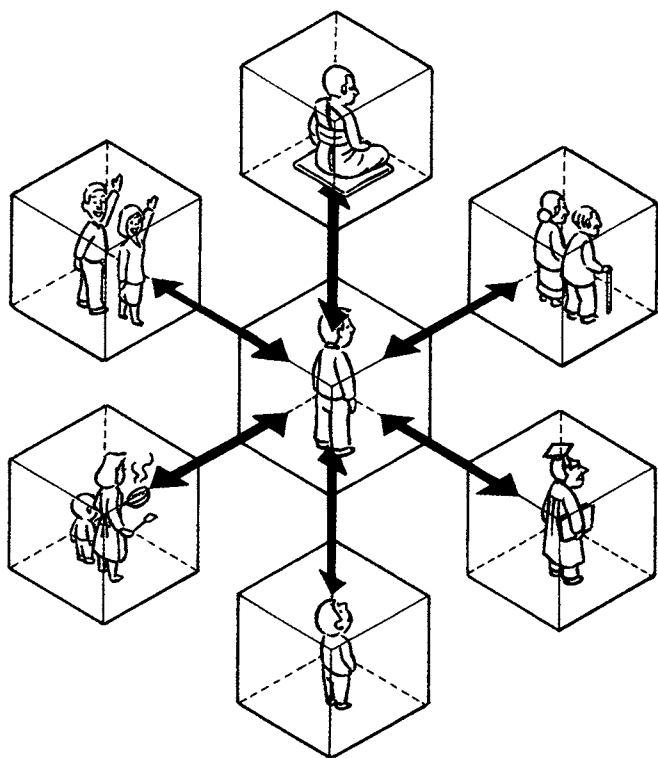
The diagram depicting these relationships is shown in the following page.

Once the Lord Buddha had divided those around us into six different groups or 'Six Directions', He had also defined for us the duties and responsibilities that the individuals in each Direction owe to us, as well as the duties and responsibilities that we owe to them. These interactive relationships are described as follows.

1. *Individuals occupying the Front Direction.* In general, from the moment of birth, the individuals who play the most important role in one's life are one's parents. Therefore, the Lord Buddha had placed one's parents at the Front and had defined their roles and responsibilities for their children in the following five ways.

- 1) Forbid the child from committing indecent deeds.
- 2) Teach and train the child how to be decent.
- 3) Provide for the child's education.
- 4) Find the child an appropriate spouse.
- 5) Provide the child with an inheritance at the appropriate time

The Six Directions



The Parents' Most Important Role

Are the five different roles of the parents equally important?

The answer is no. The reason is that the first two responsibilities are the most important, since they involve the teaching and training of the 'Right View', and of human decency.

How does one go about teaching and training one's child to remain decent, and to stay away from wickedness?

There are five general ways as follows.

1) *One must instill in one's child since his infancy the necessary disciplines, and the formation of a good habit.* An individual taking care of an infant needs to realize that eating, sleeping, and waste elimination according to a time schedule is the way to start teaching the child the necessary disciplines, and to instill in him the beginning of a good habit. Living in a clean home environment, and wearing clean clothes teach the child about cleanliness. On the contrary, an infant whose diaper is infrequently changed, who lives in a dirty environment may learn to accept sloppiness and dinginess as a way of life.

2) *One must teach and train the child to have certain manners as soon as he is able to understand them.* The child should be taught from very early on to greet his parents, his grandparents, and all the adults in his life with a proper 'Wai'.¹ The child is also taught to 'Wai' the

¹ A 'Wai' is the Thai way of paying respect and of worship. A common 'Wai' is carried out by bringing both palms of the hands together so that the fingers in each hand meet and align with each other. In this position, the hands are then placed at the chest level while one's head bows over them. There are also more elaborate forms of the 'Wai'.

'Sangha', and to worship the Buddha's image. The child is taught to say 'thank you' when someone helps him or gives him things. He is taught to apologize when he makes a mistake. The proper manners of the child must first be taught and trained at home. They should not wait to be taught at school.

The reader may have noticed sometimes that some adults can 'Wai' others beautifully, but feel self-conscious to do the same with their own parents. Therefore, they practically never 'Wai' their parents. The reason for this awkwardness is that these individuals were not taught at an early age to 'Wai' their own parents.

There are proper manners applied to standing, walking, sitting, sleeping, dining, speaking, etc. For example, one does not shout or holler. One does not use foul language. One does not argue with one's elders. One knows his proper place with respect to others. In brief, one has the manners of a refined individual. To possess such a refinement, one has to be taught and trained from infancy all the way to young adulthood.

3) *One must instill into one's child starting from kindergarten certain teachings of the 'Dhamma'.* One teaches the child to pray to and worship the Lord Buddha before his bedtime. The child's bedtime stories can be taken from some selected teachings of the 'Dhamma'. One teaches the child to offer food to the 'Bhikku' on his almsround every morning. One teaches the child to keep the 'Five Precepts'. One takes the child to the temple regularly and teaches him to pay the proper respect to the 'Sangha' and to worship the Lord Buddha's image. In brief, one teaches the child the ways of a practicing Buddhist.

Once the child attends primary school, he can be led to begin practicing his meditation. The child's practice can be initiated under the instruction of a 'Bhikku' who practices righteousness. Afterward, he can join in the family's regular meditation sessions.

The parents need to instill in the child the ways of a practicing Buddhist by bringing their children with them regularly to the temple. There, they can learn to sit still and listen to the sermon. They can be encouraged to study and practice the 'Dhamma'. The children need to be taught and trained *to give alms, keep the Precepts, and practice meditation* on a regular basis until the practices become a force of habit. Such training teaches the child to develop the '*Right View*', which goes to help the child develop a shame and fear of sin as well as his sense of personal responsibilities. The study and practice of the 'Dhamma' in these ways provide the child with a strong and healthy sense of boundary in which to live his life. In this way, he can protect himself from straying into wickedness, and can maintain his decency for the rest of his life.

Moreover, what every individual needs to know and understand is *the reason for his being, and the ultimate objective of his life*. The answers are clearly explained in the teachings of the 'Dhamma'. Therefore, studying and practicing the 'Dhamma' regularly at the temple provide the ready avenue for parents to instill in their children the knowledge and the understanding of the objective of one's life.

As described in Chapter Three, there are three levels to one's life objective. These include:

- The primary level.

- The secondary level.
- The tertiary or highest level.

4) *The parents are responsible for creating a good home environment for the family.*

What is meant by a good home environment?

A good home environment is one where the family members feel secure and happy. The family may not be wealthy but the family home needs to provide the following creature comforts:

4.1) *The comforts of food.* In this context, it means that every family member can enjoy their meal together on a regular basis. If the family members cannot enjoy their meals together three times a day, they should at least be able to do so once a day at dinnertime.

What benefits are derived from family members sharing a meal together?

A mealtime together can provide many benefits for the family. It is the time to gather together and share the experiences of each family member's day. It is the time to acknowledge each other's feelings about things in his life. It is the time to exchange ideas. Most importantly, it is the time for the parents to check up on their children's progress. It is the time for the parents to present some relevant teachings of the 'Dhamma' based on the day's experiences. Families that can hardly find the time to be together have a tendency to develop problems more easily.

4.2) *The comforts of home.* It means keeping the home clean and attractive. Each family member must share the responsibility of the household chores, even when

the family can afford a maid. Whenever the parents get ready to do something around the house, they should invite their children to help out. This way, the children can learn how to do different things, and develop the spirit of teamwork.

In the home, there needs to be a family altar room, unless the space is severely limited. It is the room for the family to pray and practice meditation together. Photographs, paintings, and all the other art objects around the house should be the type that uplifts one's spirit. There may be some images or photographs of the Lord Buddha, some photographs of the family ancestors, some family photographs, etc. There should not be images that drag the mind down toward any 'unwholesome attachments' such as sexually provocative images, and images of acts of wickedness and violence.

4.3) *The comforts of people.* Family members need to be in the habit of listening, honoring, and respecting each other. The parents themselves need to honor one another, and form a united effort to develop and grow the family members. When a problem comes up, the family needs to discuss as a unit to find a proper solution to the problem, instead of trying to place the blame for the problem on someone.

When a child expresses an opinion, the parents are responsible for listening with consideration to their child. If the child's opinion is appropriate, it should be supported. If not, the parents need to provide the child with an explanation. On the child's part, in certain cases, he may later become more highly educated than his parents. Nevertheless, he should still respectfully listen to his parents' opinions.

At any rate, the people comfort in any family comes from two factors as follows.

- a) The leader of the family is a true leader in the sense that he has the '*Right View*', and derives his wisdom from studying and practicing the '*Dhamma*'. He is self-composed and is not temperamental.
- b) The family members share the same faith, the same moral conduct, and the same '*Right View*'. Under such circumstances, conflicts can hardly flare up. The popularly held opinion that 'conflicts are bound to happen for those who dwell together' is true because the members are unequal in the levels of their faith, their moral conduct, and their '*Right View*'.

4.4) *The comforts of the 'Dhamma'*. In this context, it means that the family members share the same level of the '*Right View*'. To be so, one's '*Right View*' needs to be instilled early on in one's childhood. It begins with the regular practices of the *giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, and meditation until they become a force of habit*. With knowledge and understanding, one grows to love the accumulation of 'merits', but is fearful of wickedness. One grows to love decency and abhor vileness.

The places where one can carry out these pious practices are at the temples where the '*Sangha*' practice righteousness. They are not to be found at a department store, an amusement park, a movie theater, a coffee shop, or some such places.

Therefore, it is up to the parents to take their children to the temple to study and practice the '*Dhamma*', and to participate in other pious activities. In these ways, the comfort of the '*Dhamma*' within the family can be

assured.

5) *The parents must be a good role model for their children.* There is a Thai saying that as long as a mother crab walks in a meandering manner, its youngsters would follow its example and walk in the same crabby, meandering way. The reason is that the young crabs have never seen or known any other way to walk. In the same manner, a child tends to copy whatever the parents do. Therefore, if any parent desires his child to be decent, he needs first to practice decency for his child to see and emulate.

What are the decent behavior patterns that the parent should have?

5.1) The giving and sharing of what one has, the giving of aid, the keeping of the Five Precepts on regular days, the keeping of the Eight Precepts on Buddhist holy days, the practice of meditation. These are all examples of the decent behavior patterns.

Please note that the keeping of the Eight Precepts is not only a direct way to accumulate one's 'merits', it is also an effective means of birth control.

The establishment of sex education in schools appears to stimulate the students' curiosity about sex, and causes many to try it out for themselves. The consequences that follow are teen pregnancy, sexual transmission of diseases, promiscuity, etc. Perhaps the world ought to go back and study how the Thai people of old had used the keeping of the Eight Precepts as a means of birth control, and as a means to purify their beings.

5.2) The parents openly respect and honor decent individuals. They do not participate in any partial practices. They do not indulge in gossiping, and they do not

harbor any jealousy.

5.3) The parents do not earn their livelihood through indecent means such as

- the trading of humans,
- the trading of weaponry,
- the trading of animals destined for the slaughter-house,
- the trading of alcoholic drinks,
- the trading of poisons, and all illegal trades.

5.4) The parents are not involved in any 'Causes of Ruin' both inside and outside the home. They must not encourage any type of gambling and betting however innocently it may be. The reason is that gambling and betting of any sort produces winners and losers. By nature, everyone wants to be a winner, and nobody wants to be a loser. Therefore, allowing children to engage in these vices would only encourage them to become conniving, selfish, etc.

5.5) The parents display their gratitude toward their own parents and family elders through loving, kind deeds. This behavior pattern provides a fine example for the children. When it is the parents' turn to get old and decrepit, chances are that their children would do to them as the parents did to their parents earlier on.

The above details pertain to the first two responsibilities of the parents. These are the parents' most important duties, and they must endeavor to do them earnestly and correctly. Otherwise, their children would not be able to develop their '*Right View*', and they cannot become fully conscientious and responsible adults later on.

The second most important duty

What is the parents' second most important duty?

Providing for the child's formal education is the parents' second most important duty. There are two aspects of the worldly education as follows.

1) *General education*, which provides the foundation for the professional education to follow.

2) *Professional education*, which includes medicine, law, business administration, etc. Individuals with a high level of education, who have also been taught and trained in the area of human decency since early childhood, can hope to meet with success in life. That is, they can achieve the primary level of their life objective. At the same time, they know *to practice the giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation*. These practices are stored provision for their future existences, which include the '*States of Happiness*'. Therefore, they can simultaneously achieve the secondary level of their life objective.

There are individuals who have not had the opportunity for a higher education or may not be formally educated at all. However, if they are firmly planted in the '*Right View*' as a result of training since their early childhood, they can still meet with success in achieving both the primary and secondary levels of their life objective. The reason is that a professional education can be learnt through real life experiences. On the other hand, individuals earning various diplomas but have never been taught the practices of human decency according to the '*Right View*' since their early childhood, can misuse their knowledge for selfish gains or to com-

mit crimes even. For example, they may use their knowledge of medicine to contemplate a murder. They may use their knowledge of business to cook up fraudulent schemes. They may use their knowledge of nuclear physics to create weapons of mass destruction.

Therefore, the parents who occupy the child's 'Front Direction' must correctly understand that the training of human decency is their direct duty. (Parents whose only intent is to skim and save in order to send their child to a prestigious school are missing the point here). Training the child the ways of human decency according to the '*Right View*' must be first and foremost on the parents' agenda. Providing the child's formal education takes second place.

Duties that have less importance

What is meant by 'duties that have less importance'?

These duties include 'finding an appropriate spouse for their child', and 'providing their child with an inheritance at an appropriate time'. They are considered to have less importance. The reason is that once the child has understood the value of human decency and has received a higher education, he would be able to find the right spouse on his own. Still, the parents may out of their best wishes find a decent individual as a potential spouse for their child. Respecting the parents' judgment, the child may well go along with the chosen individual. If not, the parents can trust their child to exercise a good judgment.

Moreover, the child in this case can earn an honest livelihood, and succeed in life even if the parents do not or cannot provide him with any inheritance. Should the

child in this case be given the responsibility to run the family business, he can be trusted to do it well. These are the reasons that the parents' fourth and fifth duties have a less importance.

One's duties and responsibilities for one's parents

The Lord Buddha had defined one's duties and responsibilities for the individuals occupying one's 'Front Direction' in the five areas as follows.

1) The parents have raised and nurtured the child since his infancy. Now, it is the child's turn to take care of his parents.

2) Help the parents' with their trade or business.

3) Carry on the family name.

4) Be worthy of an inheritance.

5) Make 'merits' and dedicate them to the parents after they pass on.

1) *The parents have raised and nurtured the child since his infancy. Now, it is the child's turn to take care of his parents.* Individuals with a firmly planted 'Right View' are naturally grateful to their parents. As a result, they can conscientiously fulfill their responsibilities for their parents when the time comes.

2) *Help the parents with their trade or business.* A child can fulfill this responsibility because he has been trained to help out around the house since his early childhood. At the same time, he has been taught to develop his 'Right View'. Moreover, his professional training has been in line with the family business.

3) *Carry on the family name.* It involves the continued practices of human decency, and keeping the good name

of the family. A child can fulfill this responsibility when his parents have fulfilled their first three duties meticulously.

4) *Be worthy of an inheritance.* This duty involves a decent behavior pattern based on one's firmly planted 'Right View'. One abstains completely from any 'Causes of Ruin'. Such a child would be able to safeguard his inheritance as well as keeping the family tradition going for a long, long time.

5) *Make 'merits' and dedicate them to the parents after they pass on.* A child that can fulfill this duty must correctly understand 'the Ways of Making Merits'. Such knowledge can be obtained through attending the sermons at the temple on a regular basis.

Therefore, parents who endeavor to instill in their children at an early age the habit of going to the temple, and participating in the various pious activities, have earned an extra bonus. Their child would know to fulfill this duty properly once they are gone from this world. Although they can no longer earn their own 'merits' in the 'States of Happiness', they can still continue to accumulate their 'merits' through their children's pious deeds, which are dedicated to them.

There is a very important issue to raise here regarding mothers who leave the child in the care of a hired nanny almost 24 hours a day. These mothers work outside the home and come home exhausted. They have very little time for their child, and even leave the child to sleep with his nanny so that they can get a good night's sleep.

The mothers in this case need to realize the fact that the hired nanny would never be able to raise the child in a devoted manner that he deserves. Ironically, the moth-

ers in this situation cannot even bother to do much for the child themselves. How encouraged the hired nanny would be in devoting her time and efforts to raising the child when his own mother does not really care.

Therefore, it is time that all the mothers and mothers-to-be realize that the business of raising a child is so much more involved than just keeping him fed and healthy, and giving him an education. There is an enormous of work to be done earnestly and conscientiously before the child can have the chance of developing any desirable personal attributes.

2. *Individuals occupying the 'Right Direction'*. It means the school teachers and college professors. The Lord Buddha had defined the duties and responsibilities that the teachers owe to their students in the five following ways:

- 1) Give valuable advice.
- 2) Teach them well.
- 3) Teach them the arts and sciences.
- 4) Praise them.

5) Teach them the moral responsibility for their education.

1) Give valuable advice

What is meant by 'giving valuable advice'?

To give valuable advice means to advise the students about the general manners and socially acceptable behavior.

Why is it necessary to give advice about the general manners?

The reason is that the students come from different families and backgrounds. Some youngsters have been taught and trained to have good manners, and to groom themselves properly. Some others have not been as well trained. Having been neglected and left to their own devices much of the time, these children tend to imitate the manners of their wayward buddies and of some questionable characters in the television programs.

Another reason is that school is a meeting place of many individuals. If each individual has the proper manners and behavior, is patient and tolerant, is not overly self-ish, then all can assemble together in peace. All can share a fellowship and the general atmosphere is conducive to learning.

But if each child is crass, aggressive, intolerant, and constantly fighting with each other, the situation can pose a real deterrent to the teaching and learning processes. It then falls on the responsibility of the teachers to pay special attention to the students, and take the time to make sure that every student behaves properly. Instead of making the time and effort to avail their students of a good education, this extra burden of the teachers just drains them of both time and efforts.

Therefore, as far as proper manners and behavior are concerned, the child's parents or legal guardians have the responsibility for teaching them to the child. When the parents have done a good job, it can help relieve the teachers' heavy burden. This way, the teachers can more effectively concentrate on teaching the arts and sciences to the students.

It has been noted that well-mannered and well-behaved children tend to also be good students. On the other hand, students that are rude, that act out and misbehave tend to have poor grades.

Is giving valuable advice confined to just manners?

There is still one more area that the teachers need to advise their students on. It has to do with not keeping the company of indecent individuals. This means that the teachers need to explain to their students the clear distinction between the characteristics of false and true friends. It also implies that the teachers also teach their students the qualities of a true friend. In this way, any student displaying the characteristics of a false friend would find himself unacceptable to others.

In order for the teachers to advise their students about false friends and true friends, they need to relate to them the concept of the '*Right View*' as well.

It can be concluded that the first important duty of the individuals occupying one's '*Right Direction*' is to teach their students the '*Dhamma*' along with the appropriate physical and verbal conducts so that they can live happily with others in society.

2) Teach them well.

What should be taught?

In this context, it means teaching the arts and sciences, which are necessary for earning one's livelihood later on.

What is meant by 'teaching them well'?

It means that the teachers have researched and planned

their teaching material well beforehand. This is so that they can teach and explain the contents of the subject in such a way that they are truly useful and applicable. Education should not be just for the sake of the certificate or diploma needed for a job application. The teachers need to make sure that the students understand what is being taught. When the students really know their crafts, the knowledge and experience can help them to succeed in their work as a professional later on.

3) Teach them about the arts and sciences.

How should the teaching be carried out?

To teach the students well, each teacher needs to develop a passion for his

particular craft. He needs to possess the passion to teach it to the students in its entirety, without holding anything back.

What types of teachers have such a passion?

Teachers who have a passion for teaching what they know without holding anything back tend to be generous, kind, and compassionate. Their general attitudes can be summarized as follows.

a) They are loving and kind to the students and feel as though the students are their own kin. They dedicate themselves to the teaching and training of their students from their store of knowledge.

b) They realize that their students make up the future generation and the future of the nation. If their students can be taught to be competent, they can help with the progress and development of the country as a whole. They know that they can play a part in raising the

nation's standard as compared to that of developed countries.

c) They are not afraid that their students will outshine them. They are only too happy to see their students meet with honor and prosperity in their future.

d) They realize that as teachers, it is their job to pass on what they know. In so doing, they are earning 'merits' for themselves. Therefore, they would want to perform their duties to the best of their abilities.

What types of teachers hold back their knowledge?

The teachers who are unwilling to give their all tend to be narrow-minded and selfish. Their general attitudes can be summarized as follows:

a) They have never realized that teachers who do their job well are doing a real service to the general public. They consider themselves a mere employee.

b) They do not want their students to be better or wealthier than they are.

c) They are opportunistic and want to earn extra money from special tutoring.

And so they hold back.

It can be said that teachers who hold back are insincere, and harbor the '*Wrong View*'. Naturally, such teachers cannot be helpful in planting the '*Right View*' more firmly in their students.

4) *Praise Them.*

How should it be done?

Praising a student in public is the way to validate the student's decency and academic accomplishment. One

of the common ways of giving praise to the students is to write them a recommendation letter when it comes time for them to apply for a job.

This particular duty should behoove the teachers to teach their students worldly knowledge as well as moral knowledge. This is so that their students can be truly praiseworthy.

5) Teach them the moral responsibility for their craft.

What does it mean?

It means that in teaching the students the moral responsibility for their craft,

they can help to prevent the students from misusing their knowledge and from making professional mistakes. They also need to be taught that it is immoral for them to be open to corruption and to take bribes and in their jobs.

Only when a teacher can fulfill his duty in the above five ways that he can be considered to have done a proper job. In this way, he has played his part in helping his students become contributing citizens of the nation.

Additionally, it is very important that all the teachers understand certain key teachings of the 'Dhamma'. They themselves need to study and practice the 'Dhamma' on a regular basis. In this way, they have the practical experience to teach their students the moral conduct as well as the arts and sciences. It takes both types of knowledge to complete an individual.

The effective way to study the 'Dhamma' is through the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness. Therefore, it is very important that educational institutions request the Sangha's assistance to teach the subject of morality

from time to time.

The duties owed to individuals occupying one's 'Right Direction'

The Lord Buddha had defined such duties as follows.

- 1) Stand up to greet them.
- 2) Line up to welcome them.
- 3) Be obedient.
- 4) Serve them.
- 5) Attentively learning the arts and sciences

If the teacher has fulfilled his five duties impeccably, it is hopeful that his students would also fulfill their own in like manner.

3. Individuals occupying the 'Rear Direction'. These are one's spouse and children. The Lord Buddha had defined the duties and responsibilities of a spouse in the following five ways:

For the husband

1) *Honoring his wife.* A 'Right View' husband would treat his wife with consideration and admiration.

2) *Being courteous to his wife.* A good husband would be polite and kind to his wife.

3) *Being faithful to his wife.* A husband who believes in the Law of 'Kamma' would keep his 'Five Precepts', and leave other women alone.

4) *Give her a leadership role.* A sincere husband who is trustful of his wife and treats her with regards would allow his wife to have the final say in all family matters.

5) *Gives her gifts of jewelry.* To demonstrate his love and devotion, a husband buys his wife gifts of jewelry on special occasions.

A man who endeavors to fulfill these five duties of a husband does so as a result of his upbringing and schooling. It is evident that he has been well brought up and well-grounded in the 'Right View'.

For the wife

1) *Manages the household.* It means that she manages the household activities such as preparing meals, taking care of children, etc. Some women may manage a family business as well. A woman well-grounded in the 'Right View' and properly educated can perform this duty effectively.

2) *Is considerate and generous to those close to her husband.* Only a 'Right View' woman can fulfill this role impeccably.

3) *Being faithful to her husband.* A woman who understands the 'Law of Kamma', and keeps the 'Five Precepts' would not contemplate adultery.

4) *Safeguards her husband's earning.* A woman can fulfill this particular duty only if she is not involved in any 'Causes of Ruin', and knows how to manage the finances.¹

5) *Is hard-working.* A woman can fulfill this role because she is not involved in any 'Causes of Ruin', and understands the true objective of one's life.

A woman who can fulfill all of these duties of a wife is one who has been well brought up in the ways of the world and of the 'Dhamma'.

In regards to one's 'Rear Direction', the most important consideration is the selection of one's life partner. It

¹ Divide the income into four parts. The first part is for supporting the family. The second and third parts as expenses needed in earning one's livelihood. The fourth part is for savings in case of emergency, and for the giving of alms and aid.

is imperative that each woman and each man considers his or her potential partner very earnestly and very thoroughly before making a decision. Starting a new family is a very important matter because it affects many individuals' lives. When the choice is poorly made or made without any thoughts, there would follow many personal and social problems later on. The obvious ones include divorces, problem children, etc.

The Lord Buddha had given many teachings concerning spousal relationship, one in particular has the following detail: ¹

Early one morning, the Lord Buddha was visiting the home of a prosperous Buddhist named 'Anathapindika'. While there, the Lord Buddha heard a commotion in the house and asked the homeowner about it. The homeowner replied that the cause of all the commotion was Sujata, his daughter-in-law and added that she did not appear to have any respect for anyone in the house.

The Lord Buddha then called Sujata to come to His presence, and proceeded to ask her which of the seven types of wives she belonged to.

1) A murderess of a wife. It means a wife who holds her husband in contempt, who takes delight in other men, and attempts to murder her husband.

2) A thief of a wife. It means a wife who steals from her husband.

3) A boss of a wife. It means a wife who is lazy, rude, and contentious.

4) A mother of a wife. It means a wife who takes care of her husband like a child, and protects his wealth and

¹ A., vol. 4, *The Book of the Sevens*, Chapter 6: ix b (596). *Wives*, p.56-58.

possessions.

5) A sister of a wife. It means a wife who respects her husband, and goes along with whatever her husband says.

6) An admirer of a wife. It means a wife who treats her husband with kind pleasure and admiration. She does not display any behavior that would be irritating to her husband.

7) A maid of a wife. It means a wife who is patient and tolerant. Even when she suffers at her husband's hands, she does not respond with anger.

The Lord Buddha continued to say that the first three types of wives are immoral and cruel. After death, they would be destined for the '*States of Unhappiness*'. The remaining four types are ethical and loving. After death, they would be destined for the '*States of Happiness*'.

When the Lord Buddha was finished with the sermon, Sujata pledged to Him that from that day onward, she would be pleased to be a maid of a wife.

From these seven types of wives, one can see that there are two main differences. These are the immoral, and the moral wives. It can be concluded that there are two main types of husbands as well. It is a fact that moral individuals tend to have developed some degree of the '*Right View*'. And with the help of a true friend, these individuals can with time develop their '*Right View*' more fully.

Therefore, in selecting a life partner, individuals need to scrutinize the moral standard of each other thoroughly, and to heed the opinions of their family elders regarding their choice. Individuals who have exercised prudence in selecting a life partner have a good chance of

finding a happy home life. At the same time, their children would be able to carry on the same tradition. There is a good possibility that such a home life would encourage all in the family to achieve both the primary and secondary levels of their life objective.

Another point is that 'a maid of a wife' is not likely to happen in a marriage where each partner is firmly planted in the '*Right View*'. The reason is that neither would display any unethical behavior toward each other.

4. *Individuals occupying one's 'Left Direction'*. They are one's relatives and friends. Friends, according to the Lord Buddha's definition, mean 'True Friends'. Individuals can be true friends only when they have been trained in the ways of the '*Right View*'. The Lord Buddha had defined the five duties that friends owe to each other as follows:

1) *Protecting his friend when he is careless* A friend has the courage to protect and support his friend when he is down on his luck or has made a mistake as result of an oversight. An individual who does nothing when he knows of his friend's hardship shows himself to be an enemy in the guise of a friend.

2) *Guarding his property when he is careless* A friend has the courage to protect his friend's possessions when he is down on his luck or has made a mistake as a result of an oversight.

3) *Being a refuge for his friend when he is in danger* A friend has the courage to provide shelter for his friend in times of danger.

4) *Staying by his side when his friend is in trouble* A friend has the courage to stick around when his friend is faced with a calamity.

5) *Showing respect to the members of his friend's family*
A friend treats with respect his friend's family members.

These characteristics and behavior patterns of a true friend can only be as a result of understanding and practicing the 'Right View of Ten'. It cannot be stressed enough how valuable it is for parents and teachers to teach and train the children the ways of the '*Right View*' starting in their early childhood.

5. *Individuals occupying one's 'Below Direction'*. This direction pertains mainly to the working relationship between an employer and his employees, and vice versa. The Lord Buddha had defined the duties of a boss and those of a subordinate as follows.

The boss's duties

1) *Possesses the abilities to assign the appropriate task to each subordinate*. It means the boss knows about assigning work to each of his subordinates according to his age, sex, expertise, talents, and experiences. He enables his subordinates to work effectively.

2) *Provides food and rewards*. It means that an employer knows to treat his employees with kindness and compassion, not unlike the way he treats his own children. He provides legal wages. He gives pay raises and bonuses accordingly. Employees with room and board are adequately provided for. Here again, a '*Right View*' employer is certain to perform this duty well.

3) *Provides medical leave*. It means allowing a sick employee to go to the doctor without dodging his pay. He is genuinely caring and inquires after the employee's recovery.

4) *Gives a special treat*. It means celebrating a special

occasion by treating the employees to a special meal.

5) *Gives them some time off.* It means providing national holidays and the appropriate number of vacation days for the employees.

An employer that fulfills these duties are considered to be a true friend, and possesses the '*Right View*'.

The Employee's duties

1) *Starts work before his employer.*

2) *Quits work after his employer.*

Employees with the above two qualities are truly responsible individuals, and are respectful of their employer. They are the '*Right View*' characteristics.

3) *Takes only what is given.* Employees who appreciate the Law of '*Kamma*', and keep the '*Five Precepts*' would not steal from their employer however trivial the amount may be.

4) *Improves his work performance.* It means that an employee does his work to the best of his abilities. With more and more experiences, his performance improves further and further. He contributes to the organization in which he works without conditions or without negotiating for a special reward.

5) *Praise his employer to others.* This can happen when both the employer and the employee are decent and are grounded in the '*Right View*'.

Any company or organization with bosses and subordinates that fulfill their respective roles as described above would only grow and prosper. There would be mutual consideration for each other. There would be a strong morale in the workplace, and a strong team spirit.

Additionally, the Buddhist Scriptures have described certain moral values and conducts that enable the mutual and effective cooperation between a boss and a subordinate. For the subordinate, there are the 'Four Paths of Accomplishment' as follows.

1) *Aspiration*. It means that one loves his work, and aspires to constantly improve his performance.

2) *Endeavor*. It means that one is hardworking, and persistent. One enjoys solving whatever work problems that he encounters.

3) *Concentration*. It means that one concentrates on one's work and on finishing it. He becomes one with his work.

4) *Evaluation*. It means that one constantly evaluates one's own performance. At the same time, one thinks of ways to make corrections and to improve the way one works.

A subordinate with the above four behavior patterns is sure to produce remarkable results and to advance in his career. Moreover, he is contributing to his boss's success and to the overall growth of the organization as well.

In the same manner, a boss who can inspire the subordinates to acquire the above qualities when these are still lacking in them, or to lead a quality employee, needs to possess the 'Four Noble Sentiments' as follows.

1) *Kindness*. It means that one is loving and kind.

2) *Compassion*. It means that one feels for one's employees, and help them out in times of trouble.

3) *Delight*. It means that one takes pleasure in encouraging one's subordinates to grow and make progress in their careers. One takes pleasure in the accomplish-

ment of his subordinates.

4) *Fairness*. One treats one's subordinates with fairness. One does not practice partiality. One rewards the subordinate's accomplishment accordingly.

The following table shows the corresponding characteristics of a boss and a subordinate.

	The Four Paths of Accomplishment	The Four Noble Sentiments
1	Aspiration	Kindness
2	Endeavor	Compassion
3	Concentration	Delight
4	Evaluation	Fairness

6. *Individuals occupying one's 'Above Direction'.* These involve the 'Shangha' who are the teachers of 'Morality', of human decency, etc. They occupy the 'Above Direction' because they practice righteousness according to the 'Dhamma-Discipline.

The duties of the 'Sangha'.

The Lord Buddha had defined the duties of the 'Sangha' toward the lay individuals as follows.

- 1) Forbid them to commit deeds of wickedness.
- 2) Admonish them to maintain their decency.
- 3) Give of aid with a good, kind heart.
- 4) Teach them the 'Dhamma'.
- 5) Explain the 'Dhamma' that they have already heard more clearly.

6) Guide them toward the *'States of Happiness'*.

The most important duties of the 'Sangha'.

Which are the most important duties that the 'Sangha' have toward the Lay individuals?

The first three are the Sangha's most important duties. These duties are the Sangha's commands to pass on their knowledge and experiences. Such knowledge and experiences are gained through the study and the practice of the Scriptures, which promote discernment. The 'Sangha' have the responsibility to teach the lay individuals to be firmly grounded in the *'Right View'*. The lay individuals who are firmly planted in the *'Right View'* would possess a decent conduct, a penchant for doing good deeds, and accumulating 'merits'. At the same time, they abstain from all evil, and stay as far away as possible from the *'Wrong View'*.

How do the 'Sangha' proceed with their duties?

The sangha's duties which will cause them to succeed in doing their first three duties are clearly described in items 4-6

4) *By teaching the lay individuals the 'Dhamma'*. It means teaching them about moral conduct and human decency. It appears that the teachings of the 'Dhamma' run counter-current to matters of *'unwholesome attachments'* that can thrill and entertain their audience. Therefore, the teachings are not stimulating material for the average listeners. This is borne out by the fact that the majority of the people tend to fall asleep during sermons. This situation is in contrast to when an individual attends a movie or a concert. Therefore, to preach a sermon effectively, the 'Sangha' need to find a creative technique to

stimulate and maintain the interest of the listeners for an adequate period of time.

In this age of technology, the preaching should be accompanied by an audiovisual aid regardless of the age and experiences of the listeners. The aid helps to stimulate and maintain the audience's interest and to help clarify the subject being taught.

How does one go about selecting a sermon topic?

The main purpose of any sermon should be about instilling the '*Right View*' into the listener's mind. The sermon should progress from easier to more involved material. The twenty-two selected topics at the beginning of this chapter provide the fundamental teaching material for the effective planting of the '*Right View*'. Moreover, the teaching material should also contain the framework of *the giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation.*

What is meant by meditation?

Meditation is a form of mind training based on Buddhist principles. There are two general methods as follows.

- 1) Training the mind to be calm, known as concentration development.

- 2) Training the mind to develop a deep insight, known as insight development.

There are two additional methods that are different from the above two methods as follows.

- 1) Training the mind to develop piety, rendering it calm, stable, aware, and focused, known as emotional development.

- 2) Training the mind to develop wisdom, which allows it to understand things as they actually are. It is the wisdom that resists the domination of the '*unwholesome attachments*', which are the root cause of all suffering. This method is known as wisdom development.

Regardless of the method used, there are two levels of achievement in the meditation practice. These include the fundamental level and the elevated level.

The mind-training that each lay individual should undergo is the fundamental level of meditation. The training provides the benefits of a calm, aware, and focussed mind as well as persistence. The benefits derived from practicing meditation help the individual to clear their mind and render it more conducive to any learning. Therefore, before giving a sermon, the 'Sangha' should lead the audience to sit in meditation first. In this way, the 'Sangha' can more effectively impart their knowledge of the 'Dhamma', especially in regards to the '*Right View*'.

5) *By explaining the 'Dhamma' that they have already heard more clearly.* Some teachings of the 'Dhamma' are difficult to understand for some individuals. Therefore, a more elaborate explanation of the subject matter can always be useful.

Nonetheless, to prevent the audience from getting bored, the 'Sangha' must be well-versed in using the current real-life examples to clarify the points of the topic being taught, and to impress the audience with the beauty of the verses contained in the Scriptures. The 'Sangha' can be creative and constructive in finding ways to keep the audience's interest and to stimulate their

desire to learn more of the 'Dhamma'. When properly taught, the audience can come to appreciate the true value of the 'Dhamma'. Those in the audience currently harboring the 'Wrong View' may be persuaded to change their ways and to increasingly adopt the 'Right View'. Such incidents have been known to occur in the past.

6) *By guiding them toward the 'States of Happiness'.* It means that it is the Sangha's responsibility to teach the lay individuals about the determining factors of one's destination in the 'Hereafter' whether it is heaven or hell. The lay individuals need to have a deep appreciation of both destinations as well as the good and evil 'Kamma'.

The readers may have noticed that the individuals occupying each of the five other directions had been given only five duties. The only group of individuals given a total of six duties is the 'Sangha', who occupy the 'Above Direction'. They have the distinct privilege of guiding the lay individuals toward the 'States of Happiness'.

What was the Lord Buddha's intention in bestowing on the 'Sangha' such a special duty?

According to the Buddhist faith, the main objective for becoming ordained as a 'Bhikku' is to intensely study and make transparent the state of 'Nirvana'. This objective must be stated clearly by every candidate during his ordination ceremony.

To accomplish this objective, the Lord Buddha had provided the 'Dhamma-Discipline' for every 'Bhikku' to study and practice so meticulously and so thoroughly that a keen insight can be developed. In this way, the 'Bhikku' becomes truly well-versed in the 'Dhamma'. However, it takes time and effort to become a true scholar and practitioner of the 'Dhamma'. A 'Bhikku' cannot

possibly accomplish his special undertaking if he has to earn a living as well. Therefore, except for going on his almsround, a 'Bhikku' needs to spend the rest of his time fulfilling his religious duties.

Having attained a scholar status, it is the Bhikku's duty to pass on his knowledge and understanding to the lay individuals. Since the lay individuals are busily earning their livelihood, they would not have the time and opportunity to study the 'Dhamma-Discipline' in the way that the 'Sangha' could. However, the Lord Buddha had given the lay individuals the duty of providing the 'Sangha' with the Four Necessities (food, clothing, shelter, and medicine). In a real sense, the 'Sangha' and the lay individuals need and depend on each other. In carrying out their duties, the lay individuals are given the opportunity to develop their '*Right View*' more and more firmly. They stand to meet with prosperity in life. At the same time, Buddhism can continue to shed its benevolent grace on the people of the world.

Therefore, the Lord Buddha had given the 'Sangha' the special duty of guiding the lay individuals toward the '*States of Happiness*'. Any 'Bhikku' who neglects to do this duty, who is doing everything else but this duty, is not doing a proper job as an individual occupying one's 'Above Direction'.

How does a 'Bhikku' go about guiding others toward the 'States of Happiness'?

He begins by making clear to the lay individuals the true objective of a human life. The Lord Buddha had defined the benefits that can be derived from achieving each level of one's life objective as follows.

- 1) Achieving the primary level of one's life objective

provides the sources of happiness in the present life.

2) Achieving the secondary level of one's life objective provides the sources of happiness in the 'Hereafter'.

3) Achieving the highest level of one's life objective provides the ultimate source of happiness or bliss, which is 'Nirvana'

The Benefits of Each Source of Happiness

1) *Sources of happiness in the present life.* When an individual can earn an honest livelihood and can comfortably support himself and his family, he is considered as having achieved the primary level of his life objective. He may be able to live his life on earth with dignity, but there is no guarantee where his destination in the 'Hereafter' would be.

2) *Sources of happiness in the 'Hereafter'.* When an individual can conduct decent deeds, and accumulate new 'merits', he can be assured of his place in the 'States of Happiness' after he dies. He would be entitled to enjoy his heavenly estate of stupendous grandeur for hundreds of thousands of years. The duration may be shorter or longer depending on the size of each individual's earned 'merits'. However, an individual can begin to work toward the secondary level of his life objective only if he is currently doing well at the primary level. Therefore, a poor or destitute individual who fails at the primary level of his life objective would find it extremely difficult to accumulate any 'merits'. Moreover, he might have already been busily involved in indecent deeds as a result of his unfortunate circumstances.

3) *The ultimate source of happiness or bliss, which is 'Nirvana'.* This is the ultimate goal of all human beings. An

individual who has attained 'Nirvana' would never participate in the 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle ever again. He is removed forever from all of the suffering in the 'Samsara'.

An individual who can achieve this highest level of one's life objective needs to have already accumulated countless number of 'merits' in countless number of lifetimes, many of which as a 'Bhikku' who practices righteousness. Therefore, only such a 'Bhikku' can attain 'Nirvana', and when he does it would be his final lifetime.

What gives an individual the impetus to achieve each level of his life objective?

The main impetus to achieve any level of one's life objective is one's '*Right View*', which has been earnestly practiced until it forms the fabric of one's personal characteristics.

Therefore, in fulfilling the role of guiding the lay individuals toward the '*States of Happiness*', the 'Bhikku' needs to expound on two main points as follows:

- 1) One's life objective.
- 2) One's '*Right View*'.

Regarding the '*Right View of Ten*', the most important part has to do with the Law of 'Kamma'. When one truly appreciates and accepts the universal truth about the '*Law of Kamma*', then the remaining nine parts of the '*Right View*' can more easily fall into place.

It has been observed that the study of the sciences has a tendency to limit the student's perspective to only what he can witness with his five senses. Therefore, he disbelieves in the reality of hell and heaven simply because

he has not seen it. He has not realized the fact that the reality of hell and heaven can indeed be witnessed through one's 'Celestial Eye' once one has achieved an elevated level of the meditation practice. Nowadays, the majority of the ordained monks entertain doubts about the reality of these realms as well. This is a reflection of the lack of 'Celestial Eye' among the majority of the monks these days. It is also a reflection of the lack of faith in the Lord Buddha's teachings on the subject, since so many accounts about hell and heaven had been given in the Scriptures. When this is the situation, the lay individuals would not be able to receive any truthful answers, and they are left pondering on their own about the subject.

The absence of a truthful answer can only point to the fact that the majority of the 'Sangha' have not performed their duty of guiding the lay individuals toward the '*States of Happiness*'. What is also painfully clear is that the majority of the 'Sangha' have not made any real advancement in their meditation practices.

What needs be done in order that a 'Bhikku' can fulfill his duties successfully?

In order to fulfill the privileged duty of 'guiding the lay individuals toward the '*States of Happiness*', each 'Bhikku' needs to develop his expertise through the study and practice of the Scriptures. Through the advancement of his meditation practice, he can develop the 'Celestial Eye' needed to penetrate the different realms of reality. Only then would he be adequately equipped to boldly pass on his knowledge and confirm the reality of hell and heaven as well as many other truths expounded in the Scriptures. Only then would he be able to encour-

age the lay individuals to *give of alms and aid, to keep the Five Precepts, and to practice meditation on a regular basis*. He realizes from his own experiences that the practice of meditation is the means to calming his mind, and to keep it still. He has found that once his mind is quiet and still, there would appear a soft brightness in the center of the body. Having accomplished this initial level of the meditation practice, he can already experience the sublime happiness surpassing any worldly happiness that he has ever known. He cannot help but become a believer. He begins to appreciate that with earnest devotion, he can as a matter of course achieve a more and more elevated level of the meditation practice. He would then be better and better equipped to find the higher truths for himself.

At the same time, he can gain the correct appreciation of the moral rights and wrongs. He can appreciate what is beneficial and what is harmful. Through the practices, he is more and more grounded in the '*Right View*'. He would naturally develop a firm shame of sin and a fear of the sinful consequences to follow in both this and the next life. His analytical thinking becomes more highly developed. He feels encouraged to increasingly accumulate his '*merits*' because he appreciates their benefits and blessings. As a result, he avoids even the slightest misdeed. The '*Bhikku*' is now able to perform his duty of guiding the lay individuals toward the '*States of Happiness*'.

Nonetheless, everything in this world falls under the ruling of the '*Three Characteristics*', which include 1) impermanence, 2) the state of being unable to remain stable, and 3) the state of being not self. In this age of

technology, the rising influence of the 'unwholesome attachments' can destabilize even a firmly planted 'Right View'. Therefore, the 'Sangha' must be vigilant in performing their duties as individuals occupying one's 'Above Direction'. They can then help stabilize the 'Right View' of their lay individuals and continue to keep it strong.

What can the 'Sangha' do to enable a more permanent planting of one's 'Right View'?

The 'Sangha' can simply encourage the lay individuals to stay within the framework of *the giving of alms and aid, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation on a regular basis*. For these pious activities to be carried out widely, there needs to be a network of decent, enthusiastic individuals. The venue can be at a home, at a temple, at a school, at an organization, etc. Regardless of the venue, the activities should be presided over by the 'Sangha'.

In summary, given the current social circumstances, the 'Sangha' need to adopt a highly proactive approach in performing their respective duties. They need to give thoughts in planning the details of all the activities connected to the temple.

The duties owed to individuals occupying one's 'Above Direction'

- 1) Perform every duty with kindness.
- 2) Express everything with kind speech.
- 3) Think of the 'Sangha' with kind thoughts.
- 4) Wholeheartedly welcome the 'Sangha' into their home.

5) Support the 'Sangha' in regards to the 'Four Necessities'.

What is the most important duty of a lay individual?

A lay individual's most important duty has to do with providing the 'Sangha' with the Four Necessities as follows.

- 1) The Bhikku's robe.
- 2) The offering of food to the Bhikku's on his almsround.
- 3) Shelter.
- 4) Medicine.

Without these necessities, the 'Bhikku' would find it impossible to remain in the monkhood. According to the 'Dhamma-Discipline', a 'Bhikku' is forbidden to earn a living. The reason is that the true and pure work of a 'Bhikku' is in the studying and practicing of the 'Dhamma', and in passing on his knowledge and experience to the lay individuals respectively.

What benefits are derived from supporting the 'Sangha'?

The benefits gained are in the form of 'merits'. However, the number of the earned 'merits' differs according to what and how one gives. For example, one can earn more 'merits' by offering the support directly as opposed to asking someone else to do it for him. The offering of support for the building of a permanent structure within the temple ground earns more 'merits' than the offering of alms to the 'Sangha'.

What can be done to educate the lay individuals about the respective 'merits' of their pious actions?

The Buddhist Scriptures contain detailed teachings about the benefits of each type of alms as well as everything that has to do with human decency. However, the knowledge is not readily accessible to a lay individual because of the language barrier, and the enormous amount of time it takes to study the Scriptures extensively.

Therefore, the access to the knowledge contained in the Scriptures can only be gained through regularly attending the sermons given by the learned scholars of the art at the temple. At the same time, one needs to regularly keep within the framework of the *giving of alms and aid, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation*. These practices when carried out together allow the individual to develop the 'Dhamma' knowledge and wisdom sufficient to living a happy existence both in this and the next life. The 'Dhamma' knowledge and wisdom is the source of the greatest 'merits'.

What is meant by kind thought, kind speech, and kind action?

It is implied in the first three duties of a lay individual that it is his responsibility to attend the sermons and practice meditation at the temple. In discussing a topic of the 'Dhamma' with the 'Bhikku', the lay individual needs to do so with love, respect, and good wishes, as a sign of reverence for the 'Bhikku'.

In regards to supporting the 'Sangha' with the 'Four Necessities', it should be carried out with the right spirit and understanding. The truth is that the 'Sangha' who

practice righteousness provide the most fertile field in which one could cultivate one's 'merits'. One necessarily treats the 'Sangha' accordingly with unreserved kindness and respect.

What is meant by 'wholeheartedly welcoming the Sangha'?

It means that whenever a 'Bhikku' has the occasion to visit one's home, he should be warmly and respectfully welcome with food and refreshments as the occasion allows. A 'Bhikku' or the 'Sangha' (more than four 'Bhikkus') may visit a lay individual's home in order to perform certain religious rites, or to preside over a religious ceremony. A 'Bhikku' may also visit one's home to offer spiritual comfort to a gravely ill individual. A 'Bhikku' may also visit one's home to request for a certain form of aid. At the end of the visit, when the 'Bhikku' gives his blessings, they should be received with respectful appreciation.

The lay individuals can perform their respective duties properly because they have been well taught by the 'Sangha' the ways of the 'Right View'. The 'Sangha' can properly fulfill their respective duties because they have taught and trained themselves within the framework of 'the rules of decent conduct' according to the 'Book of the Fives' as follows.¹

"But, monks, that a monk, respectful and obedient, dwelling in harmony with his fellows in the godly life, will keep the minor precepts, Æi such a thing shall be; and that if he keeps the minor pre-

¹ A., vol. 3, *The Book of the Fives*, Chapter 3: i(21). *Without Respect* (a), p.10.

cepts, he will keep the learner's code; if the learner's code, the virtues; if the virtues, right views; if right view, right concentration. Ài such a thing shall surely be."

When both the 'Sangha' and the lay individuals have fulfilled their respective duties as designated by the Lord Buddha, then Buddhism would continue to grace the earth and bless the human race for a long, long time to come.

Summary

The interrelationship between each individual and the individuals occupying his 'Six Directions' makes it possible for 'true friendship' to exist. The individuals in each 'Direction' exert their influence on us differently. In general, the most influential individuals in our childhood are our parents, who occupy the 'Front Direction'. If our parents happen to be firmly planted in the '*Right View*', then we are indeed truly fortunate. It means that we would be well taught and trained in the ways of the '*Right View*' since our infancy. We have a very good chance at growing up to be a '*Right View*' adult just like our parents.

When we are old enough to go to school, should we meet with '*Right View*' teachers who occupy our 'Right Direction' from elementary school all the way to the undergraduate level, then we are doubly fortunate. What remains is for us to study and practice the 'Dhamma' from the individuals occupying our 'Above Direction' or the 'Sangha'. Through such training, we come to understand the true purpose as well as the true objective of our life. We learn the benefits of achieving the three

levels of our life objective, and the terrible harm of the failure to do so.

Any young individual that has been well trained and taught by the individuals occupying the three Directions as mentioned above, would grow up to possess the desirable personal attributes. He would possess the qualities of a true friend. When he goes out to make his own way in the wide world, and come across individuals occupying the remaining three Directions, he would know how to separate false friends from true friends. He would know to choose only the company of decent individuals, and would not fall prey to the coaxing of wicked individuals or to participate in any immoral deed.

Should one choose to be married, one would know to select a potential partner who shares the same faith, moral conduct, and views. One stands the chance of having a happy home life with such a life partner (the 'Rear Direction'). One will have the opportunity to instill in one's children the ways of the '*Right View*' and leave as the community's heritage the next generation of decent individuals. For certain, one would not choose as a life partner a sloppy individual out of some uncontrolled passion or the lack of foresight.

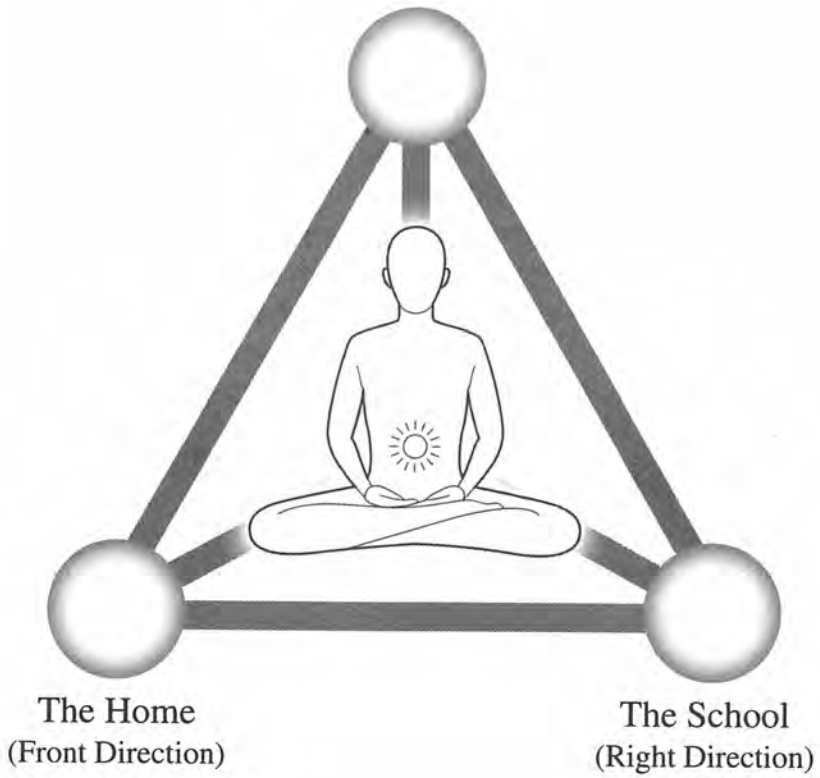
At work, one would have a new relationship with the individuals in one's 'Below Direction'. As a boss, one would be equipped with the 'Four Noble Sentiments', and effectively fulfill his five duties. On the other hand, as a subordinate he would also be able to effectively fulfill his five duties as a result of having possessed the 'Four Paths of Accomplishment' and the '*Right View*'.

The reader can well appreciate that individuals occupying one's 'Front, Right, and Above Directions' have the most influence on one's life. The influence that one receives makes the vast difference between becoming an individual complete with the desirable personal attributes, which arise out of one's '*Right View*', or an individual with questionable characteristics, which arise out of one's '*Wrong View*'.

Moreover, when an individual who has had a positive influence from his parents, his teachers, and the 'Sangha', come into contact with decent individuals in the remaining three 'Directions' later on, it is certain that his personal attributes would only improve in quality. On the other hand, should some of the individuals in the remaining three 'Directions' be of dubious quality, he would have possessed sufficient qualification to help them toward developing some desirable personal attributes without undue difficulty.

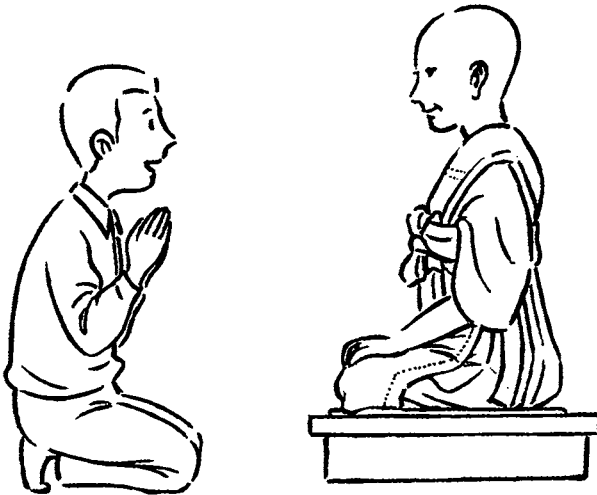
There is no question at this point how crucially important the roles of one's parents, school teachers, and spiritual teachers are. They exert the most influence in the development of one's quality attributes. The fact that so many people of all ages and sexes these days are in such a confused state of mind and encounter terrible problems in their lives, bear witness to the failure of the parents, teachers, and the 'Sangha' in fulfilling their respective duties.

The Temple
(Above Direction)



– CHAPTER FIVE –

*The Key to the Success of the
‘Six Directions’ Concept*



Those Who Play the Most Important Roles in One's Life

Who are these individuals?

From Chapter 4, the reader can appreciate the important roles of the individuals occupying one's 'Six Directions'. These individuals are the determining factor of how one's life would turn out. When we were young, the individuals occupying our Front (parents), Right (teachers), and Above (the Sangha) Directions exert the biggest influence on us, be it good or bad. As we grow up, individuals occupying the Rear (spouse and children), the Left (friends and relatives), and the Below (boss and subordinates) Directions gradually assume more importance.

As for the 'Left Direction', the influence on our life may begin in our teenage years, and remain so for the rest of our life. Some teenagers may have developed their friendship further as they grow up and decide to get married. Others may have chosen to experience with premarital sex, which can result in unwanted pregnancy. There are yet others who have become involved with damaging activities, which can very often destroy one's future prospects. At any age, a chance meeting with a true friend is considered truly fortunate indeed.

Some individuals retain the influence of the individuals occupying their 'Above Direction' throughout their lives. The 'Sangha' who practice righteousness can guide and prod us to maintain our decency, to grow our '*Right View*', and to chart our course toward the '*States of Happiness*'. Unfortunately, there have also been examples of an immoral 'Bhikku', who has led the lay individuals astray.

The reader needs to appreciate that a 'Bhikku' was once a lay individual. It is hoped that each has laid down his former life to enter the monkhood for the lofty purposes of studying and practicing the 'Dhamma', of developing an exemplary '*Right View*', of endeavoring to attain 'Nirvana'. Unfortunately, not all have remained true to these lofty objectives for reasons of their own.

It remains for the lay individuals to cautiously select those occupying their 'Above Direction' for the purpose of offering them due support and reverence. The lay individuals must not encourage or make allowances for the wayward 'Bhikku'. At the same time, they must not publicly humiliate the 'Bhikku' because of its ill effects on the Buddhist Faith as a whole.

The Two Stages of Man's Personal Transformation

What is meant by man's personal transformation?

It has been described in Chapter 1 that man's personal transformation is the change and conversion of one's indecency, which is the end result of one's '*Wrong View*' into the '*Right View*'.

At this point, certain readers may have believed the idea that all children were born innocent, and can be compared to a white piece of cloth. Therefore, it is not necessary to transform their nature until they have grown up enough to display some undesirable behavior patterns. Such a view comes from the incorrect understanding of the truth about human nature.

The truth is that the human mind contains the root of unwholesomeness, which is the root cause of the three 'unwholesome attachments'. These include 1)greed,

2)anger, and 3)ignorance. These attachments are inherent in each of us at birth in the same way that DNA is a part of the chromosome contained in the cell.

Infants may appear innocent but the inherent 'unwholesome attachments' within each of them are ready to manifest and spew forth their wickedness. Therefore, one's personal transformation needs to take place since his infancy for it to be effective.

To facilitate the reader's understanding, the author has assigned one's personal transformation into two stages as follows.

1. The child stage.

2. The adult stage.

1. *The child stage.* This stage begins during one's infancy and continues to one's early adulthood when one has completed one's formal education and is ready to start one's career.



During one's childhood, the most obvious display of one's 'unwholesome attachments' is anger, which even an infant can demonstrate with great alacrity. Once the infant grows up to be a toddler and begins to understand certain things, the next form of the 'unwholesome attachments' that can be frequently displayed is greed. The toddler thinks nothing of taking another child's toys or cookies. If he cannot have his way, he would throw a temper tantrum, and may proceed to beat another child up. At the same time, he is very possessive of his own toys or cookies and adamantly refuses to share anything with anyone.

As the toddler grows up, he may begin to display his 'ignorance' by for examples abusing his playmates, torturing animals with glee. One may ask what indeed causes the child to display such unlovable behavior patterns. The answer can be found in the 'unwholesome attachments', which are an inherent part of human nature.

Most adults may take these unattractive behavior patterns very lightly. They think of these behavior patterns as a natural part of growing up and that the child would grow out of it in time. Such thinking cannot be more wrong.

The reason is that a child who has been allowed to break with a tradition of decency until it becomes a habit does so without knowing any better. How could he when no adults around him bother to tell him otherwise. He grows up having little understanding of the moral rights and wrongs. By the time he may have an inkling of the truth, he may have already done a great deal of harm to self and others. Some wayward children end up being a juvenile delinquent, and have to be committed to a re-

habilitation center. Such a drastic measure may or may not work. It may even precipitate matters further for the child.

For certain, when a wayward child grows up, and continues to behave aggressively and unreasonably, he could encounter some serious problems in life. He may at times end up inflicting bodily harm to others when he cannot have his way.

Therefore, waiting to transform a child until he grows up most certainly does not work. By then, he might have already been arrested for some petty crimes or worse. With a criminal record, his future prospects look bleak. And instead of being a contributing member of society, he has now become a problem citizen, a burden to society.

For these reasons, one's personal transformation must begin as early as one's infancy. The process calls for the diligent teaching and training of the child to behave properly with respect to his age and understanding. The process needs to continue until the child is old enough to really know better.

Individuals who play the most important role in the first stage of one's personal transformation are those occupying the 'Front and Right Directions'. The parents and teachers should also request the assistance of the 'Sangha' from time to time.

2. *The adult stage.* It begins with the start of one's career or occupation.

Who is responsible for transforming an adult whose 'Right View' has been impaired?

The answer is that the concerned adult would have to do it himself, hopefully with the guidance and encouragement of a true friend.

What does self-transformation mean?

In the absence of the 'Dhamma' knowledge, most individuals would have already formed a lot of opinions about so very many things, which have effected their lives by the time they are grown-ups. How each opinion is formed depends on one's psychological make-up, one's upbringing, one's life experiences, etc. However, the real basis of each opinion is dubious. Educated individuals may possess the technical knowledge sufficient for earning one's livelihood. Still, no amount of worldly education can teach an individual to cultivate the '*Right View*', which is so crucial to his true success and happiness in life.

These individuals, under the pressure of greed, anger, and ignorance, may knowingly commit a wicked deed. They may become involved in a corruption scheme, in a premeditated murder, in a drug deal, etc. The reason is that without a firm, absolute foundation for one's opinions, they can change based on one's circumstances. The concept of right and wrong becomes a blur. One may reason that what one is doing is right as long as one does not get caught in the process. As a result, one constantly bends the rule. When push comes to shove, one reasons that after all, rules are made to be broken.

Therefore, it is necessary that one possesses a firm, absolute foundation for one's opinions and beliefs. To acquire such a foundation, one needs to educate oneself, for no one else can do it for him. The Lord Buddha was very clear on this subject as can be seen in the quotation below.¹

"Admonish thyself by thyself; examine thyself by thyself, Guard thyself; be mindful: do this,

¹ Dhammapada Commentary : Part2. Bhikkhu Vagga, p. 262

*O monk! And thou shalt live in happiness.
For self is the lord of self, self is the refuge of self:
Therefore curb thyself, as a merchant curbs a goodly
steed."*

It now boils down to *how one can go about teaching oneself.*

This is where the true worth of the role of a true friend comes in. A true friend can help guide one to develop a conscience. A conscience to know what is decent and what is not, what should and should not be, what is useful and what is not. *When one begins to pay attention to the details of one's mind, one's speech, and one's action, that is when one teaches oneself to be mindful, in time, one would develop the wisdom that can lead one to transform oneself.*

At any rate, most individuals in general do not possess a complete set of attributes of a true friend, neither do they possess all the traits of a false friend. Therefore, the transformation of one's 'Wrong View' needs to be based on the selective absorption of others' decent qualities. At the same time, one endeavors to rid oneself of all wickedness.

When we have the opportunity to keep the company of a true friend, we would have the chance to develop the qualities of a true friend in ourselves fairly quickly. Still, a lot depends on our own intelligence and intellect, and on the 'merits' of our past good 'Kamma'. Some individuals like 'Devadatta', who despite having the true friend in the Lord Buddha, lacked the wisdom and past 'merits' to learn. On the contrary, he allowed his 'unwholesome attachments' to completely dominate his thoughts and action. He was finally drowned in a quicksand, and instantly propelled to the lowest level of the

'States of Unhappiness', the Avici Hell.

The Failure of the 'Six Directions'

What are the indicators of the 'Six Directions' Failure?

The main indicator is the current social environment in Thailand where the majority of adults and youths lack the moral conduct, and break away from the traditional decency of old.

The fact is that the peace and calm that had been pervasive in the Thai society throughout its history has been eroding away for the past decades. Since the erosion began, there have been many insidious problems within the society. These problems all came to a head a few years ago when the Thai currency underwent a drastic devaluation.

The current government may have been able to alleviate the nation's economic problems, still there are a great deal of social problems awaiting to be remedied. These problems include youth unrest and violence, youth participation in the 'Causes of Ruin', young girls in the sex trade, criminal gangs, illegal drug rings, counterfeit-ing rings, forgery. There is a widespread of corruption in high places. Some high-ranking government officials are behind the scenes of many criminal but lucrative acts such as illegal logging, black marketeering, drug trafficking, etc.

All of the psychological and social problems prevalent these days are the true indicators of how individuals occupying one's 'Six Directions' have failed to perform their respective duties.

What causes the failure of the 'Six Directions'?

There are two main causes as follows.

1. One has not obeyed the 'Noble-Discipline'.
2. One lacks the art of binding others to him.

1. *One has not obeyed the 'Noble-Discipline'.* The reason is simply ignorance. One has no knowledge of the 'Noble-Discipline' because one has not studied and practiced the 'Dhamma'. The reason for the lack of the study and practice of the 'Dhamma' may be many. One may believe that such study and practice have sole pertinence only to the 'Sangha' or the old folks. One may believe that one is busily earning a living and cannot possibly spare the time for such activities. One may believe that the teachings of the 'Dhamma' go against the sciences, especially in regards to hell and heaven. One may conclude that the teachings of the 'Dhamma' are archaic and delusional. One may form the opinion that the 'Sangha' live off society, that they have all the necessities provided for without having to work for them. All of these reasons form the ignorance that makes one neglect the study and practice of the 'Dhamma' altogether.

Such ignorance causes harm in two major ways.

1) *It causes personal harm.* The ignorance causes one to fall under the power of the 'unwholesome attachments', and leads one to form the 'Wrong View'. There is very little chance that an individual under such wickedly powerful influence would transform one's 'Wrong View' into the 'Right View'. The ignorance causes one to fail in one's duties toward the individuals in one's 'Six Directions'.

2) *It causes harm to all concerned.* When the 'Right View' cannot be earnestly passed on from one genera-

tion to another, in time the concept of the '*Right View*' would disappear totally. This paves the way for the '*Wrong View*' to dominate the thoughts, the speech, and the action of all the individuals within the society. The results of which are the social unrest, wars, vicious competition, and other forms of wickedness that we are witnessing in the world today.

Therefore, before Buddhism disappears from the Thai soil altogether, it behooves the remaining Thai Buddhists to work proactively together. Let us bring back the duties and responsibilities of the individuals occupying one's '*Six Directions*'. Let us all do our best to bring back the peace and calm of the traditional Thai life of old once again.

2. *One lacks the art of binding others to him.* Some individuals may be able to perform their duties without any direct knowledge of the '*Dhamma*'. A parent may teach his child to be decent, and to abstain from any indecent act. A teacher may try to teach his students to be good, decent individuals. However, if each individual occupying each of the '*Six Directions*' lacks the art of binding others to him, it would be nearly impossible for him to carry out his duties properly. The lack of success occurs in spite of his best wishes.

What is meant by the art of binding others to us?

The art of binding others to us implies the ability to get along well with others. It implies that one is endearing and respectable. It implies that one's company is sought after.

The Lord Buddha understood the human nature very well in that everyone desires to be loved, and that nobody wants to be repugnant to any one. Unfortunately,

most individuals wish that specific others love them and know all the ways to treat them specially. Yet they have not thought about doing all these things to others first. This situation causes so many individuals to be disappointed and frustrated, naturally.

For example, there are elderly parents who are so obnoxious that their children have no desire to be around them. Another example concerns a man who has fallen in love so many times without having his love returned even once. The reason is that he has a miserly nature and is in the habit of taking advantage of others.

For these reasons, the Lord Buddha had given us instructions on how to be endearing, how to be a true friend, and how to make true friends. Or at the very least, how to incur the least amount of dislike from others.

Principles of Service and Social Integration¹

The Lord Buddha had given us the '*Four Principles of Service and Social Integration*' in order for us to train ourselves to be endearing and to possess *the art of binding others to us*. These principles are exemplary ways to train one's heart and mind for the purpose of social integration. There are four principles as follows.

1. *The giving of gifts.* It means that one wholeheartedly shares what one has with others in the spirit of love, consideration, and kind regards. One gives the gift from the heart, and the gift has been chosen with the recipient in mind.

When the giver is a moral, decent individual, and gives

¹ A., vol.2, *the Book of the Fours*, Chapter 4: ii (32). *Sympathy*.

from his heart without expecting anything in return, the recipient can truly appreciate the kind, considerate gesture of the giver. When gifts are given to each other in such a spirit, they go to create a bond of high regards between the giver and the recipient. One may easily afford a particular object of desire, but it means so much more to receive it as a gift from those one cares about such as one's parents, spouse, children, or friends.

The giving of gifts from the heart between the individual at the center and each individual occupying his 'Six Directions' can only improve the relationship of those concerned. The considerate gesture promotes feelings of warm regards, and a loving understanding for each other. The practice of giving from the heart endears the giver to the recipient, and the giving spirit endears him to all those around him. The Lord Buddha had captured the overall effect as follows:

"Giving, one binds friends" ¹

The giving spirit enables one to make friends with whomever he comes into contact with. His sincere consideration for others is indeed the true art of binding others to him.

2. Kind speech.

What does it mean by 'kind speech'?

In this context, 'kind speech' implies words that endear ourselves to others. It is not confined only to the use of polite words but has wider implications as follows:

- 1) Kind speech implies words that are polite, easy on

¹ S., vol.1, Chapter X, p.316.

the ear, and meaningful.

2) Kind speech implies words that arise out one's kindness, and causes the listener to appreciate one's virtuous character.

3) Kind speech implies truthful words expressed at the right place and time.

4) Kind speech implies words of sincerity and good wishes expressed at the right place and time.

5) Kind speech implies words that are encouraging to those who are in the process of developing the qualities of a true friend.

6) Kind speech implies words that are not abrasive, and intended to exacerbate a situation.

7) Kind speech implies words that are not demeaning or discouraging.

Whoever practices these seven manners of speaking can be considered as possessing 'kind speech'.

Why is it that some individuals possess 'kind speech' while others do not?

There are a few reasons for this situation.

First of all, individuals possessing the '*Right View*' naturally have the right thought and right speech. They speak words that are polite, truthful, useful, well meaning, and properly timed. The speech of a '*Right View*' individual is constructive, and encouraging to the listener.

In regards to one's upbringing, it can be said that one's speech pattern comes from those around him in his 'Six Directions', specifically individuals occupying the Front, Right, and Above Directions. An individual brought up in the ways of the '*Right View*' by his parents, teachers

and the 'Sangha', and surrounded by the '*Right View*' individuals would practice 'kind speech' as a matter of course. He is familiar with 'kind speech', and realizes the harm of 'uncivil speech'. He is naturally endearing to others around him.

In regards to one's temperament, an individual who has been well brought up would generally have an even temper and kind speech. Even when he feels annoyed, he would endeavor to calm himself down before saying anything. When it takes longer to calm down, he would just as soon not say anything at all, rather than risk saying something that may result in adverse consequences.

In regards to one's analytical faculty, a well brought up individual understands the relationship between cause and effect. He has been brought up to think of the consequences of everything that he says and does. That is he has been brought up to take responsibility for his action. He exercises more tolerance and is slow to anger. Therefore, he habitually practices 'kind speech'.

On the other hand, a '*Wrong View*' individual thinks indecent, wicked thoughts, and his speech is consequently foul. His words are false, rude, abrasive, damaging, and useless. He uses his words to break down relationships. His words may be sugary sweet but his intention is to insult and injure.

Therefore, the words of a '*Wrong View*' individual are damaging and demeaning to his listener. Such manner of speaking makes the speaker repulsive to those around him. He may bring harm to himself as a result of his uncivil words.

An individual that grows up in a '*Wrong View*' household where its members earn a dishonest livelihood, and

are familiar with all the 'Causes of Ruin' would have very little idea about 'kind speech'. He may have come from a broken home situation, poorly taught and trained, and mostly neglected. All that he has ever heard is 'uncivil speech' and so he practices 'uncivil speech' as a matter of course.

An individual that lacked a proper upbringing through neglect or has been surrounded by poor role models, would have a poor analytical faculty. He rarely stops to think about the consequences of his action, or about controlling his temper. Foul words are a common occurrence in his life. When angry, it is unimaginable what words might come out of his mouth.

How can an individual who has known only 'uncivil speech' begin to cultivate 'kind speech'?

There are three steps to follow as cited below.

1) *Keep the company of a true friend.* One can start learning about 'kind speech' from a true friend while at the same time one makes every effort to abstain from one's old way of speaking. In time, the pattern of 'uncivil speech' may become more and more embarrassing to him. With less and less use, the 'uncivil speech' would gradually disappear.

2) *Avoid the company of vulgar individuals totally.*

3) *Study and practice the 'Dhamma'.* The giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, the practice of meditation go a long way toward uprooting one's pattern of 'uncivil speech'. The more one studies and practices the 'Dhamma', the more capable one would be of 'kind speech'.

The following accounts were taken from the Scriptures

to demonstrate the use of 'kind speech' and its resulting benefits, and the use of 'uncivil speech' and the harm wrought by it.

Case Study No. 1: The mutual benefit of 'kind speech'.

Once, the Lord Buddha told a story to His 'Sangha' about the son of a wealthy man.¹ One day, this wealthy man's son and three of his buddies who also came from wealthy families were taking a walk in the countryside outside the city of Benares. As they were standing at a crossroads, they saw a hunter with a cartload of venison on his way to the market.

One of the young men went over to the hunter and said 'Hey hunter! Give me a piece of venison'.

The hunter replied, 'Your words are uncivil, you ask for meat but your words deserve only skin and bones.'

Another young man approached the hunter and said, 'Brother, may I have a piece of your venison?'

The hunter replied, 'the word brother or sister implies a kinship and a part of one's flesh. Therefore, I will give you a piece of meat.'

The third young man wanted to try as well, so he said to the hunter, 'Father, please give me a piece of your venison.'

The hunter replied, 'The word father reverberates at the heart, therefore I will give you the deer's heart.'

Now it was the turn of the wealthy man's son. He approached the hunter and said, 'Dear friend, please give me some of your venison.'

¹ J. vol.3, No.315, *Mamsa-Jataka*, p.32.

The hunter replied, 'A home without a friend is like a jungle. Your words are worthy of a treasure. So friend, I shall give you all of my venison.'

The hunter went with the wealthy man's son to his home and unloaded the whole lot of venison for him. The wealthy man's son was so moved by the hunter's generosity that he asked the hunter and his family to come and live at the house. The hunter no longer needed to go hunting.

When the Lord Buddha had finished telling the story, He added that the hunter in that life was the past life of His Principal Disciple, the Venerable Sariputta. And the wealthy man's son was His own past life.

Case Study No. 2: The past life 'Kamma' of a Pig-Peta ¹

Once, the Lord Buddha was staying at the Veluvana Monastery, and the subject of the Pig-Peta (a hungry ghost) had been broached. Therefore, the Lord Buddha had decided to give the following sermon:

During the time of the Lord Buddha Kassapa, there were two senior monks residing in a monastery together at a particular village. One elder monk had been ordained sixty years ago, while the other had been fifty-nine years ago. The two senior monks had lived together in loving harmony and peace for years, and were highly respected by the villagers.

One day, a preacher of the Doctrine came by the monastery, and was invited to stay over. The preacher observed how well the villagers had been providing for the senior monks, and wanted for himself the same favorable situation. He went on to conceive a plan to break

¹ *Dhamapada Commentary, Part 3: MAGGA VAGGA, p.153-157.*

up the senior monks' relationship so that they both would leave and he could take over the monastery. Finally, he was able to succeed, and the senior monks went their separate ways.

About one hundred years had gone by before the two senior monks had a chance meeting at a monastery. They decided to be reconciled. During the process of reconciliation, they were able to find out the truth about the preacher's devious ploy.

Therefore, the two senior monks decided to confront the preacher who still remained at their former monastery. The confrontation proved too much for the preacher and he finally left.

In spite of the long period of the preacher's monkhood, which lasted about 20,000 years,¹ he still could not be protected from the penalty of his grave sin. He was subsequently reborn in the Avici Hell, and had been repeatedly burnt to death for the space of an interval between two Buddhas. (The space of an interval between two Buddhas means the time period between the Great Decease of one Buddha and the Enlightenment of the next Buddha.) After having served his horrid sentence in hell for aeons, he was reborn a Peta dwelling in Vulture Peak. The Peta stood about five kilometers high, with the body of a human being. Its head was like a pig, and out of its mouth grew a tail that oozed maggots all the time.

¹ *The human life span varies from an incalculable number of years at the beginning of a new age to ten years near the end of the age.*

Case Study No. 3: The past 'Kamma' that caused the Lord Buddha to have to undergo a period of self-mortification.

Once, the Lord Buddha had given an account of His own past 'Kamma' as follows. During the time of the Lord Buddha Kassapa, the current Lord Buddha-to-be had been born a Brahmin named Jotibala. He had said to the Lord Buddha Kassapa, "How did the bald monk attain Enlightenment when it is a most difficult thing to do"

The Lord Buddha continued as follows.:

"Because of that uncivil speech, the direct path of attaining Enlightenment had been hidden from me, and I had to go about it the wrong way. As a result, I had to undergo severe self-mortification at the village of 'Uruwela' for six whole years. It was only after the period of suffering that I could attain Enlightenment.

I am now completely removed from all Kammic consequences, from all desire, from all sadness, from all need, from all defilement, and shall enter 'Nirvana'."

The above accounts should give the reader a deep appreciation of the benefit of 'kind speech' and the terrible consequences of 'uncivil speech'. Simple words that are truly meaningful, and are expressed with sincerity that reach out and touch the listener's core are considered to be 'kind speech'.

Words that may not be impolite but are spoken in ignorance or recklessness especially in reference to the teachings of the 'Dhamma' become 'uncivil speech'. The

utterer of such words has already committed an evil 'Kamma', and its evil fruit is unavoidable.

'Kind Speech' should be an integral part of one's character. It allows us to be endearing and well regarded. The practitioner would no doubt be able to find happiness and success in his life. The Lord Buddha had mentioned in the Sarambha-Jataka as follows.¹

*"Kind speech brings about success,
Uncivil speech brings about trouble."*

3. The practice of altruism.

What does it imply?

It means giving advice and doing constructive things for others out of the kindness of one's heart. It means sharing one's knowledge and expertise with those who need them in order to accomplish certain tasks. It means providing others with the know-how needed to succeed in one's occupation or profession, in taking care of one's health and welfare. It means doing what we can to help our fellow beings achieve a certain standard of living so that all can live in peace, safety, and happiness.

What are the examples of altruism?

The most important gauge of altruism is that whatever we do, however we do it, needs to ultimately benefit the public at large. Some examples include:

A successful business individual may decide to share his experience and expertise with interested individuals within his community free of charge.

¹ J., vol.1, No.88, Sarambha Jataka p.217.

A company or an organization may arrange a seminar on a particular technology for its employees, but reserves a number of seats free of charge for the interested individuals of the public.

A charity organization may arrange for a one-to two-day training seminar free of charge on certain crafts such as cooking, flower arrangements, etc.

A charity organization or a social club may arrange a short-term course lasting from three to seven days on the practice of meditation, free of charge.

Individuals may volunteer their services as crossing guards, traffic directors, youth camp leaders, etc.

Individuals may volunteer their time as guest lecturers at different organizations and learning institutions.

These are but some examples of altruistic deeds.

What is the objective of altruism?

The main objective is to enhance the learning of basic arts and sciences, the know-how's of new technologies, the training of certain skills, etc., in a less formal setting than schools or colleges. It is hoped that participants can benefit from their attendance in a practical way.

The second objective is more of a by-product in that the practitioners of altruistic deeds have a chance to help others in the community. In so doing, the better-endowed individuals of society have a chance to demonstrate their responsibility for the less-endowed members. The interaction and interrelationship foster a sense of shared responsibility, good will, and unity among all concerned. In time, when the less-endowed individuals become better-endowed, they can follow the same practice out of their sense of shared responsibility.

These beneficial activities are an excellent means to implement and improve one's art of binding others to us especially in the area of 'kind speech'.

What sort of individuals enjoys the practice of altruism?

The 'true friend' sort, naturally. The reason is that it is within the characteristics of a true friend to:

1) Possess a vision. They know that when they have a hand in developing a community through the network of decent individuals, the benefits of a thriving community would ultimately reach them.

2) Possess the correct understanding that any community that is morally and economically strong would not shelter crimes and criminals. As for the normal teenage problems, the community is able to deal with them without undue difficulty.

3) Possess the correct understanding that strong communities make up a strong nation.

4) Possess the correct understanding that a strong community is a result of decent, '*Right View*' members. Such individuals make it a habit to conduct only good deeds, and pass on their knowledge and experience of moral rights and wrongs to the next generation. In so doing, a worthwhile tradition can continue for generations to come.

5) Possess the correct understanding that when the community members genuinely care about each other, there will be no place for a '*Wrong View*' individual. He either has to change or leave.

The above five reasons are but a few examples of why a true friend enjoys the practice of altruism. A true friend

is firmly planted in the '*Right View*' and is naturally endearing and respectable.

4. Knowing one's place.

The main objective of knowing one's place is to conduct oneself in such a way as to remain endearing and honorable under all circumstances. There are three types of conduct, which include:

- 1) Consistent conduct.
- 2) Appropriate conduct.
- 3) Decent conduct.

1) Consistent conduct.

Consistent conduct implies that one behaves in a consistent manner toward those around him or individuals occupying one's '*Six Directions*' regardless of one's personal circumstances. The changing of personal circumstances should not affect the consistent manner of one's behavior.

Individuals who understand about the Law of '*Kamma*' realize that life on earth is very much like a puppet being pulled every which way by the strings of past good or bad '*Kamma*'. Whenever the good '*Kamma*' runs ahead of the evil '*Kamma*', and the good '*Kamma*' succeeds in sending forth its fruit, the results could be success and prosperity. During this benevolent period, whatever one touches, turns to gold, practically. One may meet with success that is above and beyond all expectations. Fortune smiles sweetly on him. But beware, when the evil '*Kamma*' catches up and runs ahead, one may also run unexpectedly into all sorts of problems. It is like the old Thai saying, '*Venus enters and Saturn crowds in*'. All the material wealth that one

possesses may disappear in a burst of flame, in a stock market crash, in a robbery, in the 'Causes of Ruin', etc. Suddenly one is experiencing all kinds of hardship.

Individuals who deeply appreciate the 'Law of Kamma' also understand the 'Three Common Characteristics', which include impermanence, the state of being unable to remain stable, and the state of being not self. They understand that life is based on uncertainty because we have no idea what good and evil deeds or how many of each had been done in all of our previous existences. We have no idea when good or bad 'Kamma' would send forth its fruit.

Therefore, while one's past good 'Kamma' is operating in one's life, one needs to be cognizant of the uncertainty of life, and not to become over-confident or arrogant. One would continue to behave like a true friend without changing the way one treats others around him. In fact, one could even share one's fortune with those around him so that all could live more comfortably.

For an individual whose life has not yet met with the spectacular success that some of those around him have done, should take care not to allow his jealousy to overpower him. He should, on the contrary, congratulate and be happy for his friends or relatives. Such attitude is healthy for all concerned.

An individual may be encountering the full effect of his past evil 'Kamma' and may be faced with a bankruptcy as well as other problems. In that case, the individual must seriously persevere. He must not allow the current misfortune to let loose his 'unwholesome attachments', which can lead to regrettable deeds such as making money through dishonest, illegal means, etc.

In conclusion, an individual possesses a consistent conduct under whatever circumstances he is facing in life. He is generous when fortune smiles on him. He congratulates others when fortune smiles on them. He perseveres with dignity when he is down on his luck. Most importantly, he maintains his sense of decency under all circumstances. Such is the meaning of 'consistent conduct'.

2) *Appropriate conduct.*

It means that one knows how to behave according to one's relationship with others at any given place and time. The most obvious relationships are the individuals occupying one's 'Six Directions'.

As a parent, one needs to fulfill one's parental duties such as forbidding the child from committing deeds of indecency. As a parent, one must not use abusive language with one's child. One must not be involved with vices such as drinking, gambling, frequenting the nightlife, etc.

As a child, one needs to fulfill one's duties toward the parents. One helps out with household chores. One helps with the parents' business, etc., etc.

As a teacher, one needs to behave like one in and out of classrooms. One needs to be a good role model for one's students. One teaches and trains the students both in the knowledge of the world, and of the 'Dhamma'. One needs to be a model citizen. One does not get involved in any corruption scheme. One does not make sexual advances toward one's students. One does not smoke, drink, take drugs, etc.

As a student, one learns the arts and sciences with due respect for the teachers. One does not participate in use-

less activities like organizing a strike, volunteering for a particular political campaign, etc., etc., to the detriment of one's education.

As a husband, one needs to fulfill all of one's duties. One must be faithful to one's wife, and keeps the family together. The sin of adultery sends forth its evil fruit in both this and the next life. The ill effects in this life include divorce, problem children, financial trouble, etc. The worst effects will take place in the 'Hereafter'. The penalty for the sin of adultery is horrific forms of punishment that can last for millions of years. When the sentence has been served accordingly, and one has the chance to be born a human, one would a return as a woman. She would continue to suffer problems of promiscuity and a broken home over and over again throughout many lifetimes. She would have the chance of a decent lifetime as a happily married woman only when the residual evil 'Kamma' has become significantly diluted.

As a wife, one needs to fulfill all of one's duties. One must be faithful, even when one's husband is not. One needs to remember that 'to each his own 'Kamma'.

As a friend, one needs to be a true friend and fulfills all of one's duties as such.

As a subordinate, one must possess the appropriate work ethics, and carried out one's duties impeccably. One can then make progress in one's career.

As a boss, one needs to treat all employees fairly and kindly. One takes the time to boost the morale of the workplace by making it a pleasant place to work in.

As a 'Bhikku', one must fulfill one's most privileged duty of guiding the lay individuals toward the 'States of Hap-

piness'. One must be dedicated to instilling in the lay individuals the ways of the '*Right View*'. One teaches the lay individuals the value of *alms-giving, Precepts keeping, meditation as well as altruism*.

Instilling the '*Right View*' in the lay individuals can result in peace and prosperity for the community in this life, and send them toward the '*States of Happiness*' in the '*Hereafter*'.

It is crucially important that the '*Bhikku*' not make the terrible mistake of misleading the lay individuals into practicing any form of black magic. Otherwise, the '*States of Unhappiness*' would certainly be awaiting both the teacher and the students.

As a lay individual, one needs to support the '*Sangha*' and the continuation of the Buddhist Faith. One must also attend the sermons at the temple in order to learn the teachings of the '*Dhamma*' from the '*Sangha*'. One must then apply what one learns to every facet of one's life.

The reader can by now appreciate the number of roles that an individual can take on at one time. Being able to fulfill each of our roles is the meaning of an '*appropriate conduct*'.

3) *Decent conduct.*

It means that one behaves in such a way as to uphold all the qualities of human decency.

It has already been described earlier in this book that desirable personal attributes are a result of a firmly planted '*Right View*'. One's '*Right View*' helps one to further develop the conscientious responsibilities for the four important areas in one's life. At the same time, one feels ashamed of sin and fears the terrible consequences

of sin. Only when one is properly conditioned in these ways would one be able to live a life of human decency.

Therefore, an individual that possesses a consistent, appropriate, and decent conduct is said to 'know his place'. Such individual is naturally endearing and honorable.

Summary of the Six Directions' Failure

It can be concluded that the mayhem so widespread in society these days is a result of the Six Directions' failure to perform their respective duties. The cause is ignorance due to a disinterest in the studying and practicing of the 'Dhamma'.

The lack of the 'Dhamma' in one's life subsequently causes one to lack the 'Principles of service and social integration' as well as the art of binding others to us.

What harm can be caused by the lack of the 'Principles of service and social integration'?

The lack of this particular 'Dhamma' causes the heart to shrivel up, so to speak. It causes the lack of loving consideration among the individuals in one's 'Six Directions'.

What are the forms of manifestation when the heart shrivels up?

1) *One becomes illogical.* It means that one does whatever one pleases. Whatever brings amusement, whatever brings pleasure is reason enough. Anything goes. One is scarcely concerned about the moral issues of what one is doing. Overindulgence in any shape and form is running rampant everywhere, and is a sure sign of a shriveled heart.

2) *One becomes irresponsible.* Examples include un-

wanted pregnancy, abortion, drinking and driving, etc.

3) *One becomes shameless and fearless of sin.* Any individual lacking the Five Precepts would have the audacity to commit an indecent deed whenever it suits him.

These three forms of manifestation are actually the behavior of the 'Wrong View' individuals. When the symptom of a shriveled heart appears among the individuals occupying one's 'Six Directions', they cannot help but fail to fulfill their respective duties. The results can only be pervasive mayhem.

- Kids are running away from home.
- Aging parents are being neglected.
- Students go on strike.
- A broken home situation is now a prevalent phenomenon.
- Treachery among friends is rampant.
- Employees rob and kill their employer.
- Even among the 'Sangha', there is no exception.

Nonetheless, the breach of conduct among the individuals of the 'Six Directions' can only be remedied by one prescription. That is, when the so-called 'Thai Buddhists' would come back to seriously study and practice the 'Dhamma' again the way the Thais of old had done in the past.

The Principles of Service and Social Integration Binds the Hearts

The wheels of a vehicle, be it two-, three-, four-, or more can move because of the axle and the chassis, which keep the wheels together as they turn. In this mechanism, there is a tiny but crucially important part called a wedge.

It fixes the axle to the hub of the wheel tightly so that the vehicle can move as a unit.

It is for this mechanism that the Lord Buddha compared the 'Principles of Service and Social Integration' to a wedge, as He put it in the 'Sigalovada Suttanta' as follows.¹

"The giving of alms, kind speech, altruism, and knowing one's place. These Principles of Service and Social Integration nurture the world, and keep it turning in the same way that a wedge, which fixes the axle to the wheel keeps the vehicle moving as a unit."

The Lord Buddha's comment clearly indicates that the hearts and minds of individuals beginning with those in the 'Six Directions' can be bound together through the 'Principles of Service and Social Integration'. They serve as a wedge that binds the hearts together.

Without the wedge that binds, not only would different groups of individuals break apart, but even a child would lack the loving respect for his own parents. As the Lord Buddha had commented,

"Without the Principles of Service and Social Integration, a parent would not be respected by his child. But the wise appreciate the true value of these principles, therefore, they can achieve greatness worthy of admiration."

¹ D., vol.4, Sigalovada Suttanta: The Sigala Homily, p.173-184.

Summary

The reader can by now appreciate that if the adults or the individuals occupying one's 'Six Directions' can conduct themselves properly according to the 'Principles of Service and Social Integration', they would naturally be endearing and honorable. These individuals also realize how important their regular study and practice of the 'Dhamma' are in maintaining their decency.

The regular practice of the 'Dhamma' results in a deeply rooted '*Right View*'. Therefore, one can say that the '*Principles of Service and Social Integration*' are the necessary steps leading to the development of the '*Right View of Ten*'.

If all the adults in society would conduct themselves according to the 'Principles of Service and Social Integration', there would be happiness and prosperity within that society. Each family would live in a warm, loving atmosphere, because the parents are endearing and honorable. They know how to instill in their children the moral rights and wrongs, the benefits of 'merits' and the harm of 'sin', what is useful and what is not, what is proper and improper. The parents can effectively teach and train their children because the parents are good role models themselves. In this environment, the children would feel secure and have no reason to act out. They know that they can approach their parents with any problem, or question, or to ask them for advice. As they grow up, they would have a firm sense of decency, and the wisdom to conduct themselves properly.

A well-adjusted child would behave well in school. He can concentrate on what the teachers are teaching them, and can develop the wisdom and intellect necessary to

make his own way in the world.

This child is also used to attending the sermons and other pious activities at the temple. He has already been studying and practicing the 'Dhamma' under the 'Sangha' since his early childhood. Therefore, his budding '*Right View*' can in time become fully developed.

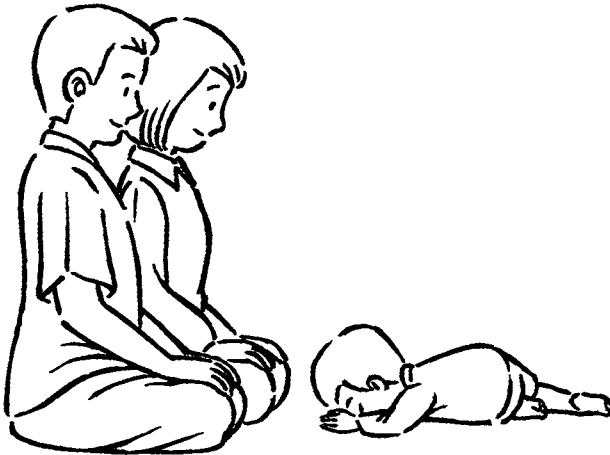
As a '*Right View*' independent individual, he would conduct himself meticulously according to the 'Principles of Service and Social Integration'. He has learnt the qualities of a true friend from those around him since his early childhood. He is therefore a true friend to others in society.

On the other hand, the lack in the study and practice of the 'Dhamma' causes the adults in one's 'Six Directions' to be a poor role model. The insidious problems among the youth these days can be traced back to the 'shriveled' heart condition in the adults around them.

Nevertheless, whatever mistakes might have been made out of ignorance, most adults with a fair amount of intelligence can learn and change for the better if they so wish. They can use the teachings of the 'Dhamma' as the guiding principles of their transformation. They can change the entire fabric of the 'Six Directions' to mutually benefit each other. They can become endearing and honorable. *They realize that the key to their successful transformation is the 'Principles of Service and Social Integration'.*

– CHAPTER SIX –

Book Summary



The Meaning of ‘Man’s Personal Transformation’

The transformation in this context is a process of converting something that is bad into something that is good. It is the conversion of harm into benefit. It is the conversion of something archaic into something modern. What is important is the conversion of something wrong into something right, proper, and decent. Therefore, the crux of ‘Man’s Personal Transformation’ is the conversion of human frailty into human decency.

Some of the forms of human frailty can be witnessed in one’s verbal and physical behavior. Examples include selfishness, dishonesty, lies, etc. These indecent behavior patterns need to be transformed into honest words, and decent deeds.

The main cause of human frailty comes from one’s ‘*Wrong View*’. One’s ‘*Wrong View*’ in turn is the manifestation of one’s ‘unwholesome attachments’, which include greed, anger, and ignorance. A ‘*Wrong View*’ individual is given to thoughts of wickedness, and his actions cause problems for himself and society at large. Worst of all, he would receive his most severe forms of penalty in the ‘*States of Unhappiness*’, which could last for aeons of time.

Therefore, it is imperative that one’s ‘*Wrong View*’ be converted into the ‘*Right View*’ for one’s own salvation. Moreover, the ‘*Right View*’ is instrumental to the cultivation of human decency, which can yield benefits in both this and the next life. There are two processes involved in man’s personal transformation. They are as follows.

- 1) The first process involves the conversion of a grown-up’s ‘*Wrong View*’ into the ‘*Right View*’.

2) The second process involves the planting of the '*Right View*' in the mind of a child beginning at his infancy. The training would keep the child firmly planted in the '*Right View*', which would keep him on the path of human decency all throughout his life.

The Meaning of the '*Right View*'

The all-encompassing meaning of the '*Right View*' is the correct understanding of the reality of the world and of life. It includes ten main points as follows.

1) The giving of alms does bear fruit. It is the right thing to practice.

2) The giving of aid does bear fruit. It is the right thing to practice.

3) Revering those who are worthy of our reverence does bear fruit. It is the right thing to practice.

4) It is a universal truth that a good '*Kamma*' bears good fruit, and an evil '*Kamma*' bears evil fruit. That is, the '*Law of Kamma*' exists.

5) The world is a place of opportunities. It is the only plane of existence where every human is given the opportunities to accumulate '*merits*', and to work toward the attainment of '*Nirvana*'.

6) The '*Hereafter*' exists. As long as a human being is unable to free itself of the bondage of '*unwholesome attachments*', he has to continue his sufferings in the never-ending '*birth-death-rebirth*' cycle of the '*Samsara*'. This vicious cycle involves the realms of reality, which include the '*States of Unhappiness*', and the '*States of Happiness*'.

7) Every child owes his mother a great debt of gratitude because she has served as a physical and psychological prototype to him. As a human, he has the oppor-

tunities to accumulate new 'merits', and to work toward the attainment of 'Nirvana'.

8) For the same reasons, every child owes his father a great debt of gratitude.

9) The 'Spontaneous Rising' of a creature in *the States of Happiness* and *Unhappiness* is a fact.

10) The 'Sangha' who practice righteousness rigorously according to the 'Dhamma-Discipline' are able to attain the 'Wisdom Eye', which allows them to penetrate the reality of this world and the hereafter. With exemplary discernment, they teach the lay individuals about the whole truth of reality. This part of the '*Right View*' attests to the fact that,

- 1) The Lord Buddha existed. His Enlightenment made it possible for Him to penetrate the whole truth of reality, which is the never-ending 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle of the 'Samsara'.
- 2) His Perfected Disciples existed. They were able to penetrate the truth of reality through their 'Wisdom Eye' in the fashion after their Master.
- 3) There still remain to the present days the 'Sangha' who can penetrate the truth of reality through their 'Celestial Eye or Wisdom Eye' in the fashion after their Master.

An individual who has the correct understanding of this 'Right View of Ten' is considered to possess only a 'head knowledge' of it. This head knowledge is powerless in preventing him from falling into the '*Wrong View*'. He has still to study other relevant teachings of the 'Dhamma', and to practice what he has learnt until it forms an integral part of his characteristics. The evidences of a '*Right View*' individual are borne by such

activities as *the giving of alms, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation on a regular basis*. A 'Right View' individual is devoted to the accumulation of 'merits', and abhors all forms of indecency.

The Meaning of the 'Wrong View'

The 'Wrong View' comes from the wrong understanding of the reality of the world and of life. It contains the ten opposing points to those of the 'Right View'. The 'Wrong View' is the deliberate work of the unbridled 'unwholesome attachments' inherent in each of us. They aim to corrupt one's mind and to rob one of the honor and dignity of one's humanity. The ten points of the 'Wrong View' include,

- 1) The giving of alms does not bear any fruit. It is a useless activity.
- 2) The giving of aid does not bear any fruit. It is a useless activity.
- 3) There are no individuals worthy of reverence.
- 4) There is no such thing as the 'Law of Kamma'. The concept of good and bad is a human invention.
- 5) The existence on the earth plane is purely accidental.
- 6) The physical death is final.
- 7) The mother's role is insignificant.
- 8) The father's role is insignificant.
- 9) There is no such thing as a 'Spontaneous Rising'. Therefore, there are no such places as heaven and hell.
- 10) The 'Sangha' are just ordinary men in the monk's garb.

The Reasons for 'Man's Personal Transformation'

There are at least four reasons for man's personal transformation, which involves the conversion of one's 'Wrong View' into the 'Right View'.

1) *The majority of individuals these days lack the 'Right View'.* Children have not been taught and trained in the ways of the 'Right View' because their parents have not been taught and trained as children either. It is a vicious cycle where one generation's ignorance of the 'Right View' passes onto another generation. There is no 'Right View' individual to be found at home or in school. The world population has abandoned human decency in favor of education and competition for material gains, only to find that all the diplomas and wealth in the world cannot make them nor their children truly happy.

2) *The inculcation of the 'Right View' requires serious efforts.* Unlike the 'Wrong View' or any other manifestations of the 'unwholesome attachments', the 'Right View' does not happen naturally.

3) *The 'Wrong View' corrupts the mind.* There are two main types of 'Wrong View' individuals. Their origins can be traced back to their previous existences.

Type 1: An imbecile that is incapable of earning his own livelihood, incapable of understanding the 'Dhamma', and incapable of understanding the moral rights and wrongs. The Scriptures compare such individuals to a person blinded in both eyes.

Type 2: An individual that would do anything for his material gains regardless of the means. He is incapable of understanding the 'Dhamma'.

How did these two types of individuals come to be?

The world population has been obsessed with materialism and consumerism of late. They have indulged their five senses to the hilt, believing the gratification of these senses would bring them happiness.

The truth is that in gratifying one's senses indiscriminately, one is actually providing fuels to one's 'unwholesome attachments', which include greed, anger, and ignorance. In the quest for such excessive gratification, the cry is always for 'more, better, bigger, etc.' The reason is that whatever one does or acquires to please one's senses, the high moments only last so long. They merely leave the individual to hunger for more of whatever one does or acquires. The unwholesome desires can only escalate and nothing is ever enough. The sole gratification of the five senses is addictive, it is a bottomless pit. One becomes enslaved to one's 'unwholesome attachments' and their dictates. In time, one grows shameless and fearless of sin, and one loses any sense of what is right and what is wrong.

The fruit of a 'Kamma' is very real whether we believe it or not. Those who have committed evil deeds in this life would most assuredly and unavoidably serve a most horrid sentence in the '*States of Unhappiness*'. The sentence could last from hundreds of thousands to millions of human years as dictated by the 'Law of Kamma'. There is absolutely no mercy. The punishment is exact and non-negotiable. After having served the respective stages of the horrible forms of punishment, the individual would eventually have a chance to be reborn in the Human Realm. As a human, there are two kinds of fate waiting for him depending on the type and inten-

sity of his residual evil 'Kamma'. He may be reborn as an imbecile, an individual blinded in both eyes. Or he may be reborn a ruthless, unprincipled individual, an individual blinded in one eye.

At first glance, it may appear that an individual blinded in both eyes pose no serious problems to society at large. However, on the whole, these individuals are a burden to themselves, to their families, and to their communities. Their inability to understand the moral rights and wrongs, which makes it impossible for them to accumulate any new 'merits', would have untold ill consequences during their long journey in the 'Samsara'.

It is predictable that an individual blinded in one eye is capable of causing harm and wreaking all sorts of havoc throughout the community, the society, and even the world at large. All the wicked deeds committed in the world all through the ages have been the handiwork of these individuals. They thrive on crimes. Some may live in hiding from the law. Others may be fabulously rich and honored by society. Regardless of their status, deep down these individuals can find no peace. In spite of their disbelief in the 'Law of Kamma', they do fear that one day the results of their criminal, wicked deeds would catch up to them.

The fear that they feel deep down while on the earth plane is nothing and lasts but a millisecond when compared to the untold torments and the duration in the '*States of Unhappiness*'. The worst of the situation is that after all is said and done, he would return to earth to repeat the entire vicious cycle over and over again.

Such are the states of reality penetrable by the Lord Buddha, His Perfected Disciples, and all the 'Sangha'

who have practiced righteousness according to the 'Dhamma-Discipline'. If the vicious cycle of the 'Wrong View' individuals continues unabated, soon enough the world would be full of individuals blinded in one eye as well as in both eyes. As it is, the world is fast approaching what the Lord Buddha had described as the 'Age of Violence'. It would be a time period of pervasive, unprecedented violence where the 'Wrong View' individuals display all forms of bestial behavior. It would be a time period where the 'Wrong View' individuals reign supreme.

4) *The 'Right View' provides a source of illumination for humanity.* Illuminated individuals are those with two seeing-eyes. They have the intellect to acquire wealth in an honest, ethical manner. They have the intelligence to understand the 'Dhamma'. Therefore, they are intent on conducting decent deeds, and accumulating 'merits' all throughout their lives. They abstain completely from anything indecent.

The 'Dhamma' uses other words to describe individuals with two seeing-eyes. These include true friends, the learned, the righteous, the decent, the 'Right View' individuals, etc. The 'Right View' individuals can fathom the fact that only the conduct of decent deeds can provide them with peace and happiness. And it is the combined effort of the society members to conduct decent deeds that brings about peace and prosperity to the world. Therefore, the 'Right View' individuals are ready to contribute their shares of decent deeds.

However, if a 'Right View' family allows just one member of the family to fall into the 'Wrong View', the family's peace would be shattered. It is also true that

given just one '*Wrong View*' individual in a community, it can already experience problems. Should the majority of the community possess the '*Wrong View*', that community is doomed. And so it is at a society, national, or international level. These scenarios should provide ample reasons for the need of man's personal transformation.

The Foundation of Desirable Personal Attributes

Which part of the 'Dhamma' can provide the foundation on which to develop one's desirable personal attributes?

The part of the 'Dhamma' that can provide the foundation on which to develop one's desirable personal attributes is the '*Right View*'. The reason is that the '*Right View*' provides the correct understanding of the world and the reality of life. When an individual possesses the '*Right View*', he naturally has the right thought, the right speech, the right action, and the right livelihood.

Desirable Personal Attributes

What makes up one's desirable personal attributes?

Human decency is the mold that forms one's desirable personal attributes. The Lord Buddha had given quite a few sermons on this subject to different audiences for different occasions. The details can be divided into three groups as follows.

1. A decent individual understands his true life-objective.
2. A decent individual is cognizant of his conscientious responsibilities.

3. A decent individual understands the need for a network of decent individuals.

1. *A decent individual understands his true life-objective.* A 'Right View' individual has a deep appreciation for the reality of the world and of life. He realizes that life in the 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle of the 'Samsara' is filled with untold sufferings. He believes that there is a path to end this never-ending vicious cycle. And the Lord Buddha had clearly demonstrated what this path was. It was the exact same path that He and His Perfected Disciples had used to attain their victorious freedom. The path consists of three consecutive steps, which forms the three levels of one's life objective as follows.

1.1) *The primary level of one's life objective.* To begin the journey, the first step that one must take is to establish oneself financially. It involves an honest livelihood and a regular income. It involves managing one's finances effectively, which means having an amount left over for emergency purposes, and for the giving of alms and aid to those in need.

There are four steps to establish oneself financially and to effectively manage one's earning. These include 1) *earning an income*, 2) *safeguarding it*, 3) *building a network of decent individuals*, and 4) *spending wisely*.

1.2) *The secondary level of one's life objective.* This is the level where one makes provisions for life in the 'Hereafter'. The 'Right View' individual understands that the common currency of life in the 'Hereafter' is in the form of 'merits'.

There are four steps involved in this endeavor, which include: 1) *the achievement of faith*, 2) *the moral conduct*, 3) *the achievement of charity*, and 4) *the achievement of wis-*

dom. These four steps can be accomplished by *the giving of alms and aid, the keeping of the Precepts, and the practice of meditation on a regular basis*. These practices are the most effective ways to accumulate one's 'merits'.

These practices must go hand-in-hand with the activities at the primary level. The reason is that the simultaneous practices of both levels provide cumulative benefits to the practitioner. The newly earned 'merits' can go immediately to shed their benevolent effects by expediting one's acquisition of material wealth. Moreover, in the event of one's untimely death, one does not die a pauper of 'merits'.

Moreover, the secondary level of one's life objective can be carried out while one is still very young. When one's parents are the '*Right View*' individuals, it is common practice for the parents to train their child in the ways of the '*Right View*' since his early childhood. The child has been taught to follow his parents' examples by keeping the Precepts, and practicing meditation on a regular basis. At the same time, he has been taught to save part of his allowance every week, which can be combined with the parents' donation to go toward the support of the 'Sangha' and the Buddhist Faith. Moreover, a male child at a responsible age can be ordained as a novice for one to three months at a time. Not only is this a highly beneficial way to initiate the serious study and practice of the 'Dhamma' under the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness, it can earn the practitioner and his parents a great number of 'merits'.

1.3) *The highest level of one's life objective*. This is the level where one stakes one's life for the sole purpose of accumulating the maximum 'merits' that make it possible to

attain 'Nirvana'. The Lord Buddha and His Perfected Disciples had all spent innumerable lifetimes for this purpose prior to their attainment of 'Nirvana'.

This level of one's life objective is out of reach for the lay individuals simply because it requires all of one's time and efforts. It is the sole arena of the 'Sangha' who practice righteousness in the fashion after the Lord Buddha and His Perfected Disciples.

However, a layman can start this dedicated work during this lifetime by leaving his family and his worldly goods to become an ordained monk for the rest of his life. Or he can become an ordained monk for one to three months at a time periodically.

The appreciation of these three levels of one's life objective comes from one's knowledge of the 'Dhamma'. The combination of the 'Dhamma' and the worldly knowledge allows one to be if not prosperous, then at least self-sufficient. Because such individual possesses human decency, he necessarily would be a contributing member of society. Should he be blessed with great wealth, then his contributions would be far reaching.

Every '*Right View*' individual has a deep understanding of one's true life- objective. He conducts himself within the framework and inspiration of these three levels of his life objective because he understands the reality of the world and of life. Therefore, he is genuinely wise.

2. *A decent individual is cognizant of his conscientious responsibilities.* This desirable personal attribute calls for the '*Right View*' individual to be conscientiously responsible for the four areas as follows.

1) One is conscientious of and responsible for the honor and dignity of one's humanity. One fulfills this responsibility by abstaining totally from a) killing, b) stealing, c) adultery, and d) false speech.

2) One is conscientious of and responsible for the honor and dignity of others' humanity. One fulfills this responsibility by abstaining totally from all partial practices.

3) One is conscientious of and responsible for the morality of one's finances. One fulfills this responsibility by abstaining totally from the six 'Causes of Ruin'.

4) One is conscientious of and responsible for the environment, which has two aspects as follows.

a) Those around us, which mean the individuals occupying one's 'Six Directions'.

b) The natural environment, which means the city, the town, the mountains, and all of the natural resources.

The conscientious responsibilities for the above four areas is synonymous with practicing human decency. Such individual is said to possess desirable personal attributes. These attributes make him a model citizen, a good son, a good student, a good friend, a good husband, a good boss, a good subordinate, a good father, a good teacher, etc. He respects the natural environment, and does his part in the conservation efforts to protect it.

The 'Right View' individual is therefore noble-minded. His motives are pure, and his actions are honorable.

3. *A decent individual understands the necessity of a network of like-minded individuals. A network of decent individuals in any community is the only effective means to rid the community of 'Wrong View' individuals.*

When a community is made up of '*Right View*' individuals, it is certain that the community would meet with peace and prosperity. The reason is that such a community would be free from indecent acts, and from the '*Causes of Ruin*'. At the same time, the community members are enthusiastic about accumulating their '*merits*' while earning an honest livelihood. Every community member shares the same faith, and the same ideals. Everyone's life objective is the same, which is to live the most decent life possible, and to make provisions for life in the '*Hereafter*'.

The '*Right View*' individuals possess the qualities of a true friend. The network of true friends provides a solid moral, social, and financial support for all in the community. There are shared activities, which are conducive to the bonding, to the improved quality of life of the community members. Individual members gladly contribute financially to the network for the mutual benefits of all. The network teaches the members to be considerate and compassionate of each other.

It can be concluded that desirable personal attributes are the developed products of a firmly planted '*Right View*'. The attributes allow one to appreciate the three levels of one's life objective, to cultivate the conscientious responsibilities for the four major areas of one's life, and to build a network of decent individuals. The attributes have to do with human decency, which includes wisdom, morality, and compassion.

✓ **Instilling One's Right View**

The '*Right View*' needs to be instilled in every individual in the community. The process should be carried out according to one's age group. Therefore, members of

the community can be divided into three different groups as follows.

1. Preschoolers.
2. School children from kindergarten and primary school, secondary school, to undergraduate level.
3. Adults.

The Process of Instilling One's Right View

The process needs to be adjusted to one's age, one's level of understanding, one's attention span, and one's availability. Basically, the process can be broken down into four methods as follows.

1. The integration of the '*Right View*' into one's personal characteristics.
2. The simultaneous integration of the '*Right View*' and the practical training of the '*Dhamma*'.
3. The study and practice of the '*Dhamma*'.
4. Teach and learn from one another.

1. The integration of the 'Right View' into one's personal characteristics.

This method is suitable for toddlers and pre-kindergarteners. It involves teaching and training the young children to understand the differences between what is decent and indecent. The children are trained to cultivate decent deeds, and to abstain from acts of wickedness. They are taught about kindness and compassion for people and animals alike. They are taught that it is wrong to be abusive, to lie, to use foul language. They are taught to show the appropriate reverence for the Buddha's image, the '*Sangha*', their parents, and the proper respect for other adults around them. They are

allowed to take part in making food offerings to the 'Sangha' on their almsround in the morning. They are taught to cite certain short prayer. They are taught to behave properly while listening to the sermons at the temple. They are encouraged to accompany their parents in attending and helping out at the various pious activities at the temple. Most importantly, the parents serve as a good role model for their children.

2. *The simultaneous integration of the 'Right View' and the practical training of the 'Dhamma'.* As the children start kindergarten and elementary school, they are ready to begin practicing certain aspects of the 'Right View', the 'Three Ways of Making Merits', and the first two parts of the 'Four Principles of Service and Social Integration'. They can learn to say their prayer in both Thai and Pali as an offering of worship to the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. They can also begin to practice meditation.

3. *The study and practice of the 'Dhamma'.* This method is suitable for youngsters in secondary school and undergraduate level. It requires the concomitant study of relevant 'Dhamma' topics, and their subsequent practice in one's daily life. The end result should always be geared toward the habit forming and character building of the practitioner.

Topics of the 'Dhamma' incorporated into the school curriculum can be selected and presented together to demonstrate their inter-connection and their relevance to one's daily practice. It is imperative that the teachers are well-versed in the topics discussed. The teachers must be firmly grounded in the 'Right View', and are themselves a good role model. They can then play an important role in producing the next generation model

citizens.

4. *Teach and learn from one another.* This method is suitable for adults in general. This process can work only among wise individuals possessing the qualities of a true friend. These individuals are aware of their own weaknesses and strengths. They know to observe and learn from their true friends in areas that they are poor at. At the same time they teach their true friends in areas that they are good at.

The best environment conducive to the gathering of true friends is through a network of decent individuals in the form of society, organization, foundation, volunteer group, or as members of the same temple. In these ways, various beneficial activities can be organized. Members have the opportunities to get together and participate in all the humanitarian functions. Through these opportunities, they can teach and learn from one another in a kind, compassionate manner.

Individuals Responsible for the Teaching and Training of the '*Right View*'

The Lord Buddha had designated the individuals of the 'Six Directions' to be responsible for instilling the '*Right View*' in a child's mind. The process requires that each individual of the 'Six Directions' fulfills the duties of his roles meticulously. By so doing, he is automatically instilling the '*Right View*' in the mind of the concerned child by means of his example.

Of all the individuals occupying one's 'Six Directions', the ones most responsible for instilling a child's '*Right View*' are the parents, the teachers, and the 'Sangha', who occupy the Front, the Right, and the Above Directions respectively. The parents are responsible for teaching

and training their child in the ways of the '*Right View*' from his early childhood to young adulthood. The teachers play a reinforcing role in this regard all throughout the child's school years. When the parents and the teachers have both studied and practiced the 'Dhamma' from the 'Sangha', then the virtuous cycle can be completed.

Children who have been properly taught and trained in these manners can grow up to be decent, honorable individuals. It is certain that they can when the time comes fulfill their own duties with regards to the individuals around them.

Individuals who are firmly grounded in the '*Right View*' play an important role in creating peace and prosperity in the community. When the reality of the situation is otherwise, it points to the fact that the '*Right View*' individuals are becoming a rare breed indeed. Therefore, to prevent this rare, precious breed from becoming extinct altogether, to prevent the world from turning into a place of pure mayhem and violence, the world population needs to take heed, and pay attention to the real cause of the pervasive mayhem and violence witnessed today.

The Failure of the 'Six Directions'

The failure of the concept has been caused by the failure of the individuals concerned to fulfill their respective duties. The main cause is ignorance. Ignorance keeps one from realizing the crucial need to study and practice the 'Dhamma'. The cause of ignorance in turn comes from the overindulgence of the five senses through materialism and consumerism.

One's ignorance of the 'Dhamma' leads to the ignorance of the '*Right View*'. Without the '*Right View*', the parents and the teachers, regardless of the numbers of

their combined diplomas, cannot possibly know how to properly fulfill their duties. The very basis of human decency, which allows individuals from all walks of life to dwell together in peace and prosperity, can only be obtained through the knowledge and habitual practice of the '*Right View*'. Without such knowledge and practice, one can only fall into the '*Wrong View*'.

To remedy this appalling situation, the 'Sangha' can no longer be content with their passive role. It is up to them, the individuals occupying the 'Above Direction', to turn proactive and take the 'Dhamma' out to the world. It is time for the 'Sangha' to go back and use the practice of the Lord Buddha in sending His Perfected Disciples out to bring the knowledge of the 'Dhamma' to the world.

The Only Stronghold: The Network of Decent Individuals

The network of decent individuals has many roles. It is a social, emotional, and financial support group. It serves to promote the interrelationship among all of the individuals concerned in one's 'Six Directions'. It serves to encourage the individuals of the 'Six Directions' to fulfill their respective duties. It serves to link the family institution, the educational institution, and the 'Sangha' institution together. In brief, the network liaises with the home, the temple, and the school.

Such liaison is not new to the Thai society. In fact, this particular way of networking had formed the fabric of the Thai society all throughout its history. In those days, the temple was the religious, educational and social center. It served as an educational institution for young children all the way to young adulthood. The ordina-

tion of young boys as novices, and of young men into the monkhood used to be a rite of passage. The villagers all took part in supporting the 'Sangha' and maintaining the temple ground. It was common practice for the wealthy to build a family temple, and to support it for generations.

The large number of temples all throughout the country had been built by lay individuals as an educational, cultural, and social center. In those days, religion was synonymous with education, culture and social activities. The 'Sangha' who practice righteousness served to bind the hearts of the community members through the teachings of the 'Dhamma'. The study and practice of the 'Dhamma' served as a source of guiding principles and a source of comfort for the practitioners. This is the true meaning of the network of decent individuals, where all members share with and depend on each other. Most importantly, such a network enables all the concerned individuals in one's 'Six Directions' to fulfill their respective duties meticulously.

How did the network enable the concerned individuals in one's 'Six Directions' to fulfill their respective duties in the past?

The important starting point of the process was the 'Above Direction'. Once the 'Sangha' had performed their duties meticulously, the lay individuals were equipped with the knowledge of the 'Dhamma'. The knowledge brought about the faith and trust in the Lord Buddha's Enlightenment. Even though most of the lay individuals then were illiterate, they could gain their knowledge of the 'Dhamma' through listening to the sermons at the temple regularly. They learned the truth

about the 'Law of Kamma', about the '*States of Happiness and Unhappiness*', about the never-ending vicious cycle of the 'birth, death, rebirth' in the 'Samsara'. The knowledge motivated them to abandon evil deeds, and to conduct only good deeds. The most important of these deeds were *the giving of alms and aid, the keeping of the Five or Eight Precepts, and the practice of meditation*. They practiced these deeds as a matter of habit. In other words, these Thai people of old were all firmly grounded in the '*Right View*'.

Most certainly, when the rest of the individuals in the remaining Five Directions were firmly grounded in the '*Right View*', they could properly fulfill their respective duties. The overall result was peace and prosperity within each community, which led to the peace and prosperity of the Thai society and the Thai nation as a whole. Such are the reasons that the network of decent individuals is the only stronghold.

The Interdependence among the Members of the Network

The network of decent individuals can be compared to the legs of a tripod. The three legs are home, the temple, and school. The three-legged structure keeps the tripod stable, in the same that the network keeps the community stable. The presence of the network makes the community strong and prosperous. All the strong, prosperous communities then go to make up a strong, prosperous nation.

In this analogy, it is also clear that each leg cannot stand alone. Two legs would be unstable, and three legs are perfect.

The first scenario. If the network is made up of just the

home and the school (two legs), the members would learn only the worldly knowledge and very little if at all of the 'Dhamma' knowledge. One may become an accomplished scientist, attorney, or politician, and know how to acquire the material wealth. But ultimately, one does not really know what all the knowledge and all the wealth are good for. Without any convincing idea about the purpose of life, about the 'Law of Kamma', about the reality of the '*States of Happiness and Unhappiness*, life itself is quite meaningless regardless of all the trappings. Moreover, if technological advances and wealth alone can provide true peace and prosperity, would not the world be the best place to live right now?

Without the knowledge of the 'Dhamma', no amount of worldly education can help the individual to feel shameful and fearful of sin. When he comes under pressure to succeed, he may well be capable of committing deeds of wickedness. The reason is that such individual has no real moral conviction. He has no real basis for judging what is right and what is wrong. In the same manner, a technologically advanced country possessed of superior weapons under pressure of greed may invade a smaller, less advanced country for the purpose of coveting its natural resources.

Such are the decisions and acts of '*Wrong View*' individuals that make up the '*Wrong View*' country. They have the brain to commandeer what they want materially, but lack any shame and fear of sin. Such individuals are considered to be blinded in one eye.

The second scenario. If the network is made up of only the home and the temple, the community members may be well-versed in the knowledge of the 'Dhamma', but

are lacking in the knowledge of arts and sciences necessary as tools to earn a decent living. A nation made up of such individuals would be undeveloped economically and technologically, and can easily fall prey to the schemes of more powerful nations.

The third scenario. If the network is made up of only the temple and the school, the students would have a hard time fitting in the home environment. It would be especially difficult for the students whose parents have not had the benefit of such a network while they were students. The parents may be involved with dishonest means of earning their livelihood. They may participate in 'Causes of Ruin'. They may resent their children for their 'air' of piety. Under such environment, it may be easier for the children to act one way at home, and another at school. This can only create an internal conflict for the children, adding unnecessary pressure for them.

The above scenarios clearly show how important it is that the network of decent individuals are made up of all three institutions. Only then could a real interdependence exist and real good can be accomplished. Moreover, the network enables each individual in one's 'Six Directions' to fulfill his duties properly. When an individual and those around him fulfill their respective duties in the spirit of loving consideration and kindness, the community made up of these individuals would meet with peace and prosperity as a matter of course. A nation made up of these communities would be strong and wealthy, naturally.

The Pertinent Solution

Elderly adults these days tend to lament over the mayhem pervasive in current society. They notice how the

younger generations have been taking leave of their traditional Thai ways. They wonder why that is. They wonder why the youths are frequenting the nightlife, are drinking and taking addictive substances, are wandering around shopping malls during school hours. They wonder why the young girls are dressed to exhibit their body parts. They wonder why the school and college uniforms are cut to fit so tightly and are indecently short. They wonder why the teenage boys and girls are carousing together, are engaged in dangerous car-racing on the streets, are engaged in school gang warfare, are boisterous and disrespectful, etc.

Unfortunately, those who lamented over these dire circumstances did only just that. No one seems to have wanted to find a solution to this deteriorating situation.

All things considered, the various precipitating circumstances all share the same cause. *The cause comes from the lack of a network of decent individuals that effectively links the home, the temple, and the school together.* This lack causes the individuals occupying one's 'Six Directions' to become seriously dysfunctional. The dysfunction has spreaded to every nook and corner of society resulting in the pervasive mayhem seen today.

Therefore, it is imperative that the entire Thai population arouses themselves from the deep slumber of mindless materialism and consumerism, and becomes united in their efforts to rejuvenate the network of the home, the temple, and the school. With earnest efforts, soon enough the '*Right View*' can be firmly planted in one's mind once again.

The Building of the Network Needs to Be Constituted as a National Policy

There are at least five reasons for this need.

1. The network can be used to effect one's personal transformation nationwide.

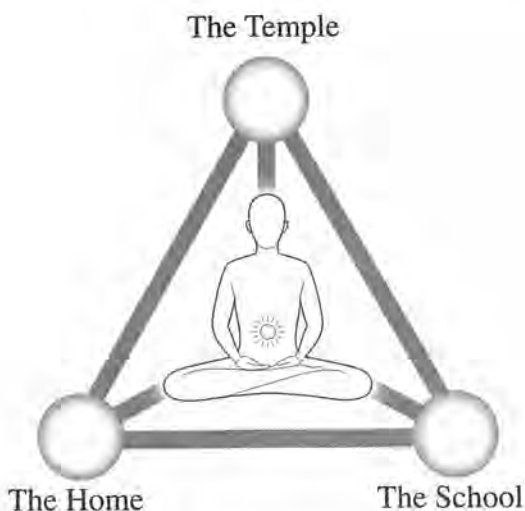
2. The government officials responsible for the nation's educational system need to realize how important it is to teach the knowledge of the 'Dhamma' along side the arts and sciences. The reason is that worldly education alone can produce only individuals blinded in one eye. Such individuals can only wreak havoc in society at large.

3. The network allows the 'Sangha' the opportunities to fulfill their duties as individuals occupying one's 'Above Direction'. At the same time, the 'Sangha' institution can be motivated to adhere to their practice of righteousness according to the 'Dhamma-Discipline'. Having the opportunities to make their contributions to society, they would feel motivated to study and practice the 'Dhamma' meticulously. They can bring back the traditional role of the temple as a spiritual, moral, social center, and as a provider of spiritual and emotional comfort to the lay members.

4. The Thai population can be encouraged and stimulated to study and practice the 'Dhamma'. Having learnt full well the damages and harm caused by the failure of the 'Six Directions', the concerned individuals in the 'Six Directions' would feel motivated to learn the function of their roles and to fulfill their duties properly.

5. The network allows the process of one's personal transformation to continue uninterrupted with the aid of various government-funded activities. The govern-

ment can also provide qualified personnel to liaise the functions of the three institutions that make up the network.



It is obvious to the reader by now that the network of the home, the temple, and the school provides an excellent tool to transform individuals en masse. However, for the transformation process to be truly effective, it needs to be on a continuous basis and happening at the same time nationwide.

For the process to work, the government needs to spark the initiation of the network as well as providing qualified personnel and funds for related activities. Once the process becomes a national policy, the network can be built nationwide and properly equipped to function properly. By providing the necessary budgets for this most worthwhile cause, the government can later reap many benefits. One of these would be a reduction of its

spending in peace-keeping and security efforts. Another would be a reduction of the number of crimes and criminals. When the entire population is firmly grounded in the 'Right View', the country would be filled with well-adjusted, responsible, honorable citizens. Decent citizens are the true resources of the country.

The Government's Role

The five duties of the parents can be adapted to form the government's duties owed to its citizens as follows.

The first and second duties: Forbid the child from acts of wickedness, and admonish the child to maintain his decency. These goals can be accomplished through the nationwide network of the home, the temple, and the school.

The third duty: Provide the child with a formal education. The government can play a key role in providing the knowledge of arts and sciences to its citizens. A high standard of education nationwide is crucial in providing the means to earning one's livelihood. It is the only way to raise the standard of living for the entire population. It is the way to eradicate poverty.

The fourth duty: Find a potential life partner for the child. The government does not fulfill this duty as such. It does however provide special pre-marital courses for young adults contemplating marriage. The courses should be geared toward detailed and practical information on the importance of the marriage institution, on how to go about selecting a life partner, how to fulfill one's spousal duties, how to fulfill one's parental duties, etc. These courses should take the place of the current sex education, which serves no useful purposes ex-

✓cept to incite the youngsters' curiosity and the desire to experiment with pre-marital sex. The courses should contain such relevant topics as follows.

1) *The human characteristics.* The material discussed should be about the factors that are responsible for one's desirable and undesirable characteristics. The discussion should include a remedial program for wayward children.

2) *Desirable characteristics.* It involves bringing the child up to possess desirable characteristics. Decent children grow up to be decent grown-ups complete with desirable personal attributes. Parents need to appreciate the important role that the '*Right View*' plays in the development of the child's desirable characteristics. At the same time, the parents themselves need to be a good role model.

The modern day society is composed mostly of isolated households without the presence of extended family members, where the newborn falls in the care of a maid or a nanny. The child under such care cannot expect to receive genuine warmth or be exposed to the '*Dhamma*'. Both aspects are crucial to the child's well-being.

Therefore, parents-to-be need to make preparations and sacrifices for the care of their children. They cannot leave them under the haphazard care of other individuals. Otherwise, their children may grow up to be emotionally insecure. The emotional insecurity can manifest itself in insidious ways.

3) *Spending wisely.* An individual who lacks the self-discipline in the way he spends his money is likely to experience constant financial problems. One may be able

to struggle by as a single person. But as a parent with children, the situation can only be tremendously exacerbated. Therefore, young adults contemplating marriage need to be taught and trained the management of personal finances. They need to be warned about the destructiveness of the 'Causes of Ruin', and must stay clear away from them.

4) *The knowledge of the 'Dhamma' as a source of wisdom.* The young adults contemplating marriage need to be well-versed in the teachings of the 'Dhamma'. They must be in the habit of studying and practicing the 'Dhamma'. The knowledge of the 'Dhamma' provides the only incentives in helping one to remain decent. It is also a source of wisdom to help one solve one's life problems. Moreover, the regular study and practice of the 'Dhamma' continue to refine one's personal characteristics. Such individuals are naturally honorable and endearing. They can be an excellent role model for their children. Since they walk their talk, it makes an easier time of teaching and training their children. It also increases the effectiveness in raising their children up to possess the 'Right View', and to carry on their parents' shining examples. In this way, one 'Right View' generation can beget another 'Right View' generation.

5) *The knowledge of the 'Six Directions'.* The parents-to-be need to have a deep appreciation of the Six Direction's important role. The concept of the 'Six Directions' is about the duties that one owes to those around him and vice versa. The concept promotes loving consideration for each other. It promotes kindness, compassion, and selflessness. These are personal characteristics that help one to get along well with others. These personal characteristics also foster the development of

close relationships, which bring about the sense of belonging and warmth, so necessary for one's personal wellbeing.

5. *Providing the children with an inheritance at an appropriate time.*

✓ As a government, the question is what legacy each government can leave behind for its citizens. Up until the current government, all the past ruling parties ever did was leaving behind a huge national debt. It is truly fortunate for the country and its citizens that the current ruling party has alleviated the debt situation. It can only be hoped that the situation would last. It is also hoped that each government can take pride in the legacy that it leaves behind from here onward.

What the Citizens Expect from its Government

The people expect the government to first and foremost fulfill the party policies given at the parliament during the inauguration address. The people expect the government to exercise its authority judiciously and decisively. The people expect the government to exercise its authority to eliminate crimes and other insidious problems damaging to the country.

The people expect the government to invest in the overall sense of wellbeing of its citizens. It is expected to promote a standard of behavior as well as a standard of living for its citizens by placing equal importance in the study of the 'Dhamma' and of the arts and sciences. It is expected to promote the network of the home, the temple, and the school. It is expected to promote the rigorous training of spiritual teachers (the Sangha) as

well as the teachers of arts and sciences. It is expected to promote its citizens' study and practice of the 'Dhamma'.

The people expect the government's operations to be transparent. It is expected to appoint qualified personnel for the jobs at hand and to release those who are incompetent from their posts. Its only concerns should be the welfare of its citizens, and that of the country.

The people expect the government to be forward-looking. It not only keeps abreast of the current development around the globe, but also looks ahead to make sure that the country and its citizens are at the forefront of technology and are not left behind in any area. It promotes the dissemination of information among its personnel and encourages them to take part in raising important issues and finding relevant solutions to them. It promotes its personnel to become better at what they do through training seminars and courses. It promotes genuine and active cooperation among the various branches of its operation. It promotes the interaction between its governing bodies and the citizens concerned.

In the Scriptures, there was recorded a sermon of the Lord Buddha regarding the righteous and unrighteous sovereign.¹ The contents of the sermon are as follows.

"During the reign of an unrighteous sovereign, the ruling ministers would also be unrighteous. The situation produces a chain effect in that the scholars and the business individuals also become unrighteous. So are the citizens in all walks of life. The unrighteousness of the entire kingdom causes the sun and moon to wobble in their courses, affect-

¹ A., vol. 2, *The Book of the Fours*, Chapter 7: X(70). *Unrighteous*, p.84-85.

ing all the other heavenly bodies. Nights and days, months and years are gradually off. The pervasive unrighteousness so disturbed the Devas occupying the lower atmosphere that they cause the wind to change direction and strength and the rain to fall haphazardly. The rice crop blooms unevenly, and the fruits ripen unseasonably. The crops provide poor nutritional value. The population is weak, sickly, pallid, and short-lived.

On the other hand, during the reign of a righteous sovereign, the ruling ministers would also be righteous. The situation produces a chain effect in that the scholars and the business individuals are also righteous. So are the general citizens. The kingdom's righteousness causes the sun, the moon, and all the heavenly bodies to traverse their courses smoothly. Seasons stay their course. Wind and rain appear at the right time and place. Crops and fruits are plentiful and rich in nourishment. The population is strong and healthy with radiant skin, and blessed with longevity.

The Lord Buddha had also provided an analogy to the situation as follows.

*"When cows are crossing, if the old bull swerve,
They all go swerving, following his lead.
So, among men, if he who's reckoned best.
Live not right, much more do other folk.
If the raja be unrighteous, the whole realm dwells
in woe.
When cows are crossing, if the bull go straight,*

*They all go straight because his course is straight.
So among men, if he who's reckoned best
Live righteously, the others do so too.
The whole realm dwells in happiness if the raja lives
aright."*

Note:

This sermon clearly demonstrates how the Lord Buddha could penetrate every situation. He understood all of the factors involved in any given situation so thoroughly. He understood the absolute phenomenon that caused the sun, the moon, the heavenly bodies to wobble in their traverses, the wind to change direction and strength, and the rain to fall unseasonably.

The Lord Buddha knew that certain Celestial Beings in this case became annoyed with the unrighteousness on earth. They showed their annoyance by causing the wind and rain to change course, knowing that the change in the weather patterns can have untold deleterious effects. This knowledge is not penetrable to ordinary human beings, however clever they may be in all of their scientific and technological understandings.

The scientists have been using advanced technologies to trace the origins of such phenomena as the green house effect, the El Nino effect, to the destruction of the rainforest, the destruction of the ozone layer, the widespread air and water pollution, etc. They have no clue that what humanity does as a whole in terms of our collected good and evil deeds can actually affect the Celestial Beings whose domiciles lie in an invisible realm parallel to our atmosphere. Such information would have appeared truly ludicrous to them. Yet, as incredulous as

it may seem these Celestial Beings possess the innate power to effect changes in our atmosphere and our physical world.

The truth is that the changing weather patterns around the world at any period has been caused by all of the evil deeds committed on earth. It is also true that during the period where decency rules, the earth would be blessed with favorable weather patterns.

The understanding of the astrologers about the influence of the planets and the stars on our lives is actually incorrect. It is humanity and its collected deeds that affect their patterns.

All of the scientific instruments in the world cannot penetrate the reasons behind so many phenomena that concern our physical lives. Yet, these and other truths were readily penetrable by the Lord Buddha through His astute 'Vision of Truth'. All humanity can have access to the different levels of the 'Vision of Truth' when they are devoted to the practice of meditation. Therefore, the use of the 'Dhamma' knowledge in combination with the scientific knowledge can appreciably deepen and widen our scope of understanding in regards to our physical world.

Ultimately, we hold the fate of humanity in our hands. We must therefore live up to our responsibilities. If we want to see a world of peace and prosperity, we now know how to create it. The answers to all human woes and happiness can be found in the study and practice of the 'Dhamma'. We also know the results of not living up to the honor and dignity of our humanity. We are living them today.

The Role of the Media

Over time the author has been asked many questions regarding where the media fit in the concept of the 'Six Directions'. The author believes the media to occupy the 'Left Direction'. The author has also been asked whether the media are one's false or true friends. The answer is they can be either.

Any media that advocate drinking, the nightlife, and other 'Causes of Ruin' are false friends. Any media that glamorize debauchery, human nakedness, and overindulgence are false friends. So are the media that thrive on defamatory sensationalism by publicizing untrue stories about an individual or an institution. So are the media that extort money in order to publicize the truth about an individual or an institution. Without the bribes, defamatory lies would be published instead of the truth. The media can do untold damages when they resort to unscrupulous practices. They are lethal in the ways that only 'Wrong View' individuals blinded in one eye can be.

On the other hand, any media that conduct themselves with honesty, courage, and integrity are considered to be one's true friend. Such media can do innumerable good and service to humanity.

Summary

The Lord Buddha taught that we all had our past 'Kamma' as our origin. It means that our past 'Kamma' are the determining factors of our birth into the Human Realm. Our birth is not of our own volition.

When we can deeply appreciate the 'Law of Kamma', we realize that our human form provides us with an excellent opportunity to begin designing and planning

our future existences. When we have made the appropriate preparations to the best of our abilities by dedicating our lives to the accumulation of 'merits', we can say for certain that we will indeed have chosen the realm and condition of our next existence.

Unfortunately, so few individuals know about the Law of 'Kamma', left alone deeply appreciating it. The scientific and technological advances of our age appear to lead people away from the Buddhist Faith and keep them enslaved to materialism and consumerism. There have been fierce competitions everywhere among individuals, organizations, and countries in the scale unheard of in the past. Most individuals are out for what they can get, and as much of it as possible. They spend their money overindulging their five senses. The overindulgence is becoming more and more extravagant and bizarre. Yet, most individuals are becoming less and less happy. All of the scientific and technological advances, all of the materialism and consumerism are the pure inventions of the earth plane. They mean absolutely nothing in the 'Hereafter'. One's fate in the 'Hereafter' is entirely dependent on one's accumulated 'merits' or the lack thereof while here on earth. One's 'Kamma' good or evil is the only determining factor.

The same old rules still apply in determining where one would end up after his last breath on earth, which is soon enough for everybody. These include:

- 1) When one's mind is clear and filled with joy, the '*States of Happiness*' awaits.
- 2) When one's mind is troubled and filled with woes, the '*States of Unhappiness*' awaits.

All the scholars and advanced practitioners of the

'Dhamma' have confirmed that just before the refined human form leaves the body, one would witness a replay of all of one's earthly deeds from the beginning of one's life until the very end. Certainly, when what one is seeing are good, decent deeds, his mind would be filled with pure delight, his conscience clear and bright. Some have even died with a slight smile on their faces.

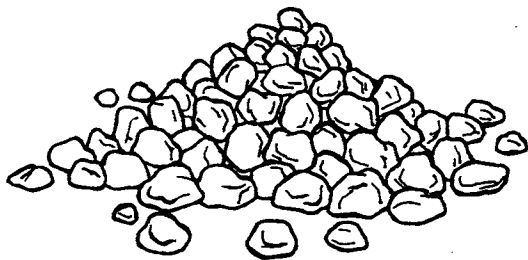
On the other hand, if most of what one sees are indecent deeds, deeds of his 'unwholesome attachments', deeds of the 'Causes of Ruin', his mind would be filled with woeful guilt, his conscience dark and overcast. Some have died squirming piteously at the images. Others have died shocked at the images with their eyes wide open.

✓ *The plain truth is that we are all here for the sole purpose of conducting good deeds in order that we can accumulate as many new 'merits' as we can. As we do so, we are more able to control the fate of our next existences. After lifetimes of resoluteness, we can begin to loosen the grip of the 'unwholesome attachments' until we can eventually liberate ourselves from them altogether. That is the time when we attain 'Nirvana'. With the attainment of 'Nirvana', we can finally be removed from the unending vicious 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle of the 'Samsara'. We can attain eternal bliss. These are the truths of the 'Dhamma'.*

The fortunate minority that has access to the 'Dhamma' knowledge appreciate the importance of the 'Six Directions' concept. These fortunate few realize how much sense and comfort the 'Dhamma' knowledge have provided them. They want to make sure to pass on the knowledge and practice to those around them in the 'Six Directions'.

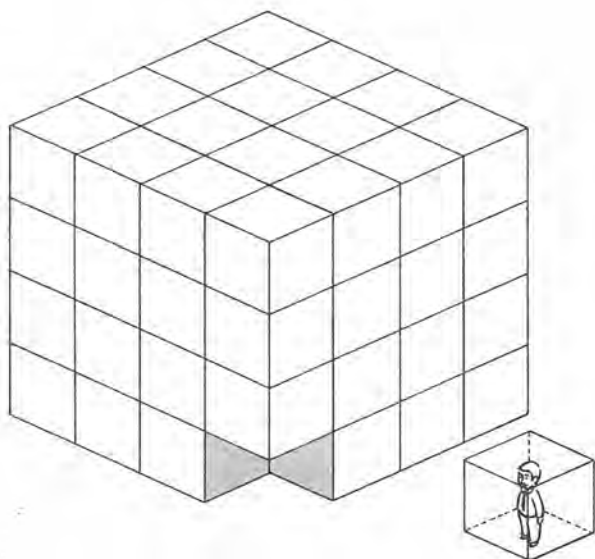
They also see the necessity for a network of the home, the temple, and the school. Linking the functions of these three institutions is their only hope of encouraging the study and practice of the 'Dhamma' at a community, society, and national level. When the network is nationwide and strong, it facilitates all individuals concerned to fulfill the three levels of their life objective, so crucial to the peace and prosperity in this and the next life.

The author wishes to give an analogy of the difference between the assemblies of the '*Right View*' and the '*Wrong View*' individuals. The assembly of the '*Wrong View*' individuals can be compared to a mound of irregularly sized and shaped rocks piling haphazardly together. The mound just exists serving no useful purposes. In reality, '*Wrong View*' individuals and their activities are damaging to all.



The assembly of the '*Right View*' individuals are like layers of stones, each perfectly sized and shaped to fit together tightly like the stone walls of old that have withstood the environment for thousands of years. That is not to say that all the stones have no individual characteristics and uniqueness because they do. And so each

'Right View' individual would still retain his personal uniqueness. They come together beautifully for the purpose of creating peace and prosperity for all members of the community.





Meditation for Beginners

For those who are interested in meditation for relaxation, consciousness and mindfulness. The following below are searched from www.dmc.tv, www.dhammadakaya.or.th

Meditation is something which we already do in everyday life allowing us to focus on the task at hand but the depth of meditation is superficial.

The events around us in the world soon rob us of our attention and our concentration is gone. The mind that wanders outside our own body is the source of all types of suffering.

By deepening our meditation until our mind comes to a standstill we can unlock the potential and unused ability within.

We maintain a balance of mindfulness and happiness for ourselves bringing contentment and direction to life in a way not possible through any other technique.

Step-by-Step Introductions for The Meditation technique

1. The sitting posture, which has been found to be the most conducive for meditation, is the half-lotus position. Sit upright with your back and spine straight ñ cross-legged with your right leg over the left one.

You can sit on a cushion or pillow to make your position more comfortable. Nothing should impede your breathing or circulation.

Your hands should rest palms-up on your lap, and the tip of your right index finger should touch your left thumb. Feel as if you are one with the ground on which you sit. Feel that you could sit happily for as long as you like.

2. Softly close your eyes as if you were falling asleep. Relax every part of your body, beginning the muscles of your face, then relax your face, neck shoulders, arms, chest, trunk and legs. Make sure there are no signs of tension on your forehead or across your shoulders.

3. Close your eyes and stop thinking about the things of the world.

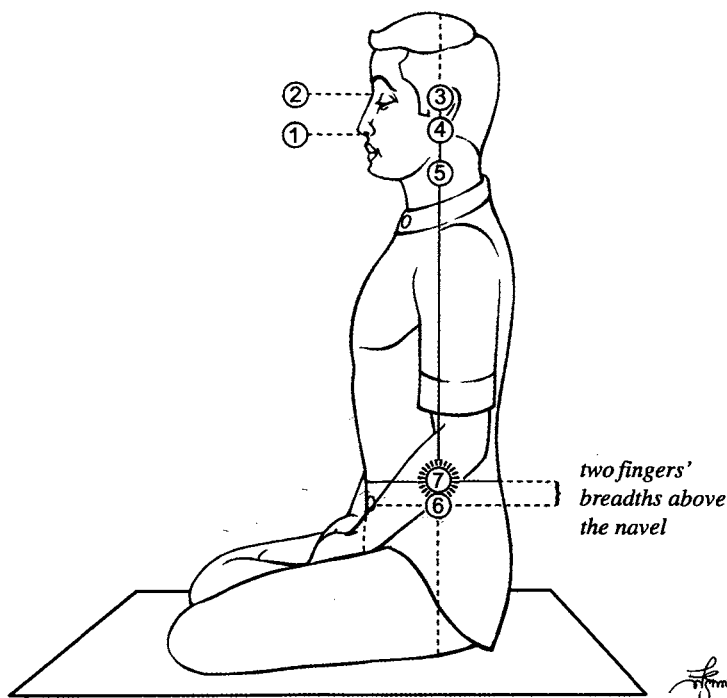
Feel as if you are sitting alone – around you is nothing and no-one.

Create a feeling of happiness and spaciousness in your mind. Before starting, it is necessary to acquaint yourself with the various resting points or bases of the mind inside the body.

The first base is at the rim of the nostril, on the right side for men and on the left side for women.

The second base is at the bridge of the nose at the corner of the eye – on the right side for men and on the left side for women.

The third base is at the center of the head.



The Seven Bases of The mind

The fourth base is at the roof of the mouth.

The fifth base is at the center of the throat above the Adam's apple.

The sixth base is at a point in the center of the body at the meeting point of an imaginary line between the navel through the back and the line between the two sides.

The seventh base of the mind is two fingers' breadth above the sixth base. This base is the most important point in the body. It is the very center of the body and the point where the mind can come to a standstill.

4. Feel that your body is empty space, without organs, muscles or tissues. Gently and contentedly rest your attention at a point near to the seventh base of the mind ñ at the center of the body.

Whatever experience arises in the mind, simply observe without attempting to interfere. In this way your mind will become gradually purer and inner experience will unfold.

5. If you find that you cannot dissuade the mind from wandering, then your mind needs an inner object as a focus for attention.

Gently imagine that a bright, clear, crystal ball, the size of the tip of your little finger, is located inside at the center of the body. Maybe you'll find you can imagine nothing, but later you'll be able to see a crystal ball of increasing clarity. Allow your mind to come to rest at the very center of the crystal ball. Use the subtlest of effort and you'll find that the crystal ball becomes brighter and clearer. If you see too much effort you will find that it gives you a headache.

6. If you find that your mind still wanders from the

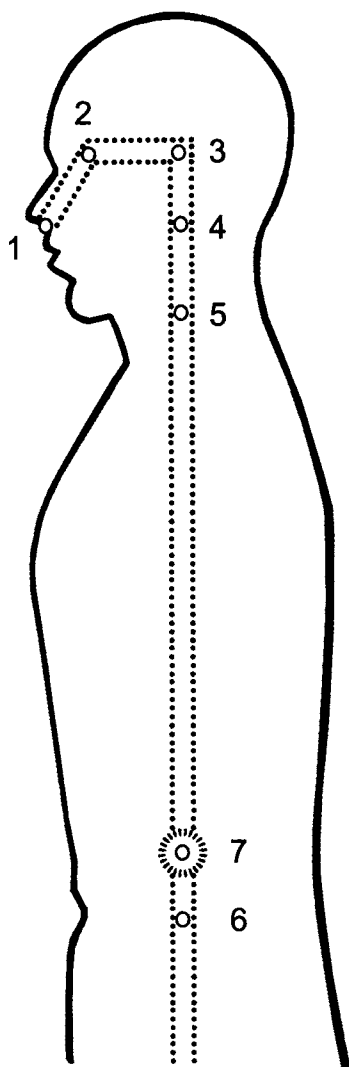
crystal ball, you can bring the mind back to a standstill by repeating the mantra, 'Samma-araham' silently, as if the sound of the mantra is coming from the center of the crystal ball. Repeat the mantra over and over again without counting.

7. Don't entertain thoughts in your mind. Don't analyze what's going on in the meditation. Allow the mind to come to the standstill – that's all you need to do. If you find that you can imagine nothing, then repeat the mantra, 'Samma-araham' silently and continuously in the mind. If you find that you're not sure about the location of the center of the body, anywhere in the area of the stomach will do. Persevere because today's daydream is tomorrow's still mind, today's darkness is tomorrow's inner brightness, today's perseverance is tomorrow's fulfillment.

Don't be disappointed if you find your mind wandering. It is only natural for beginners. Make effort continuously, keep your mind bright, clear and pure, and in the end, you will achieve your goal.

8. Keep repeating the mantra and eventually the sound of the words will die away. At that point a new bright, clear, crystal ball will arise in the mind of its own accord. The crystal ball will sparkle like a diamond.

This stage is called pathama magga (primary path). At this stage the shining crystal ball is connected firmly to the mind, and is seated at the center of the body. You will experience happiness, With continuous observation at the center of this crystal ball, it will give way to a succession of increasingly purer bodily sheaths until it reaches the ultimate one called 'Dhammakaya', the highest level of attainment of supreme happiness.



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SAVING HUMANITY

